THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

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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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JOB.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF JOB.

INTERPRETATION OF THE BOOK OF JOB.—We purpose to give a concise view of our reasons for maintaining—I. THE EXISTENCE AND REALITY OF JOB. II. THE PATRIARCHAL ANTIQUITY, ORIGIN, AND AUTHORSHIP OF THE BOOK. III. ITS REFERENCES TO A FUTURE STATE AND THE WAY OF SALVATION; and IV. ITS DIVINE INSPIRATION AND CANONICAL AUTHORITY. 1. That Job is not a poetical or imaginary, but an historic character, appears from the mention of him in connection with Noah and Daniel, in Ezekiel xiv. 14, 20; and the allusion of St. James, chap. v. 10, 11. Here we think it may be inferred that Job was among "the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord," and who, he says, "were to be taken for an example of suffering and patience"; for he immediately adds, "Behold we count them happy who endure" (itself a reference to Job v. 17). "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, &c., and seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy." It has been suggested that this quotation does not refer to Job's faith, but his patience. But surely faith is the foundation of patience; and the Divine writer would not have cited him, even as an instance of suffering, if he had not been a real character. We find no such personifications of our Lord's parables in the Epistles. It has also been objected that Job is not among the instances of faith in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. But this was probably because the apostle was addressing arguments derived from the law and the writings of the Hebrews; and an objector might have refused to bow to Job who would yield to Moses and Samuel. But even if it were otherwise, he shares the omission together with Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Ruth, whose books are placed by the Jews, with Job and Daniel, among the Hagiographæ, not with the prophets. Very little, indeed, can be argued from omission, as Paley has shown, with reference to historical facts. The particularity of names and circumstances, the very *dramatis personæ*, are before our eyes in all the individuality of real characters. "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job," is not less definite or historical in style than, "Now it came to pass in the days when the Judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land; and a certain man of Bethlehem Judah," &c., with which the Book of Ruth opens. 2. With reference to the patriarchal antiquity of the times and history of Job, we remark, that the Book contains no allusion to any of the historical facts or even ceremonies of the Israelites, or to any events later than their sojourn in Egypt; even if some reference to the deluge, or the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, may be traced. The language also of the body of the work (chaps. iii. to xii.) is indeed as distinct from the introductory and concluding chapters as the style of Æschylus from that of Xenophon, or Milton from Goldsmith. It is poetical and archaic; that is, not only elevated in style, but also has many ancient forms of expression, brief and obscure; words of Chaldaio or Aramæan origin, such as we meet with in those parts of the Book of Genesis which refer to the affairs of Jacob and Laban in Padan Aram, and some whereof the roots are only to be found in Arabic. There is no reference to an established priesthood, or to the worship of images; but to that most ancient form of idolatry, the worship of the sun, moon, and stars; much less to any of the peculiar ordinances of the Jewish ritual. The frequent use of the name of God in the singular (Eloah), and of El-Shaddai, the Almighty, are marks of a primitive age; while the sacred name of "Jehovah" is only once used, except in the prologue and epilogue. But here it corresponds with the language used, which is pure Hebrew. Hence the conjecture of Kennicott, Michaelis, and Lee (adopted also by Mr. Titcomb) is, that Moses, finding the poem among the Midianites, when he was with his father-in-law Jethro, committed it to writing, with an introduction and conclusion, for the comfort of the Israelites, Job himself being the original author; whether or not it was

committed to writing, or existed only in floating recitations, like the songs of the Celtic nations, or perhaps only in fragments, as the poems of Homer before the time of Pisistratus, almost every subsequent writer of the Old Testament will be found to have borrowed from the Book of Job. Job is said to have lived in the land of Uz; and from this it has been concluded that he was a descendant, either of Uz, the son of Aram, or of Huz, the son of Nahor (if they were not the same person, spoken of by anticipation, as the names are the same in Hebrew). There was a place in Idumea named Uz, as appears from Jeremiah (chap. xxiii. 20; Lam. iv. 23). The greater number of writers, ancient and modern, incline to the land of Edom as the dwelling-place of the illustrious patriarch, "the greatest of the sons of the East," who stands forth amidst a system of theology which has nothing in common with any of the relics of subsequent times among the nations surrounding Judea. Of contemporary times there are no other relics. Arabia itself has no literature earlier than the Koran of Mohammed; but the doctrine of Job is perfectly accordant with the glimpses which we gather from the writings of Moses of the state of those nations in patriarchal times, when an Abimilech in Syria, a Pharaoh in Egypt, a Jethro in Midian, a Jobab (who by many, including the Septuagint writers, is supposed to be the same with Job), and even Balaam, in the mountains of the East, had some reverence for true religion—"the fear of the Lord." Even the subsequent corruptions and idolatrous rites point to a primitive state of things such as we find in the Book of Job; when the nomadic tribes went everywhere "lifting up holy hands" to God; looking for some great deliverer—an avenger—to overcome the power of the serpent; practising burnt sacrifices, and worshipping the Supreme on hills and in groves; cherishing the tradition of an invisible world of spirits, and a future eternal judgment. 3. We do not wonder, therefore, at the indications of an eternal world, or the way of salvation—the Christology—which the Church of the Jews, as well as of the Christians, have found in this sublime Book. Were there, in fact, no traces of these primitive truths, we should have found a system of mere Theism existing amidst a world possessed with supernatural convictions; and this is just that conclusion to which the school of modern infidelity would fain conduct us, and reduce this Book to its own negation of revealed truth. For the glorious hope of a final reward, which made Job so confident, they would "fill themselves with the east wind" of a stoical endurance of evil for virtue's sake; or a mystic love of God, without reference to any past or future experience of His loving-kindness—a system at once at variance with what we know practically and experimentally of ourselves, as agents influenced by hope and fear, and opposed to *all* the discoveries of His dealings with us. God has never required us to love Him merely from an adoration of His abstract excellencies, independent of all experience of His mercy. When we find the woman praised who gave much because "she loved much," and set forth as an example of a true motive of action, we perceive only a reflexive exercise of the same principle,—a grateful sense of favours already received,—she had been forgiven much. Those writers, therefore, who deny to Job, under his troubles, the hope of a restitution in the eternal world (he certainly expected none in this life), and would set him forth as an instance of that love which disregards alike reward and punishment, describe a creature as fabulous as the centaur or the griffin, the offspring of their own vain imagination, wedded to an ignorance of human nature, or a hatred of evangelical truth. But can it be shown that either prophets or apostles, martyrs or warriors, had no "regard to the recompense of the reward"? Such, indeed, we are told, was a motive not unworthy of our Saviour's own consideration, whom even these moralists would exalt at least as our example—"for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame." To have found, therefore, in Job a patient sufferer, without a hope of deliverance or reward, in time or eternity, would have been a greater contradiction of experience than any of the miracles of the New Testament, and would have required a stronger force of evidence to support its existence. *A priori*, therefore, in any record, or even parabolic narrative, which affected to describe man as he is, much more in one which did contain such august truths relative to God, angels, true wisdom, human corruption, the fear of the Lord, the Jehovah of the patriarchs, propitiated by sacrifice, and interfering in human affairs, we should be warranted in expressing surprise did we not learn "that there is a judgment"; that the universally looked for Avenger or Redeemer were introduced; and that, while "the hope of the hypocrite was as the spider's web," he who relied on the Lord, and who,

even in death, would not let go his integrity, should find spiritual deliverance, filling his heart with hope, and his lips with praise. An attempt is made to get rid of the testimony of Elihu, by asserting that "it is now decisively pronounced by Hebrew scholars not to be genuine." This decision we deny, both as to its critical truth and intrinsic justice. What manuscript or version wants this integral part of the Book? Does Kennicott or De Rossi intimate any such deficiency? Lightfoot, indeed, and Rosenmüller, attribute the Book itself to Elihu. And though it stands apart from the other interlocutions, it is introductory in its arguments to the grand conclusion; when not only the three mistaken friends are reproved, but both Job and Elihu silenced by the awful voice of God, repeating and expanding, in magnificent language, the Abrahamic sentence, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" With reference to the principal passage, "The Testament of Job" (chap. xix. 23–29), little that is new can be brought forward either for or against the received interpretation; the difficulties of which occurred to Grotius and Warburton, and have only been repeated by modern sceptics. There stands the oracle—"I know that my Redeemer liveth"—introduced by the most solemn announcement of an all-important truth, worthy of perpetual and durable record. On the translation of the introductory sentences there seems to be no substantial difference of opinion—

> "Would that, now, my words were recorded;
> Would that in a book they were engraven;
> With an iron style and lead;
> For ever on the rock, that they were hewn!"

Now, would such an exordium be fitting for any general assurance of a return of prosperity, which Job nowhere intimates; or of an exhibition of his righteousness in this life? Would such a hope be worthy of such a magniloquent expression? On the other hand, if the prophet were suddenly possessed with a Divine confidence in that hope of future things, which is not built "on transitory promises," what more sublime or suitable introduction? And we know that the rocks of the Arabian desert are full of such inscriptions! We have similar asseverations or demands for attention, in Scripture, when important enunciations are about to follow. "Verily, verily I say unto you"; "This is a faithful saying"; "The voice said, Cry"; "I heard a voice from heaven, saying, Write." All these precede important announcements. The exact meaning of the prophecy itself has found a variety of interpreters; but there can be no doubt that the words are very emphatic, brief, and pregnant.

> "I assuredly know that my Deliverer liveth,
> And hereafter, upon the dust shall He arise;
> And (though) after my skin, they pierce this (body),
> Yet from my flesh shall I see God.
> Which I, and not another, shall see for me,
> And mine eyes shall have beheld;
> My reins have been consumed within me,
> For ye shall say, 'Why have they persecuted him.'
> And the root of the matter shall have been found in me.
> Withdraw ye from the presence of the sword,
> For the anger which is due to transgression, is the sword;
> Know ye, therefore, that there is a judgment."

But this famous text is far from the only one in the Book which is an evidence of the faith of Job. What can be clearer, on the hypothesis of a future state, than chap. xliii. 15: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him," reading as in the text (Kethib), or, "Though He slay me, shall I not hope?" as in the margin (Keri). The sense is the same, as Calvin remarked, and the whole context agrees: "How could I risk my life, and rush into His presence, if I were not innocent? Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. I am prepared to argue my ways in His presence; and even this trial shall turn to my salvation (although) no hypocrite can come before Him." Here he maintains his appeal to the Searcher of hearts, the final and eternal Judge; even beyond the bounds of time and sense. And this is also agreeable with other passages, in which

he declares (chap. xvi. 19) that "his Witness is in heaven, his record is on high." While assured of his ultimate deliverance from the grave, he exclaims (chap. xiv. 13–15), "Oh, that Thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that Thou wouldest keep me secret, until Thy wrath be past, that Thou wouldest appoint me a time, and remember me!" "If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait until my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer. Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands." Here he will, as a soldier at his post, await the release of his spirit, by the arrival of the relief guard. He feels assured that God will not forget him, even in the dust; but will, in His own time, have a longing, as it were, a parental "desire to the work of His hands." Many other expressions, indeed Job's general confidence in his integrity, his readiness of appeal to the Supreme Tribunal on all occasions, in reply to the mistaken judgments of his friends, can only be reconciled by an inward consciousness of a future, infallible decision. The speech of Elihu next demands attention. It has been assailed as "not genuine," upon mere supposition that it is "the work of a different hand," which even if maintained would not amount to a diversity greater than that existing between the historical and poetical portions. But the argument of Elihu, though not void of infirmity, is certainly in advance of the previous speakers, and prepares the mind of the reader, as it may have done that of Job, for the voice of the Almighty, silencing rather than convincing the gainsayers. Elihu intimates that he is animated with a desire to direct Job to the true source of comfort: that he should humble himself, and not justify himself before God; that he speaks (xxxiii. 22–25), as none of the others had done, of the Messenger, or Interpreter, one of a thousand, to show man the Divine righteousness; of the ransom provided, and of the return of the sinner to the moral condition of a little child. That there should be some glimpses of the Gospel in patriarchal times is demanded by what we know from other sources, Jewish and Gentile, as well as the general economy of God, who left Himself not without a witness, either to His own being and attributes, or the remedy that He had provided for the sin of man,—the Great Deliverer or Avenger, on the head of the serpent, of the ruin of the primitive race; that Day-star whom Balaam, probably a countryman and descendant of Job, should "see, but not know; should behold, but not nigh"; and who, thus seen dimly by the blessed chain of ancient witnesses, stood out at last plainly revealed in the One Victorious Mediator and future Eternal Judge. 4. If we have at all established these Divine references we have gone far towards maintaining, from internal evidence, the inspiration of the Book of Job. And we are not without other Scriptural proof. The apostle Paul, referring to chap. v. 13, says, "It is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." And again (referring to Psa. xcii. 11), "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain." Making no difference between the authority of one and the other. This kind of quotation confers equal weight, as part of the sacred canon, on the Book of Job, with that ascribed to the Book of Psalms. The same expression, "It is written," occurring frequently; but only where the words cited are those of Divine inspiration, as in the account of the temptation of our Lord. Unacknowledged quotations may be found in the Psalms, Proverbs, and most of the Prophets; seeming to show that although the history of Job formed no part of the national records of Israel, nor indeed of the history of the line of the promised seed, or of the people of God, as marked out by any special designation; yet that it formed the subject of thought and study to the devout and inspired among the Jews, while it was a mirror of the best days of Gentile religion among those who maintained the institutions of Noah. Its views of the invisible world, and the humbling discipline of God; the necessity of true repentance, and the duty of propitiatory sacrifices; "the end of the Lord," and the blessedness of His service, pure from the idolatrous leaven of the Canaanitish nations, point to a Divine hand, guiding the poet and the historian to the record of true facts and the utterance of true doctrine. And this appears, not only in the calm language of the early chapters, but even in his own distracted effusions, under the pressure of extreme calamity, and when irritated by the injudicious treatment of his friends. To have gone so far, and then stopped short, is one of the proofs, as well of the genuineness as of the inspiration of the Book. It conducts us back to the manners of the patriarchal age, and the morals prevalent among the people of God, who were even then "scattered abroad," inheriting the blessing of Shem, Melchisedeck, Abraham, Ishmael, and Edom, though not the specialities

of the covenant sealed to Isaac, Jacob, and Judah. Tribes sustained, under the pressure of Satan's temptations, by the hope of a Deliverer, and testifying, wherever they went, that they were pilgrims, having an eternal home beyond the shadowy region of the grave. In this faith they lived; in this faith they died Each could say with dying Jacob, "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord!" Like him, they gathered around them their houses, and, with "holy Job," sanctified them by prayer and sacrifice, while they delivered to them their testimony, to be treasured up for unborn generations; and their wish has been granted: their "words are written, as with an iron pen and lead upon the rocks for ever," in wisdom that is older than the pyramids, and which shall survive unwasted when they have mouldered in the dust. (*Christian Observer.*)

THE DATE AND ORIGIN OF THE BOOK OF JOB.—Nothing can be safely inferred from the Aramæan words which are frequently employed in it; and that, not simply because the Aramaisms occur chiefly in the speech of Elihu, and are appropriate in his mouth, since he himself was an Aramæan; nor simply because all Hebrew poetry, of whatever age, is more or less Aramaic; but also and mainly because the presence of Aramæan words in any Scripture may indicate either its extreme antiquity or its comparatively modern date. For these Aramaisms —as "Rabbi" Duncan tersely puts the conclusion of all competent scholars— are either—1. Late words borrowed from intercourse with the Syrians; or 2. Early ones common to both dialects. Any argument, therefore, which is based on the use of these words cuts both ways. Both the pervading tone of the Book and its literary style point steadily and unmistakably to the age of Solomon as the period in which it at least assumed the form in which it has come down to us. There is in it a noble universality, "as if it were not Hebrew." It does not contain a single allusion to the Mosaic laws and customs, or to the characteristic beliefs of the Jews, or to the recorded events of their national history. Hence many have concluded that it was written in the patriarchal age. But to this there is at least one fatal objection. The literary form of the poem, the *proverbial* form, decisively marks it out as one of the Chokmah books, and forbids us to ascribe it to any age earlier than that of Solomon. "Job" belongs to the Chokmah both in spirit and in form. (*Samuel Cox, D.D.*)

ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE EARLIER DATE OF THE BOOK OF JOB.—It is not merely that the language in which the Book is written is not, we are assured, that of the oldest extant form of Hebrew, but, at the very earliest, that not of the morning, but of the high noon, of Jewish literature. It is not merely that the author, when speaking in his own person, speaks invariably of God by the name in which He was revealed to Moses as the covenant God of the people of Israel; nor merely that he seems to have been familiar, if not with many other portions of the Old Testament, certainly with at least one Psalm; or that expressions occur, such as Ophir, as the recognised name for gold, which would have been inconceivable before, at the very earliest, the reign of Solomon. It is more than this. The very problem which the Book discusses, the riddle which vexes the soul of Job, is not one which springs into full life, or would form the subject of a long and studied and intensely argued and elaborate discussion, in any early or simple stage of a nation's progress. The work is clearly by a Hebrew. It bears no signs of being a translation. The stamp of originality is on every page. When, or where, could a Hebrew have found a place for such a work in the infancy of his nation? The struggle between a traditional creed which told him that all suffering was a penalty for actual sin, all prosperity a reward for goodness, and the spectacle of undeserved suffering as seen in the world of a more complex experience— the question of the inherent value and sacredness of goodness in itself, as apart from the outward or inward happiness which it brings,—the very character of the awful Ruler of the universe, His justice and His goodness, as distinct from His sovereignty and goodness—these are scarcely problems which would force themselves, like armed intruders, on the human soul in the simpler and earlier stages of social or national progress. We smile as we read the assertions of doctor after doctor of the Jewish or Christian Church, that the awful questionings, which you and I have faced and shall face in the words of the tortured Job, were read to comfort oppressed and ignorant bondsmen in the slave gangs of Egypt; or to cheer the "stiff-necked" tribes of half-civilised wanderers in the forty years of their desert life. How little can those who tell us so have faced the full meaning

of the largest and the central portion of the Book. The elements, doubtless, of such perplexities may have existed from the day when the blood of some unavenged successor of righteous Abel cried in vain for retribution. But we can hardly imagine that their full and elaborate discussion would have found voice, or echo, or hearing, still less enshrined itself in a nation's literature, till a sadder and more perplexing experience had opened men's eyes to darker and more tangled thoughts than come to the childhood of nations. God's Spirit does not transport men out of their own epoch. Great men may mould their age, may see further than their contemporaries, but they are moulded also by, are the children of, their age. Great and lofty as are the utterances, they would have been born out of due time, till the problems with which they deal had been brought home to the hearts of thinkers by familiarity with much unexplained and inexplicable suffering, by long and painful musing over the mysteries and riddles of human life. (*Dean Bradley.*)

THE BOOK OF JOB A POEM.—The Book of Job is, in its main portion, a poem, not a narrative or history. It is as truly and certainly a poem as the *Paradise Lost* or the *Iliad* are poems of England or of Greece. To what class of poems does it belong? It is not, like the Book of Psalms, a series of detached hymns, embodying the very highest meditative outpourings, glad or sorrowful, of the human heart, national or individual, to its God. Nor do we find in its pages the common sense of the many, framed in verse by the wisdom of one or more, as in so large a portion of the Book of Proverbs. It is as different as possible from the poetry, idyllic or mystic, of the Song of Solomon; or from the meditations on life, placed on the borderland of prose and poetry, in the Book of Ecclesiastes. It resembles Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, as dealing with the practical and the speculative interests of human life. But it differs, in other respects, fundamentally from both. First, it gathers all its teaching round a single personage, the hero of the poem, who from the beginning to the end forms the one centre of interest. And secondly, whatever problems it raises, or whatever lessons it teaches, comes to us, when once we have read the first line of the actual poem, through the lips, never of the author himself, but of the speakers, human or Divine or other, whom he places on the stage. Hence men have called it an epic poem, or a drama. Like epic poems, it has a hero, a struggle, and a conquest. It is so far a drama, that it consists almost entirely of dialogue, and that the author will speak to us only to introduce the different speakers to whose words we shall listen. Yet we cannot without reserve call that a drama in which there is no change of scene, no movement, no event, no action. It has been called also a parable, and there is a sense, no doubt, in which the word, however vaguely and loosely used, may well be applied to it. I make no attempt to bring the book, the poem, under any special class or denomination. It stands alone in the Bible, alone in the literature of the world, as the very flower of inspired Hebrew poetry; and as such let us accept it, seeking for its true teaching and its true import in its contents, and in these only. (*Ibid.*)

THE PROBLEM OF THE BOOK OF JOB.—The problem of the Book is not one but many. No doubt the poet intended to vindicate the ways of God to men. No doubt, therefore, he had passed through and beyond that early stage of religious faith in which the heart simply and calmly assumes the perfect goodness of God, and had become aware that some justification of the Divine ways was demanded by the doubt and anguish of the human heart. The heavy and the weary weight of the mystery which shrouds the providence of God, the burden of this unintelligible world, was obviously making itself profoundly felt. Unquestionably the Book of Job does show, in the most tragic and pathetic way, that good no less than wicked men lie open to the most cruel losses and sorrows; that these losses and sorrows are not always signs of the Divine anger against sin; that they are intended to correct and perfect the righteousness of the righteous, —or, in our Lord's figure, that they are designed to purge the trees which already bear good fruit, in order that they may bring forth more fruit. But, after all, can it be the main and ruling intention of the Book to teach us that noble lesson? A door is opened into heaven. The King sits on His throne; His ministers gather round Him, and sit in session; among them appears a spirit, here simply named the "Adversary" or "Accuser," whose function is to scrutinise the actions of men, to present them in their worst aspect, that they may be thoroughly sifted

and explored. He himself has sunk into an evil condition, for he delights in making even good men seem bad, in fitting good deeds with evil motives. Self is his centre, not God; and he suspects all the world of a selfishness like his own. He cannot, or will not, believe in an unselfish, a disinterested goodness. When Jehovah challenges him to find a fault in Job, he boldly challenges Jehovah to put Job to the proof, and avows beforehand his conviction that it will be found Job has served God only for what he could gain thereby. This challenge, as Godet has been quick to observe, does not merely affect the character of man; it touches the very honour of God Himself: "for if the most pious of mankind is incapable of loving God gratuitously,—that is, really, it follows that God is incapable of making Himself loved." And "as no one is honoured except in so far as he is loved," by this malignant aspersion, the adversary really assails the very heart and crown of the Master of the Universe. Jehovah, therefore, takes up the challenge, and Himself enters the lists against the adversary; Jehovah undertaking to prove that man is capable of a real and disinterested goodness, Satan undertaking to prove that the goodness of man is but a veiled selfishness, and the heart of Job is to be the arena of the strife. On the one hand, the poem was designed to demonstrate to the spiritual powers in heavenly places that God is capable of inspiring a pure and disinterested love, by proving that man is capable of a real, an unselfish goodness; and, on the other hand, to relieve the mystery of human life by showing that its miseries are corrective, and by strengthening the hope of a future life in which all the wrongs of time are to be redressed. (*Samuel Cox, D.D.*)

THE BOOK OF JOB.—It seems to me that the highest critical authorities must be right in thinking that the drama of Job is nearly the latest, as well as the only formally artistic product of the poetic genius of the Jews. This, at least, is in intention, as well as in fact, a literary effort—an attempt to present, and perhaps more or less to solve, in a dramatic form, some of the highest problems of man's spiritual life. It is the only important Book in the Old Testament which is not closely interwoven with the real history and life of the nation,—which stands apart as a *conscious* effort of imagination. No doubt the Book of Job marks in many ways the culmination of the national genius, and the transition from the exclusively Divine centre of the Hebrew poetic thought to the wider range of insight into nature and man, from the natural as well as the supernatural side, which was to succeed it. The very treatment of a Divine theme under the human conditions of an imaginary drama would alone appear to indicate this. The conflict with the narrowly Jewish conceptions of Providence which it contains would also indicate it. The contemplative delight which the wonders of nature and the mysteries of animal life arouse in the writer's mind, and the naturalistic minuteness with which they are painted, as well as the delineations of the inward perplexities of the spiritual life, all point to an origin in an age when that more genial appreciation of nature and man which we perceive in the later prophecies bearing the name of Isaiah had been carried even further. Moreover, as regards man himself, the whole argument turns on the subtle distinction between that part of his nature which, finite and short-sighted though he is, yet gives him a right to claim a real affinity with God, and that part which, finite and limited as it is, necessarily obscures his power of judgment. This is not a point which could well have been discussed in an early period of the Jewish literature. There is an evident effort throughout the drama to distinguish the "creature" in Job from that "spirit" in him which gives him a right to plead with God. The drama is usually understood as a mere exposure of the false view which makes calamity a certain index of the wrath of God, and therefore of guilt. This, no doubt, it is; but it is much more. It is a discussion of the mystery of God's relation to man, and to the lower universe. There is an effort, I believe, in the poem to show that man is related to God in two ways,—as a spiritual being, and as a creature. As a spiritual being, he may justify himself, and speak what God Himself cannot override, and will certainly affirm; as a creature, he is in complete ignorance of the lot it may be right for the Ruler of the universe to assign him, since he only can judge who sees the universe as a whole, who moves the very springs of its life. Man cannot and ought not to accuse Providence of injustice in any external lot He may send, unless he could undertake to wield the whole scheme of Providence in His place; then, and then only, might he "disannul" God's judgment, and condemn Him in

order to "establish his own righteousness." The ignorant *creature* is wrong in criticising the acts of the Creator; but the *spirit* of the man is right in asserting the absolute character of his highest spiritual convictions against any array of external argument. Job is sustained in his assertion that though his body should be destroyed, yet a living Redeemer should vindicate his inward purity; he is sustained in reiterating, "God forbid that I should justify you till I die; I will not remove my integrity from me; my righteousness will I hold fast, and will not let it go"; he is sustained in holding fast by the judgment of his spirit on his own actions, for that is a judgment with full knowledge; but he is condemned for judging God's outward conduct to him by any standard whatever; since in doing so he judges by "words without knowledge," seeing that the knowledge requisite for such judgment would be the omniscience of the Creator Himself. The argument is illustrated with the fullest delineation of the mystery of nature, the broadest contrast between the narrow circle of spiritual knowledge and independence really reserved to man, and to man alone, and the utter incompetence of man to wield a single attribute of Providence either over His own world or that of the lower creation. . . . The Hebrew poet had already distinguished between the direct knowledge of God's Spirit, which spiritual communion gives, and the indirect knowledge of His mysterious ways which can only be gained by a study of those ways. It shows that he had mastered the conviction, that to neglect the study of the natural mysteries of the universe leads to an arrogant and illicit intrusion of moral and spiritual assumptions into a different world,—in a word, to the false inferences of Job's friends as to his guilt, and his own equally false inference as to the injustice of God. (*Richard Holt Hutton, M.A.*)

THE GENERAL LESSONS OF THE BOOK.—1. To commend the virtue of patience. 2. To maintain the Providence of God. 3. To encourage the hopes of the believer. There shall be no mistake at last: his person will be justified, his integrity manifested, and his holiness perfected in the day or end of the Lord. 4. To promote humility. This was the peculiar lesson which Job had to learn. 5. Love to God as a gracious Father. This is the character in which He was not known to the heathen. 6. Charity to man. It teaches that the people of God are not to be censorious and ready to judge one another, or interpret misfortunes as peculiar proofs of His wrathful indignation towards those who, in their general walk and conversation, bear the marks of His family. "Charity thinketh no evil." 7. A lesson in knowledge. This is put last in order, because it is probably rather incidental than primary. The great truths of Revelation, from Genesis to the Apocalypse, are briefly disclosed, glancing out as if by accident in this Divine Book. Greenfield says, "The Church of God has been greatly enriched by having bequeathed to it the vast treasury of Divine truth which is found in the Book of Job,—a Book containing the purest morality, the sublimest philosophy, the simplest ritual, and the most majestic creed." In the spiritual Church, patience hath its perfect work; faith learns to walk as seeing Him who is invisible; hope rests on Him as an anchor, sure and steadfast, fast bound to the eternal shore, entering into that which is within the vail; humility becomes conformed to Him; perfect love casteth out fear; charity suffereth long, and is kind; and wisdom acquaints itself with God, and is at peace. (*Charles Augustus Hulbert, M.A.*)

THREE FRIENDS AND ONLY ONE JOB.—The friends represent nothing but the early faith, as it has already become a delusion and superstition. This faith is from its nature that which more commonly prevails, which seeks to maintain itself with emphasis and earnestness against every innovation and variation. With profound insight the poet introduces several friends in contrast with the solitary Job. Unusual calamities and unusual experiences are the lot of but a few; endurance under unexpected trials, and steady resistance of current narrower views, founded upon fresh and certain experience, is still more uncommon; but most uncommon of all is the hero who successfully brings out triumphantly a new truth which is still weak and little understood. Accordingly the poet must bring forward Job alone, without human help or stay, as every great truth can at first by one man only be felt and defended so keenly and powerfully that the one acts decisively for all. Job must by himself wage the whole conflict, and refute the antiquated views by means of his own per-

sonal experience, which is peculiar to himself in this degree. On the opposite side stands the great multitude with its prepossessions, consciously or unconsciously combating the man that revolts against them. The poet accordingly causes the representative personality hostile to Job to divide into a number of separate persons, bringing forward three old sympathetic friends of Job, who, on visiting him and considering more closely his misfortunes, soon become his opponents. (*Heinrich August Von Ewald.*)

THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

JOB.

CHAPTER I.

VERS. 1-3. **There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job.**—*The character of Job* :—There are serious and devout persons who regard the Book of Job as a work of imagination, and refer it to the age of Solomon. They point out that the subject discussed is precisely that which agitated the mind of Solomon, and that nothing but a wide contact with the Gentile world could have admitted a subject or a scene so remote from ordinary Jewish thought. Luther says, "I look upon the Book of Job as true history, yet I do not believe that all took place just as it is written, but that an ingenious, learned, and pious person brought it into its present form." The poetical character of the work is manifest, and this poetical character must be taken into full account in any attempt to explain the contents. That is admissible in poetry which would not be proper in prose. Poetry may suggest, prose should state. Whether the poem be historically based or not, there is certainly set before us a very distinct and well-marked individuality. It is not possible for us to understand the discussion in the book until we are adequately impressed with the character of the hero, because the whole turns, not as is usually assumed, upon his patience, nor upon his absolute innocence, but upon his religious sincerity and moral uprightness. Job is presented in the characteristics of his conduct, his attractions, and his repulsions. "Perfect and upright." "Fearing God." "Eschewing evil." A man may be delineated very minutely; a photograph in words may be presented of his features, his bodily form, his gait, his tone of voice, and even of his qualities of mind and disposition, and yet no adequate idea of him may be conveyed to the minds of others. Genius is shown in some brief, sententious striking off of the essential peculiarities, the things in which the man stands out from other men. This hand-mark of genius is on the description that is given of Job. It is brief, but it differentiates him precisely. We feel that we know the man. I. IT PRESENTS THE CHARACTERISTICS OF HIS CONDUCT. Our Lord taught—what reason also affirms—that a man's life and doings form the proper basis of any judgment that is made concerning him. "By their fruits ye shall know them." That ground of judgment is universally acknowledged to be quite fair. We ought to be willing to lay our life and conduct open before our fellow-men, and to say, "Judge me according to my integrity." Many, even religious men, prefer to say, "Judge me according to my professions." The world is right in persisting in judging us by our conduct. And it may be questioned whether, on the whole, its judgment is harsh and unfair. It does not look for perfection in us, but it does expect to find that ours is a higher standard of honesty and charity than theirs. We would like to be described by our beliefs. Our Lord was described by His doings. "He went about doing good." It says much for Job that he can be set before us in the light of his conduct. He was a sincere, upright, kind, and good man. How are we to explain these words, "perfect and upright," as descriptions of human life and conduct? The word "perfect" has in Scripture this idea in it. The thought of the absolutely perfect is cherished in a man's soul, and he is ever trying to work his thought out into his life and conduct. Taking the two words together, "perfect" refers to the

ideal in the man's mind; and "upright" describes the moral characteristic of his human relationships. And we may glorify our Father in heaven by cherishing high ideals, and by bringing forth, in our daily life, much fruit of common honesties, common purities, and common charities, and so grow towards the standard of the perfect. II. IT PRESENTS THE CHARACTERISTIC OF HIS ATTRACTIONS. Tell us what a man loves, and we can tell you exactly what the man is. Everyone is disclosed by his favourite pursuit. Do you love truth and goodness? Then a blessed revelation is made concerning you. The Godward side of your nature is alive, healthy, and active. But is it the same thing to say of Job that he "feared God," and to say that he "set his love on God"? Yes. A man can never worthily love, if he does not fear,—fear in the deeper sense of respect, admire, and reverence. Fear and love grow together, and grow so like each other that we find it difficult to tell which is fear and which is love. Job, on the side of his attractions, was drawn to God. The purity of the waters that lie full in the face of the sun is drawn out, and caught up by invisible forces into the sky, by and by to serve ends of refreshing on the earth. And all the noblest and best that is in a man may be drawn out by the invisible forces of Divine love and fear, if the soul do but lie open to God, the Sun of Righteousness. III. IT PRESENTS THE CHARACTERISTIC OF HIS REPULSIONS. "He eschewed evil." The word employed is vigorous, but not exactly refined. We cannot pronounce it without discerning its precise meaning. "Escheweth" means, "finds it nauseous, and spits it out." The clean is repelled from the unclean, the kindly from the cruel, the gentle from the passionate, the pure from the vicious. A good man is characterised by an acute sensitiveness to everything that is evil. What then was the leading idea of Job's life? It was a life lived in the power of principle. Some central idea ruled it, gave it unity, steadied it. He believed that, in righteousness, Divine communion may be enjoyed. He saw that God, happiness, truth, peace, the only worthy idea of living, all belong to righteousness. So his conduct was right. "Righteousness tendeth unto life"; and "God blesseth the generation of the righteous." Whatever may happen to this man, we may be sure that God was on his side. God declared him to be a pure, upright, and sincere man. (*Robert Tuck, B.A.*) *Job, the model of piety*:—Job must have lived not very long after the Deluge. Somewhere between the time of Noah and of Abraham. Five things in this model which we shall do well to imitate. I. JOB WAS A MODEL OF HOME PIETY (1 Tim. v. 4). Some persons pretend to be very good and pious when among strangers, but they are not careful how they act at home. If we are really trying to be good Christians, and to love and serve God, then home is the place in which we should let our religion be seen. It should make us more respectful and obedient to our parents, and more kind and loving and gentle to our brothers and sisters, and to all about us in the home, than those are who do not profess to be Christians. Job's sons were in the habit of having social gatherings at each other's houses. When their feasting was over, their father was accustomed to gather them all together for special religious services, when he prayed that God would forgive them if any of them had said, or thought, or felt, or done anything that was wrong while the feasting was going on. It was in this way that Job was a model of piety at home. II. JOB WAS A MODEL OF INTELLIGENT PIETY. He lived so long ago that we could not expect him to have had very clear views about the character of God, and the way to serve Him. But he had. It is wonderful how much he knew about these things. He lived before any part of the Bible was written. But he got his knowledge from the God of the Bible. We get our knowledge from the Bible. If we come to the Bible to find out what true piety is, and how we are to serve God, we shall understand this matter as Job did, and our piety, like his, will be intelligent piety. III. JOB WAS A MODEL OF PRACTICAL PIETY. His piety did not show itself in what he said only, but also, and mainly, in what he did. He carried his religion with him wherever he went (chap. xxix). We have some examples of good Christian men and women who are like Job in this respect. But there ought to be many more of the same kind. If, from the example of Job, we look up to the example of Jesus, we shall find them both very much alike in this respect. When Jesus "went about doing good," He was making His piety practical. IV. WE HAVE IN JOB A MODEL OF PATIENT PIETY. The apostle James says, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job." This is the first thought that comes to us when the name of Job is mentioned. Think of his terrible calamities. We should have been tempted to

say some very bitter things against the providence of God for permitting so great and crushing an affliction to come upon us. But Job said nothing of the kind. All he did is told thus: "Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head." This was the way in which people in that Eastern country were accustomed to express their feelings when in great sorrow. But what a much more wonderful model of patience was Jesus! The patience of Job was beautiful at the beginning, but it did not last. He got discouraged, and said some very impatient things. He failed in his patience before he got through his trials. And so it is with all the examples of piety and patience that we find among our fellow-creatures. They fail, sooner or later. The example of Jesus is the only perfect one. V. JOB WAS A MODEL, OR EXAMPLE, OF REWARDED PIETY. When Satan said, "Does Job serve God for nought?" he meant to say that Job was selfish in his religion, and only served God for the pay or profit he expected from it. But he was mistaken here. Job knew that there was a reward to be found in the service of God. But this was not the only thing he thought of in that service. "In keeping God's commandments there is great reward." All who serve God as faithfully as Job did will find themselves richly rewarded. (*R. Newton, D.D.*) *The character of Job*:—1. Beginning with the opening verses, we are led to contemplate Job in his family relations; in his tender solicitude for the spiritual welfare of his children, causing the light of daily worship to shed its rays upon the domestic tabernacle,—his house a church, and himself the ministering priest at its altars. This whole passage brings out in strong relief the depth of Job's personal piety, and his fervent intercessions for his family. "According to the number"—that is, according to the needs, and necessities, and particular circumstances of them all: the ungovernable pride and passion, perhaps, which he had observed in one son, the worldly spirit and pleasure-seeking which he knew to be the besetting sin of another. One by one, each son's infirmities and temptations shall have its remembrance in a pious father's prayers. The whole scene brings out an example of that household piety which is the strength of nations, the seed of the Church, the best conservator of God's truth in the world, and that on which the Almighty has declared shall ever rest His heavenly benediction. "For I know him," it is said of Abraham, "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." Thus, for his exemplary character and conduct in all the relations of home life, we can understand why it is witnessed of Job that he was a perfect and an upright man. 2. Again, in the entire submissiveness of his will to the Divine will, we see a reason why it should be witnessed of Job that he was "a perfect and an upright man." His pre-eminence in this virtue of patient resignation we find recognised in the Epistle of St. James, who, after bidding us "take the prophets for an example of suffering affliction and of patience," cites, as worthy of special imitation, the "patience of Job." Nor have we need to go further than this first chapter for evidence of the patriarch's absolute and beautiful self-abasement. For we see a man before us who is a very wreck of wrecks—under the pressure of bodily suffering unexampled. And yet, amidst the wild and wasting havoc, no murmur of rebellion escapes his lips, neither does any hard thought of God find any place in his heart. Still, as we know, it was not always thus with Job. This model of suffering patience was at times tempted to expressions of almost blasphemous impatience—imprecating darkness upon the anniversary of his birth, as a day not worthy to be joined unto the days of the year, or to come into the number of the months. It was the yielding to this temper of mind which drew forth against him the stern and just reproof of Elihu, "Should it be according to thy mind?" Is it for thee to say how God should correct, and when God should correct, and in what measures He should correct? Art thou a competent judge of what the Almighty may have in view in His corrective dispensations; or whether shall tend to promote them, this form of chastening or that? "Should it be according to thy mind?" No doubt this form of insubmissiveness is often to be found in God's children when lying under His Fatherly corrections. Chastening, we know, we must have; and chastening we expect. But, as with Job at the time of this reproof being administered to him, there is often a disposition in us to dictate to our heavenly Father in what form the chastening should come. Under any great trial there is a constant tendency in us to say, "I could have borne any trial rather than this." Far otherwise was it with Job—at least, when he was in his better moods. He desired to be conformed to the will of God in all things. He had no selective

submissions, taking patiently the thorn in the flesh one day, and withstanding proudly the angel in the path of the vineyards the next; now bowing in all lowliness under the imposed yoke of the Saviour, and now refusing to take up his appointed cross. Job knew that submission to the Divine will was not more the discipline of life than it will be the repose and bliss of immortality. "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." In the yielded captivity and surrender of every thought to the will of God, he would vindicate his claim to be considered "a perfect and an upright man." 3. Furthermore, among personal characteristics of Job justifying the honourable mention made of him in our text, we naturally include the strength and clearness of his faith. As a grace of character, no virtue stands higher than this in the Divine esteem. It was that royal gift from above which procured for Abraham the distinguishing title of "the Friend of God." And there are points of resemblance between his faith and that of this perfect and upright man in the land of Uz. Both were beforehand of their dispensation in their views of the doctrine of an atoning sacrifice; both, with a clearness of vision beyond that of men of their own age, saw the day of Christ; saw it, and were glad. Even in those family burnt-offerings recorded in this first chapter, there was, on the part of Job, a distinct act of faith. He saw in that sacrifice and oblation a type of the coming propitiation; saw his own sins and his sons' sins laid on that slain victim, and believed that they were blotted out in the cloud that curled up from that sacrificial fire. This, indeed, was the only answer to be returned to his own question—the question which had perplexed him, as well as thousands of minds besides: "How should man be just with God? How should God and man come together in judgment?" Clearly in no way except by means of that Divine and ineffable mystery so beautifully foreshadowed in his own striking language: "Neither is there any daysman betwixt us that might lay his hand upon us both." And then see how this strong and eagle-eyed gaze into the far-off future comes out in the nineteenth chapter, when describing his faith in the God-Redeemer, the Divine and ever-living Mediator. Job knew, as well as David knew, that, in the higher sense for which a Redeemer is needed, "no man can redeem his brother, or make atonement unto God for him; for that it cost more to redeem their souls: so that he must let that alone for ever." See, then, how great is Job's faith. This Redeemer, who can do for us what no created being could do—living, and all through the ages, ever living—must be Divine. Yet not Divine only; for He is my kinsman, of the same race and blood with me, bound over by Divine appointment to do for me the kinsman's part. Mystery of mysteries! yet shall my faith embrace it. "I know that my Redeemer liveth." And this faith, in Job's case, like all true faith, was an intensely practical thing; a working factor in the shaping of his whole life and character. See how this comes out in the thirteenth chapter. Things are at their worst with Job. The taunts and reproaches of his so-called friends had irritated him beyond endurance, and he spake unadvisedly with his lips. And no wonder. "Hold your peace," he says to them. "Let me alone, that I may speak, and let come on me what will. It does seem as if God had set me for His mark; the looming wrath-cloud does seem as if it would discharge itself upon me every moment. Yet think you that on this account I am going to doubt my God, distrust my God, see shadow of change in the Unchangeable? Nay, verily; though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Oh! wonder we to find it written of such an one, "That man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God"? 4. One other aspect of Job's character remains to be taken, as supplying a reason for the high commendation of the text; I mean that view of his life which brings him before us as a man of prayer; a man of devout and heart-searching communion with his own spirit; a man able to bear anything rather than the thought of estrangement, and coldness, and a cloud of fear and unlove coming for a moment between his soul and God. Take a few passages only from his book, showing the intense fervour of these spiritual longings: "Oh! that I knew where I might find Him; that I might come even unto His seat! Oh! that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his friend! Oh! that I were as in months past; as in the days when God preserved me; . . . as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle!" "That man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God." Still, we must be careful that these searchings of heart are not carried too far; are not, in the hands of Satan, made an occasion of driving us from our hope. We must not forget that the

occasional intermission of our spiritual comforts is often a part of a necessary sanctifying discipline. It is possible that God sees us depending too much on these tokens of His favour, this abiding of His secret upon our tabernacle. Insensibly we had come to look upon those happy experiences as our righteousness; we had almost made a Christ of them, to the disparagement of the all-sufficiency of His atonement, and to the casting of a shadow on the glory of His Cross. But this must not be. In all our self-examinations we must not shrink from looking back, and must not be afraid to look within. But if we can honestly discern in ourselves the signs of present desires after holiness, and yet are disquieted and cast down, then, instead either of looking back or looking within, we must look out and look up; out of self, up to Christ; out of the light upon the tabernacle, up to the light of heaven; out of all thought of what we may have done or not done for Christ, up to the grateful contemplation of what Christ has done for us. (*Daniel Moore, M.A.*) *A good man in great prosperity*:—I. A GOOD MAN. He was "perfect." Not sinless, but complete in all the parts of his moral and religious character; he did not attend to one class of duties to the exclusion of others, cultivate one attribute of virtue regardless of the rest. He was complete. All the parts of the plant of goodness within him grew simultaneously and symmetrically. 1. In relation to his general conduct he was "upright." He pursued the straight road of rectitude, turning neither to the right nor left hand; he did what his conscience believed was right, regardless of issues. 2. In relation to his God he was devout. He "feared God," not with a slavish fear,—his fear was a loving reverence. He was far removed from all irreverence of feeling, he was profoundly religious. God filled the horizon of his soul, he looked at all things in their relation to the Divine. 3. In relation to evil he was an apostate. He "eschewed evil"; he departed from it; he hurried from it as from the presence of a monster. However fashionable, gorgeously attired, institutionally and socially powerful, he loathed it, and fled from it as Lot from Sodom. 4. In relation to his family he was a priest. "He offered burnt offerings." He interposed with God on their behalf; he was a mediator between his own children and the great Father of spirits. Like a good father he sought the moral cleansing of his children and their reconciliation to the Eternal. II. Here is a good man VERY PROSPEROUS. 1. He was prosperous as a father. "There were born unto him seven sons and three daughters." In ancient times, to be destitute of children was esteemed a great calamity: the greater the family the greater the parental blessing. Things have changed now: here in our England, a large family is regarded as a terrible infliction. What greater blessing in this world can a man have than a large number of loving hearts to call him father? 2. He was prosperous as a farmer. The stock here described has been estimated to amount in our money to the sum of £30,000. Here, and now, this is a good fortune, but yonder, and then, it stood for at least fifty times the amount. 3. He was prosperous as a citizen. "For this man was the greatest of all the men in the east." There were many great men in the east in those days, no doubt, men whose names would strike awe into the soul of the populace, but Job was the greatest of them all. Elsewhere he describes the power which he wielded over men. "When I went out to the gate through the city, when I prepared my seat in the street! the young men saw me, and hid themselves," &c. (Job xxix. 7, 8). In conclusion, two remarks—1. That a good man in great prosperity is what antecedently we might have expected to find everywhere in the world. 2. That a good man in great prosperity is not a common scene in human life. Generally speaking, the best men are the poorest, and the worst men hold the prizes of the world. (*Homilist.*) *Job's life of prosperity*:—Now let us judge this life from a point of view which the writer may have taken, which at any rate it becomes us to take, with our knowledge of what gives manhood its true dignity and perfectness. Obedience to God, self-control and self-culture, the observance of religious forms, brotherliness and compassion, uprightness and purity of life, these are Job's excellences. But all circumstances are favourable, his wealth makes beneficence easy, and moves him to gratitude. His natural disposition is towards piety and generosity; it is pure joy to him to honour God and help his fellow-men. The life is beautiful. But imagine it as the unclouded experience of years in a world where so many are tried with suffering and bereavement, foiled in their strenuous toil, and disappointed in their dearest hopes, and is it not evident that Job's would tend to become a kind of dream-life, not deep and strong, but on the surface, a broad stream, clear,

glittering, with the reflection of moon and stars, or of the blue heaven, but shallow, gathering no force, scarcely moving towards the ocean? No dreaming is there when the soul is met with sore rebuffs, and made aware of the profound abyss that lies beneath, when the limbs fail on the steep hills of difficult duty. But a long succession of prosperous years, immunity from disappointment, loss, and sorrow, lulls the spirit to repose. Earnestness of heart is not called for, and the will, however good, is not braced to endurance. Whether by subtle intention or by an instinctive sense of fitness, the writer has painted Job as one who with all his virtue and perfectness spent his life as in a dream, and needed to be awakened. He is a Pygmalion's statue of flawless marble, the face divinely calm, and not without a trace of self-conscious remoteness from the suffering multitudes, needing the hot blast of misfortune to bring it to life. Or, let us say he is a new type of humanity in Paradise, an Adam enjoying a Garden of Eden fenced in from every storm, as yet undiscovered by the enemy. We are to see the problem of the primitive story of Genesis revived and wrought out afresh, not on the old lines, but in a way that makes it real to the race of suffering men. The dream-life of Job in his time of prosperity corresponds closely with that ignorance of good and evil which the first pair had in the garden eastward in Eden while as yet the forbidden tree bore its fruit untouched, undesired, in the midst of the greenery and flowers. (*Robert A. Watson, D.D.*) *Job*:—Job may be called "the first of the Bible heathens." He was not a Jew, he was one "outside the pale of the visible Church." The problems of the book are of interest to man as man, and not as either Jew or Gentile. There is no allusion in the book to Jewish traditions, customs, or modes of thought. The sacrifices mentioned are primitive, not Mosaic. There is a striking breadth and universalism in its pictures of life, manners, customs, and places. There is a variety about the local colouring that we find in no book that is undoubtedly Jewish in its origin. There is a marked absence of the strong assertion of God as Israel's God which we elsewhere find. The picture of Satan is very different from that which we have elsewhere in Scripture. Many considerations point to the very high antiquity of Job's time,—such as his own great longevity; the primitive and patriarchal simplicity of life and customs; the reference to sacrifices, but to neither priest nor shrine; the fact that the only form of idolatry spoken of is the very primitive one of the worship of the sun and moon; and the total silence of the history to such striking and momentous events as the destruction of Sodom, and the giving of the law. When or by whom the book was written we have not sufficient evidence to warrant even a guess. The presence of the book in the Canon ought to be a standing marvel to those who can see in the Old Testament only a collection of Jewish literature, a store-house of national thought, history, poetry, or theology. The book stands by itself, sublime in its solitariness, suggestive in its isolation. Not less remarkable is the book if regard be had to its literary character, its poetic elevation, its dramatic daring, its full-blown magnificence of imagery. Carlyle says, "There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit." The form is essentially dramatic. The problem presented is one phase of the world-old and world-wide one of human suffering. It is the most inscrutable side of the mystery that is presented and treated—the suffering of a righteous man; not of one made righteous, purified, by the discipline of pain, but righteous prior to the assault of affliction. There is brought before us a figure of piety and fame, public repute and private virtue. Then follows the charge of selfishness, preferred by the accuser, and the Divine permission that he be put to the test. The working out of this test, its effect upon him and upon his friends, constitute the body of the drama. The theory of the friends is this; in this life pain is proportioned to sin, and joy to righteousness; suffering to transgression, and reward to innocence. It makes no provision for a mystery of suffering; all pain, whilst it may be made to be disciplinary or corrective in its consequence by being rightly used, and by learning what it is fitted to teach, is yet, in its primary character, penal. When, therefore, you see suffering, you may be sure there has been sin. Job indignantly repels this explanation of his sufferings. He touches the very borders of blasphemy in his declarations of innocence, and his demands that the Almighty should show why He causes him thus to suffer. As the argument develops, the parties change places. The friends, at first calm, dispassionate, and even, from their standpoint, considerate and forbearing, deteriorate. They lose temper in presence of what they deem to be Job's obstinacy

and sinful determination not to admit his sins. Their theory is not broad enough to cover all the facts of the case: this they feel, and naturally they become irritated and irritable. The episode of Elihu may be passed by as not essential to the development of the drama. In a few sentences may be stated the position which is assumed by the Divine voice. He ends the controversy, but not by explaining the difficulties which had perplexed them all. He asks, Is it the Creator God of this universe that man dares to arraign at his bar, and is it of Him that he dares to demand a self-vindication? The true attitude of man ought to be one of confidence in the God whose works proclaim Him to be infinitely great and wise. Man is crushed out of the last semblance of self-complacency. The effect of this self-manifestation by the Almighty, and of the revelation of what His own real image is, strikes Job into nothingness. But whatever had been his faults, those of his friends had been deeper and deadlier. Their presumption had been more than his. So the Almighty vindicates the sufferer, and condemns, though He spares the mere theologians, who set their own orthodoxy as higher than His charity, and a human theory above a Divine sympathy. (*G. M. Grant, B.D.*) **In the land of Uz.**—*God's servants in unfavourable surroundings*:—I. GOD HATH HIS SERVANTS IN ALL PLACES, IN THE WORST PLACES. There was never any air so bad but that a servant of God might breathe in it. Here God had a choice piece, even in the land of Uz, a place of profaneness; here was Bethel in Bethaven, a house of God in a land of wickedness. Lot dwelt in Sodom, Joseph in Egypt. II. IT IS A GREAT HONOUR AND A HIGH COMMENDATION TO BE GOOD, AND DO GOOD AMONGST THOSE THAT ARE EVIL. III. GRACE WILL PRESERVE ITSELF IN THE MIDST OF THE GREATEST OPPOSITION. It is such a fire as no water can wholly quench or put out. True grace will keep itself sound and clean among those who are leprous and unclean; it is such a thing as overcomes all the evil that is about it. As all the water in the salt sea cannot make the fish salt, but still the fish retains its freshness; so all the wickedness and filthiness that is in the world cannot destroy, cannot defile true grace; that will bear up its head, and hold up itself for ever. (*J. Caryl.*) **Perfect and upright.**—*The perfection of the saints*:—There is a twofold perfection ascribed to the saints in this life; a perfection of justification, a perfection of sanctification. The first of these, in a strict sense, is a complete perfection. The saints are complete in Christ, they are perfectly justified; there is not any sin left uncovered nor any guilt left unwashed in the blood of Christ, not the least spot, but is taken away. His garment is large enough to cover all our nakedness and deformities. Then there is a perfection of holiness or of sanctification. 1. The saints even in this life have a perfect beginning of holiness, because they are begun to be sanctified in every part (1 Thess. v. 23). When the work of sanctification is begun in all parts, it is a perfect work beginning. 2. They are likewise perfect in regard of their desires and intendments. Perfect holiness is the aim of the saints on earth; it is the reward of the saints in heaven. The thing which they drive at here, is perfection, therefore they themselves are called perfect. 3. He was perfect comparatively, comparing him with those who were either openly wicked or but openly holy; he was a man without spot, compared with those that were either all over spotted with filthiness, or only painted with godliness. 4. We may say the perfection here spoken of is the perfection of sincerity. Job was sincere, he was sound at the heart. He did not act a part, or personate religion, but was a religious person. He was not gilded, but gold. When Job bought or sold, traded or bargained, promised or covenanted, he stood to all uprightly. As a magistrate he gave to all their due. (*Ibid.*) *Grace the best of blessings*:—The first thing which God takes notice of is His grace. I. GRACIOUS HABITS AND SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS ARE THE CHOICEST OF ALL BLESSINGS. If God has given a man grace, he hath the best and the choicest of all that which God can give. God hath given us His Son, and God hath given us His Spirit, and God hath given us the graces of His Spirit; these are the finest of the flower, and the honey out of the rock of mercy. Though you should not come to children, though you should not come to the other part of the inventory, to sheep, and camels, and oxen, and asses; if you are in the first part of the description, that you have a perfect heart, and upright life, and the fear of God in your inward parts, and a holy turning against every evil, your lot is fallen in a fair place, and you have a goodly heritage: they that have this, need not be discontented at their own, nor envious at the condition of any other; they have the principal verb, the one thing neces-

sary. II. WHERE ONE GRACE IS, THERE IS EVERY GRACE. Grace is laid into the soul in all the parts of it, and there is somewhat of every grace laid into the soul. We have not one man one grace, and another man another grace; but every man hath every grace that hath any grace at all. All grace goes together. Particularly, this man was perfect. That is, he was sincere and plain-hearted. Observe from hence—1. It is sincerity that especially commends us unto God. As Job's graces are preferred in his description, before his riches, so sincerity is preferred before all his other graces. Sincerity is that which makes us so acceptable and pleasing unto God. 2. Sincere and sound-hearted persons are in God's esteem perfect persons. Truth of grace is our perfection here; in heaven we shall have perfection as well as truth. Further, in that upon this perfectness and plainness of heart, there is presently added uprightness: Observe from thence—1. Where the heart is sincere towards God, the ways are just and honest before men. 2. It is a great honour and an ornament unto our profession of godliness, to be just and upright in our dealings toward men. (*Ibid.*) **One that feared God.**—*Holy fear*:—Here we have fearing God added to perfect and upright. Observe hence—I. MORAL INTEGRITY AND MORAL HONESTY, WITHOUT THE FEAR OF GOD, CAN NEVER RENDER US ACCEPTABLE UNTO GOD. God delights in nothing we do, unless we do it in His fear. Not to wrong man because we fear God, is an argument of more than man. II. HOLY FEAR CONTAINS IN IT EVERY GRACE WE RECEIVE FROM GOD, AND ALL THE WORSHIP WE TENDER UP TO GOD. Fear containeth faith, and fear containeth love too. III. HOLY FEAR KEEPS THE HEART AND LIFE CLEAN. The fear of the Lord is clean (Psa. xix.). Clean not only in itself, formally clean, but effective: it makes clean, and keeps clean the heart and life. Fear is an armed man at the gate, which examines all, and stops everyone from entering that is unfit. It stands as a watchman on the tower, and it looks every way, to see what is coming to the soul; if evil come, fear will not admit it. (*Ibid.*) **And eschewed evil.**—*Hatred of evil*:—1. Godly persons do not only forbear sin, but they abhor sin. They have not only their hands bound from it, but they have their hearts set against it. 2. A godly man's opposition of sin is universal; it is against all sin. 3. Godly persons do not only avoid the acts of evil, but all the occasions of evil. (*Ibid.*) *The upright eschew all evil*:—If sin be evil, and displease God, and deserve damnation, he that most fully and carefully avoideth it, is the honestest and the wisest man. You will not blame your child or servant for being loath to offend and disobey you even in the smallest matter. You like not him that offereth you the least abuse, so well as him that offereth you none. You had rather be well than have the least disease. You will not take a little poison, nor would you feel a little of hell. Why then should we not avoid the least sin so far as we are able? (*R. Baxter.*) **Seven sons and three daughters.**—*Children a blessing*:—There are some who account their children but bills of charges; but God puts them upon the account of our mercies. (*J. Caryl.*) **His substance also was seven thousand sheep.**—*A great estate*:—A question may here be raised, Why the Holy Ghost spends so many words, and is thus accurate in the setting forth of Job's outward estate? 1. He is described to be a man of a very great estate, to the end that the greatness of his affliction might appear afterward. The measure of a loss is taken by the greatness of a man's enjoyment. If a man have but little, his affliction cannot be great. After great enjoyments, want is greatest. 2. The greatness of his estate is set forth, that the greatness of his patience might appear. 3. It was to give all the world a testimony that Job was a thorough godly and holy man; that he was a man of extraordinary strength of grace. Why? Because he held his integrity, and kept up his spirit in the way of holiness, notwithstanding he was lifted up with abundance of outward blessings. To be very great, and very good, shows that a man is good indeed. Great and good, rich and holy, are happy conjunctions, and they are rare conjunctions. Usually riches impoverish the soul, and the world eats out all care of heaven; therefore Job was one of a thousand, being at once thus great in riches, and thus rich in goodness. How often do riches cause forgetfulness of God, yea, kicking against God? How often are they made the bellows of pride, the fuel of uncleanness, the instruments of revenge? How often do rich men contemn, despise, and oppress their weak and poor brethren? From the whole, take these observations. We see here Job a holy man, very full of riches: thence observe—1. That riches are the good blessings of God. To hold and possess great riches, is not evil; it is

evil to set our hearts upon them. 2. Plain and honest dealing is no hindrance to the gaining or preserving of an estate. Honest dealing is no stop, no bar to getting. The nighest and the safest way to riches, is the way of justice. Woe to those, who by getting riches, get a wound in their own consciences. 3. In that Job, a man fearing God, was thus rich, thus great; see here the truth of the promises. God will make good His promise concerning outward things to His people (1 Tim. iv. 8). 4. Here is another observation from this place: Job was frequent in holy duties; he was a man fearing God, he was much in the way of holy worship; he did not serve God by fits, or at his leisure, but "continually"; yet he was very rich. Time spent in holy duties is no loss, no hindrance to our ordinary callings, or to our thriving in them. The time we spend in spiritual duties, is time gained for secular. The time we spend in prayer, &c., whets our tools, and oils our wheels, promotes all we go about, and getteth a blessing upon all. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 4, 5. **And his sons went and feasted in their houses.**—*The family meeting and the family sacrifice*:—I. THE FESTIVE MEETING. "And his sons went," &c. 1. It was a united family. There were no schisms in that body. The sons had all grown up, had their own houses, their own lands, and their own flocks and herds. Yet Ephraim did not envy Judah, and Judah did not vex Ephraim—without jealousies, without shyness, without any affected superiority, without mistrust. "Behold, how good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." And what an evil thing it is where this unity is wanting. 2. It was a social family. "And called for their three sisters to eat and drink with them." It is a noticeable feature of patriarchal life that great respect was always paid to the home courtesies. We claim it as one of the refining and beneficent results of Christianity that it has restored woman to her social place and dignity. And, as compared with her lower position in an immediately preceding age, no doubt it did. But the courtesies of the sisterly relation have never been observed more sacredly than by the patriarchs, who thus learned under the paternal roof the graceful attentions and refinements which should the better befit them for married life. We open a deep spring of elevating and softening influences when we establish among brothers and sisters a systematic regard to domestic courteousness. A young man is sure to grow up a churl—rude, half-humanised, unmannerly—who does not care to maintain a kindly and affectionate bearing toward a sister at home. 3. It was a convivial family. "And his sons went and feasted in their houses." It was not then inconsistent with patriarchal manners to mark these family gatherings by a feast. Abraham made a feast at the weaning of Isaac; Isaac makes a feast to Abimelech and Pichol; and Laban made a feast on the occasion of the marriage of Jacob. God has clearly made some things for the service of man only, but He has as clearly made other things for his enjoyment, for his refreshment. The Psalmist tells us in one verse that the great Parent "caused the grass to grow for the cattle, and the herb for the service of man," he tells us in the next verse that He causeth "wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make him of a cheerful countenance." Only in the abuse consists the sin of these well-spread tables. II. THE FAMILY SACRIFICE. The seven days' feasting were past. "And it was so when the days of their feasting were gone about, Job sent and sanctified them," &c. 1. Job sent and sanctified his children; that is, bade them prepare themselves for a sanctifying ordinance. The most ordinary exercises of devotion are well preceded by a moment's pause; it gives the soul time to attire itself for the Divine presence-chamber—an opportunity to shake off the dust from our feet before approaching to speak with God upon the mount. The present was a great family occasion in Job's household. There were mercies to acknowledge, shortcomings to bewail, responsibilities to renew, lessons to sanctify. What changes might pass over their domestic fortunes before the yearly feast came round! That cloud, now no bigger than a man's hand, what may it not grow to? That sorrow, now lighting heavily on our neighbour, and on account of which we dare not even utter to him the customary kind words of the season, how soon may that sorrow be ours! God of the future, and of the unseen, and the unknown, how should a devout parent desire to roll on Thee the burden of these responsibilities! Avert them from our children and families we cannot, but if, like Job, we send and sanctify them, a year which is begun with prayer we may hope to conclude with praise. 2. Observe, too, they were grown-up

sons on account of whom Job evinced solicitude. The fact may suggest whether in our day the filial and parental relations are kept up long enough. It seems to be too much taken for granted that the quitting of the home-roof is the signal for the discharge of the parental responsibilities. "And he rose up early in the morning and offered burnt-offerings." Early in the morning, for this was a marked characteristic of the devotions of men of old time. Abraham, David, and Job seem to have thought that they who prevented the dawning of the day in their supplications would carry away the best blessings. God sitteth between the cherubim, waiting for prayer, and they who come first shall be heard first. "I love them that love Me, and they that seek Me early shall find Me." "And offered burnt-offerings." How so, when as yet there was no written law, no order of priesthood, no ordinance or sanctuary? The answer suggests how far back, and how universally the day of Christ has been looked for. How much or how little Job understood of the moral scope of these burnt-offerings does not appear. Two features of Job's practical religion come out here. 1. In making an offering he measured the amount by the greatness of his mercies. 2. His offerings were not thank-offerings only, they were intercessory, and in this view they mark the beautiful individuality of a pious father's prayers. (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *A merry Christmas*:—Our text gives us a very pleasing picture of Job's family. He was a happy man to have had so many children all comfortably settled in life; for they all had houses, and each was able in turn to entertain the rest. Perhaps the soberness of age disqualified him for joining in their feasting, but he commended it, he did not condemn it. I. The text, and THAT IS FESTIVE; so we will ring a merry bell. I distinctly hear three notes in its merry peal. 1. It gives a licence to the righteous. They may meet together in their houses to eat and drink, and to praise God. The Puritans tried to put down the keeping of Christmas. God forbid that I should proclaim the annihilation of any day of rest which falls to the lot of the labouring man. Feasting is not a wrong thing. Job only feared lest a wrong thing should be made out of a right thing. These young people met in good houses, and in good company. Their feasting was a good thing, for it had a good intent; it was for amity, for cheerfulness, for family union. And at the feasting there was good behaviour. Good men of old have feasted. Abraham made a feast when his child was weaned. Shall I tell of Samson and his feasts, or of David, or of Hezekiah, or of Josiah? Feasting was even an essential part of Divine worship under the old law. There was the feast of trumpets, of tabernacles, of the passover, of the new moons, &c. And our Saviour countenanced a feast, and even helped to provide the guests for it. He was not Himself out of place at the wedding-feast at Cana. And God has provided in His world not only enough for man's need, but also abundance for man's feasting. 2. It suggests a caution. Job said, "It may be." Though they were good sons, they may have "blessed God too little in their hearts." They may not have been grateful enough for their prosperity, and for the enjoyments God had given them. This caution is necessary, because there is no place free from sin. Wherever two meet together Satan is always a possible third. Because there is many a special temptation where there is a loaded table. More men have perished by fulness of bread than ever died by hunger. More have been drowned in the bowl than ever were drowned at sea. Because they who sit at table are but men, and the best of men are but men at the best. 3. It provides a remedy. Job sent for his sons as a father; he sanctified them as a preacher; he sacrificed for them as a priest. Our feasts should be sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. II. What is in the text, and THAT IS INSTRUCTIVE; so we must ring the sermon bell. If Job found it right with a holy jealousy to suspect lest his sons might have sinned, how much more do you think he suspected himself. He who was so anxious to keep his children clean was himself more anxious that he might always fear his God and eschew evil. Then be careful, be watchful of yourself. III. The text, THAT IS AFFLICTIVE; here we ring the funeral bell. Calamity came while the children were feasting. Between the table and the coffin there is but a step. Then do nothing that you would not willingly die doing. Be to-day what you would wish to be in eternity. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The patriarch Job and his children*:—The feasts mentioned were probably birthday festivities. The pious father, while he permitted these youthful festivities, knew the moral danger by which they were attended. So once a year, when the round of feasts was complete, he called the family together, and kept a feast unto the Lord. He "sanctified" them, that is, on this occasion he

specially set himself and his children apart for God. I. THE DANGER TO WHICH JOB'S CHILDREN WERE EXPOSED: the danger of sinning. 1. Youth is an age of ignorance and inexperience. Life is new. They have not proved its innumerable perils, its unfathomable deceits. They look at life through the medium of their own frank and buoyant and hopeful feelings. The more self-assured is the unthinking youth, the more likely he is to miss the narrow path of obedience and truth, and fall into temptation and snare. 2. In the age of youth the passions of human nature are most irregular and impetuous. Reason is too often dethroned, and lawless appetite usurps her seat. 3. In the age of youth evil example exerts its most pernicious influence. Man in all periods of his existence is an imitative creature, but more particularly so in the days of youth. 4. In the period of youth the great destroyer of the peace, and of the souls of men, is especially assiduous in his bad work. 5. This danger of sinning is never, perhaps, greater than on occasions of festivity, when luxury and gaiety reign. 6. What aggravates the evil of sin is its tendency to increase, so that a young sinner may go so far as to "curse God in his heart." Dreadful as such a sin is, it is that towards which all other sins lead. II. THE DEEP AND ANXIOUS CONCERN OF THE PATRIARCH lest his children should have fallen into this evil. His expressions indicate great anxiety, tender and heartfelt apprehension. 1. To sin against God must of necessity be a most odious and dreadful thing. 2. The consequence of sin is misery. The parent whose heart is right with God knows well that there is no calamity like the calamity of sin; no pang like the pang of remorse. 3. Not greater is the misery than is the deep dishonour which sin ensures. III. THE MANNER IN WHICH JOB SOUGHT TO DEPRECATE, ON BEHALF OF HIS CHILDREN, THE GREAT EVIL OF SIN. He had recourse to sacrifice—the only mode in which the guilt of sin can be cancelled, and its punishment averted. The father who felt it his duty to institute these solemn family atonements would accompany them with such faithful admonitions, such affectionate counsel, and such religious instructions, as the occasion would dictate, and as their wants required. Nor would these annual sacrifices be unaccompanied with earnest prayers and intercessions on behalf of his children. As parents we may plead in private for our children. We may give parental instructions in our customary family devotions. We may have, like this patriarch, special seasons of family consecration. IV. THE EFFECT WHICH THE SPIRIT AND CONDUCT OF JOB MUST HAVE HAD UPON THE MINDS OF HIS CHILDREN. They could not behold the pious concern which their father manifested for their religious and eternal well-being; they could not behold the annual solemnities, which he instituted for their sake, unmoved. We may charitably hope that the effect upon them was beneficial; and that such a pious parent was rewarded by the piety and obedience of the children. The holy anxiety, the private and domestic intercessions, the kind and tender admonitions of pious parents, constitute, for their children, one of heaven's loudest calls. Conclusion—To parents. Have you been sufficiently alive to the religious and eternal interests of your posterity? Ought we not to look to God, who knows all our need, for grace to fulfil, in a more effectual manner, the Christian parent's part? (*J. Bromley.*)

Religion presiding over hospitality and social enjoyment:—Job's domestic felicity seemed secured by the solemn acknowledgment of the Divine authority with which it was accompanied, and by that godly jealousy with which the patriarch regarded his children, for which there was probably no more specific ground than the fatal tendency of human nature, especially in the fulness of prosperity, to forget the obligations of spiritual religion. At the close of their social meetings, he was wont to assemble the whole family for sacred exercises; and in conformity with the prescriptions of religion in that early period, to offer sacrifices for them all, and to renew the dedication of them to Jehovah, accompanying these acts with confession of sins and prayer for Divine grace. We do not know whether, in reference to his children, the calamity did not bear a character of righteous displeasure. The faith of Job would not have been fully tried if some doubt had not existed on this point; if the apprehensions of parental solicitude had not accompanied the sorrows of bereaved affliction. That social and convivial meetings are, on some occasions, allowable and becoming, few will be disposed to deny; nor can it be supposed that religion, which prescribes mutual benevolence and affection, should prohibit mutual enjoyment. The Scriptures allude, with manifest approbation, to several occasions of festivity. In the Christian Church, though no festivals are prescribed, except of a spiritual kind, yet private hospitality, on suitable occasions, is abundantly commended. It is the folly and weakness of

man that plants his enjoyments with dangers and snares. 1. If you would act a Christian part in your social intercourse and entertainments, it is manifest they must be conducted with such prudence and moderation as to exclude the idea of extravagance, vanity, and excess. Under the fair guise of hospitality, may not injustice sometimes be detected? Sinister and dishonest views may sometimes prompt an expensive show of hospitality, but perhaps a more ordinary motive is found in a principle of worldly ambition. The parade of wealth is sometimes assumed as a means of obtaining wealth. But no fortune, however ample, will justify a vain and expensive conviviality, or vindicate either extravagance or excess. 2. Our social entertainments should be attended with corresponding liberality to the poor. While the heart is expanded with the feelings of kindness, and warmed with the communications of hospitality, we should take care that the poor come in for a proportionate share of our fellow-feeling, and that our social enjoyments be accompanied with a more express attention to the duties of feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. 3. Your social intercourse, if you would please God in it, must be so conducted as to be, not injurious, but subservient to the high ends Christians should ever aim at—their personal improvement, and the glory of their Heavenly Father. As a Christian should form no voluntary engagement on which it might not be permitted to ask the blessing of God, so should he act so as to invite this blessing. It becomes him who daily prays, "Lead us not into temptation," to guard against those circumstances that would endanger his integrity and purity. (*H. Gray, D.D.*) *The banquet of Job's children*:—Among the blessings of Job, his children are reckoned first. How his children were affected we cannot define so well as of their father, because the Holy Ghost saith nothing of them but that they banqueted, which doth sound as though He noted a disparity between Job and his sons. So it seems that Job's sons were secure upon their father's holiness, as many are upon their father's husbandry. We do not see by any circumstance of the story that the sons abused their feasts. Their meetings tended to nourish amity. Why did God create more things than we need, but to show that He alloweth us needful and comfortable things? All the good things which were not created for need, were created for delight. If feasts had been unlawful, Christ would not have been at the feast in Cana. The story saith, "Job sent for his sons, and sanctified them, and sacrificed for them." In which words the Holy Ghost showeth the pattern of an holy man and good father, which kept the rule that God gave to Abraham, to "bring up his children in the fear of the Lord." Job goeth to the remedy. Albeit my children have not done their duties in all points, but offended in their feastings, yet I am sure that God will have mercy upon them and upon me, if we ask Him forgiveness. 1. The cause which moved Job to sacrifice for his sons. "It may be that my sons have blasphemed God in their hearts." He was glad to see his children agree so well together; but he would have them merry and not sin, and therefore he puts them in mind every day while they feasted, to sanctify themselves. Job thought with himself, It may be that my sons have committed some scape like other men; I cannot tell, they are but men; and it is easy to slip when occasion is ready, though they think not to offend. It is better to be fearful than too secure. Blasphemy is properly in the mouth when a man speaks against God, as Rabshakeh did; but Job had a further respect to blasphemy of the heart, counting every sinister affection of the heart as it were a kind of blasphemy or petty treason. We may see this, that the best things may soon be corrupted by the wickedness of men; such is our nature, ever since Adam. It is good for man, so long as he liveth in this world, to remember still that he is amongst temptations. We must look upon our riches as we look upon snares, and behold our meats as we behold baits, and handle our pleasures as we handle bees, that is, pick out the sting before we take the honey; for in God's gifts Satan hid his snares, and made God's benefits his baits. One lesson Job's action may teach us, to prepare ourselves before we eat the communion; that is, to sanctify ourselves and meats, as Christ did. We may also learn to suspect the worst of the flesh, and to live in a kind of jealousy of ourselves. When thou seest some selling in the shops, some tippling in the taverns, some playing in theatres, then think of this with thyself: it is very like that these men swallow many sins, for God is never so forgotten as in feasting and sporting and bargaining; then turn to thy compassion, and pray for them, that God would keep them from sin when temptation is at hand, and that He would not impute their sin to their charge. (*H. Smith.*) *The village feast*:—One

of the greatest hindrances that religion finds is the false idea that it involves giving up all that makes life happy and enjoyable. We can never set forth too clearly that such an idea is wrong and unscriptural. Sin is the only thing to be given up; and in avoiding sin we do not cut off any part of true happiness; we increase it, by getting what alone can make any heart really happy—the joy and peace of a good conscience. Religion is not to make us sombre, morose, and dull, but is able to fit us to join in the pleasures of life, as those who, loving God most of all, are able also best to truly love their fellow-men. Job did not join his children, yet he allowed their happiness. He was a wise man, and able to discern between youthful pleasures and youthful lusts. The knowledge of their happiness in sinless pleasures made him happy too. Yet notice how he acted. He helps them, and in the best way possible. He remembers them before the throne of grace. He dedicates even their feastings and joys by prayer and sacrifice to God. Fear filled the mind of Job lest "his sons should sin, and curse God in their hearts"; lest feasting and prosperity should cause them to forget God's goodness. So it is specially on their feast day that Job remembers them at the throne of grace. Have you thus honoured God this morning, as the Giver of all good things? If not, learn a lesson from the patriarch. (*Rowland P. Hills, M.A.*) *Counteractions of excitement:*—The apprehension thus expressed arose out of a deep knowledge of human nature. The apprehension was lest a time of unusual excitement should produce irreligious effects. In the case of Job the usual dangers of wealth and prosperity were mitigated and counterbalanced to the greatest possible extent. But now those dangers were on a particular occasion aggravated by the temptations of excitement. The even tenor of life was interrupted by a season of special festivity. The good, experienced man saw in this new risks and new solicitations to evil. The text tells how he met these new dangers. Excitement involves some such dangers as these—1. A temptation to be more than commonly hasty and perfunctory in our strictly religious duties. The flagging interest, more than the failing time, is the real danger for us. 2. The way in which the world at such times asserts its importance, and would persuade us of its alone reality. It is a difficult thing to live in this world as if really expecting and belonging to another. That which is at all times a difficult thing, becomes in times of special excitement a thing impossible with man, a thing possible only in the strength of God. 3. Times of excitement are apt to be also selfish times. When once our thoughts are more of pleasure than of duty, we must be selfish. We may be selfish about duties; we are almost sure to be so about pleasures. When God is forgotten, we may be almost sure it is self, and nothing better, that is remembered. 4. Excitement is too often made an excuse for utter idleness. At such times there is generally a considerable abatement made of your regular duties. Often those which remain are less well done than ordinarily. 5. Times of excitement are generally discontented times. You see what was the special fear of the good man spoken of in the text. "Cursed God in their hearts." The moment we separate ourselves from God, we become impatient of Him. 6. Where such is the state of things within, there must be a condition, in the simplest sense, of terrific danger. Consider now God's goodness to us in providing us with some special helps in times of special difficulty. You see what the resource described in the text was. It is not much that others can do for you in this matter. In the example here before us we must see rather a type of the heavenly than of any human intercession. The application of Christ's one offering is still needed. At such times it is our bounden duty to pray. It is well, too, that we should rather force ourselves to an increased use of the means of grace than suffer that use to become more than commonly slack and infrequent. Good men at such times have found it necessary from time to time to set apart seasons for themselves of especial humiliation and prayer. How anxious and how difficult a thing is the restoration of the spiritual health! Then great reason have we to guard against its becoming impaired. (*C. J. Vaughan, D.D.*) *The priestlike father:*—The father is the family priest. Job was an Arab chief. In that Arabian home there was, what there ought to be in every British home, a father who, as he sees his children about him, feels himself called to be a consecrated priest unto God, a priest ordained by the laying on of hands, the hands of his own little children. 1. The first quality of a priest is sympathy. One who can "have compassion," because he knows life, and is able to sympathise. Sympathy means being able to know exactly what are the feelings of other people. Job had before him the question which comes to all parents, "How ought I to

feel towards young people who are thirsting for pleasures which I have long lost the relish for?" Job's children were fond of feasts and holidays, and it is clear that their enjoyments caused him anxiety. He felt that there are times when young life needs a very watchful eye. Youth has its special temptations. What young life is really doing—its thoughts, its faults, its dangers—these are things that a parent wants to know. The Christian father would sit within the very soul of his child if he could, and keep the crooked serpent out of that new Eden. Feeling the limit of his own power, the good man kneels and prays. What he cannot do God can do. 2. A priest was a director. The education of a child is done by the schoolmaster, but it is directed from the home. What is it that makes or mars every life? It is personal character. This makes the man or woman, and it is Christ that makes character. Here is the sphere for the priestlike father. These young holiday-loving people in the land of Uz daily saw their model in their own father. They lived under the shadow of a sublime example. 3. Above all, a priest is an intercessor. There is one Mediator, and yet all are mediators. Every one is a bridge over which some benefit is conveyed to his fellows. And the most sacred of mediators are father and mother. On the priestlike father's heart are engraved the names of the household, for which he makes daily intercession. For these sacred home responsibilities, as for all other, the great preparation is the preparation of self. To give ourselves to God is the chief thing out of which all good influences come. Let us give ourselves to the habit of faithful prayer. The prayer and devotion of God's people ennobles and safeguards life. (*Samuel Gregory.*) *Job's fears for his children*:—In the text there are two parts. I. JOB'S FEAR, OR JEALOUSY, CONCERNING HIS CHILDREN. The persons suspected. His sons. His daughters are mentioned, but Job's care specially concerned the sons, as responsible for the feast, and as more exposed to temptations of excess. But perhaps sons means children, and includes them all. Look at Job as another man than his children, and yet solicitous about them. Then we learn that a good and gracious heart is troubled about other men's miscarriages as well as his own. The good man will try to restrain others by his admonitions; to expiate their sins by his prayers; to bewail their sins in his reflections. So should we do, upon sundry considerations. (1) Out of respect to the honour and glory of God. (2) Out of respect to the souls of our brethren. (3) Out of respect to ourselves. Consider Job in his relation as a father. His chief care was lest his children should offend God at their meetings and feastings. (1) He did not find fault with the meeting itself. (2) He does not complain of the charge or cost of the meeting. (3) He does not think wrongly of his not being invited. This was his fear, lest his children should offend, and trespass against God. He was solicitous about the sins of his children. No doubt he had been careful to instruct his children. But there is no trust to be given either to good relationships, or good education, considered alone by themselves. See the reasons and occasions for Job's fears. (1) His love and affection for them. (2) Their general corruption of nature. (3) Their age and condition of life. (4) Their employment, or the occasion of their present meeting—a feast. There are great temptations at such scenes: to gluttony, drunkenness, and intemperance; to strife, contentions, and brawlings; to lascivious carriages and speeches; to atheism and forgetfulness of God. Satan is usually vigilant to improve such opportunities. II. THE PARTICULAR MATTER OF JOB'S FEAR is, lest his children should "have cursed God in their hearts." It may mean have blest (the word is *barak*) God in their hearts—that is, they may have sinned together with their blessing of God. This is usual, and it proceeds from that hypocrisy which by nature rests in men's hearts; men are careful to have a good outside now and then, and to conform to some outward duties of religion, because they carry some speciousness with them, but the inward frame and disposition of spirit is little heeded or regarded by them. The expression admits of such an interpretation as this: though my sons have blest God in their hearts, they may have fallen into some occasional and actual miscarriage. There are said to be sins of three sorts. (1) Sins of daily or frequent incursion, which, whilst we remain in the flesh, we shall never be freed from. (2) Sins which, in an especial manner, wound the conscience. (3) Sins of a middle nature between both; sins of a non-attendancy or neglect. Take the sentence negatively. "Have sinned, and have not blessed God," or "Have sinned, and little blessed God." Take it as "cursed God." This need not be understood in the proper and aggravating sense but rather in the qualified and interpretative. There is a blaspheming God

in the heart, and there is a blaspheming that does not reach so far. Learn—1. It is a thing very commendable in a Christian to repent of sin, even unknown. 2. It is the care of a gracious person, not only to take heed of notorious sins, but also of the shadows and resemblances of it. 3. A good Christian has regard to his thoughts, as well as to his words and actions. 4. A godly man is tender of passing hard censure upon the persons or actions of other men. (*T. Horton, D.D.*) *On family worship*:—I. CONSIDERATIONS WHICH RECOMMEND FAMILY WORSHIP. With respect to the Deity, it is due to Him, and it is pleasant to Him. Man is to worship his Maker in all the capacities and relations in which his Maker places him. As an individual, he offers to Him his private devotions. Communities, as such, bring to Him in public worship their gratitude and their prayers. And families living under the same roof, affected by the sins, interested in the wants, and blessed in the felicities of each other, owe a family sacrifice to the God of mercy, and Giver of their common safety and joys. Will it be said God has no need for such service? We have every reason to believe that this duty is peculiarly pleasant and acceptable to Him. It was from Abraham He resolved He would not hide anything He would do, because He knew the patriarch, that he "would command his children and his household after him, that they should keep the way of the Lord" (Gen. xviii. 19). II. THE EFFECTS OF FAMILY WORSHIP UPON THE FAMILIES IN WHICH IT IS PERFORMED. 1. It is favourable to good order. 2. It is calculated to promote and preserve amity and kind offices in the family. 3. And it brings the blessings of heaven. This duty will appear still more important and beneficial, if we advert to its uses to the individuals of whom families are generally composed. (1) With regard to the pious part of them, it affords, next to the worship of the sanctuary, the most convenient and unexceptionable opportunity for that sociality in devotion which minds seriously impressed do very naturally and strongly desire. But all the members of the family are not religious. For those who are otherwise, family prayer may have the most beneficent operation. 4. Consider its influence upon the community as a whole. (*Bishop Dehon.*) *Regard for children's spiritual welfare*:—There is not a father or a mother among us to this day to whom God has not often said, Hast thou, in this matter of thy children, considered My servant Job? No. We confess with pain and shame and guilt concerning our children, that Job here condemns us to our face. But we feel to-night greatly drawn, if it is not too late, to imitate Job henceforth in behalf of our children. We have not wholly neglected them, nor the Great Sacrifice in their behalf. But we have not remembered it and them together at all with that regularity and point and perseverance and watchfulness that all combined to make Job such a good father to his children, and such a good servant to his God. But if our children are still about us, and if it is not yet too late, we shall vow before God to-night that whilst they are still with us we shall not again so forget them. When they set out to go to school we shall look out of our windows after them, and we shall imagine and picture to ourselves the life into which they must all enter and cannot escape. We shall remember the streets and the playgrounds of our own schooldays, and the older boys and their conversations. And we shall reflect that the games and sports and talks of the playground will bring things out of our children's hearts that we never see nor hear at home. And then, when they come the length of taking walking and cycling tours, and fishing and shooting expeditions; and, still more, when they are invited out to eat and to drink and to dance, till they must now have a latchkey of their own—by that time it is more than time we had done with all our own late hours, and had taken ourselves to almost nothing in this world but intercessory prayer. We shall not go with them to watch and to judge over our children: but we shall not sleep till they have all come home and shut the door to our hearing behind them. And we shall every such night, and in as many words, plead before God the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, for each several one of our own and our neighbour's children. (*Alexander Whyte, D.D.*) *Unconscious sin*:—Of course, we confess overt acts of sin, and also secret sins, directly we are aware of them. But our unconscious sins are vastly more numerous than our conscious ones, just as the elevations beneath the ocean waves are much more numerous than those which rear themselves above the breakers as islets. For every one sin you know of, there are perhaps ten of which you are ignorant. 1. Let us understand how unconscious sins come into existence. Old habits assert themselves, in the heat of life, without our noticing them, as a man may unconsciously give a nervous twitch. Besides, our sensibilities are blunt, and permit sins to

pass for want of knowing better, as a clerk in a bank may pass a counterfeit bank-note for want of longer experience. Moreover, our standard is too low; we measure ourselves against our fellows, and not against the requirements of God. Then, too, though we may resist temptation, we can hardly do it without getting some stain. 2. Let us learn when unconscious sins are most to be dreaded. During times of feasting and holiday. Because we then give less time to devotion. Because we relax our self-watch. Because we are thrown into light and frivolous company. Job was always anxious after such times, and said, "It may be." 3. Let us see how to deal with unconscious sins. They are sins. They will interrupt our communion. They will work a deadly injury to our spiritual life; for hidden disease is even more perilous than that which shows itself. They must be brought beneath the cleansing blood of Jesus. We need to ask many times each day, Lord Jesus, keep me cleansed from all conscious and unconscious sin. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *Moderate recreation lawful*:—1. It doth well become godly parents to give their children leave to take moderate refreshing and recreation one with another. 2. Parents must not cast off the care of their children, though they are grown up, though they are men and women. 3. Children that are grown up, or have houses and families of their own, ought yet to yield all reverence and submission to the lawful commands, counsels, and directions of their parents. Do you think you have outgrown obedience and honour to parents, when you are grown in years? 4. A parent's main and special care should be for the souls of his children. The care of many parents is only to enrich their children, to make them great and honourable, to leave them full portions and estates, to provide matches for them; but for sanctifying their children, there is no thought of that. 5. He that is a holy person himself desires to make others holy too. Holy Job would have all his children holy. 6. The good which others do by our advice and counsel, is reckoned as done by ourselves. While we provoke others to goodness, that good which they do is set upon our account as if we had done it. 7. Holy duties call for holy preparation. Oh, come not to the sacrifice except you be sanctified! (*J. Caryl.*) *The early morning the best praying-time*:—1. That it is God's due and our duty to dedicate the morning, the first and best of every day, unto God (Psa. v. 3). We have a saying among us, the morning is a friend to the Muses: that is, the morning is a good studying time. I am sure it is as true that the morning is a great friend to the Graces; the morning is the best praying time. 2. That it is not safe for any to let sin lie a moment unrepented of or unpardoned upon their own consciences or the consciences of others. If a man's house be on fire, he will not only rise in the morning, or early in the morning, but he will rise at midnight to quench it. (*Ibid.*) *Parental solicitude*:—1. That everyone is saved and pardoned by the special and particular actings of his own faith: every soul must believe for itself. Everyone must have a sacrifice. 2. That it is not enough for parents to pray in general for their children, but they ought to pray particularly for them. As parents who have many children provide portions according to the number of them all; and in the family they provide meat and clothing according to the particular number of them all: so likewise they ought to be at a proportionable expense in spirituals, to lay out and lay up prayers and intercessions, "according to the number of them all"; not only to pray in general, that God would bless their children and family, but even to set them one by one before God. The souls of the best, of the purest, though they do not rake in the dunghill, and wallow in the mire of sin, basely and filthily, yet they do from day to day, yea from moment to moment, contract some filth and uncleanness. Every man hath a fountain of uncleanness in him; and there will be ever some sin bubbling and boiling up, if not flowing forth. 3. A suspicion that we ourselves or others have sinned against God, is ground enough for us to seek a reconcilement for ourselves or others with God. If you that are tender parents have but a suspicion—if there be but an "It may be"—that your child hath the plague or taken the infection, will it not be ground enough for you to go presently and give your child a good medicine? And if Job prayed thus, when he only suspected his sons had sinned, what shall we say of those parents who are little troubled when they see and know their sons have sinned? It is safest to repent even of those sins we only fear we have committed. A scrupulous conscience grieves for what it suspects. 4. That we may quickly offend and break the law, while we are about things in their own nature lawful, especially in feasting. It is an easy matter to sin, while the thing

you are about is not sinful; nay, while the thing you are about is holy. Lawful things are oftentimes the occasion of unlawful. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 6–12. **Now there was a day.**—*A fatal day:*—1. That Satan observeth and watcheth his time to fasten his temptations most strongly upon the soul. He watcheth a day, "there was a day," and there was not a day in the whole year upon which he could have done it with greater advantage than upon that day. As the mercies of God are exceedingly endeared to us by the season in which they come to us: When they come to us in our special need, how sweet is a mercy then! And as our sins are exceedingly aggravated, by the season and time wherein they are committed: What, sin upon this day? A day of trouble, a day of humiliation? So likewise the temptations of Satan and the afflictions which he brings upon the servants of God, are exceedingly imbittered by the season; and he knows well enough what seasons will make them most bitter. And what can more imbitter a cup of sorrow than to have it brought us upon a day of rejoicing? If joy be troublesome in our sorrows, how troublesome is sorrow in the midst of our joys (Prov. xxv. 20). Then Satan could never have found out such a time as this. Must he needs be afflicting the father when the children were a feasting? Could he find out no other time but this? Must his tears be mingled with their wine? Must the children's rejoicing day be the father's mourning day? Must Satan needs show his malice against the father, when the children were shewing their love one to another? Let us observe, then, this mixture of malice and cunning in Satan, in choosing his time. To carry a man from one extremity to another, puts him upon the greatest extremity: To make the day of a man's greatest rejoicing to be the day of his deepest sorrows, this is cutting, if not killing sorrow. It were well if we could be wise in this respect to imitate Satan, to choose out our day to do good when there is greatest probability of success, as he chose out his day to do mischief. 2. That the fairest and clearest day of our onward comfort may be clouded and overcast before the evening. (*J. Caryl.*) **And Satan came also among them.**—*The Satan:*—In contrast to the Almighty we have the figure of the adversary, or Satan, depicted with sufficient clearness, notably coherent, representing a phase of being not imaginary but actual. He is not, as the Satan of later times came to be, the head of a kingdom peopled with evil spirits, a nether world separated from the abode of the heavenly angels by a broad, impassable gulf. He has no distinctive hideousness, nor is he painted as in any sense independent, although the evil bent of his nature is made plain, and he ventures to dispute the judgment of the Most High. This conception of the adversary need not be set in opposition to those which afterwards appear in Scripture as if truth must be entirely there or here. But we cannot help contrasting the Satan of the Book of Job with the grotesque, gigantic, awful, and despicable fallen angels of the world's poetry. Not that the mark of genius is wanting in these; but they reflect the powers of this world, and the accompaniments of malignant human despotism. The author of Job, on the contrary, moved little by earthly state or grandeur, whether good or evil, solely occupied with the Divine sovereignty, never dreams of one who could maintain the slightest shadow of authority in opposition to God. He cannot trifle with his idea of the Almighty in the way of representing a rival to Him; nor can he degrade a subject so serious as that of human faith and well-being by painting with any touch of levity a superhuman adversary of men. . . . Evidently we have here a personification of the doubting, misbelieving, misreading spirit which, in our day, we limit to men, and call pessimism. (*Robert A. Watson, D.D.*) *Satan among the angels:*—This scene is not less perplexing than startling. Satan is beheld in some way among the angels of God. There is another parallel striking illustration of the dominion God holds, and of His mode of administration over the world of moral causes and evil consequences, in 1 Kings xxii. 19–22. I. CAN WE IN ANY WAY REALISE THE SCENE? We may conceive the bright beings—Gabriel, Raphael, Michael, Uriel "circling the throne," rejoicing each with his hymn of praise, reporting his work of love. These are the "chariots of the Lord"; those are they which "do His commandments"; they have each performed his own work, for the Bible beholds all the work of creation and providence carried on, not by dead laws, not even by operating living principles—life stands behind all matter, using it as a veil or as a vehicle. "I," might Raphael say, "directed the rolling planets, I stood by the axis of the young firmament, I heard the stars sing together, and I stand in Thy presence to report my obedience, and to bless Thee." "And I," might Uriel say, "have

confirmed the doubting, I have steadied the steps of the straying; I passed by the couch of the dying, and I consoled." "And I," might Gabriel have said, "have prepared the earth for Thy approach; I have winnowed the winds and have diffused the light; and I have put thoughts into the hearts of men; and at Thy command I have broken up solitudes; I have set the solitary in families, and where I have gathered them into companies I have heard their songs to Thee; and I have come into Thy presence to report my obedience and to bless Thee." And then there was seen a shadow, and it fell across the gold of the throne, and while it dropped from the seraph's wing, it spread itself out even over the pavement of light; and when the voice from the central blessedness piercingly inquired, "Whence comest thou?" it was in a tone altogether unlike that of the other angels, the shadow rejoined, "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." And all this transaction, so suggestively given, I conceive still; I drop the more lofty conceptions of the book—I conceive the sons of God, each with his hymn and his work. I see the merchant who, the balances of trade in his hands, feels how much selfishness has still been, if not the main intention, still present—yet he goes and presents himself before the Lord. "Thou," he says, "hast given all; behold my obedience; behold my contrition; behold me, and bless me." Or the schoolmaster, or the minister, "I also am an angel or a messenger of Thine; my strength is from Thee, the light I bear is a candle kindled by Thee; I bring Thee my obedience, I have wrought for Thee, behold me, and bless me." And then you can conceive one to whom all this is only a fitting subject for caricature, as you see all reality is, all enthusiasm is. Do you not see that which exposes itself most always as the weak side, is ever the strongest side of a character? So the jaunty sneerer comes; some cynical Horace Walpole or sardonic Voltaire, and, "Ah," says he, "I have been looking at all these things, mocking—that is my way, not mending—'I have been going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it.'" II. HERE, THEN, WE HAVE NEXT THE SCRIPTURAL IDEA OF SATAN. Of course you will often have heard the passage I have read, spoken of as conveying a poetic description, that it is merely a highly sublime personification. Be that as it may, the doctrine of the text affirms the personality of Satan. The Holy Scriptures sketch the character of the Evil One; but they never permit us to hesitate as to the fact of his personality. He exists, not as an abstract idea, not as a blind force, not either as a mere quality, or the absence or negation of qualities in bodies or in persons. Elevate your conceptions to what is the ground of personality, what constitutes its difference from a mere thing. Personality is consciousness; it consciously works out its own character, and its powers are all collected and resolved in will. Now Scripture teaches us that such a being there is, immediately evil, and living only in and for evil. He is not merely a necessity in things; at any rate this is not the account of his origin; and it would be impossible to believe this without impeaching the infinite character, the unity, and goodness of God. Satan is positive, personal, although not absolute, evil. The response of the Evil One to his Almighty Questioner distinctly expresses—1. Indifference. Indeed, the attributes of his personality are riveted and closely interlocked together; the one emanates from the other, "going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it." This is the end, the passionless end of his character—indifference, the absence of all reality, contempt for all enthusiasm, contempt for all sentiment, studious repression of all that might be divine instinct, or delight in the works of the great God—such is Satan. What Satan is, you may detect in many a character, in many an essay, in which you are reminded how Satan comes among people still, "going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it." See a man who has lost his sense of wonder, who boasts that nothing can take him by surprise, who has been living so fast you cannot overtake him by any sentiments or ideas that are noble—not the delicacy of a flower, not the calm, upheaving grandeur of the mountain, no holy life, no noble book, no spectacle of a stirring and absorbing passion; he goes to and fro in the earth, and sees nothing; his eye-glass sees us much as he sees. Look at that hard man who prides himself on seeing what men are, and using them; priding himself, too, that nobody ever did know him, that nobody ever did read him—he is "going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it." Or the selfish manufacturer or merchant, who simply wrought for his own gains, like a buccaneer or Choctaw, who has prowled over society to find among men cogs for his machine, bricks for his mill, and to whom men anywhere are only as so many stones in the wall. And just as all these are

manifestations of personality, so I conceive a vast and extended personality in that amazing conscienceless being, who seems to wrap this world round like a cold and dreadful mist, or withering blight and shade—Satan. 2. There is another attribute, although, certainly, the first is very greatly the result of this second — it is Unbelief. In the instance before us it assumes a shape we often notice now, manifests itself in disbelief in man. "Doth Job serve God for nought?" This, then, is a marked attribute of Satan—disbelief in God too; for to believe in God is not merely to apprehend His being and His absolute power. 3. Another characteristic is brought out as an attribute of Satan in this singular and ancient scene—Cruelty. I cannot but notice how most assuredly there is involved in it the immediate connection of Satan with, and his influence over, material interests and things; lightning and storm, disease and death, are shown here to be certainly related to him. It seems to me eminently reasonable, that in Scripture the universe is represented as governed by life. I know I shall be told of "forces" and "laws," and I reply, I have looked at these things, and attempted a little to apprehend these things, and I believe in them. In any case, as we cannot account for the benevolent and general scheme of nature without one blessed and infinite over-ruling Presence, so it seems impossible to conceive the strangely ruptured condition of things without referring them back to some central agency of evil and sin. 4. Another characteristic feature brought out in the text is Limitation. While evil and Satan exist, they are conditioned by the sovereignty of God; God rules over evil in all its personalities and forms. Satan and the angels alike come into the presence of God. The faith of our fathers, indeed, was, that the devil was on the earth, having great power. It would provoke a smile on some lips to think of the real way in which they were wont to wrestle with the devil. I hear of nobody who places much faith in his power to injure us; we never pray as if he were by us in terrible might. Coldly our prayers ascend to God, as if He were not; and for the great Adversary, it is as if he were really dead. How different was Luther and his great foe, Duke George, for instance. "All the Duke Georges in the universe," said he, "are not equal to a single devil, and I do not fear the devil." The mighty-hearted Luther kept the battle heating in a constant tempest. You have read and know well his *Table Talk*, his life—that invisible world, how present to him! With Luther it was, then, evidently no sham fight, but a fearful hand-to-hand conflict; and all his praying and speaking most evidently went upon the principle, not only of a real belief in the power of darkness, but of his power also, by hearty prayer and faith in Christ, to rout and scatter it. And I, why do I venture to set before you this doctrine, as I believe it is, of Holy Scripture? Very greatly because I feel that we live in an age which is dangerously loosening its hold of great spiritual personalities. I cannot, indeed, form a very clear conception of attributes, excepting as they are embodied in persons. I can speak of theft, and I can define theft, but I cannot separate it from the action of a person; and I can speak of holiness, and define holiness, but it is nothing to me unless it is embodied in a person. We are in great danger of using fine-sounding epithets about God, and even about man, and losing the sense of personal relation. So to many who even profess and call themselves Christians, God is the sum-total of the forces of the universe, the soul is a mode of matter, and Satan is a term for the empirical, partial, and evil drift of things, which in the course of ages may possibly sink into the tidal force of good, and so cease to be the necessity it looks at present. Manifestly the whole consequence of such negations is to annihilate responsibility, and to destroy the cheerful radiant freedom of the human soul everywhere. The personality of Satan stands over against the personality of God; limited, indeed, only permitted, and doomed by His sovereignty. Strangely, indeed, must Scripture have surrendered its intention, if its purpose is not to produce in us hatred and fear towards some tremendous ubiquitous person constantly seeking to have power over us—a malignant will, a power and an element in the universe, in the world, in the human heart—a power not of God, not good, adverse and hateful to God and goodness. (*E. P. Hood.*)

Satan:—We have here a highly figurative representation of the Eternal and His spiritual kingdom. And a remarkable meeting of the great God and some of His intelligent creatures. The passage teaches concerning Satan—I. THAT HE HAS A PERSONAL EXISTENCE. Acting as a person, he "goes to and fro in the earth." 1. The personality of his existence is suggested by reason. (1) As there are existences gradually sinking beneath man down to nothing, so there may be intelligent beings existing above man, up to the highest point of creatureship.

(2) As men have fallen and become rebels against God, there is nothing improbable in the supposition that there are beings above man who have done the same. (3) As the fallen amongst men become the tempters of others, and this in proportion to their depravity and power, it is very probable that amongst the fallen ones above us there are leaders in wickedness. Because of this natural probability, almost all peoples in all lands have believed in an arch-fiend, a malignant "god of this world." 2. The personality of his existence is confirmed by human history. It is almost impossible to account for the absurdities which men entertain, and the enormities which they perpetrate, without going up to some foul spirit who blinds the eyes and flames the passions of men. 3. The personality of his existence is declared in the Bible (Matt. iv. 3; John viii. 44; Acts xxvi. 18; Eph. vi. 12; 1 Thess. iii. 5; 2 Pet. ii. 4; Jude 6; Rev. xii. 10, &c.). He is called by different names, Satan, Devil, Old Serpent, Prince of the Power of the Air, Beelzebub, Dragon, &c. II. HE IS AN INTRUDER INTO THE SACRED (1 Kings xxii. 19–23; Matt. iv. 3). Wherever the sons of the Almighty assemble, Satan is amongst them; he is there to bias the intellect, and to pollute the feelings. III. HE IS AMENABLE TO THE ETERNAL. Jehovah asks him concerning his movements, and concerning his opinions. IV. HE IS A VAGRANT IN THE UNIVERSE. Going to and fro implies—1. Homelessness. 2. Zealousness. V. HE IS A SLANDERER OF THE GOOD. He slanders man to God, and he slanders God to man. He is diabolus, breaking the harmony of God's moral universe by slander. VI. HE IS A SLAVE OF THE INFINITE. He can only act by permission. God uses him as His instrument. (*Homilist.*) *Temptation :*—Temptation is the precursor of sin. There is a great tendency to forget the real nature of Satan; that he is a distinct being, governed by the same laws of motion and influence over matter by which other spiritual bodies are governed. Every strong impulse of evil is a direct assault, and indicates a personal appearance of the tempter, as decidedly as would the approach of any earthly assailant be marked by visible signs. Satan has a distinct personality and individuality, veiled only from us by the mist of our bodily being. There is a floating impression in men's minds that evil is simply a principle inherent in themselves, of no very definite shape, and scarcely forming itself into a clear principle at all. We ought to be able to separate in our minds between the distinct and violent assaults of the tempter, and those slighter suggestions of evil which are the frequent movements of our own corrupt heart. A clear distinction between external assault and internal suggestion will go far to chase those doubts and apprehensions away, and tend to give health and vigour to the soul and conscience. Another benefit will arise from the ideas and pictures this idea of the personality of Satan will raise to the mind in the contest with evil. It reduces the conflict to a definite period, and a number of definite acts. The more real we make our struggle with evil the better. In our bodily condition it is easier to resist a person than an abstraction. We can more easily kindle within ourselves feelings of indignation, desire of superiority, and the like, when we realise personality in our foe. (*E. Monro.*) *Satanic temptation :*—1. That there is no place in the world that can secure a man from temptation, or be a sanctuary from Satan's assaults. Cloisters are as open to Satan as the open field. 2. We may note here the wonderful diligence of Satan. 3. That Satan is confined in his business to the earth. (*J. Caryl.*) *Satan deserves his name :*—Many have their names for nought, because they do nothing for them; like Laban's images, which were called gods, though they were but blocks; but the devil deserves his names. He is not called a tempter, a liar, a slanderer, and an accuser, and a deceiver, and a murderer, and a compasser in vain; like St. George, which is always on horseback, and never rides; but he would do more than by his office he is bound to. Others are called officers because they have an office; but he is called an enemy because he shows his envy. Others are called justicers because they should do justice; but he is called a tempter because he practiseth temptation. Others are called pastors because they should feed; but he is called a devourer because he doth devour; and we call him a compasser because he doth compass. (*Henry Smith.*) *Satanic excursions :*—Another route that Satan on his active travels is exceedingly apt to take is for the despoiling of souls. It does not pay him merely to destroy the bodies of men and women. Those bodies would soon be gone anyhow; but great treasures are involved in this Satanic excursion. On this route he meets a man who is aroused by something he has seen in the Bible, and Satan says, "Now I can settle that for you: the Bible is an imposition; it has been deluding the world for centuries; do not let it delude you. It has no

more authority than the Koran of the Mohammedan, or the Shaster of the Hindoo, or the Zend-Avesta of the Parsee." He meets another man who is hastening towards the Kingdom of God, and says: "Why all this precipitation? Religion is right, but any time within the next ten years will be soon enough for you. A man with a stout chest like yours, and such muscular development, must not be bothering himself about the next world." Satan meets another man who has gone through a long course of profligacy, and is beginning to pray for forgiveness, and Satan says to the man: "You are too late; the Lord will not help such a wretch as you; you might as well brace up and fight your own way through." And so with a spite and an acuteness and a velocity that have been gaining for six thousand years, he ranges up and down, baffling, disappointing, defeating, afflicting, destroying the human race. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Satan compassing the earth*:—"Compassing" here doth signify tempting, and the "earth" doth signify all the people of the earth; as if he should say, "I come from tempting all men." As Satan is here called a "compasser," so he will compass your eyes with shows, and your ears with sounds, and your senses with sleep, and your thoughts with fancies, and all to hinder you from hearing while the articles are against him; and after I have spoken, he will compass you again with business, and cares, and pleasures, and quarrels, to make you forget that which you have heard. Therefore "take heed how ye hear." Satan is an adversary compassing the earth; and therefore let the earth beware, like a city which is besieged with the adversaries. Three things I note wherefore the devil may be said to compass the earth. 1. Because he tempteth all men. 2. Because he tempteth all to sin; and 3. Because he tempteth by all means. What doth he compass? "The earth." This is the devil's pilgrimage, from one end of the earth to the other, and then back again; like a wandering merchant which seeketh his traffic where he can speed cheapest. First of all creatures, Satan compasseth men; he compasseth all men, and he compasseth good men. If then the devil be such a busy-body, which meddleth in every man's matter, let us remember what the wise man saith, "A busy-body is hated"; the devil is to be hated because he is a busy-body. As the serpent compasseth, so doth his seed; and therefore Solomon calls the ways of the wicked crooked ways. (*H. Smith.*) **My servant Job** (vers. 8, 11; and chap. xl. 4).—*A threefold estimate of a good man's character*:—I. JOB'S CHARACTER AS ESTIMATED BY GOD. God regarded the character of Job. He estimated Job as "perfect." Every part of his character contained the germ of completeness. He estimated Job as "upright." His life was parallel with the commandments of heaven, and the precepts of truth. Job recognised carefully his domestic responsibilities. This perfection is alleged of human nature, "an upright man." Note the blessedness of this character. (1) Divine protection. A hedge about him. (2) Business prosperity. "Substance increased in the land." II. JOB'S CHARACTER ESTIMATED BY SATAN. The Satanic test of character must be viewed in a two-fold aspect. (1) As a subtle scheme to secure Job's ruin. (2) As a merciful messenger permitted by God to enhance the worth of Job's life. The test was severe, but limited. He estimates that Job's character was superficial, that underneath his garb of goodness there was a smouldering impiety, which only required outward circumstances to develop it into obstinate rebellion. III. JOB'S CHARACTER ESTIMATED BY HIMSELF. 1. He designates himself "vile." True, his sorrows may have had a depressing effect upon him, and continued suffering have brought him under the influence of gloomy views. Perhaps he had circumstances as an index of his heart-life, thinking that his trials were the infliction of wrath, rather than the chidings of love. However, it is evident that reverent humility was a great element in his piety. He had such lofty conceptions of God, His purity and justice, that, in remembrance of such an ideal of life, his own paled into absolute imperfection. 2. Job calls attention to his vileness.—"Behold!" This is somewhat unusual, as people try to conceal the miserable rottenness of their lives, either by a mock modesty or daring pretension. 3. Job takes the blame of his vileness—"I am vile." He does not make his assumed pollution the result of original depravity; he does not attribute it to the despotism of circumstances, to the evil tendency of education, and the impurity of society. No; without palliation or excuse, he renders himself culpable. Ought we not to be shamed into honesty by the plain, bold confession of this good man? Job could afford to consider himself vile, when God thought him perfect. (*Joseph S. Exell, M.A.*) *God's servant*:—1. That Satan's main temptations, his strongest batteries are planted against the most eminent godly

persons. Here God calleth Job His servant. And He calleth him so—(1) By way of distinction or difference; My servant, that is, Mine, not his own. Many are their own servants, they serve their own lusts and pleasures; many are Satan's servants. Some are the servants of men. (2) My servant, by way of special right and property. So Job and all godly persons are called God's servants. (*a*) By election. (*b*) They are God's servants by the right of purchase. (3) My servant, by way of covenant. Then again, we may further understand this, and all suchlike expressions: When God saith My servant, He doth as it were glory in His servant. God speaks of him as of His treasure; as a man doth of that which he glorieth in. 2. It is a man's honour to be God's servant, and God thinks Himself honoured by the service of man. When God speaks of His people by name, it noteth two things in Scripture. (1) A special care that God hath over them. (2) A special love that God hath to them (John x. 3). 3. That God doth take care of His elect children and servants in a special manner above all other men in the world. (*J. Caryl.*) *God's testimony to the good*:—I. THAT GOD HATH SERVANTS OF ALL STATURES AND DEGREES. All His servants come not to the like pitch, to the like height; here is one that is beyond them all, "My servant" Job—not a man like him upon the earth. II. WE OUGHT NOT TO SET UP OUR REST IN LOW DEGREES OF GRACE; OR CONTENT OURSELVES TO BE LIKE OTHERS IN GRACE. Then see the character that God giveth of Job, A perfect and upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil. 1. God hath a perfect character of every soul. He knoweth fully and clearly what the tempers of your hearts and spirits are. 2. God will give to every man a testimony according to his utmost worth. God will not conceal any of your graces, or obscure your goodness, He will make it known to the world to the full, what you are. It is good for us to have our letters testimonial from God, to have our letters commendatory from heaven. It is not what a man saith in his own heart, what he flattereth himself: it is not what your neighbours or others flatter you, and say of you, but what God saith of you, what testimony He giveth of you. (*Ibid.*) *Sin eschewed*:—If I say to a person, "I will not receive you into my house when you come dressed in such a coat"; and I open the door to him when he has on another suit which is more respectable, it is evident that my objection was not to the person, but to his clothes. If a man will not cheat when the transaction is open to the world, but will do so in a more secret way, or in a kind of adulteration which is winked at in the trade, the man does not hate cheating, he only hates that kind of it which is sure to be found out; he likes the thing itself very well. Some sinners, they say, hate sin. Not at all, sin in its essence is pleasing enough; it is only the glaring shape of it which they dislike. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Satan considering the saints*:—How very uncertain are all terrestrial things! How foolish would that believer be who should lay up his treasure anywhere, except in heaven! Job's prosperity promised as much stability as anything can do beneath the moon. He had accumulated wealth of a kind which does not suddenly depreciate in value. Up there, beyond the clouds, where no human eye could see, there was a scene enacted which augured no good to Job's prosperity. The spirit of evil stood face to face with the infinite Spirit of all good. An extraordinary conversation took place between these two beings. I. IN WHAT SENSE MAY SATAN BE SAID TO CONSIDER THE PEOPLE OF GOD? Certainly not in the usual Biblical meaning of the term "consider." "O Lord, consider my trouble." "Consider my meditation." "Blessed is he that considereth the poor." Such consideration implies goodwill and a careful inspection of the object of benevolence with regard to a wise distribution of favour. In that sense Satan never considers any. If he has any benevolence, it must be towards himself; but all his considerations of other creatures are of the most malevolent kind. No meteoric flash of good flits across the black midnight of his soul. Nor does he consider us as we are told to consider the works of God, that is, in order to derive instruction as to God's wisdom and love and kindness. He does not honour God by what he sees in His works, or in His people. 1. The consideration which Satan pays to God's saints is upon this wise. He regards them with wonder, when he considers the difference between them and himself. A traitor, when he knows the thorough villainy and the blackness of his own heart, cannot help being astounded when he is forced to believe another man to be faithful. What grace is it which keeps these? I was a vessel of gold, and yet I was broken; these are earthen vessels, but I cannot break them! It may be that he also wonders at their happiness. He feels within himself a seething sea of misery. He admires and hates the peace which reigns in the

believer's soul. 2. Do you not think that he considers them to detect, if possible, any flaw and fault in them, by way of solace to himself? He considers our sinful flesh, and makes it one of the books in which he diligently reads. One of the fairest prospects, I doubt not, which the devil's eye ever rests upon is the inconsistency and the impurity which he can discover in the true child of God. In this respect he had very little to consider in God's true servant, Job. 3. We doubt not that he views the Lord's people, and especially the more eminent and excellent among them, as the great barriers to the progress of his kingdom; and just as the engineer, endeavouring to make a railway, keeps his eye very much fixed upon the hills and rivers, and especially upon the great mountain through which it will take years laboriously to bore a tunnel, so Satan, in looking upon his various plans to carry on his dominion in the world, considers most such men as Job. He is sure to consider God's servant, if there be "none like him," if he stand out distinct and separate from his fellows. Those of us who are called to the work of the ministry must expect from our position to be the special objects of his consideration. If you are more generous than other saints, if you live nearer to God than others, as the birds peck most at the ripest fruit, so may you expect Satan to be most busy against you. Who cares to contend for a province covered with stones and barren rocks, and ice-bound by frozen seas? But in all times there is sure to be a contention after the fat valleys where the wheat-sheaves are plenteous, and where the husbandman's toil is well requited, and thus, for you who honour God most, Satan will struggle very sternly. He wants to pluck God's jewels from His crown, if he can, and take the Redeemer's precious stones even from the breastplate itself. 4. It needs not much wisdom to discern that the great object of Satan in considering God's people is to do them injury. Where he cannot destroy, there is no doubt that Satan's object is to worry. He does not like to see God's people happy. 5. Moreover, if Satan cannot destroy a Christian, how often has he spoilt his usefulness! How is it that God permits this constant and malevolent consideration of His people by the evil one? One answer, doubtless, is, that God knows what is for His own glory, and that He giveth no account of His matters; that, having permitted free agency, and having allowed, for some mysterious reason, the existence of evil, it does not seem agreeable with His having done so to destroy Satan; but He gives him power, that it may be a fair hand-to-hand fight between sin and holiness, between grace and craftiness. Besides, be it remembered, that incidentally the temptations of Satan are of service to the people of God. An experimental divine remarks, that there is no temptation in the world which is so bad as not being tempted at all; for to be tempted will tend to keep us awake—whereas, being without temptation, flesh and blood are weak: and though the spirit may be willing, yet we may be found falling into slumber. Children do not run away from their father's side when big dogs bark at them. II. WHAT IS IT THAT SATAN CONSIDERS WITH A VIEW TO THE INJURY OF GOD'S PEOPLE? It cannot be said of him as of God, that he knoweth us altogether; but since he has been now nearly six thousand years dealing with poor fallen humanity, he must have acquired a very vast experience in that time, and having been all over the earth, and having tempted the highest and the lowest, he must know exceedingly well what the springs of human action are, and how to play upon them. 1. Satan watches and considers, first of all, our peculiar infirmities. He looks us up and down, just as I have seen a horse-dealer do with a horse; and soon finds out wherein we are faulty. Satan knows how to look at us and reckon us up from heel to head, so that he will say of this man, "His infirmity is lust," or of that other, "He hath a quick temper," or of this other, "He is proud," or of that other, "He is slothful." 2. He takes care also to consider our frames and states of mind. If the devil would attack us when our minds are in certain moods, we should be more than a match for him: he knows this, and shuns the encounter. Some men are more ready for temptation when they are distressed and desponding; the fiend will then assail them. Others will be more liable to take fire when they are jubilant and full of joy; then will he strike his spark into the tinder. As the worker in metals knows that one metal is to be worked at such a heat, and another at a different temperature; as those who have to deal with chemicals know that at a certain heat one fluid will boil, while another reaches the boiling-point much earlier, so Satan knows exactly the temperature at which to work us to his purpose. Small pots boil directly they are put on the fire, and so little men of quick temper are soon in a passion; larger vessels require

more time and coal before they will boil, but when they do boil, it is a boil indeed, not soon forgotten or abated. 3. He also takes care to consider our position among men. There are a few persons who are most easily tempted when they are alone—they are the subjects then of great heaviness of mind, and they may be driven to most awful crimes; perhaps the most of us are more liable to sin when we are in company. In some company I never should be led into sin; into another society I could scarcely venture. 4. How, too, will he consider our condition in the world! He looks at one man, and says, "That man has property—it is of no use my trying such-and-such arts with him; but here is another man who is very poor, I will catch him in that net." 5. Satan, when he makes his investigations, notices all the objects of our affection. I doubt not, when he went round Job's house, he observed it as carefully as thieves do a jeweller's premises when they mean to break into them. So, when the devil went round, jotting down in his mind all Job's position, he thought to himself, "There are the camels and the oxen, the asses and the servants,—yes, I can use all these very admirably." "Then," he thought, "there are the three daughters! There are the ten sons, and they go feasting—I shall know where to catch them, and if I can just blow the house down when they are feasting, that will afflict the father's mind the more severely, for he will say, 'Oh, that they had died when they had been praying, rather than when they had been feasting and drinking wine.' I will put down, too, in the inventory," says the devil, "his wife—I dare say I shall want her," and accordingly it came to that. You have a child, and Satan knows that you idolise it. "Ah," says he, "there is a place for my wounding him." III. Satan considered, but THERE WAS A HIGHER CONSIDERATION WHICH OVERRODE HIS CONSIDERATION. In times of war, the sappers and miners of one party will make a mine, and it is a very common counteractive for the sappers and miners of the other party to counter-mine by undermining the first mine. This is just what God does with Satan. Satan is mining, and he thinks to light the fusee and to blow up God's building, but all the while God is undermining him, and He blows up Satan's mine before he can do any mischief. Subtlety is not wisdom. All the while that Satan was tempting Job he little knew that he was answering God's purpose, for God was looking on and considering the whole of it, and holding the enemy as a man holds a horse by its bridle. 1. The Lord had considered exactly how far He would let Satan go. 2. Did not the Lord also consider how He should sustain His servant under the trial? You do not know how blessedly our God poured the secret oil upon Jacob's fire of grace, while the devil was throwing buckets of water on it. 3. In the next place, the Lord considered how to sanctify Job by this trial. Job was a much better man at the end of the story than he was at the beginning. Foolish devil! he is piling up a pedestal on which God will set His servant Job, that he may be looked upon with wonder by all ages. 4. Job's afflictions and Job's patience have been a lasting blessing to the Church of God, and they have inflicted incredible disgrace upon Satan. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 9. **Doth Job fear God for nought?**—*The devil's sneer*:—There is very much distrust abroad, and unfortunately too much warrant for distrust, touching the sincerity of people in general. The devil has his fling at even one of the best of men here in this opening chapter of the drama of Job. As is readily seen, the implication in this question as to whether Job fears God for nought is that every man has his price. It is assumed that the basis of all action is commercial. The law of the counting-house or the market—so much for so much—it is taken for granted rules everywhere. If one is unusually patriotic or religious, or is enthusiastically devoted to any high ideal, it is for a consideration. Disinterestedness is a pretence or a dream. Deprive virtue of the reward which ordinarily waits on virtuous behaviour, and the reward which virtue is to itself, or which is found in being virtuous, will soon lose all its fascination and power. Investments made in the moral world, like investments made in the material world, are solely with a view to prospective dividends. This is the devil's theory of human conduct. There it is,—the low, contemptuous estimate of virtue, the pessimistic view of human nature. One feels the chill there is in the tone of it. It is all a matter of cool calculation. The man may be everything that is claimed for him—devout, obedient, pure, true; but then—he is paid for it! This is the explanation of it all,—the man finds his account in this service or devotion. It is the yardstick view of things. It is the book-balances which settle it. It is the ethics of the labour

market—work so long as the remuneration is satisfactory—brought over into moral spheres—elevated into a standard with which to measure the sublime consecration to freedom and duty of men like William of Orange and Cromwell and Washington and Garibaldi. It is the matchless Livingstone, dying on his knees in the heart of Africa, reduced to the level of the tusk-hunter or the man-stealer who penetrates these same wilds for the material recompense he can find in the perilous adventure. Not so; verily, not so. There are other and higher motives in life than those which enter into the management of a peanut-stand or a cotton factory or a railroad. Humanity has in it loftier capabilities, and these capabilities have frequent illustration in actual experience. Unquestionably a good many people are disposed to fall in with the devil's estimate of the motives which govern conduct, and to consider even the worthiest of men incapable of rising above selfish considerations. The selfishness may be more refined in some instances than in others. It is still only a question of degree. It is selfishness all the same. It is this for that, so much for so much, doing things for what is in them. There are several explanations of this satanic tendency to look at all actions from the view-point of selfish motives. 1. In the first place, with all that is dignified and commendable and noble in human nature, there is a disposition—possibly we might go further and say,—a predisposition—to judge the general conduct of our fellows in a spirit of detraction. From what we know of ourselves, from what we know of others in their confessed schemes, from envy, from jealousy, from a certain conceit of our own shrewdness in penetrating character, we easily drift into the habit of forming low estimates of the motives of men and women, and attributing their movements to influences and aims and desires which originate, not in the upper, but in the lower ranges of incitement. The multiplied warnings of Scripture against these harsh judgments and pre-judgments and misjudgments show us what a bad aptitude there is in the heart for this kind of indulgence. We are prone to level down. In presence of a commendable action how fatal is the facility with which our nimble tongues fall to saying, "Certainly; but the thing was done just to catch votes, or to win the favour and patronage of the rich, or to please the populace." 2. In the second place, there is, beyond all gainsaying, a vast amount of action among men whose secret spring is some sort of personal advantage or gain. Large numbers make unblushing confession of this. Of many who do not confess it, and only half realise it, perhaps, it is still true. Their only controlling thought is pleasure or profit or promotion. It runs through all they do. They choose their professions, they marry, they espouse causes, they join political parties, they enter clubs, they identify themselves with churches, all in a temper of self-interest—a self-interest which it is impossible to distinguish from selfishness. It is not a matter of injustice nor is it at all uncharitable to ascribe selfish and even sinister motives to this kind of folk. 3. In the third place, there is the consideration which Satan and those who coincide with him in his view of things may bring forward in support of the position taken by them on this question, and which admits of no successful disputing, namely, that fearing God—fearing God in the way of love and reverent loyalty—always does secure to one something worth having. Satan was right in his intimation that Job was getting a good deal—a good deal that was substantial and abiding—out of his fidelity. God never permits a man to do this thing: serve Him for naught. Never yet did a man come into the faith of God, and maintain the integrity of his soul before God and the world, without receiving something rich and rare in return for it. As the event proved, Job was getting something out of his serene and unfaltering trust and his upright conduct besides wife and children and houses and barns and cattle and servants and renown among his fellows—something which stood by him, and to which he could cling in all the darkness and under all the bitter bruising of the after days. We say often that virtue is its own reward. It is. It is often an unutterable satisfaction just to have the consciousness in one that he is sincere and clean and upright, and means to stand square on the truth and do his duty, come what will. But virtue has other rewards. It has rewards outside itself. Early and late, at home and abroad, at the hearthstone, in social circles, in business operations, in politics, honesty is the best policy. It pays to be pure. In the long-run nothing else does pay. It is Gerizim and Ebal over again. On the side of righteousness are the blessings. On the side of unrighteousness are the curses. Hence it comes to pass that it is a nice psychological question, and one requiring not a little analytical skill, to run the knife in and turn it about in a way to distinguish between the stress of motives which look to

the doing of right solely because it is right, and the doing of right out of consideration for what follows. One with as much dialectic cunning as Satan has can confuse almost anybody at this point. There is the fact of the waiting of the reward upon the conduct. Who shall say the conduct is not with an eye to the reward? At least the suggestion can always be made to seem plausible. Still, in spite of all in evidence to the contrary, and in spite of all appearances to the contrary, there is disinterestedness in the world. (*F. A. Noble, D.D.*) *Religious selfishness*:—This is the question which the infidelity of hell asks the fidelity of heaven. With the same underlying current of thought, not a few reason in our day. The only theory of life which some will recognise as at all philosophic is that which is based upon purely utilitarian principles. But the world, all that is best and noblest in the world, does not act from purely selfish motives. Not only humanity, but the very physical world itself protests against this dreary doctrine. God does not seem to have created the earth and visible heavens on those exalted "purely utilitarian principles" which commend themselves to some superfine intellects in the present day. A certain class of thinkers charge the religious life with being based on the same principle. Religion is not objected to, it is only patronisingly relegated to a department of political economy. The question—the selfishness of religion—which I propose now to speak of, I shall deal with as a difficulty in an earnest Christian soul, which longs to get rid of it, rather than as the hostile idea of an avowed opponent. "Doth Job fear God for nought?" The answer expected is, of course, "No." Therefore religion is selfish. Is this true of our Christian faith? There are some forms in which certain of its doctrines have been presented and enforced which would seem to sustain the charge. Has there not sometimes been too great a tendency to make our individual salvation the sole and exclusive object of the Christian life? In many manuals of devotion, *e.g.*, Kempis' "De Imitatione Christi," and in books which treat systematically of the religious life, this is painfully apparent. And we have a lurking suspicion that such is what the Bible and the Church alike teach us. First let me speak of rewards and punishments. There is no doubt that Scripture and the Church lay stress upon the glorious life which the righteous shall inherit, and the unutterable woe which shall befall the wicked. Such teaching has still, and ever will have, its due place and power in the work of the ministry of Christ. It is, however, a small part of Christian teaching. If the exhortations and motives to Christian life were to begin and end here, there might be some colour of selfishness about it. But this is only a first step. It is, if you will, an appeal to men's self-interest for a moment,—but only for a moment,—to lead them up afterwards to something infinitely purer and higher. A Christian lives on through such childish feelings to the full unselfish manhood in Christ Jesus. When we remember that self is the very root and essence of sin, it is not surprising that in the first stage of dealing with such a nature as man's there should be an adaptation of the means employed to such a condition. To represent the hope of reward or fear of pain as the continually abiding and sole motive of the Christian life all through, is to ignore nine-tenths of the exhortations of the New Testament—is utterly to misrepresent and pervert the teaching of our Lord—is to deny the truth of countless Christian lives which we have read of or have seen. There is another thing of still more practical importance. There is no word which we use more frequently in religious phraseology than the word "salvation." Is there not too great a tendency in many of us to always speak and think of that salvation as solely an escape from some future punishment? If we regard the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God as merely a means by which we are to escape some future pain, I do not know whether there may not be a strong tinge of selfishness in our faith. But there is a more awful thing than pain or punishment, there is sin. It is to save us from sin that Christ died. If then the salvation be deliverance from sin, and if self be sin (for sin is ever the assertion of "I" against the all-good, all-loving God)—is it selfish to conquer self through the power of Christ—is it selfish to become so one with Christ as to have self crucified with Him, so that we no longer live unto self, but unto Him who died and rose again? There can be no real spiritual life until we learn to loathe sin—not merely the results of sin. Let us tell men, sin is your enemy; sin, here in your hearts; sin, which is robbing your life of all its joy and sweetness; sin, which is grinding like a hot chain into your very flesh. From that Christ died to save you. Is not this a pure, unselfish Gospel? "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins." That power has actually been felt by many. Then there dawns on us gradually the new life;

self is nailed to the Cross—to Christ's Cross with Him—and henceforth it is not I that live, "but Christ that liveth in me"; not a calm, indifferent life, but a life of constant struggle against all sin and evil,—and yet a life in which self-sacrifice itself becomes easy, for I am "dead to sin, and living unto righteousness" (*T. Teignmouth Shore, M.A.*) *Is man entirely selfish?*—Satan insinuates that the man who professes to serve God is, after all, only serving himself, and is making God nothing more than a convenience, a purveyor to his own selfish profit and pleasure. One object of the Book of Job is to prove that there is something genuine in man, especially when the grace of God has entered his heart. Satan puts his calumny into the form of a question. It is evident how he intended it to be answered. God has held up Job as a proof of His power to put true goodness into human nature; and the reply is that this seeming goodness is only self-interest. The man is religious because he makes a good thing out of religion. The accuser has a belief in the philosophy of selfishness. It is a faith not uncommon in our day. There are some who seek a foundation for it in argument, and wish to prove that all virtue is merely self-interest largely and wisely interpreted, which is true in this respect, that goodness and self-interest will, in the end, coincide, but very false if it is meant that goodness has its origin in taking this end into account. The Bible itself is quoted as sanctioning the idea that self-interest is, and ought to be, the spring of human action. Sin, it is said, is only self-interest unenlightened and wrongly directed, and true religion is a proper and wise regard to our own happiness. I. SELFISHNESS IS NOT THE ESSENCE OF HUMAN NATURE AS PRESENTED IN THE BIBLE. Satan denies that there is unselfishness in Job. He would imply that it is not in God's power to create a disinterested love of Himself, even in a regenerate creature—that self-interest is the hidden worm at the root of everything, good or bad. Think—1. Of the regenerate man, and see whether God's plan of forming him proceeds on the principle of appealing to selfishness. It is granted that the Bible, all through, presses men with threatenings of punishment, and holds out to them promises of happiness to lead them to a new life. But this is to be remembered, that it begins its work with men who are sunk in sin, and that the essence of sin is selfishness. It must arrest and raise them by motives adapted to their condition, provided that these motives are not wrong, and enlightened self-interest, that is, self-interest which is consistent with the good of others is not wrong. The Bible is too broad and human not to bring all fair motives into exercise. So before the Gospel, and even with it, we must have Sinai's word, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." But to affirm that this is the final, or even the prevailing motive of the new life, is to mistake or misrepresent the Bible, which is constantly advancing from the domain of threatening and outward promise to that of free and unselfish love. Its strength of appeal from the very beginning lies in the mercy of God pardoning unconditionally. As a man rises into the knowledge of the Divine plan he seeks and serves God, not from the hope of what he is to receive from Him, but from the delight which he finds in Him—in the true, the pure, the loving, that dwell in the Father of Lights. If they still charge us with selfishness in seeking this, because it is our happiness, we confess we know not what is meant by the charge. We do not seek Him for the joy, we find the joy in seeking. God acts towards man on the principle of free, undeserved love, that He may form in him the spirit and image of His own action, creating a spring of self-sacrifice which flows back to God, and overflows to men. The Son of God, who knows what is in man, believed this possible. He made a John, a Paul, a Peter, a Stephen—hearts that drank of the cup of His self-sacrifice, and forgot themselves, and laboured, and suffered, and died, like Him, for the world's good. It is certain that the Bible proceeds on the principle of creating unselfish action in the regenerate heart. 2. Even in the case of unregenerate men, the Bible does not affirm that the only law at work is one of utter selfishness. Though man is fallen, the elements of human nature are still there. They are not annihilated, neither are they demonised. The deep radical defect is Godward, that man has ceased to retain Him in his knowledge, and has expelled His love from his heart. There yet shines many a fair tint on human nature. Whatever unrenewed men may be to God, they perform to their fellow-men, oftentimes, the most unselfish acts. They give, hoping to receive nothing again. Let us not think that we discredit the Gospel, by seeming to leave these fair features of humanity outside its regenerating circle, but let us rather widen that circle to embrace them, and believe that if there is anything glorious upon earth, or beautiful in humanity, we owe it to the power of Christ's death, and the breadth of His intercession. II. THE

RESULTS OF RELIEF IN UNMITIGATED SELFISHNESS. The first evident consequence in him who holds it is a want of due regard for his fellow-creatures. With no belief in principle or goodness, he can cherish no reverence, and feel no pity. The next consequence is the want of any centre of rest within itself. Another effect is the failure of any real hold of God. The spirit, Satan, here, had no just views of a God of truth and purity and goodness. III. SOME MEANS THAT MAY BE ADOPTED AS A REMEDY BY THOSE WHO ARE IN DANGER OF FALLING INTO THIS FAITH. We should seek to bring our own life into close contact with what is genuine in our fellow-men. Next to the cultivation of society and friendships among living men, we may mention the choice of books. Then, in judging humanity, we must beware of taking a part for the whole. The last means for removing the view that man is incapable of rising above self is to apprehend the Divine care of human nature. He who has studied the person of Christ, and laid his hand, however feebly, on the throbbings of that heart, will not be in danger of the view that self-love, utter and eternal, is part of the nature of man. (*John Ker, D.D.*) *Doth Job fear God for nought?*—I. THE IMPORT OF THIS INSINUATED SNEER. It is chiefly interesting to us because the words are not yet dead. Satan's agents imitate their master, and use the same arguments and the same sophistries. It is still a common device of the world to attribute good actions to evil motives. Sometimes men are said to be pious to obtain influence. If a person gives largely to church-building, the world will hint that he wants to "get his name up." If a handsome subscription is sent to any particular object, the donor "desires to see his name in print." Sometimes men are said to be pious because of a far-seeing expediency. They are said to go to this or that church on account of the patronage they expect to receive. Tradesmen are accused of attaching themselves to the particular sect from which they hope to derive the greatest profit. How many a poor person exclaims, "Oh, if the squire had only to fight with hunger, he could not afford to be religious." II. THE INFLUENCE OF THIS INSINUATED SNEER. What a power there is in a covert insult! Even the devil's speech was not without a terrific influence. It appealed even to the Almighty. He granted the arch-fiend the opportunity to try his theory and to prove his assertion. And all this bitter experiment recoiled upon poor Job. For weeks and months and years he was as molten gold in the devil's crucible. He lost all he had. Do not let us run away with the idea that the wicked have no influence now. They are lords of the present world, and they can make the life of the righteous man very bitter for him, whether he be rich or whether he be poor. And God permits those influences to continue, in order that He may vindicate His people and manifest His own power and glory. III. THE UNINTENTIONAL TRUTH OF THIS INSINUATED SNEER. Satan overreached himself after all. No man does serve God for nought. There is no such thing as entire self-abnegation in this world. Job proved in the end that his principles were sound. But what are religious principles after all? A determination to serve God because we are convinced that to serve Him is the best policy. We cannot divest religion of selfishness. The Scriptures teach us that we love Him because "He first loved us," and because He has redeemed us, and promised us eternal life. An ideal, uninterested religion may be the attainment of heaven and the angels, but it cannot be of men. (*Homilist.*) *Disinterestedness*:—"Doth Job fear God for nought?" There is one Taskmaster for whom no labourer ever works in vain, whose wages are always punctually and fully paid, and with whom a faithful servant never feels even a passing shade of dissatisfaction. We always know that obedience to God never fails of its reward; that all work done for God ends in fit and full result; that to live with and for God is to live the noblest, the happiest, the peacefullest life possible to us. The text draws our attention to man's motives. The Book of Job asks, in every variety of form, this question, Is there any connection to be traced between a man's character and his earthly fate? Satan refers the indisputable obedience and piety of Job to God's kindly and generous dealing with him. The question before us is this, Are disinterested love and service of God things impossible? The great contention of ethical principle is whether any human action is ever or can be performed without the more or less subtle impulse of self-interest. Some say that we serve God as we do our duty, as we love our children, as we sacrifice ourselves for our country, for the sake of what we can get by it. But this doctrine takes the light and the nobleness out of human life. We feel instinctively that it answers only to our meaner and commoner part: this thought cuts away our moral ideal

leaves us nothing to aspire to, imprisons us for ever in the baseness of what we are. We are reduced to this dilemma, that our noblest actions and affections can only exist when the mind is, as it were, hoodwinked and wilfully ignorant of their real character. But we make appeal to conscience. Is not your whole notion of moral life based upon the thought that the noblest actions are those from which the recollection of self is completely eradicated? A human life is acknowledged to rise in nobleness in proportion as the part of it which is occupied with self-regarding labours and interests grows less, and the part which we are accustomed to look upon as disinterested grows larger. In the quality of our less interested actions, we rise from the lower to the higher just in proportion as we painfully purge away from them the clinging taint of self. The purity and depth of love are measured precisely by this—whether the thought of self becomes more frequent and more prevailing, or silently and completely fades away. When there is undue anticipation of what is to be obtained in a future life, Christianity becomes nothing more or higher than the utilitarian philosophy upon an extended scale, and with coarser issues. St. Theresa saw in a vision a strange and awful woman, bearing in the one hand water, in the other fire. Asking her whither she went, she replied, "I go to burn up heaven, and to quench hell, that henceforth men may love God for Himself alone." Is there nothing here which finds a ready echo in our noblest instincts? Do we not to a large extent create the difficulty which afterwards we try to resolve, by making the ideas of reward and punishment co-extensive with that of a future life? If heaven be a reward, we know that we have not earned it. To the common imagination heaven is nothing better or higher than a kind of Mahometan paradise, full of enjoyments less markedly sensual, yet which whoever is fortunate enough to pass its gates can enjoy without further preparation. If heaven be something loftier; if its central idea be a closer communion with God, a larger knowledge of His purposes, a fuller co-operation with His will, it assumes quite another aspect to the enlightened conscience. It is the better part of our present life indefinitely strengthened and purified and brightened. Heaven is purer love, larger trust, more perfect service. We do not "serve God for nought," and yet just as little do we serve Him for what we can get by it. We are like little children with their mother. We loved her when we received everything from her, and assuredly loved her no less when she had no more to give and asked much from us. From the bounty of God we can never escape. He wins us first by His goodness; happy are we if at last we turn to Him for Himself. (*C. Beard, B.A.*)

Disinterested goodness:—The Satan puts at once into words a view of human springs of action, not confined to a single age. There is no such thing, he says, as "disinterested goodness." Such a question, such a view, is not confined to evil spirits, or to the story of the man of Uz. The question had been raised when this book was written. It is one of the main questions, some have said, the main question of all, with which this book is meant to deal. But the view embodied in (the) Satan's words is one which you may have heard whispered, or loudly spoken, now and here, as there and then. There is no such thing, you may be told, as a love of goodness for its own sake. There is always some ulterior aim, some selfish motive. Even religion, you will hear, even the religion of Christ, is a mere matter of selfish interest. It is nothing more, even when sincere, than a selfish device to escape from pain, and enjoy happiness hereafter. "Doth Job fear God for nought?" You see how far the words extend. They cover a wider range than that of the character of one child of Adam. They go down to the very springs of human nature; down to the very essence, and even the existence of goodness itself. "Can men and women care for goodness and mercy, or for truth, or for righteousness, for their own sake?" Nay, the arrow launched at Job flies farther, it is really pointed at God Himself. If (the) Satan is right, it is not only that there is no such thing as disinterested goodness, but God Himself is robbed of His highest and noblest attribute. If He can no longer win the hearts, and retain in joy and sorrow the reverential affection of those on whom He showers His benefits; if He can no longer inspire anything but a mercenary love, He may be all-powerful still, but there are surely those among our fellow-creatures, whom some of us know, or have known, who must come before Him in our homage. Heaven and earth are no longer full of His glory. You see how vital the question which the challenge stirs, and how rightly it has been said, that in the coming contest, Job is the champion, not of his own character only, but of all who care for goodness, and of God Himself. The challenge is given and accepted; and power is granted to (the) Satan to test the good man, the "perfect and upright" Job, with the loss of that

on the possession of which the accuser believes all his goodness to be based. Satan is not represented in this book as the suggester of evil to the human soul, nor as the fallen angel, his Maker's foe. He is depicted as simply a malicious spirit, whose power for evil is rigidly limited by his Master, and the Master of the world. And such as he is, he goes forth to work His will. And once more the scene shifts to the land of Uz. (*Dean Bradley.*) *Satanic selfishness* :—He himself has sunk into an evil condition, for he delights in making even good men seem bad, in fitting good deeds with evil motives. Self is his centre, not God; and he suspects all the world of a selfishness like his own. He cannot, or will not, believe in an unselfish, a disinterested goodness. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Is it selfish to be religious?*—Satan employs a base insinuation against the servant of the Lord. "Doth Job fear God for nought?" He cannot find room to accuse Job. There is no foothold for him in Job's character; he cannot bring a railing accusation against him. So he imputes bad motives. He says that Job fears God for what he can get out of it. It is not to be wondered at that Satan employs such a weapon. What is true of Satan is true of all his sons. "Marvel not if the world hate you." A treacherous heart accuses all of treachery. Job signally refutes the slander. Carey was offered by the government £1000 per annum if he would turn interpreter. He had nobler work than that. They raised the bribe—£5000 in the service of your country. No, he had nobler work than that. Yet Satan might have insinuated, "Doth Carey serve God for nought?" Although this was a base insinuation, Satan really made assertion of a blessed fact. He himself confesses, "Hast Thou not made a hedge about him?" &c. Godliness with contentment is great gain. We do not serve God for nought. He is not a Master who forgets to care for His servants, or treats His children ill. The poorest and meanest of God's saints would bear glad testimony to the unmistakable fact that it is good to serve God; it has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. (*Thomas Spurgeon.*) *The satanic insinuation* :—God's challenge calls forth this reply from Satan. It is an insolent reply, in character with the speaker; but one which nevertheless reveals a great deal of keen insight. 1. Satan's reply discloses his conception of Divine providence. "Hast Thou not made a hedge about him?" There are two ways of looking at the hedges, or limitations of life. Those who know of what use they are in protecting and guarding men, accept them gratefully. Those who know little of the uses of such limitations are often found to be impatient of them. Satan's desire concerning every life is that there shall be no hedge about it. 2. Satan's reply supplies his estimate of piety, that it is selfish. A literal translation would be, "Doth Job fear God gratis?" He suspects that there is no such thing as disinterested goodness. If Job's piety had turned out to be selfish, the probability is that the piety of the best of us would prove equally selfish. 3. Satan's reply expresses his estimate of Job. The mission of Satan, according to his own showing, had been that of a peripatetic critic. He had failed to tempt Job, so all he could do was, suggest a false and unworthy motive. When we deal with human motive, we deal with one of the most mysterious things in God's world. Now, I do not expect a better theory of goodness from the devil than that at best it is selfish. No one can rise to a higher altitude than he himself occupies, and when any one tells me that Christian motive is necessarily a selfish motive I know where he is living. I know the altitude he has reached. It is a law of life that the man who is incapable of an unselfish act is the greatest sceptic on God's earth about the unselfishness of others. He can only grasp the possibility of being unselfish by being partaker of that exalted quality himself. On that principle, when Satan speaks about piety, I do not expect that he should see anything higher or nobler than selfishness in it. I know of nothing so satanic in life as to impute impious motives to godly men. That scepticism as to the possibility of disinterested piety gives me a glimpse into the depths of depravity in the heart of the being who is capable of uttering it. The denial of the possibility of disinterested piety reveals the saddest degradation on the part of the man who is capable of such a denial. There is no power that can save him except that which shall renew his whole nature; for there is no power that can redeem a man save as it makes him unselfish. After all, down deep in the heart of man, there is a profound belief in and admiration of unselfishness. Who are the great men of the past, even in the world's estimation? The men who denied themselves for the sake of their fellows; great reformers, who suffered in order to uplift their fellows. We all instinctively feel keenly the charge of selfishness. We are all ashamed of being considered selfish. In this even those who profess to cling

to the philosophy of selfishness are nobler than their creed. Let me remind you of the fact, that as long as we gather round the Cross, and recognise there the highest expression of a surrendering love for us, so long shall we believe in the possibility of self-denial and disinterested services, and our highest desire and aim shall be that the mind which was also in Christ Jesus may be in us. (*David Davies.*)

Is piety mercenary?—I shall give you Satan's sense in three notable falsities, which he twists up together in this one speech, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" 1. That riches will make any man serve God; that it is no great matter to be holy when we have abundance; a man that prospers in the world cannot choose but be good. This Satan implies in these words, and this is an extreme lie (Deut. xxviii. 47). Abundance doth not draw the heart unto God. Yet Satan would infer that it doth. This might well be retorted upon Satan himself. Satan, why didst not thou serve God then? thou didst once receive more outward blessings from God than ever Job did, the blessedness of an angel. 2. There is this in it: "Doth Job fear God for nought?" Satan intimates that God could have no servants for love, none unless He did pay them extremely; that God is such a Master, and His work such as none would meddle with, unless allured by benefits. Here is another lie Satan windeth up closely in this speech; for the truth is, God's servants follow Him for Himself: the very excellences of God, and sweetness of His ways, are the argument and the wages by which His people are chiefly moved to His service. God indeed makes many promises to those that serve Him, but He never makes any bargains with them: His obey Him freely. Satan makes bargains to hire men to his service (Matt. iv. 9). 3. Then there is a third sense full of falsehood, which Satan casteth upon Job, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" that is, Job hath a bias in all that he doth, he is carried by the gain of godliness, not by any delight in godliness, thus to serve God. Job is mercenary; Job doth not seek the glory of God, but he seeks his own advantage. Thus in brief you see the sense, I shall give you some observations from it. 1. It is an argument of a most malignant spirit, when a man's actions are fair, then to accuse his intentions. The devil hath nothing to say against the actions of Job, but goes down into his heart and accuseth his intentions. Malice misinterprets the fairest actions, but love puts the fairest interpretation it can upon foul actions. 2. That it is an argument of a base and an unworthy spirit to serve God for ends. Had this been true of Job in Satan's sense, it had indeed blemished all that he had done. Those that come unto God upon such terms, they are not holy, but crafty. As sin is punishment enough unto itself; though there were no other punishment: so to do good is reward enough unto itself. But here a question will arise, May we not have respect to our own good, or unto the benefit we shall receive from God? Must we serve God for nought in that strict sense, or else will God account nothing of all our services? I shall clear that in five brief conclusions. 1. The first is this, There is no man doth, or possibly can serve God for nought. God hath by benefits already bestowed, and by benefits promised, outvied and outbid all the endeavours of the creature. If a man had a thousand pair of hands, a thousand tongues, and a thousand heads, and should set them all on work for God, he were never able to answer the obligations which God hath already put upon him. Therefore this is a truth, that no man can in a strict sense serve God for nought. God is not beholden to any creature for any work or service that is done unto Him. 2. Again, this is further to be considered. The more outward blessings any one doth receive, the more he ought to serve God, and the more service God looks for at his hands. 3. In the third place, it is lawful to have some respect to benefits both received and promised by way of motive and encouragement to stir us up and quicken us, either in doing or in suffering for God (Heb. xi. 26, xii. 2). 4. Then reference unto benefit is sinful, when we make it either the sole and only cause, or the chief cause of our obedience. This makes anything we do smell so of ourselves that God abides it not. 5. Lastly, we may look upon them as fruits and consequences of holiness, yea, as encouragements unto holiness, but not as causes of our holiness; or we may eye these as media, through which to see the bounty and goodness of God, not as objecta on which to fix and terminate our desires. (*J. Caryl.*)

Ver. 10. **Hast not Thou made an hedge about him?**—*Hedges* (To children):—Satan held that Job was such a good man just because God took such special care of him. Now, Satan very often says that of good men; and some of us have been guilty of repeating it. We are so apt to think that God has made a hedge to protect other lives far more than our own, and that the best people

are as good as they are because of some special protection which God has granted them. The word "hedge" denotes that which protects or guards. Why does the farmer raise a hedge all round his field? And God does this. He seeks to protect all our lives. There is many a hedge that we have hardly ever noticed, and certainly have never properly valued. God has given some of us a hedge in the example and teaching of good and pious parents; in the influence of good teachers; in the form of good companionships; in the discipline we have to undergo in the home, in the school, and in life. Sometimes a schoolmaster's cane is a very useful hedge. A hedge not only shelters, it often keeps us from wandering. Sometimes we do not like hedges; we should like to see more of the country, and wander at will. God's way of hedging us in is not always by sending us blessings which we are pleased to accept, but sometimes by sending us sorrow and trial. He thus keeps us in our places, guards us against going astray. That was the kind of hedge that Job did not like. The farmer sometimes plants thorns in his hedges, and we must not be surprised if God does. After all, a hedge may become a very lovely thing. What would the landscape often be without hedges? God makes the hedges along the country full of beauty, poetry, and song. And in our lives here, this is just what the Lord Jesus has done. The old Law of Moses was like a stone hedge. The hedges of the Lord Jesus are like our quick-set hedges. He makes His commandments sweet and welcome, and the ways of His testimonies full of delight. It is the love of Christ constrains us, and that is always a sweet constraint. (*David Davies.*) *God protects His people*:—1. That the protection God gives to His people and servants is the vexation of Satan, and of all his instruments. 2. That Satan, the father of lies, sometimes speaks truth for his own advantage. 3. That the people and servants of God dwell in the midst of enemies, in the midst of dangers. 4. That God Himself doth undertake the guarding and protecting of His people. 5. You see how far the hedge goeth, not only about his person and household, but about all that he hath. His meanest thing was hedged about. (*J. Caryl.*) **Thou hast blessed the work of his hands.**—*Success the outcome of the Divine blessing*:—1. That all success in business is from the blessing of the Lord. Satan speaks very good Divinity here; Thou hast blessed: it is from the Lord (Gen. xxxix. 23). That whatsoever he did, the Lord made it to prosper. Working is our part, but prospering is the Lord's part. Some take all to themselves, and thank their own labours, their own wisdom, policy, and parts; others ascribe all to their good fortune, &c. We see Satan himself here preacheth a truth that will confute them. 2. Everyone ought to be a man of employment. Everyone ought to have some business to turn his hand. God doth not love to bless those that are idle. 3. That the Lord delighteth to bless those who are industrious. It is seldom that there is an industrious hand, but there is a blessing of God upon it. Hence, as we find in one place, the diligent hand maketh rich (Prov. x. 4, 22). 4. The blessing of God where it falleth is effectual. If God doth but bless we shall increase, there is no question of it. Blessing and multiplying go together. The blessing of God is a powerful blessing. (*J. Caryl.*)

Ver. 11. **But put forth Thine hand now.**—*Conscious and unconscious hypocrisy*:—There are two kinds of hypocrisy in the world—conscious hypocrisy and unconscious. Of conscious hypocrisy it is not our intention to speak; we would fain believe that deliberate hypocrisy is as rare as deliberate atheism. We do not think that it was with conscious hypocrisy that Satan intended to charge God's servant Job, or with knowingly serving the Lord for what he could gain by it. Had he been guilty of this his probation must have made it manifest. It was a more latent hypocrisy the tempter wished to detect. The accusation of the adversary had reference to unconscious hypocrisy, and this is not so rare in the world. The insinuation against the patriarch was, that there was a measure of hypocrisy in him unknown to his own soul; that there was some self-interest at the root of his service of which he was not aware; that he was not so honest as he thought himself, or as others thought him; and that his affliction would elicit these facts against him. It is true that, to some extent, men are not so good as they seem; that there is not a little unconscious hypocrisy in the world; that the characters of men depend, more than they are disposed to acknowledge, upon their circumstances; that many of us would not be so good as we are were our positions in life worse. We ought to have examined ourselves very narrowly, and be well assured of our spiritual estate, ere we think, still less affirm, that we

should not be the same as they—in worse social positions—did we by some providential reverse change places with them. This unconscious hypocrisy is a danger to which we are all liable. (*Alfred Bowen Evans.*) *The ease with which God can destroy man's estate :*—The extreme importunity of Satan to do mischief. It is a truth which Satan here speaks concerning the hand of God: that if God do but touch the highest and greatest estate in the world, it will fall to pieces quickly. (*J. Caryl.*) **He will curse Thee to Thy face.**—*Trial the touchstone :*—1. Satan can only guess at the hearts of men. He would undertake and enter warranty with God that Job would blaspheme if God did but touch him, but he was deceived: Satan did but speak at a venture. 2. Affliction is the trial and touchstone of sincerity. When God doth afflict you, then He doth bring you to the touchstone, to see whether you are good metal or no; He doth bring you then to the furnace, to try whether you be dross or gold, or what you are. Affliction is the great discoverer. That unmasks us. Satan was not out in the thing. While religion and prosperity go together, it is hard to say which a man follows; but when once they are forced to a separation, where the heart was will soon be manifest The upright in heart are like Ruth,—whatsoever becometh of the Gospel, they will be sharers with it in the same condition. When zeal is kindled only with the beams of worldly hopes, when worldly hopes fail our zeal is extinct, and our endeavour is cut off with our expectation. (*J. Caryl.*) *Temptations of the afflicted :*—The hour of affliction is the hour of temptation. Satan loves to fish when the waters are troubled. He would bring us to hard thoughts of God by the hard things we suffer from God. "Touch him, and he will curse Thee to Thy face." In such stormy weather some vessels are cast away. Faith is a special antidote against the poison of the wicked one. It can read love in the blackest of Divine dispensation, as by a rainbow we see the beautiful image of the sun's light in the midst of a dark and waterish cloud. (*G. Swinnock.*)

Vers. 12-22. **So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord**—*The foe of foes :*—I. THE ENTHUSIASM OF HIS MALIGNITY. No sooner does he receive permission than he begins in terrible earnestness. He does not seem to have lost a moment. Like a hungry vulture in a carrioned atmosphere, he pounces down upon his victim. Now he strikes at the cattle that were ploughing the field, and the she asses that were beside them. Then he slays the servants, then with a shaft of fire from heaven he burns up the "sheep and servants," and then he breathes a hurricane through the wilderness, and levels to the dust the house in which his children are revelling in the festive pleasures of family love, and destroys them all. Then he goes to the utmost point of the liberty which his great Master granted him. He could do no more with Job's circumstances. He deprived him as in a moment of all his property and his children. He had no authority to go beyond this point at present. He had to wait for another Divine communication before he could touch the body of Job. He did his utmost, and did it with an infernal delight. II. THE VARIETY OF HIS AGENTS. 1. Wicked men. He breathed his malign spirit into the men of Sheba, and they rushed to the work of violence and destruction. He inflamed the Chaldeans with the same murderous passions, and then "three bands fell upon the camels," carried them away, and slew the servants, &c. Alas! this arch-fiend has access to human souls. "He worketh in the children of disobedience." He leadeth them captive at his will. 2. Maternal nature. The great God gave him power over the elements of nature. He kindled the lightning, and made it consume the sheep and the servants. He raised the atmosphere into a tempest, levelled its fury against the house, and brought it down to the destruction of all within. With heaven's permission this mighty spirit of evil can cause earthquakes to engulph cities, breathe pestilences to depopulate countries, create storms that will spread devastation over sea and land. "He is the prince of the power of the air." III. THE CELERITY OF HIS MOVEMENTS. How rapidly his fell strokes followed each other. Before the first messenger of evil had told the patriarch his terrible tale, another appeared. Whilst the first was "yet speaking," another came; and whilst the second was yet speaking, came the third. The carriers of misery trod on the heels of each other. Why this hurry? Was it because this work of violence was agreeable to the passions of this foul fiend? Or was it because the rapidity would be likely so to shock Job's moral nature as to produce a religious revulsion, and cause him to do what he desired him to do—curse the Almighty to His face? Perhaps both. Perhaps the celerity was both his

pleasure and his policy. Trials seldom come alone. IV. THE FOLLY OF HIS CALCULATIONS. What was the result of all this on Job? The very reverse of what Satan had calculated. He "worshipped." He did not curse. In his worship we discover three things:—1. His profound sensibility. 2. His exalted philosophy. 3. His religious magnanimity. How disappointed this arch-fiend must have been with the result. The result was the very opposite to what he had expected—to what he had wrought for. Thus it has ever been, and thus it will ever be. God may permit Satan to blast our worldly prospects, to wreck our fortunes, and destroy our friendships. But if we trust in Him He will not allow him to touch our souls to their injury. He only uses the fiend to try His servants. An old Welsh minister, in preaching on this text, is reported to have said that God permitted Satan to try Job as the tradesman tries the coin that his customer has tendered in payment for the purchased wares. He strikes it on the counter and hears it ring as rings the true metal, before he accepts it and places it in his drawer. The great Merchantman employed Satan to ring Job on the counter of trial. He did so—did so with all the force of his mighty arm, and in the Divine ear the moral heart of the patriarch vibrated as the music of Divine metal fit for the treasury in the heavens. (*Homilist.*) *God sets bounds to the afflictions of His people:*—1. It is not always an argument of God's goodwill and love to have our motions granted. Many are heard and answered out of anger, not out of love. The children of Israel required meat for their lusts, and God gave it them. 2. That until God gives commission, Satan hath no power over the estates or persons of God's people, or over anything that belongs unto them. 3. That which Satan and evil men desire sinfully, the Lord grants holily. The will of God and the will of Satan joined both in the same thing; yet they were as different as light and darkness, their ends were as different as their natures. 4. That God Himself sets bounds to the afflictions of His people. 5. That Satan is boundless in his malice toward the people of God. If God did not set him bounds he would set himself no bounds, therefore saith God unto him, only upon himself, &c. (*J. Caryl.*)

Ver. 16. **While he was yet speaking there came also another.**—*The calamities of Job:*—I. MANY AGENTS ARE WATCHING FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO INJURE US, BUT ARE RESTRAINED BY THE POWER OF GOD. These may be divided into the visible and invisible. There are the invisible, those fallen spirits, of whose apostasy and active malignity so much is said in Scripture. Here you will see how the devil first tried to take away Job's character for sincerity and virtue, then to insinuate that he was no better than a mercenary hypocrite, then to suggest that if he was but deprived of his outward possessions he would soon prove himself to be a downright blasphemer. Have we any reason to suppose it is otherwise with respect to us? Is not Satan still injuriously active? There are visible foes of our interests and of our peace. Man is not only alienated from God, but also from his fellow-creatures. You especially ought to consider the debt you owe to God's restraining and preserving mercy. Persecution is perfectly natural to depraved man. It is providence which throws chains upon his black and malignant passions. II. THE CREATURES CAN BE READILY CONVERTED BY GOD INTO THE AUTHORS OF OUR INJURY OR DESTRUCTION. It is so with the very elements of nature themselves. So with our social connections. "A man's foes may be those of his own household." Thus it is also with our secular possessions: they may prove curses rather than blessings. III. THE EXTERNAL DISPENSATIONS OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE ARE NOT INFALLIBLE CRITERIA BY WHICH TO FORM OUR ESTIMATE OF HUMAN CHARACTER. Prosperity is not, for it often happens that the horn of the wicked is exalted, and that they flourish like a green bay-tree. Adversity is not an unequivocal test. Learn—1. Our obligations to the protecting care of God. 2. What an illustration has been supplied of the precariousness of that tenure by which all earthly things are held. (*John Clayton.*) *The testing of Job:*—The question discussed in the Book of Job is this—Is it possible for man to be actuated by disinterested love for his Maker? Observe the tests to which Job was subjected. I. HE WAS TRIED CIRCUMSTANTIALLY. Though bereft of everything, Job does not throw off his allegiance to heaven, nor shriek curses into the ears of the infinite. Desolate he says—"Blessed be the name of the Lord." II. HE WAS TRIED CONSTITUTIONALLY. Satan asks—Let me act on him? He is smitten with a loathsome disease. Does his faith stand this? III. HE WAS TRIED THEOLOGICALLY. His

friends denounced him as a sinner. His nature rebelled. For many a long day he was tortured in his deepest convictions, the tenderest nerves of his soul. Does his loyalty to heaven then give way; does his trust in the Almighty die out? Here, in Job, is the question settled for all time, that the human soul is not essentially selfish. It can "fear God for nought." (*Homilist.*) *The design of affliction:*—Job and affliction have long been associated together in our minds. Next to the "man of sorrows," Job was perhaps the most afflicted of the servants of God. The principle of substitution at once explains the sufferings of the one, but to account for the sufferings of the other seems at first sight more difficult. The Book of Job is the most ancient of all the books of inspiration, and is entirely independent of them. Job's history is not linked with that of the people of God, nor does it advance in any way the manifestation of the purposes of God. As resulting from the fall, and as stamping the Divine curse upon creation, affliction is the common lot of mankind. Affliction, in one shape or another, is the special portion of God's people. God is the author of the afflictions of His people. We are apt to ascribe it to second causes, and to lose sight of the great first cause. God has a design in affliction. I. THE DESIGN OF GOD IN THE AFFLICTIONS OF THE WICKED. 1. He intends to punish the wicked by affliction. But He designs also to awaken them, to arrest their attention, and to show them the nothingness and vanity of all things here. How blessed is that affliction which brings the prodigal back to his father's house, however severe it may be. II. THE DESIGN OF GOD IN AFFLICTING HIS OWN PEOPLE. 1. To try the genuineness of their faith. The apostle speaks of the "trial of our faith." In all his trial Job's faith was found genuine, and to the praise and honour of God; Job never does anything which is inconsistent with his being a child of God. Some, when they are put into the furnace of affliction, prove themselves to have been but hypocrites. 2. To discover the latent corruption of their hearts. When a man is first converted he little thinks how much evil there still remains behind! But the trial comes, and then unbelief arises in its former strength. Rebelliousness rages in every region of the soul. Unsubdued passions resume their strength, and he is utterly dismayed at the fearful scene. Job, who was the most patient of all men, then showed impatience. In the days of his prosperity he seemed to be perfect, but affliction showed what was in his heart. 3. To purify and to sanctify them. God puts us into the furnace to purge us from the dross—to make us holy and spiritually minded—to make us seek those things which are above. 4. To call into exercise the graces of the Spirit. There is a great tendency even in the people of God to spiritual sloth and slumber. They have grace, but their grace is not in lively exercise. Their movements are sluggish and lifeless. By affliction God awakens us to a sense of our high responsibilities, and calls forth into exercise our dormant graces. 5. To enhance the value of true religion. What can sustain you when trial and trouble, in various forms, has come upon you, but real, heartfelt piety? What else could have supported Job in his unparalleled and complicated afflictions? 6. God afflicts His people also in order to manifest His own glorious attributes. The great object in all that God does is to manifest His own glory. Learn—(1) That God has a purpose in all that He does. (2) Be encouraged by contemplating the case of Job. You are not standing alone in affliction. (3) Do not only look forward to the time of your deliverance from affliction, but look unto God for His grace, not only to sustain you, but to make that affliction minister to your happiness. (*A. S. Cannen.*) *Whom He loveth He chasteneth:*—Among the mysteries of God's providence there is perhaps no mystery greater than the law by which suffering is meted out in the world. It is not a mystery that sin should bring forth sorrow; it is not a mystery that pain, disease, and death should be the fruit of man's fall. The conscience of men in all ages—the heathen as well as the Jewish and Christian—has acquiesced in the justice of that moral constitution of things by which sin becomes chastisement and suffering the expiation of guilt. The really difficult problem is not the problem of suffering in the abstract: it is the problem of the meting out of suffering on any theory; it is the problem why the innocent are called upon to suffer, whilst the guilty too often escape. This is a problem which comes before us in the Book of Job. Job is a righteous man, living in the fear of God, and eschewing evil. He is a man of large wealth and possessions, but he does not spend his wealth in selfish gratification. He is charitable to the poor, hospitable to the stranger, bountiful to all. He was not only the greatest of all the

men of the East—he was the best. But in a moment the sky of his prosperity is overcast; blow follows blow with fearful rapidity. On what principle of justice is such a man made to suffer? Here is a man exemplary in life, devout, pure, charitable, of sterling integrity, earnest piety, and sincere faith in God; why is he crushed with this awful suffering? Contrast with this the tragedy of "Prometheus," written by Æschylus. Prometheus has been the benefactor of mankind. He has entered into a sublime conflict with Zeus, the supreme being, for the good of the race. He is crushed by his adversary, and he dies with defiance on his lips. The conception is grand, but the chief element of grandeur lies in the fact that it is power, and not righteousness, which sits on the throne, and rebellion against supreme power which is not supreme right must always be grand. The struggle in the history of Job is far nobler. He knows that the God he worships is not supreme power only, but supreme righteousness also. This it is that makes his trial so hard. With him the difficulty is to reconcile the God of his conscience and his faith with the God who is ruling the world. On the throne of the universe sits one who, judging by the facts of life, is not absolutely righteous. The struggle in the drama of Job is not the defiance of power, it is not the arrogant assertion of self-righteousness: it is the confession of ignorance of self, and ignorance of God; it is the submission of the sorely tried man to the revelation of that God whose revelation he had longed to see. The problem is that of innocent suffering. What is the solution of it? Three answers are given. 1. That of the three friends. Though representing three different types of character, all concur in one thing—they all hold the same theory of the Divine government, and on the strength of that theory they all condemn Job. God is just, and therefore God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. If a man suffers, he suffers because he deserves it. Job may be upright, but he must be cherishing some secret sin, and it is this which has called down on him the vengeance of the Most High. This is their compendious system of theology. But it breaks down. It is not large enough to cover the facts. Centuries of teaching could not root out of men's minds the obstinate belief that suffering is the measure of sin; but the sufferer himself repudiates it. The righteousness of God is the fundamental article of God's creed; but then comes his cruel perplexity. Job does not maintain absolute freedom from sin. For a moment he is tempted to take refuge in blind submission. But in his inmost heart he cries out, "God must be righteous." And so to the very last word he uttered he refused to be convinced of direct sin as the cause of his suffering. We know that Job is right, but he still needed to learn the greatest lesson of all, that his very righteousness was not his own. He is right in maintaining his own innocence against his friends, right in holding fast his integrity, right in trusting God through all, right in appealing to Him to declare his righteousness when it seems to be hidden. 2. Another theory of suffering is given by Elihu. He is angry with Job for his obstinacy; and with the friends, because they have failed so completely to vindicate the righteousness of God. Elihu represents a younger theology. God's purpose in chastisement He declares to be the purification of His servant. If He puts those whom He loves into the crucible, it is to purge away their dross, to cleanse them from past sins, and to keep them from falling in the future. Here, certainly, is a step in advance. To see a purpose of love in affliction is to turn it into a blessing. Job accepts in silence this interpretation of suffering. 3. But the mystery of suffering is not fully explained even when this purifying power is assigned to it. There is a suffering which is not even for the salvation or purification of the individual soul, but for the glory of God. In the prelude Satan tells God to His face that His servants serve Him not from disinterested motives or sincere affection, but in the spirit of the hireling, from the lowest and most mercenary considerations. "Doth Job fear God for nought?" This is the challenge given, and it is one that strikes at the nature of God Himself. It means that he is incapable of inspiring a genuine, disinterested affection. God accepts the challenge. Job has to learn that suffering comes, because God is honoured in the trial of His people; and surely no more noble part can be assigned to man than to be the champion of God. (*Bishop Perowne.*) *The mystery of pleasure and pain*:—Pleasure and pain, happiness and suffering, are elements of creaturely experience appointed by God. The right use of them makes life, the wrong use of them mars it. They are ordained, all of them, in equal degrees, to a good end; for all that God does

is done in perfect love as well as in perfect justice. It is no more wonderful that a good man should suffer than that a bad man should suffer: for the good man, the man who believes in God and therefore in goodness, making a right use of suffering, will gain by it in the true sense; he will reach a deeper and a nobler life. It is no more wonderful that a bad man, one who disbelieves in God, and therefore in goodness, should be happy, than that a good man should be happy, the happiness being God's appointed means for both to reach a higher life. The main element of this higher life is vigour, but not of the body. The Divine purpose is spiritual evolution. That gratification of the sensuous side of our nature for which physical health and a well-knit organism are indispensable—paramount in the pleasure philosophy—is not neglected, but is made subordinate to the Divine culture of life. The grace of God aims at the life of the spirit—power to love, to follow righteousness, to dare for justice's sake, to seek and grasp the true, to sympathise with men and bear with them, to bless them that curse, to suffer and be strong. To promote this vitality, all that God appoints is fitted—pain as well as pleasure, adversity as well as prosperity, sorrow as well as joy, defeat as well as success. We wonder that suffering is so often the result of imprudence. On the ordinary theory the fact is inexplicable, for imprudence has no dark colour of ethical faultiness. He who by an error of judgment plunges himself and his family into what appears irretrievable disaster may, by all reckoning, be almost blameless in character. If suffering is held to be penal, no reference to the general sin of humanity will account for the result. But the reason is plain. The suffering is disciplinary. The nobler life at which Divine providence aims must be sagacious no less than pure, guided by sound reason no less than right feeling. And if it is asked how, from this point of view, we are to find the punishment of sin, the answer is, that happiness as well as suffering is punishment to him whose sin and the unbelief that accompanies it pervert his view of truth, and blind him to the spiritual life and to the will of God. The pleasures of a wrong-doer who persistently denies obligation to Divine authority and refuses obedience to the Divine law are no gain, but loss. They dissipate and attenuate his life. His sensuous or sensual enjoyment, his delight in selfish triumph and gratified ambition, are real, give at the time quite as much happiness as the good man has in his obedience and virtue, and perhaps a great deal more. But they are penal and retributive nevertheless, and the conviction that they are so becomes clear to the man whenever the light of truth is flashed upon his spiritual state. On the other hand, the pains and disasters which fall to the lot of evil men, intended for their correction, if in perversity or in blindness they are misunderstood, again become punishment, for they too dissipate and attenuate life. The real good of existence slips away while the mind is intent on the mere pain or vexation, and how it is to be got rid of. (*Robert A. Watson, D.D.*) *The threefold calamity*:—This sincere, right-hearted man must be passed through the entire round of human troubles. If any usual form of human sorrow is left untried in the case of Job, then the problem of the book is not yet fully solved. According to this poet-author, the calamity of human life is threefold. I. TROUBLE AFFECTS A MAN THROUGH HIS POSSESSIONS. The case of Job is quite a model of the troubles that can come to a man through his possessions. He had scarcely time to take breath after hearing one mournful tale before another messenger of woe burst upon him, and the climax of his woe seems utterly heart-breaking. How is it that these changes of circumstances came to press on this man as troubles? Nothing really hurts us save as it affects the mind, and different things affect us differently according as they reach the various parts of our mental and spiritual nature. What part of us, then, is touched by these outward calamities which deprive us of the things that we possess? There is in our nature the desire of acquisition, and its satisfaction is the source of very many of our pleasures. The hurt to the mind which follows on losing our possessions takes its highest form in the loss of our children and friends. So far, however, as such troubles are concerned, our manhood ought to be great enough to enable us to deal with them, and we have no overwhelming admiration for the man who can see all his possessions go and yet maintain his integrity and keep his hold on God. II. TROUBLES MAY COME TO A MAN THROUGH HIS BODY. We could not easily over-estimate the relation which health and bodily vigour bear to a bright, hopeful spirit and a cheery, active faith. A vast proportion of the doubts and fears and inward struggles of men have their secret source in conditions of the body,

failure at the springs of vitality, or the presence of insidious disease. The secret relations of the body and the spirit are very mysterious. Consequently you come nearer to a man, you touch him to the quick, you put his spirit to a far higher test, when you bring calamity in upon his body. From the descriptions given it is probable that Job's disease was what Eastern travellers know as elephantiasis, because the extremities of the body swell enormously, and the skin becomes as hard as the elephant's hide. It is hard to bear when disease is painful; harder still when it is prostrating; harder still when it is disfiguring and loathsome; harder still when it involves social disabilities. And Job's was all this. Can a man so suffer and keep hold of God? These calamities which come through our bodies affect other parts of our nature, and in some senses higher parts. The love of life. The desire of pleasure. The faculty of hope. All these are struck back, pressed down, forbidden to speak, and it is their inward wrestling which makes the bitterness of such trouble-times. But if affliction only reached these two things, our possessions and our bodies, we should not be able to call the testing sublime. Something would still be wanting. III. TROUBLE AFFECTING A MAN THROUGH HIS MIND. For this greater testing the outward troubles of Job were but the approach and preparation. These new trials were of a kind, and came in such a way, as was most likely to cause mental confusion. The visit of the friends, and their bad theology and false accusations, were the very things to awaken the inner conflicts of the soul. They offered forms of truth which roused his resistance. They presented creeds, in their grave and formal way, which Job felt were too small to meet his case. They started doubts in his mind which almost swelled into the agony of despair. Job's mental anguish took one particular form. The facts of his condition were brought into conflict with the formal creed of his day, the creed in which he himself had been brought up. That creed declared that suffering was the exact and necessary accompaniment of every sin; and that great calamity betokened great sin. Job feels sure that this must somehow be wrong. The creed would not fit his case. Scripture provides us with other illustrations of this highest and most imperilling form of human trouble. But the most sublime example is found in the Lord Jesus Himself. Bodily sufferings He had, but no man knows what the Lord has borne for him until he can enter into the spiritual conflict of Christ's temptation, and the infinitely mysterious inward distress of Gethsemane and Calvary. We are not alone in these agonies of soul. Not alone while the struggle is being waged, not alone in the blessed victory it may be given us to win. We, too, with Job, may hold fast our integrity. Two things need a passing notice. Observe how the mental struggle was intensified by the influence of the foregoing outward calamities. The loss of all he possessed had humbled him. Grief at the loss of his children had oppressed him. Long-continued suffering of body had wearied him, and now the very spirit was weak. And observe also, that in such times of strain a man may very nearly fail and yet hold his integrity. Sometimes a man is, for a moment, smitten down. Job sometimes fails, and talks foolishly. He seems as if, in his desperation, he set his righteousness against God's. But from the very border-land of infidelity and despair Job comes back to the trust and the rest of the child-heart that finds the Father in God. (*Robert Tuck, B.A.*) *Usually where God gives much grace, He tries grace much*:—To whom God hath given strong shoulders, on him, for the most part, He layeth heavy burdens. And so we are come to the second main division of the chapter, which is the affliction of Job; and that is set forth from this ver. 6 to the end of ver. 19. And lest we should conceive it to have come upon him by chance, it is punctually described four ways. 1. By the causes of it (ver. 6, 7, &c.). 2. By the instruments of it (ver. 15, 16, &c.). 3. By the manner of it (vers. 14, 15, 16, &c.). 4. By the time of it (ver. 13). (*J. Caryl.*) *The tests to which God puts His people*:—God puts His servants sometimes into these experiments that He may test them (as He did Job), that Satan himself may know how true-hearted God's grace has made them, and that the world may see how they can play the man. Good engineers, if they build a bridge, are glad to have a train of enormous weight go over it. When the first great exhibition was built they marched regiments of soldiers, with a steady tramp, over the girders, that they might be quite sure that they would be strong enough to bear any crowd of men, for the regular tramp of well-disciplined soldiers is more trying to a building than anything else. So our wise and prudent Father sometimes marches the soldiery of trouble right over His people's supports,

to let all men see that the grace of God can sustain every possible pressure and load. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The severest temptation last:*—When he thinks we are at the weakest, then he cometh with the strongest assaults. If Satan had sent Job word of the death of his children first, all the rest would have been as nothing to him. We observe in war, that when once the great ordnance are discharged, the soldiers are not afraid of the musket: so when a great battery is made by some thundering terrible judgment upon the soul, or upon the body, or estate of any man, the noise and fears of lesser evils are drowned and abated. Therefore Satan keeps his greatest shot to the last, that the small might be heard and felt, and that the last coming in greater strength might find the least strength to resist it. (*J. Caryl.*)

Ver. 20. **And worshipped.**—*The grand victory:*—This is the grandest scene that human nature has ever presented. The world had never seen anything to compare to it. The greatest conqueror that ever won his triumph in Rome was as a pigmy beside the giant. I. THE TRIUMPH OF MIND OVER MATTER. Job's soul seems to soar above what is material. Things which were seen faded from his view, and things which were not seen grew bright and distinct. The dying Stephen saw the Lord Jesus in his vision. But Job was not a dying man. He was in full strength and vigour. It is possible, then, so to triumph over that which is seen and temporal, that even in this world heaven is a reality. II. THE TRIUMPH OF PRINCIPLE OVER SELFISHNESS. Principle and selfishness are always antagonistic. There is a constant warfare going on between these in the universe, in the world, in the soul. Self is too often the victor. But in Job religious principle was supreme. He rose up and worshipped! Selfish human nature would have raved and cursed. The worldly man would have cursed his luck, cursed his foes, cursed the Chaldeans, and cursed everything. There does not seem to have been any struggle in the mind of Job. He seems, by constant patience and by the unceasing habit of giving principle the first place, to have been raised almost above strife and contention. There is a time when contest ceases. Sometimes self, after a few weeks or years, obtains the mastery, and then to self the man habitually yields. But we do occasionally find cases wherein principle is victor, and then homage is paid hereafter unquestioningly to its sovereignty. III. The TRIUMPH OF RELIGION OVER WORLDLINESS. The world passed out of Job's ken as a factor in his fate. Many would have said, What a strange combination of circumstances! What a terrible coincidence! What an unlucky man! "The Lord hath taken away." Here is a pattern for causalists, who look to minor details instead of to the prime Ruler of all things. This is the true sphere of religion—to cast out all else from a man's life—all except God. Then, and then alone, has it triumphed over the world, and sin, and temptation. IV. THE TRIUMPH OF DIVINE GRACE OVER THE DEVIL'S TEMPTATIONS. (*Homilist.*) *The humble saint under an awful rod:*—1. The best of men are often exercised with the sorest troubles. Job was a perfect and upright man, fearing God and eschewing evil. Those who are nearest God's heart may smart most under His rod. 2. When things go best with us as to this world, we should look for changes. Presumption of continued prosperity is unwarrantable; for who can tell what a day may bring forth? If any man in the world had reason to promise himself a security from poverty and distress, surely it was this eminent servant of God. The Lord had blessed him with large possessions, and a numerous offspring. He could appeal to heaven as to the integrity of his conduct, that he had got his wealth without oppressing the poor or injuring his fellow-creatures. Let us therefore take care how we say our mountain shall stand strong and cannot be moved, for who can tell what is in the womb of providence? This will, in a great measure, prepare us for the trial, if God should call us to it. On the other hand, we should be cautious how we sink under our burdens when the Lord is contending with us, and entertain gloomy apprehensions that deliverance is impossible. Our wisdom lies in the medium, between resting in and boasting of blessings, and limiting the power and goodness of God, as if He could not support us under trouble, or make a way for our escape. 3. The grace of God is given us, not to erase or destroy our natural passions and affections, but to correct, restrain, and purify them. Job arose, rent his mantle and shaved his head, and this before he set himself to worship. The grace of God is designed to regulate, refine, and spiritualise our natural affections, which, if left to themselves, are ready to run into riot and excess. 4. Saints under trouble usually find that relief

at the throne of grace, when pouring out their souls to God in prayer, which they meet with nowhere else. 5. Seriously to reflect on what we once were, in a state of infancy, and what we shall be when laid up in the grave, is a good means to reconcile our minds to afflictive emptying providences. Pride is the mother of discontent. Humility gives the sweetest relish to all our enjoyments, and prepares the mind with a becoming resignation to part with them at the will of our original Proprietor, who is the Sovereign Disposer of all things. 6. Good men desire to look beyond second causes to the hand of God in all their mercies and afflictions. Job mentions not a word of his own industry or care in obtaining, or of the Sabeans and Chaldeans in robbing him of his substance, but the "Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." Means and instruments have their influence, but it is under a Divine agency or permission. Those which are best suited to promote a desirable end will certainly miscarry without His concurrence, and the most envenomed enemies of God and His people can do no more than He is pleased to suffer. 7. Satan, the accuser of the brethren, narrowly watches the saint when oppressed with affliction, and if anything can be pleasing to a spirit so completely miserable, it would be to hear him speak unadvisedly with his lips, and charge God foolishly. It is hard work, but how very reasonable! For a saint cannot be in that situation not to have much to bless God for. More and better is always left than is taken away, such as God Himself, His unchangeable love, the glorious Redeemer, the Holy Spirit, an everlasting covenant, the blessings of redemption and sanctification, with grace and glory. And who does not see that all the sufferings and losses of this world are not worthy to be compared with any one of these, much less than with them all! (*S. Wilson.*) *Right behaviour in times of affliction:*—1. That when the hand of God is upon us, it becometh us to be sensible of it, and to be humbled under it. 2. That in times of affliction we may express our sorrows by outward gestures, by sorrowful gestures. 3. That when God afflicteth us with sufferings, we ought to afflict ourselves, to humble our souls for sin. 4. That thoughts of blasphemy against God should be cast off, and rejected with the highest indignation. (*J. Caryl.*) *Afflictions turned into prayers:*—1. A godly man will not let nature work alone, he mixes or tempers acts of grace with acts of nature. 2. Afflictions send the people of God home unto God; afflictions draw a godly man nearer unto God. 3. That the people of God turn all their afflictions into prayers, or into praises. When God is striking, then Job is praying; when God is afflicting, then Job falls to worshipping. Grace makes every condition work glory to God, as God makes every condition work good to them who have grace. 4. It becometh us to worship God in an humble manner. 5. That Divine worship is God's peculiar. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 21. **Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither.**—*Job's resignation:*—Job was very much troubled, and did not try to hide the outward signs of his sorrow. A man of God is not expected to be a stoic. The grace of God takes away the heart of stone out of his flesh, but it does not turn his heart into a stone. I want you, however, to notice that mourning should always be sanctified with devotion. "Ye people, pour out your hearts before Him: God is a refuge for us." When you are bowed down beneath a heavy burden of sorrow, then take to worshipping the Lord, and especially to that kind of worshipping which lies in adoring God, and in making a full surrender of yourself to the Divine will, so that you can say with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." It will also greatly alleviate our sorrow if we then fall into serious contemplations, and begin to argue a little, and to bring facts to bear upon our mind. "While I was musing," said David, "the fire burned," and it comforted and warmed him. Job is an instance of this kind of personal instruction; he has three or four subjects which he brings before his own mind, and these tend to comfort him. I. THE EXTREME BREVITY OF LIFE. Observe what Job says, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither." We appear for a brief moment, and then we vanish away. I often, in my own mind, compare life to a procession. Well now, because life is so short, do you not see where the comfort comes? Job says to himself, "I came, and I shall return; then why should I worry myself about what I have lost? I am going to be here only a little while, then what need have I of all those camels and sheep? If my earthly stores vanish, well, I shall vanish too." Further, Job seems especially to dwell with comfort upon the thought, "I shall return to the earth, from which all the particles of my

body originally came: I shall return thither." You recollect how the tribe of Gad and the tribe of Reuben went to Moses, and said, "If we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan." Of course, they did not want to cross the Jordan if they could get all their possessions on the other side. But Job had not anything this side Jordan; he was cleaned right out, so he was willing to go. And, really, the losses that a man has, which make him "desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better," are real gains. What is the use of all that clogs us here? II. Job seems to comfort himself by noticing THE TENURE OF HIS EARTHLY POSSESSIONS. "Naked," says he, "came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither." He feels himself to be very poor, everything is gone, he is stripped; yet he seems to say, "I am not poorer now than I was when I was born." One said to me, the other day, "All is gone, sir, all is gone, except health and strength." Yes, but we had not as much as that when we were born. We had no strength, we were too weak to perform the least though most necessary offices for our poor tender frame. Old men sometimes arrive at a second childhood. Do not be afraid, brother, if that is your case; you have gone through one period already that was more infantile than your second one can be, you will not be weaker then than you were at first. Suppose that you and I should be brought to extreme weakness and poverty, we shall neither be weaker nor poorer than we were then. It is wonderful that, after God has been gracious to us for fifty years, we cannot trust Him for the rest of our lives; and as for you who are sixty, seventy, or eighty years of age, what! has He brought you thus far to put you to shame? Did He bear you through that very weakest part of your life, and do you think He will now forsake you? Then Job adds, "However poor I may be, I am not as poor as I shall be, for naked shall I return to mother-earth. If I have but little now, I shall soon have still less." I want you to notice, also, what I think really was in Job's mind, that, notwithstanding that he was but dust at the beginning, and would be dust at the end, still there was a Job who existed all the while. "I was naked, but I was; naked shall I return thither, but I shall be there." Some men never find themselves till they have lost their goods. They, themselves, are hidden away, like Saul, among the stuff; their true manhood is not to be seen, because they are dressed so finely that people seem to respect them, when it is their clothes that are respected. They appear to be somebodies, but they are nobodies, notwithstanding all that they possess. III. But perhaps the most blessed thing is what Job said concerning THE HAND OF GOD IN ALL THINGS: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." I am so pleased to think that Job recognised the hand of God everywhere giving. He said, "The Lord gave." He did not say, "I earned it all." He did not say, "There are all my hard-earned savings gone." What a sweet thing it is if you can feel that all you have in this world is God's gift to you! A slender income will give us much content if we can see that it is God's gift. Let us not only regard our money and our goods as God's gifts; but also our wife, our children, our friends. Alas! some of you do not know anything about God. What you have is not counted by you as God's gift. You miss the very sweetness and joy of life by missing this recognition of the Divine hand in giving us all good things richly to enjoy. But then, Job equally saw God's hand in taking them away. If he had not been a believer in Jehovah, he would have said, "Oh, those detestable Sabeans! Somebody ought to go and cut to pieces those Chaldeans." That is often our style, is it not,—finding fault with the secondary agents? Suppose my dear wife should say to the servant, "Where has that picture gone?" and the maid replied, "Oh, the master took it!" Would she find fault? Oh, no! If it had been a servant who took it down, or a stranger who removed it, she might have said something; but not when I took it, for it is mine. And surely we will let God be Master in His own house: where we are only the children, He shall take whatever He pleases of all He has lent us for a while. IV. Job's last comfort lay in this truth, that GOD IS WORTHY TO BE BLESSED IN ALL THINGS—"Blessed be the name of the Lord." Let us never rob God of His praise, however dark the day is. "Blessed be the name of the Lord." Job means that the Lord is to be blessed both for giving and taking. "The Lord gave," blessed be His name. "The Lord hath taken away," blessed be His name. Surely it has not come to this among God's people, that He must do as we like, or else we will not praise Him. God is, however,

specially to be praised by us whenever we are moved by the devil to curse. Satan had said to the Lord concerning Job, "Put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face"; and it seemed as if God had hinted to His servant that this was what the devil was aiming at. "Then," said Job, "I will bless Him." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The entrance and exit of life:*—1. That every man is born a poor, helpless, naked creature. 2. When death cometh, it shakes us out of all our worldly comforts and possessions. 3. The life of man is nothing else but a coming and a returning. (1) That a godly man in his straits studieth arguments to acquit and justify God in all His dealings with him. (2) That the consideration of what we once were, and of what at last we must be, may relieve our spirits in the greatest outward afflictions of this life. (*J. Caryl.*) *Infancy and after life:*—Job feels himself to be very poor indeed, everything is gone, he is stripped; yet he seems to say, "I am not poorer now than I was when I was born." I had nothing then, not even a garment to my back but what the love of my mother provided for me. I was helpless then; I could not do anything for myself whatever. One said to me the other day, "All is gone, sir, all is gone save health and strength." Yes, but he had not so much as that when he was born. David often very sweetly dwells upon his childhood, and still more upon his infancy; and we shall do well to imitate him. Suppose that you and I should be brought to extreme weakness and poverty, we shall never be weaker nor poorer than we were then. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Empty-handed departure from life:*—We have heard of a rustic who, when dying, put a crown-piece into his mouth, because he said he would not be without money in another world; but then he was a clown, and every one knew how foolish was his attempt thus to provide for the future. There have been stories told of persons who have had their gold sewn up in their shrouds, but they took not a penny with them for all their pains. The dust of great Cæsar may help to stop a hole through which the blast blows, and the dust of his slave cannot be put to more ignoble uses. The two ends of our life are nakedness; if the middle of it should not always be scarlet and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day, let us not wonder; and if it should seem to be all of a piece, let us not be impatient or complaining. (*Ibid.*) **The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.**—*The right attitude in time of trouble:*—It is an easy thing to smile when we are pleased, when our enterprises are successful, and our garners are filled with all manner of store. It is a far different thing to maintain a thankful spirit in the day of adversity, to "rest in the day of trouble." It is no easy thing to contemplate, with an even mind, the reverses of human life. Yet the patriarch Job was able to meet the most afflicting changes with a holy composure, to own the hand and to bless the name of God in the cloudy as in the sunny day. In these words we have a clear statement of the providence of God in the affairs of human life, and an example of the true disposition and experience of a child of God. I. The troubles of Job had fallen upon him fourfold. Of each of the four great troubles which had befallen him, a natural cause had been reported. If Job could have anticipated the light of modern wisdom, he would, no doubt, have fixed his mind, and allowed it to rest, upon the instruments of his great affliction. In second causes men seek and find the potency of human events; but they "regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of His hands." The conduct of Job is an instructive contrast to this, and an edifying example of the good and right way. He exclaims, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." It is no less strange than deplorable, that, in proportion as great discoveries in sciences and arts have wrought effects, there has been an evil and unreasonable heart of unbelief growing and spreading, and emboldening men to limit or deny the power of God to exercise a controlling influence in His own creation and in the affairs of men. 2. We have represented to us the true disposition and conduct of a child of God in the example before us. Job in deepest distress could say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." (*Edward Meade, M.A.*) *Right conduct under the smiles and frowns of God:*—I. MEN OUGHT TO ACKNOWLEDGE GOD UNDER THE SMILES AND FROWNS OF PROVIDENCE. God is the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things. He rules in the kingdoms of nature, providence, and grace. He controls all the views, purposes, and actions of men. No good nor evil can come to them but under His direction and by virtue of His influence. Since God guides all the wheels of providence and governs all secondary causes, all good and evil are to be traced up to His holy, wise, powerful, righteous, and sovereign hand. II. MEN

OUGHT TO BLESS AS WELL AS ACKNOWLEDGE GOD UNDER BOTH THE SMILES AND FROWNS OF HIS PROVIDENCE. Job acknowledged that God had given and taken away, and then adds what was still more important, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." 1. God never takes away any favours from mankind but what He meant to take away when He gave them. As He always has some purpose to answer by every good gift, so when that good gift has answered the purpose for which it was given, He takes it away, and not before. So that He acts from the same benevolent motive in taking away as in bestowing favours. 2. It becomes men to bless God in taking away as well as in giving peculiar favours, because the favours He continues are generally more numerous and more important than those He removes. 3. The afflicted always know that whatever personal evils God brings upon them, He constantly seeks the general good of the universe; and that all the sufferings they endure are calculated and designed to answer that wise and benevolent purpose. 4. The afflicted and bereaved have often reason to bless God, because the evils they are suffering are so much lighter than those that many others have suffered and are suffering. They are apt to think and say there is no sorrow like unto our sorrow. 5. Men should always bless God, because this is the only way to make all His dealings towards them eventually work for their good. There is an infallible connection between their feeling and acting right under Divine corrections, and their receiving spiritual and everlasting benefit from them. Reflections—1. This subject suggests the propriety of drawing near to God, and conversing with Him under His correcting hand. His providential dealings have a meaning and a voice, which the afflicted ought to hear and understand. 2. See the nature of true submission under the afflicting and bereaving hand of God. It is something very different from stupidity and insensibility under Divine chastenings. This is not submitting to them, but despising them, which is highly displeasing to God. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*)

Job recognising God's hand:—I. THE WORDS SPOKEN IMPLY A CONVICTION OF THE DOCTRINE OF A PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE. Many there are who, although they aver that God will not utterly leave an abandoned world, still deny the existence of a particular providence. Job saw the hand of God in all the afflictive dispensations under which he lay. II. ALTHOUGH JOB PRAISES GOD FOR THE GIVING OF HIS MERCIES, STILL HE RECOGNISES HIS HAND IN THE TAKING OF THEM AWAY. Tell one who is healthy of the mercy of God in giving him his strength, and this he may readily acknowledge. But on the withdrawment of these mercies, how does he receive it? III. THESE WORDS FLOW FROM THE CONVICTION OF ONE WHO SAW THE DIVINE JUSTICE SHINING IN ALL HIS ACTS. The real Christian is widely distinguished from the man of the world. The latter charges God foolishly as acting foolishly, but the former sees plainly that God is just and holy in all He does. IV. JOB RECOGNISED THE DIVINE WISDOM WHICH SUPERINTENDED AND CONTROLLED HIS SUFFERINGS, FOR A GOOD END. These words, as well as recognising God's dealings as wisest and best, whether in gain or in bereavement, are an answer to the voice of lying and temptation. Satan had been exceedingly busy, and wished to overwhelm the holy man with despair. He continually threw in gloomy thoughts and doubts of the care, and goodness, and wisdom of God. But Job was not to be moved by such words. (*T. Judkin, A.M.*)

The life of the true:—I. THE LIFE OF THE TRUE HAS THE ORDINARY VICISSITUDES. Job had received children, cattle, and property from the Lord, and all had been now "taken away." In the life of all men there is a constant receiving and losing. Health, pleasure, friendship, fame, property, these come and go. How much that we all once had has been taken away from us. The freshness of childhood, the buoyancy of youth, the circles of early friendships. These vicissitudes of life—1. Remind us that this world is not our rest. 2. Urge us to rest on the Unchangeable. II. THE LIFE OF THE TRUE HAS AN ENNOBLING CREED. Job felt that God was in all the receivings and losings of his life. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." Some trace their vicissitudes to chance, and some to necessity, but Job to God. He recognised God in all the events of his life. This creed is—1. Reasonable. If there be a God, He must be concerned in everything—the small as well as the great. 2. Scriptural. The Bible is full of it. Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without His notice. 3. Dignifying. It brings God in conscious proximity to man in his everyday life. III. THE LIFE OF THE TRUE HAS A MAGNANIMOUS RELIGIOUSNESS. "Blessed be the name of the Lord." The language is that of pious exultation. This spirit is something more than submission to the Divine will under suffering—

even something more than an acquiescence in the Divine will in suffering. It is exultation in the manifestation of the Divine will in all the events of life. It amounts to the experience of Paul, who said, "We glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, patience, experience," &c. (*Homilist.*) *God's dealing with Job*:—Let us consider God's seemingly hard dealing with Job, notwithstanding He had once dealt so bountifully with him, that is, "The Lord hath taken away." It is hard, no doubt, for a man to be born in poverty; and be obliged to struggle on in poverty and want all his life long; but still I should imagine it must be much easier for a man who had been born poor to be able to live in poverty, than for a man who had been born and reared up in plenty and luxury; for a man never misses what he never possessed. We have a striking instance of this in the history of the unjust steward. When that unfaithful man was about to be turned out of office, we find him absorbed for a time in private meditation and pondering over the terrible change that awaited him; and at last he was forced to give vent to his feelings in these words, "I cannot dig, and to beg I am ashamed." A man of gentle birth, or a man who has been used to enjoy life, when he is suddenly reduced to poverty and want through some unforeseen and unavoidable misfortune, has not been used to the hardships that a poor man has been accustomed to bear, and therefore his want of experience makes the change so much the more intolerable for him. And I have no doubt but that it was the terrible change which came so suddenly upon him that made the young prodigal son in the Gospel, "who had wasted his substance with riotous living" in the far country, and "who would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat," to cry out with a heavy heart and tearful eye, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" Job was cognisant of the fact that the Almighty had delivered him into the hands of Satan to do what he would with him, provided he only spared his life; and therefore, instead of saying, "The Lord gave," and Satan hath taken away, Job saith here, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." True it is that it was the Sabeans that had seized upon the oxen and the asses, and had taken them away, and had slain all the servants with the edge of the sword. It was true that it was a fire from heaven that had burned up and consumed all the sheep and the servants. It was true that the Chaldeans had fallen upon the camels, and carried them away, and had slain all the servants with the edge of the sword. It was only too true that a great wind from the wilderness smote the four corners of the house in which all his sons and daughters were feasting together, and buried them all beneath its ruins. But Job uttered not a word of complaint against any of these, for well he knew that all these were only instruments in the hands of Satan with the express permission of God, and that by these Satan was to prove his uprightness: hence Job still persists in saying, "The Lord hath taken away." It was the same God that had dealt so bountifully with Job at first, that had now again stripped him of all that he had; and when the Almighty gave them unto Job at first, He made no conditions with him; He never promised him that he should have to keep his riches or property for any definite period, much less that he should have them absolutely and for ever. Oh, no! and hence it was only just that God should do with His own things as seemed good unto Himself, and to all this just and righteous dealing of God's Job agrees; and he confesses that in the text when he says, "The Lord hath taken away." (*H. Harris Davies, M.A.*) *The Lord hath taken away*:—These words were not lightly uttered. They were said by one who, with mantle rent and head shaven, had fallen on the ground and worshipped. After all, it is not the praise of jubilant moments that is the truest, but that which is murmured low in the thick darkness, mixed with tears. It is all very fine to sing with the linnets in the sunshine, but to sing against the weather is finer. Everything around us looks mournful in the fall of the leaf—all is fading and vanishing, and the odour of death is in the damp air. Yet nature in her bright tints seems to say, "Isn't it beautiful?" This decay is a happening fit and seasonable. And every fading and vanishing face is a bright advent. It is well, though it look ill to us; and it is always opportune, however bad it seems to us who remain. Believing in God and immortality as we do, it is the quite best thing for them. God in His wise government brings punctually the change of air which the soul requires. But what of us who are left? I. OUR TRUE POSSESSION IN THOSE WHO ARE TAKEN AWAY REMAINS UNTOUCHED. The portion of the heart, that is the true possession—not what we see and hear. This

affection is ours still. Death does but refine and sublime it. The dead are not gone from us, they are given to us as we never had them before. The ancient violin-makers wrote of their work, making the wood speak, "Being dead, I sing more than when I was alive." May it not be that the idealising touch of death reveals that which we had missed before? We can see now the beauty that was not able to shine out in them before. It is the real man we see now. Let us be bold and loving enough to imagine good when only evil is apparent. II. THE TRUE-HEARTED AND BELOVED ARE STILL WITH US AS REGARDS THEIR INFLUENCE. In this respect we have lost nothing, but perhaps gained something. Sometimes the pity is that one cannot escape from the influence of one's ancestors, and get clear of the black drop in the blood which we inherit. But a brave, upright, holy life is more quickening in its effect when that life is over. The thought of such has had a restoring, wholesome, moulding influence. And let us not doubt for a moment that those who are taken away still live. They, not their influence only. I never doubt that. Extinction at death is altogether too poor and low as the solution of the mystery of humanity. To me it is an impossibility to believe that of the soul developed in long evolution; to think that is the end of the greatest work the great Creator ever made. To believe what some call nature, what I call God, should be so foolish and so wasteful as to throw away the only great thing, evolved at such tremendous cost—to extinguish the conscious soul, that subtle and wonderful essence which took the Creator ages to distil, is an impossibility to me. Death means life. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. (*S. A. Tipple.*) *Job's gracious words*:—Although he was bereaved of every comfort, although his heart was pierced with many sorrows, although his patience was tried by the extremity of pain, and his ear stunned with the words of a foolish woman, Job still retained his integrity, and continued to look up with cheerful resignation to the hand that chastened him. The calamities which befell Job are a standing lesson, confirmed by the experience and observation of mankind in all ages, that this world furnishes no armour which is proof against the arrows of adversity; and that the more diversified are the comforts which any person enjoys, he is exposed to the greater variety of suffering in the days of darkness which may overtake him. I. THE WORDS OF JOB DISCOVER A RECOLLECTION OF THE GOODNESS OF GOD. Instead of searching for other causes of the distinguished prosperity which he had enjoyed, he says, with the simplicity and humility of a grateful spirit, "The Lord gave." There is no portion under the sun precisely similar to that which was given to Job. But all we have we have received from the hand of God. If you accustom yourselves to remember the years of the right hand of the Most High, no change of situation will obliterate from your minds the good which you have received; and to be deprived will seem but another phase of the same Divine goodness. II. THE WORDS OF JOB IMPLY AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT THAT THE LORD DOES NOT DEAL UNJUSTLY WITH THE CHILDREN OF MEN WHEN HE TAKES AWAY WHAT HE GAVE. The security and joy of possession may have produced a mistaken opinion of the good things of this world. But you do not find in Scripture any promise of their being continued to you. They are in their nature temporary. When they are bestowed in the largest measures, they cease not to be precarious. You cannot demand from the justice of your Creator that He should never take away from you anything that He gave. If He takes away you should, with Job, be disposed to bless His name. III. THE WORDS OF JOB IMPLY A CONVICTION THAT THE EVIL WHICH THE CHILDREN OF MEN RECEIVE IS INTENDED FOR THEIR BENEFIT. He represents it as proceeding from the same independent and unchangeable Being from whom they receive good. God rejoices over His creatures to do them good; but it is needful that He should sometimes afflict. In the sober solitude of affliction He corrects that giddiness with which continued prosperity often inspires frivolous minds, and His chastisements bring back to Himself those hearts which His indulgence had estranged. By touching something dear to those who are at ease in their possessions, He rebukes their former indifference about the distresses of others, and melts them into a fellow-feeling of all the infirmities of the children of sorrow. Although the salutary effects are often counteracted by the foolishness of man, yet it has been understood in all ages that adversity is, by the appointment of nature, the season of recollection, and the school of virtue. IV. THE WORDS OF JOB IMPLY A BELIEF THAT THE BENEFIT WHICH THE CHILDREN OF GOD DERIVE FROM AFFLICTION IS IMPARTED TO THEIR SOULS WITH TENDERNESS AND GRACE. Attend then to the consolations of religion.

The consolations are founded on the principle that all the sorrows of life are appointed by God. The same hand which, at one time, fills your houses with good things, at another time measures out the waters of affliction which you drink. Attend to the hopes which religion provides for the afflicted. But these hopes belong only to His dutiful children. If you honour the God of your fathers, if you enjoy with moderation what He gives, and serve Him with gladness of heart in the multitude of His goodness, He will revive you when you walk in the midst of trouble. The best preparation for adversity, then, is the sentiment of religion, habitually cherished by acts of devotion. (*G. Hill, D.D.*) *The mourner's song* :—Atheism in sorrow is a night without a star. 1. Man cannot have any property apart from God. 2. Death is the assertion of God's proprietorship. 3. Submission to Divine arrangements is the highest test of obedience. 4. Submission is most honourable to man, and most acceptable to God, when it rises into thankfulness. In sorrow the soul finds its surest refuge in fundamental principles. 1. There is a God. 2. That God is careful of me. 3. By impoverishing me of other possessions, He is seeking to enrich me with Himself. 4. He will ultimately take me as well as my family and property. 5. If I can bless His name in the very sanctuary of affliction and death, what rapture shall I feel in the heaven of unclouded and undying love! He who submits most lovingly and reverently on earth shall sing most sweetly in heaven. 6. Out of this filial submission comes a doubling of the very possessions which were taken away. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *God the subtractor* :—It sounds a Christian commonplace when we sing that all blessings flow from God. Existence itself, with its range of faculty and wealth of delight, becomes ours by the daily will of God, to be recalled and revoked at His good pleasure. For these unnumbered bounties and benefits we find it easy to bless the Lord who gives. But can we, as we lose them, one after another, also bless the Lord who takes away? How hardly we learn to trust in God the subtractor! Consider, for instance, how springtime belongs to us all to begin with—and bounding health and sunny spirits and the zest of being alive. In life's April we are happy as with a singing of birds in the heart. But the season draws on when He who gave these boons of youth will take some of them, perchance most of them away. And so, too, we have hope granted us to begin with, and generous ambitions, and gallant dreams of what we will be and what we can do. These also are the gifts of God. It is an instinct with the young to gird themselves for the peaks and prizes of life, albeit we see only a few in each generation walking with tranquil breath about those high tablelands, for which we all secretly feel that we were born. And this is not because, as in a competition, some must be first. Real eminence is a region, not a pinnacle, and those who dwell there beckon us up to the ample spaces by their side. Yet the forlorn sense of limitation creeps over most men in middle age. You have measured your own powers by that time, and found the end of your tether. The God who kindled those brave hopes and plans is the God who quenches them one by one. Can we accept our limitation, and gain peace even in what seems defeat and failure, as we say quietly, The will of the Lord be done? Then again, how strangely God often gives a man his great opportunity. Once perhaps in a lifetime the door opens, and he may enter in and obtain his heart's desire and win his fame and success. But it is not for always. The man himself may have no blame to bear. Yet the door shuts again as strangely as it opened, and God has taken the opportunity away. For the rest of his days that man will never go any farther. But when the roses fade out of your own garden, can you say as you stand among their dead petals, Blessed be the name of the Lord? Or think again of friendship, that golden gift of God, which is granted to most of us but for a season. How sadly our dearest friends divide and scatter, or more sadly we outlast their affection. For the bitterest losses and withdrawals of life there is no final or sufficient solution. We can but accept them in blind faith which falls back on the Inscrutable Will. The Lord hath taken away is "the last word that can be said. Nothing can go beyond it, and at times it is the only ground which we feel does not shake under our feet." The Lord Himself is left. And in the hour of our utmost desolation it is He who whispers, "I am thy Youth, and thy Health, and thy Opportunity, and thy Success, and thy Consolation. I am thy Friend and thy Shield, and thy exceeding great Reward. All thy fresh springs are in Me." The like truth applies to the highest spiritual visitations and benedictions. The breath of the Holy Ghost is not ours either to command or to retain. There come times when

the whole inward nature lies parched and barren, when impulse flags and sickens, and desire grows languid, and the fountain of love seems shrunken and low. The holiest and most mysterious gifts of God—the touch of His awful presence, the solemn rapture of His communion, the clasp and embrace of His love—they are not with us always. When we say, The Lord gave, sometimes we must say also, The Lord hath taken away. Too many Christians fret and perplex and blame themselves when they sink below the high-water mark of some former experience of the Divine bounty. Yet from the nature of the case that must needs be. No pilgrim to Jerusalem may linger on the shining Mount of Transfiguration. It may be that our Lord's warning against treasures on earth applies to the hoarding up even of spiritual experiences and emotions. The apostle's word that we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out, may prove true at last concerning those inward possessions which even the saints have prided themselves on, and clung to and trusted in. God will bring our very faith to the bare simplicity of childhood, so that we may repose not in our creed, not in our fidelity, but in Himself alone. And thus it comes to pass with the Christian who has suffered the loss of all things, that he gathers grace to bless God even out of that very nakedness to which God has reduced his spirit. Yet the ultimate truth stands sure, that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. He cannot tantalise His children with a mere loan of blessings which they must so soon lament. What He grants once He never reclaims absolutely and for ever. When we confess that we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come, we affirm more than bare immortality. We mean that the life to come shall realise and make perfect all that this life has come short of, and failed at, and left undone. Heaven for a Christian is the home prepared for his lost causes and unfinished labours and impossible loyalties. Christ Himself has taken charge of all our dead hopes, our ruined plans, our buried joys, our vanished years, our broken dreams. He has laid them away safe in His holy sepulchre. So the resurrection of the dead shall include the blossoming again of every fair thing that has faded and withered out of our hearts. The world to come shall renew all the fulness and glow and passion of existence which this world half bestowed and then extinguished. The time-worn disciple can feel at last detached and disengaged from everything save the Father's perfect will. God has taken away so much from him that he has now so many hostages in Paradise. One after another his treasures have been lifted into heavenly places, until his heart is only waiting for the call to follow and regain them there. (*T. H. Darlow, M.A.*) *God giving and taking*:—All heaven must have kept holiday when this calm, intelligent, and believing utterance was made. Over against Cicero, with his culture, philosophy, and eloquence, when mourning as those who have no hope in the decease of a beloved daughter, may we gladly set the Chaldean patriarch who, in the deprivation of health, wealth, and children; in the swerving counsel of an uncongenial wife; in the oil of vitriol which self-righteous friends poured into his gaping wounds, could still honour God and possess his soul in patience. Successive inundations, which would have swept others into hell, only raised this grand old hero on their mountain billows to higher altitudes of faith, self-conquest, and endurance. I. THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN RESIGNATION. 1. Implies belief in a wise and loving Providence. 2. Contentment with our allotments. 3. Calm yielding to the will of God. No retaliation, no resistance, and no flight, like Adam or Jonah, is attempted. 4. Deep sense of our mercies God leaves more than He takes. Lot's property lost, yet family spared; himself saved. If Isaac must die, yet Ishmael lives. If Joseph is devoured, Benjamin and the other sons survive. 5. A strong confidence in God. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." II. THE MANNER IN WHICH IT IS SHOWN. 1. It is sincere (xxxi.). 2. It is cheerful (ii. 10). 3. It is immediate (i. 20). 4. It is constant (xlii. 7, 8). III. PROOFS OF ITS REASONABLENESS. 1. Perfections of God require it (Isa. xl. 26–31). 2. The Word of God demands it (Jas. v. 11). 3. The honour of religion closely related to it (1 Pet. ii. 20). 4. The example of Christ sanctions it (Heb. xii. 3). 5. Our present and future felicity depends on it (1 Pet. v. 10). (*Homiletic Review.*) *Submission to bereaving providences*:—The affliction and the patience of Job are set before us as an example, and there is scarcely any case that can occur but something in his complicated trials will be found to correspond to it. His afflictions were sent, not so much in consequence of any particular sin, as for the trial of his faith. However painful any affliction may be, while we are exercised by it, yet when it is over we often

perceive that all was wise and good; at least, we see it so in others. In Job's trials, in particular, God was glorified, Satan confounded, and the sufferer comes forth as gold. That which supported him under all was the power of religion, the value of which is never more known than in the day of adversity. This is the armour of God, which enables us to stand in the evil day; and having done all, to stand. I. THE SPIRIT OF SUBMISSION UNDER BEREAVING PROVIDENCES EXEMPLIFIED IN THE CONDUCT OF JOB. There are several particulars in this case which serve to show the greatness and severity of Job's affliction, and the aboundings of the grace of God towards him, which enabled him to endure it all with so much meekness and submission. 1. The degree of his afflictions. The objects taken away were more than were left, and seemed to leave him nothing to comfort him. 2. His trouble came upon him suddenly and unexpectedly, and completely reversed his former circumstances. It was all in one day, and that a day of feasting too, when everything appeared promising around him. Prosperity and adversity are like two opposite climates: men can live in almost any temperature, if but inured to it; but sudden reverses are insupportable. Hence it is we feel most for those who have seen better days when they fall into poverty and want. 3. Though Job was eminently pious, it is doubtful whether his children were so in any degree, and this would render the bereavement far more severe. 4. His submission also appears in a holy moderation which attended his griefs. A man of no religion would have been distracted, or have sunk in sullen despair. A heathen would have cursed his gods, and perhaps have committed suicide, being filled with rage and disappointment. 5. Amidst all his sorrow and distress he preserves a holy resolution to think well of God, and even blesses His holy name. II. THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH JOB'S SUBMISSION WAS EVIDENTLY FOUNDED. There is the patience of despair, and a submission to fate; but Job's was of a very different description. 1. He considers all that befell him as God's doing, and this calms and quiets his spirit. 2. He recollects that all he had was from the hand of God; that it was merely a gift, or rather lent for a time, to be employed for His glory. 3. He feels thankful that they were once given him to enjoy, though now they are taken from him. We may see reason to bless God that ever we had property or children or friends to enjoy, and that we possessed any of them so long as we did; though now, by the will of providence, we are deprived of them all. 4. Even when bereaved of every earthly comfort, he considers God as worthy of his gratitude and adoration. Job could bless the hand that took away, as well as the hand that gave; and this must have been a special act of faith. Reflections—(1) How wise and how heedful to choose the better part, which shall never be taken from us. (2) Afflictions, if not sanctified, will only tend to aggravate our guilt. (3) The example of Job teaches us that a spirit of despondency and discontent in a time of trial is utterly inconsistent with true religion. (4) While we admire the patience of Job, we cannot but abhor the unfeeling conduct of his friends. (*J. Haman.*)

True resignation:—This sentence is one of the pillars of Christian ethics, and represents one of the highest attainments taught by God's revelation. If Job had said nothing else, this verse is sufficient to stamp him as one of the greatest of moral philosophers. I. THE FACTS HERE STATED. 1. "The Lord gave." Everything came from Him. He gave us life at first. He gives us every breath we draw, every meal we eat, every friend we value, every relative we love. 2. "The Lord taketh away." It is practical infidelity to look upon our losses in any other light than we regard our gifts. He gives and He takes away the gift. And He has the right to do so. II. THE SENTIMENT IMPLIED. It is this inward sentiment that makes the aphorism so precious and valued. The under-current which gives life to the dead body is resignation to the Divine will. This is what Job manifested, and it is the proper course for us. 1. It is a natural course. What He does is done in wisdom. Hence acquiescence is the proper and natural feeling to be displayed. 2. It is a wise course. To murmur and complain at trials is a source of still greater misery and unhappiness. Resignation, like the honey in the lion's carcase, will bring us comfort in our sorrow. It promotes the highest Christian graces. It tranquillises the disturbed passions and calms the troubled soul. The highest form of resignation is that brought before us in the text—a feeling which will not only submit, but will bless the gracious hand that deals the blow, knowing that the blow is only dealt in love. (*Homilist.*)

Submission with praise to God on the death of hopeful children:—I. SHOW WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND BY BLESSING GOD'S NAME AT SUCH TIMES. 1. It does not exclude a becoming grief at the loss of near and dear relatives. 2. It supposes

that we are far from thinking, and much further from speaking, hardly of God. 3. We are not to bless God for such strokes, in themselves considered. They may be called evils, as sin is the occasion or procuring cause of them. 4. We should bless God at such times, because we may be assured, if we are true believers, that He designs to do us good thereby, though we at present, perhaps, cannot see how. II. DEMONSTRATE THE TRUTH OF THE PROPOSITION. Or make it appear that it is our duty to bless God, not only when He gives, but also when He takes away. Most, I fear, are not so thankful as they ought to be for the favours which they daily receive from God. All are too apt to "forget His benefits." It is God who both gives and takes away. And He is infinite in all perfections. Therefore He must know what is fittest to be done. God only takes what He freely gave, or rather lent us. He never told us we should always enjoy our relations, or that He would not call for them. If our deceased relations were truly religious, or made partakers of saving grace, God hath taken them out of a sinful, troublesome world, and at the time which He thought best. And though God hath taken them from us, He hath taken them to Himself. III. THE APPLICATION. 1. Nothing is by chance. 2. How unbecoming to murmur against God. 3. How miserable must they be who do not eye the providence of God in their affections. 4. What an excellent thing is grace. 5. Let us be weaned from earthly friends. 6. This may reconcile us to the death of godly relations. (*Joseph Pitts.*) *Praise for resignation*:—Dr. Pierson says, concerning a German pastor, Benjamin Schmolke, that a fire raged over his parish and laid in ruins his church and the homes of his people. Then God's angel of death took wife and children, and only graves were left, then disease smote him, and laid him prostrate, then blindness took the light of his eyes away; and under all this avalanche of ills Schmolke dictated the sweet hymn beginning with the verse—

"My Jesus, as Thou wilt!
Oh, may Thy will be mine;
Into Thy hand of love
My all I would resign."

Music from the heart:—"Blessed be the name of the Lord." God is a wonderful organist, who knows just what heart-chord to strike (says a famous preacher). In the Black Forest of Germany a baron built a castle with two lofty towers. From one tower to the other he stretched several wires, which in calm weather were motionless and silent. When the wind began to blow the wires began to play like an Æolian harp in the window. As the wind rose into a fierce gale, the old baron sat in his castle and heard his mighty hurricane-harp playing grandly over the battlements. So, while the weather is calm and the skies clear, a great many of the emotions of a Christian's heart are silent. As soon as the wind of adversity smites the chords the heart begins to play, and when God sends a hurricane of terrible trial you will hear strains of submission and faith, and even of sublime confidence and holy exultation, which we never could have heard in the calm hours of prosperity. *In everything give thanks*:—There are bitter mercies and sweet mercies; some mercies God gives in wine, some in wormwood. Now, we must praise God for the bitter mercies as well as the sweet: thus Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Too many are prone to think nothing is a mercy that is not sweet in the going down, and leaves not a pleasant farewell on their palate, but this is the childishness of our spirits, which, as grace grows more manly and the Christian more judicious, will wear off. Who that understands himself will value a book by the gilt on the cover? Truly, none of our temporals (whether crosses or enjoyments) considered in themselves, are either a curse or a mercy. They are only as the covering to the book; it is what is writ in them that must decide whether they be a mercy or not. Is it an affliction that lies on thee? If thou canst find it comes from love, and ends in grace and holiness, it is a mercy, though it be bitter to thy taste. Is it an enjoyment? If love doth not send it and grace end it, it is a curse though sweet to thy sense. There are sweet poisons as well as bitter cordials. (*W. Gurnall.*)

Ver. 22. **In all this Job sinned not.**—*Pious resignation*:—"In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." I. CONSIDER THE NATURE OF PIOUS RESIGNATION TO THE WILL OF GOD, in His afflictive dispensations towards us, as represented in what Job did upon the present occasion. The greatest favourites

of heaven are often the subjects of the severest afflictions. Not only is affliction the common lot of all men, but adversity may be a greater token of the Divine favour and love than prosperity itself. Of Job it is said, "he arose"; that is, he did not sink under his afflictions so as to forget himself. He rose from his seat with all the dignity of true religion and heavenly composure of mind. He "rent his mantle." An outward sign, in Eastern countries, of great distress, or of indignation. Thus Job testified the greatness of his sorrow and the depths of his humiliation as a sinful creature. "Shaved his head," another expression of uncommon distress. "Fell down upon the ground," bowing lowly and prostrate before the Majesty of heaven, with entire submission to the Divine will. "And worshipped," not in appearance only, but in heart. So we see that pious resignation does not consist in the stupid insensibility of the hard hearted, nor in the monkish apathy of the Stoic; for there is neither virtue nor grace in bearing what we do not feel; and no chastening is for the present joyous, but grievous. People may suffer very much under their afflictions, and feel them very deeply, and be resigned to the will of God at the same time. Neither is an earnest desire to have our affliction removed inconsistent with the nature of holy submission. We may weep and mourn, and betray our inward distress by our outward emotions and conduct, and still be unfeignedly submissive to the will of God. External agitations are, in some cases, the almost unavoidable effect of strong natural affections. Insensibility, so far from being the ornament, is the disgrace of human nature. II. A PECULIAR PRIVILEGE OF GOD'S PEOPLE UNDER HIS AFFLICTING HAND, WHICH IS EXHIBITED TO US IN WHAT JOB said. "Naked came I," &c. Here is an interpretation of the true state of his mind, as evidential of a most excellent frame of heart. It is recorded to teach us what is our duty as creatures, and what is our privilege as Christians, if indeed we be partakers of the saving grace of God. Every good thing we have is the undeserved gift of God, to be received with gratitude, thanksgiving, and love, and to be sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. It is not only our duty to justify the Lord in all His afflictive dispensations towards us; it is our privilege to praise God for them, and even bless Him for our afflictions. They will then prove unspeakable blessings to us. III. A TESTIMONY BY THE HOLY GHOST HIMSELF CONCERNING THE GREAT EXCELLENCY OF PATIENT RESIGNATION. "In all this," &c. In all the behaviour of this servant of the Lord he acted not only like a man, but like a wise man, and like a holy man, a man of God. It was not his natural fortitude and courage, nor the strength of reason and argument that supported him, but the superior power of faith in God, the nobler principle of Divine grace. He did not utter a repining word, entertain a hard thought, nor discover a fretful and impatient spirit. He neither arraigned the justice nor indicted the goodness of God, but acknowledged his own unworthiness and the Divine Sovereignty; confessed his obligations to his great Benefactor, and His undisputable right to do what He would with His own. Remember, then, that the Lord doth not willingly grieve nor afflict the children of men. Afflictions are always dealt out in number, weight, and measure. When the end in view is answered they will be removed. We should be more anxious to have our afflictions sanctified than taken away. Beware of the evil of impatience, murmuring, and discontent. Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? (*C. de Coetlogon.*) *Charging God foolishly*:—The two opposite states of prosperity and adversity equally require our vigilance and caution; each of them is a state of conflict, in which nothing but unwearied resistance can preserve us from being overcome. There is no crime more incident to those whose life is embittered with calamities, and whom afflictions have reduced to gloominess and melancholy, than that of repining at the determinations of Providence, or of "charging God foolishly." They are often tempted to unseemly inquiries into the reasons of His dispensations, and to expostulations about the justice of that sentence which condemned them to their present sufferings. They consider the lives of those whom they account happier than themselves with an eye of malice and suspicion, and if they find them no better than their own, think themselves almost justified in murmuring at their own state. The unreasonableness of this may be seen by—I. CONSIDERING THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD. Many of the errors of mankind, both in opinion and practice, arise originally from mistaken notions of the Divine Being. It is frequently observed in common life, that some favourite notion or inclination, long indulged, takes such an entire possession of a man's mind, and so engrosses

his faculties, as to mingle thoughts perhaps he is not himself conscious of with almost all his conceptions, and influence his whole behaviour. The two great attributes of our Sovereign Creator which seem most likely to influence our lives are His justice and His mercy. The justice of God will not permit Him to afflict any man without cause. Whether we suppose ourselves to suffer for the sake of punishment or probation, it is not easy to discover with what right we repine. If our pains and labours be only preparatory to unbounded felicity we ought to rejoice and be exceeding glad, and to glorify the goodness of God, who, by uniting us in the sufferings with saints and martyrs, will join us also in our reward. Since God is just, a man may be sure that there is a reason for his misery, and it will be generally found in his own corruption. He will therefore, instead of murmuring at God, begin to examine himself, and when he has found the depravity of his own manners it is more likely that he will admire the mercy than complain of the severity of his Judge. Then we may think of God not only as Governor, but as Father of the universe, a Being infinitely gracious, whose punishments are not inflicted to gratify any passion of anger or revenge, but to awaken us from the lethargy of sin, and to recall us from the paths of destruction. A constant conviction of the mercy of God firmly implanted in our minds will, upon the first attack of any calamity, easily induce us to reflect that it is permitted by God to fall upon us, lest we should be too much enamoured by our present state, and neglect to extend our prospects into eternity. Thus by familiarising to our minds the attributes of God we shall, in a great measure, secure ourselves against any temptation to repine at His arrangements, but shall probably still more strengthen our resolution and confirm our piety by reflecting. II. BY REFLECTING ON THE IGNORANCE OF MAN. It is by comparing ourselves with others that we often make an estimate of our own happiness, and even sometimes of our virtue. He that has more than he deserves is not to murmur merely because he has less than another. When we judge so confidently of others we deceive ourselves, we admit conjectures for certainties, and chimeras for realities. No man can say that he is better than another, because no man can tell how far the other was enabled to resist temptation, or what incidents might concur to overthrow his virtue. Let every one, then, whom God shall visit with affliction humble himself before Him with steady confidence in His mercy, and unfeigned submission to His justice. Let him remember that his sins are the cause of his miseries, and apply himself seriously to the great work of self-examination and repentance. (*S. Johnson, LL.D.*) *Job's first victory:*—They are indeed conquerors under trouble who are kept free from sin and provocation in their hour of trial. For this was Job's victory, that in all this Job sinned not. Albeit troubles do suggest temptations to many sins; yet the great sin to be avoided by the godly under trouble is, misconstructing of God and His dealing. Misconstructions of God do both reflect upon the infinite wisdom and deep counsels of God in ordering the lots of His people. And they also do proclaim their own folly, in their want of skill to judge aright of God's proceeding, and in following a course which may well vex themselves, but cannot profit them at all. Whatever advantage saints do give to Satan over themselves in an hour of trial, yet by the power of grace they may be enabled so to walk as may refute all his calumnies of them, and make him a liar; even as God in the issue will, once for all, wipe off all the aspersions which Satan casts upon His followers. As God doth always take notice of His people's carriage so especially under trouble; and whoever so keep their feet in time of trial, they are observed and commended by God. Saints ought not to measure God's approbation of their way under trouble by any present comfortable issue; seeing the Lord may take notice of and commend the integrity of those whom yet He seeth is not fit to deliver: for Job is here commended, while the trial is not only continued, but growing upon him. (*George Hutcheson.*) *Patient Job, and the baffled enemy:*—That is to say, in all this trial, and under all this temptation, Job kept right with God. During all the losses of his estate, and the deaths of his children, he did not speak in an unworthy manner. The text speaks admiringly of "all this"; and a great "all" it was. Some of you are in troubles many; but what are they compared with those of Job? Your afflictions are mole-hills contrasted with the Alps of the patriarch's grief. Ah, if God could uphold Job in all this, you may be sure that He can support you. "All this" also alludes to all that Job did, and thought, and said. If in patience he can possess his soul when all the arrows of affliction are wounding him, he is a man indeed. May we

ourselves so live that it may be said of us in the end, "In all this he sinned not. He swam through a sea of trouble." I. IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS THE MAIN THING IS, NOT TO SIN. It is not said, "In all this Job was never spoken against," for he was spoken against by Satan in the presence of himself; and very soon he was falsely accused by men who should have comforted him. You must not expect that you will pass through this world, and have it said of you in the end, "In all this no one ever spoke against him." Those who secure zealous lovers are pretty sure to call forth intense adversaries. The trimmer may dodge through the world without much censure; but it will seldom be so with an out-and-out man of God. Neither is it a chief point for us to seek to go through life without suffering, since the Lord's servants, the best of them, are ripened and mellowed by suffering. Remember, if the grace of God prevents our affliction from driving us into sin, then Satan is defeated. Satan did not care what Job suffered, so long as he could but hope to make him sin; and he was foiled when he did not sin. If you conquer him in your hour of grief, you conquer indeed. If you do not sin while under the stress of heavy trouble, God will be honoured. He is not so much glorified by preserving you from trouble, as by upholding you in trouble. He allows you to be tried that His grace in you may be tested and glorified. Remember, furthermore, that if you do not sin, you yourself will be no loser by all your tribulations. Sin alone can injure you; but if you remain steadfast, though you are stripped, you will be clothed with glory; though you are deprived of comfort, you will lose no real blessing. True, it may not seem a pleasant thing to be stripped, and yet if one is soon going to bed, it is of no great consequence. II. IN ALL TIME OF TRIAL THERE IS SPECIAL FEAR OF OUR SINNING. It is well for the child of God to remember that the hour of darkness is an hour of danger. Suffering is fruitful soil for certain forms of sin. Hence it was needful for the Holy Spirit to give a testimony to Job that, "In all this he sinned not." 1. For instance, we are apt to grow impatient. 2. We are even tempted to rebellion against God. 3. We may also sin by despair. An afflicted one said, "I shall never look up again. I shall go mourning all my days." Come, if you are as poor as Job, be as patient as Job, and you will find hope ever shining like a star which never sets. 4. Many sin by unbelieving speeches. 5. Men have been driven into a kind of atheism by successive troubles. They have wickedly argued—"There cannot be a God, or He would not let me suffer so." III. IN ACTS OF MOURNING WE NEED NOT SIN. Hearken: you are allowed to weep. You are allowed to show that you suffer by your losses. See what Job did. "Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped"; and "in all this Job sinned not." The husband lamented sorely when his beloved was taken from him. He was right. I should have thought far less of him if he had not done so. "Jesus wept." But there is a measure in the expression of grief. Job was not wrong in rending his garment: he might have been wrong if he had torn it into shreds. Do not restrain the boiling floods. A flood of tears without may assuage the deluge of grief within. Job's acts of mourning were moderate and seemly—toned down by his faith. Job's words also, though very strong, were very true: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither." Job mourned, and yet did not sin; for he mourned, and worshipped as he mourned. Remember, then, that in acts of mourning there is not, of necessity, any sin. IV. IN CHARGING GOD FOOLISHLY WE SIN GREATLY. "Job sinned not," and the phrase which explains it is, "nor charged God foolishly." 1. Here let me say that to call God to our judgment-seat at all is a high crime and misdemeanour. "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" 2. In the next place, we sin in requiring that we should understand God. What? Is God under bonds to explain Himself to us? 3. We charge God foolishly when we imagine that He is unjust. "Ah!" said one, "when I was a worldling I prospered; but ever since I have been a Christian I have endured no end of losses and troubles." Do you mean to insinuate that the Lord does not treat you justly? Think a minute, and stand corrected. If the Lord were to deal with you according to strict justice, where would you be? 4. Some, however, will bring foolish charges against His love. 5. Alas! at times, unbelief charges God foolishly with reference to His power. We think that He cannot help us in some peculiar trial. 6. We may be so foolish as to doubt His wisdom. If He be All-wise, how can He suffer us to be in such straits, and to sink so low as we do? What folly is this! Who art thou, that thou wouldst measure the wisdom of God? V. TO COME THROUGH GREAT TRIAL WITHOUT SIN IS THE HONOUR OF THE SAINTS. There is no glory in being a

feather-bed soldier, a man bedecked with gorgeous regimentals, but never beautified by a scar, or ennobled by a wound. All that you ever hear of such a soldier is that his spurs jingle on the pavement as he walks. There is no history for this carpet-knight. He never smelt gunpowder in his life; or if he did, he fetched out his scent-bottle to kill the offensive odour. Well, that will not make much show in the story of the nations. If we could have our choice, and we were as wise as the Lord Himself, we should choose the troubles which He has appointed us, and we should not spare ourselves a single pang. Who wants to paddle about a duck-pond all his life? Nay, Lord, if Thou wilt bid me go upon the waters, let me launch out into the deep. The honour of a Christian, or, let me say, the honour of God's grace in a Christian, is when we have so acted that we have obeyed in detail, not forgetting any point of duty. "In all this Job sinned not" neither in what he thought, or said, or did; nor even in what he did not say, and did not do: I feel that I must add just this. As I read the verse through, it looked too dry for me, and so I wetted it with a tear. "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly"; and yet I, who have suffered so little, have often sinned, and, I fear, in times of anguish, have charged God foolishly. Is not this true of some of you? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

CHAPTER II.

VERS. 1–10. **And Satan came also among them.**—*Spiritual agencies, good and evil, in sickness*:—This is one of those mysterious chapters of Holy Scripture wherein God hath graciously vouchsafed, for the strengthening of our faith and loving trust in Him, a brief glimpse of that which is continually going on, day by day, in regions mysterious to mortal vision, and in which, could we but at all times feel it, we are so greatly concerned. Scripture is consistent in its testimony throughout—that there is a prince of darkness, a fallen angel, whose constant aim it is to effect our eternal ruin. In this case the evil messenger is permitted by the Most High to afflict one of His own righteous servants with grievous losses and poverty and sore disease, for the trial and purification of his faith. I. SATAN IS FROM TIME TO TIME ALLOWED TO MOVE THE LORD TO AFFLICT EVEN HIS MOST FAITHFUL PEOPLE IN VARIOUS WAYS. The Lord's ways toward His people, and indeed toward all men, are most mysterious, but from the analogy of His dealings with the patriarch Job we may safely conclude that they are full of secret love and mercy towards them, and designed to promote their everlasting happiness. II. THE LORD GIVES SATAN ONLY A LIMITED POWER OVER HIS OWN PEOPLE. As the Lord said, "He is in thine hand, but save his life," so in your case He may have given him liberty to proceed just so far, and no further, with you. III. FAITH UNTRIED IS FAITH NOT PROVED ACCEPTABLE. Many a man deceives himself with the empty counterfeit of faith. Hence an ordeal is requisite in which numbers fall away, whilst the faith of others is brought out as pure gold refined from the furnace of affliction. God graciously keep you from falling away in this your season of trial. IV. SATAN IS MOST FREQUENTLY THE LORD'S AGENT IN THE INFLICTION OF DISEASE AND OTHER TRIALS. But Satan defeats his own purposes in afflicting God's people, because their faith, through God's grace, is thereby strengthened. In order the better to strengthen his position in attacking a believer's faith, Satan will often incite his nearest and dearest relatives to seek to withdraw his heart's allegiance from God. He did this in the case of Job. In the moments of his fancied triumph Satan moved Job's wife to assist him in the deadly warfare. But God had not forsaken him. (*J. C. Boyce, M.A.*) *The afflictions of Job*:—In language of the most stately and beautiful kind there is set before us the mystery of Providence. This passage is but one step in the development of a sublime moral lesson, but it has nevertheless a certain completeness of its own. I. THE CHARACTER OF TEMPTATION. 1. God is not the author of it. In temptation there are three parts. (1) The external conditions which tend to bring it about. God may be the author of these conditions. (2) The state of heart which makes temptation tempting to us. God is not the author of this. (3) There is the special thought in the mind, the suggestion to do the deed, which is the focusing of the pre-existing and undeveloped feelings of the

heart. Satan is the author of this. 2. But God permits us to be tempted. He allows natural laws to work about us, and historical events to shape themselves, and persons and things to come into contact with us, in such ways that temptation arises. Whatever is, is by His permission. 3. God permits temptation for our good. In our lesson we see that it was permitted in Job's case in order to bring out clearly the stability of his faith in God. God is not careless or thoughtless in His permission of our trial. 4. Our friends sometimes unwittingly make temptation harder to us. Job's wife spoke to him in sympathy. "Renounce God and die" is not a fling of sarcasm, but a weak and honest attempt to give comfort. 5. Temptation is never necessarily successful. It was not so in Job's case. II. BEARING TEMPTATION. Job's example gives some practical lessons. 1. See the solitude of the tempted soul. The barriers of the soul cannot be passed. There alone we each must confront temptation and have our fight with it. 2. Job rightly says to his wife that to renounce God would be foolish. If Job had renounced God he would have been irrational, because he would have given up the only source of help possible. 3. Job shows us that faith is the only reasonable attitude of man towards God. (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *The afflictions of Job*:—The trial of Job, as it is portrayed, suggests three truths. I. SATAN IS A PERSONAL BEING. That this is the old doctrine no one denies; but it is asked by many, whether such belief has not been outgrown with all our progress in theological thought. Over against all speculative opinion we have to set the plain teaching of God's Word. The language here is figurative, but it must mean something. Satan is not an abstraction. Observe that Satan here is called the accuser. Milton's story of the fallen angels is only a human invention. The interpretation which makes him a mere personification of evil would make Jesus Christ a mere personification of goodness. II. GOD PERMITS SATAN TO TEMPT BELIEVERS. The great enemy of the soul in its race toward heaven is Satan. III. GOD SETS A LIMIT TO THE POWER OF SATAN. "Behold, he is in thine hand; only spare his life." The tempter could go no further than he was permitted to. But the mystery to Job was that such permission was given at all. If his troubles had come from an enemy, or even from his "miserable comforters," he could have borne them more easily; but that they should have fallen from his Father's hand, that puzzled him. That is the puzzle of human life. Our best relief is that Satan's power has a limit; it cannot go beyond God's permission. No soul needs to be under the control of temptation—it cannot hold the human will; it is not the supreme force in the world. One thing is stronger: the power of God in Jesus Christ, and that power is pledged to every soul in its fight with sin. (*T. J. Holmes.*)

Ver. 3. **Still he holdeth fast his integrity.**—*A commendation of Job's integrity*:—1. Constancy in piety, notwithstanding the sharp temptations of an afflicted condition, is a singular commendation in God's esteem; for hereby Job so acquits himself that the old characters of his piety are not sufficient without this new addition to his commendation (1 Pet. i. 7). And the reason of this is insinuated in the word "holding fast," which in the original imports a retaining and holding of a thing firmly and with our whole strength, because of difficulties and opposition; as the traveller keeps his garment on a windy day. 2. Whatever it be in religion wherewith men please themselves, yet nothing pleaseth God better than sincerity and uprightness when it is persevered in under affliction, and in a trying condition. 3. As God is specially pleased with men's sincerity, so it is against this that Satan plants his chief engines and battery. Satan did not assault Job's outward prosperity, but to better his integrity thereby. Nor is it men's formality or outward profession that he doth so much malign, if he can keep them from being sincere in what they do. 4. Albeit it be no small difficulty to stand fast, and to continue straight and upright in sharp trials, yet the truly sincere are, by the grace of God, able to do it, and to abide never so many and sharp assaults. Even weak grace, supported by God, is a party too hard for all opposition. 5. It is an act of Divine wisdom, when things of the world are going to ruin, not to cast away piety also, and a good conscience; or, because God strips us of outward contentments, therefore to turn our back upon that which ought to be a cordial under all pressures: for this is commended as an act of great wisdom in Job, when other things were pulled from him, still "he held fast his integrity." To take another course will nothing benefit men, or ease their griefs, but doth indeed double their losses. (*George Hutcheson.*) *Graces held fast in trial*:—1. That Satan in all his temptations plants his chiefest battery against sincerity. Satan did

not care at all to pull Job's oxen from him, or his sheep from him, or his children from him, but to pull his grace from him; therefore it is said, Job held that fast. 2. That whatsoever a godly man loseth, he will be sure to lay hold of his graces, he will hold spirituals, whatever becomes of temporals. As it is with a man at sea in a shipwreck, when all is cast overboard, the corn that feeds him, and the clothes that cover him, yet he swims to the shore if he can, with his life in his hand. Or as it is with a valiant standard-bearer, that carries the banner in war, if he sees all lost he will wrap the banner about his body, and choose rather to die in that as his winding sheet than let any man take it from him. 3. That grace doth not only oppose, but conquers Satan and all his temptations. He doth prevail in his integrity (so the Hebrew may be rendered in the letter). 4. That true grace gains by opposition. True grace is increased the more it is assaulted. (*J. Caryl.*) *God unchangeable toward the afflicted servant:*—He is still His servant, and one prominent among His children, and a word is now added showing that Jehovah notes the fidelity of His own: "Holdeth fast his integrity." How beautiful is this! Poor and stricken, bereft of all, Job is still "My servant." The living God loses not interest in His tried and suffering ones. Drink deep from this sweet well. Though change of circumstance oft brings change in those we once called friends, and those from whom we look for comfort give only blame, God is not a man that He should change, and it is still "My servant Job." (*H. E. Stone.*) *The moral law and its observance:*—The lowest step of the religious life is obedience to the moral law, and our time can never be lost when we are gazing at those simple, infinite, eternal sanctions. This is to all Christian life as the primitive granite on which the world is built. The man who strives to be faithful to the moral law, be he even a heathen or a publican, may be nearer to the kingdom of God than they who, in theologic hatreds, systematically violate its most essential precept: "Obedience is better than sacrifice." The sum and substance of the moral law, as Christ set it forth, is truth and love. Only a few men are, in the highest sense, men of principle. A man of principle is one of the noblest works of God. He has learned the sacredness of eternity, the awful axiomatic certainty of law. Two most necessary cautions. 1. None of you may suppose for a moment that it needs no more than an appeal to reason and to conscience to secure obedience to this moral law. This, as all history proves, is a vital error. 2. You cannot see the face of God unless you keep your bodies in temperance, soberness, and chastity. It is not the grandeur of the moral law alone which can help you in this. You have to hear the voice of Christ. (*Dean Farrar, D.D.*) **Although thou movedst Me against him.**—*Satanic importunity:*—1. That Satan is an earnest and importunate solicitor against the people and Church of God. 2. That pure, or rather impure, malice stirreth Satan against the people of God. 3. That God doth afflict His people sometimes without respect unto their sins. Thou didst move Me against him without cause. 4. That God will at the last give testimony for the clearing of the innocency of His servants against all Satan's malicious accusations. (*J. Caryl.*) *Satan's malicious incitements:*—The expression "although thou movedst Me against him" is startling. Is it an admission, after all, that the Almighty can be moved by any consideration less than pure right, or to act in any way to the disadvantage or hurt of His servant? Such an interpretation would exclude the idea of supreme power, wisdom, and righteousness which unquestionably governs the book from first to last. The words really imply a charge against the adversary of malicious untruth. The saying of the Almighty is ironical, as Schultens points out: "Although thou, forsooth, didst incite Me against him." He who flings sharp javelins of detraction is pierced with a sharper javelin of judgment. Yet he goes on with his attempt to ruin Job, and prove his own penetration the keenest in the universe. (*R. A. Watson.*)

Ver. 4. **All that a man hath will he give for his life.**—*Satan's proverb:*—The proverb put into Satan's mouth carries a plain enough meaning, and yet is not literally easy to interpret. The sense will be clearer if we translate it, "Hide for skin; yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." The hide of an animal, lion or sheep, which a man wears for clothing will be given up to save his own body. A valued article of property often, it will be promptly renounced when life is in danger; the man will flee away naked. In like manner all possessions will be abandoned to keep oneself unharmed. True enough in a sense, true enough to be used as a proverb, for proverbs often express a generalisation of the earthly

prudence, not of the higher ideal; the saying, nevertheless, is in Satan's use of it, a lie—that is, if he includes the children when he says, "All that a man hath will he give for himself." Job would have died for his children. Many a father and mother would. Possessions, indeed, mere worldly gear, find their real value or worthlessness when weighed against life, and human love has Divine depths which a sneering devil cannot see. A grim possibility of truth lies in the taunt of Satan that, if Job's flesh and bone be touched, he will renounce God openly. The test of sore disease is more trying than loss of wealth at least. Job was stricken with elephantiasis—one of the most terrible forms of leprosy, a tedious malady, attended with intolerable irritation and loathsome ulcers. (*Robert A. Watson, D.D.*) *Satan's estimate of human nature*:—The Book of Job is a historical poem, and one of the most ancient. In form it is dramatic. We have to be on our guard as to the degree of authority with which we invest the statements of the different interlocutors. Bildad, Zophar, and Eliphaz spoke for themselves only. We must not think all their utterances were inspired. So the utterances of Satan are his own, and are not to be treated as inspired. This proverbial sentence means that a man will give up everything to save his life. The insinuation is that Job served God from merely selfish considerations. Satan was only measuring Job and mankind generally by his own bushel. It must be admitted that there is a degree of truth in the saying. If it had not been so, there would have been no plausibility about it, and it could have imposed on no one. A lie, pure, simple, and unadulterated, does little harm in the world. Some one hath pithily said, "A lie always needs a truth for a handle to it; else the hand would cut itself which sought to drive it home upon another." The worst lies, therefore, are those whose blade is false, but whose handle is true. There is an instinctive love of life in every human being. Life is sweet, even with all its trials, sorrows, and, in many cases, miseries; and there is a clinging to it in every heart. And this love of life is not only an instinctive principle: within certain limits it may even be a positive duty. But the affirmation of the text is not true—I. TO THE HISTORY OF EVEN UNREGENERATE HUMAN NATURE. Even in the unconverted there are principles, some evil and some good, which, becoming dominant, subordinate to themselves the love of life. Such as the passions of hatred and revenge; the love of adventure; duellings; love of knowledge; science; salvation of the imperilled by water, fire, or disease. So, in the name of humanity, we may repudiate the assertion that, as a universal thing, men will do anything to save their lives. II. HOW MUCH LESS TRUE IS THE TEXT OF THE RENEWED HEART. That which is the ruling passion in a man rules over the love of life, as well as other things in him. In the truly godly man the ruling passion is love to God, and love to his neighbour for God's sake, and that dominates over all things else. The adversary, though he used every advantage, could not succeed in shaking Job's confidence in God. (Illustrate from cases of three Hebrew youths, Daniel, Paul, &c.) Satan spoke words of calumny, not of truth. Learn—1. Through our self-love Satan's most insidious temptations come to us. With this estimate of human nature in his mind, he has kept continually appealing to men's love of life, and it is astonishing in how many cases he has at least partially succeeded. 2. The truest greatness of humanity lies in falsifying this assertion of Satan. Since we call ourselves by the name of Christ, let us be distinguished by His unselfishness. That only is a heroic life which forgets itself in service. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *The value of life*:—Life is equally distinguished by brevity and calamity. Nevertheless life has always been considered the most valuable treasure, the most enviable prize. The love of it is unquestionably the most vigorous principle of our nature. It is interwoven with our very frame. As we grow up, to this supreme passion every other inclination pays homage. This adherence to life we have undertaken to justify. There is nothing in it unworthy of the philosopher or the Christian, the man of reason, or the man of faith. I. THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN LIFE. 1. Appeal to authority, the authority of the varied scriptural references to life, such as, "A living dog is better than a dead lion." 2. Contemplate human life as the work of God. "Marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty!" But in this lower world the chief is Thy creature, man. All is under the influence of his power or his skill. See the animal world. See the material world. Everything justifies the supremacy he possesses. His very form is peculiar. What majesty is there in his countenance! He is fearfully and wonderfully made. There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Most High giveth him understanding. He is capable of knowing, and

serving, and enjoying his Creator; he has reason and conscience; he is susceptible of vice and virtue, of morality and religion. 3. Human life has an intimate, unavoidable, inseparable connection with another world, and affords us the only opportunity of acquiring good. If we confine our attention to the present momentary state of man, he will appear a perplexing trifle. He has powers and capacities far above his situation; he has wants and wishes which nothing within his reach can relieve and satisfy. He is great in vain. But as soon as he is seen in connection with another state of being, he is rescued at once from perplexity and insignificance. As soon as we seize this point of vision, all is intelligible. Immortality, what a prerogative! Eternity, what a destiny! A preparation for it, what a calling! The importance of a thing is not to be judged of by the magnitude of its appearance, or the shortness of its continuance, but by the grandeur and variety and permanence of its effects. Nothing can equal the importance of the present life, as a state of probation, according to which our future and unchangeable happiness or misery will be decided. For, upon this principle, none of your actions can be indifferent. Consider that, as is your way, such will be your end. 4. Consider human life in relation to our fellow-creatures, and as affording us the only opportunity of doing good. The means of the temporal and spiritual welfare of mankind are not poured down immediately from heaven. God divides the honour with us. He gives, and we convey; He is the source, and we are the medium. It is by human instrumentality that He maintains the cause of the Gospel, speaks comfort to the afflicted, gives bread to the hungry, and knowledge to the ignorant. But remember, all your usefulness attaches only to life. Here alone you can serve your generation according to the will of God, by promoting the wisdom, the virtue, and the happiness of your fellow-creatures. Would you exercise patience? This is your only opportunity. Would you exercise self-denial? This is your only opportunity. Would you exercise Christian courage, or Christian candour and forbearance, or beneficence? This is your only opportunity. Would you discover zeal in the cause of your Lord and Master? Here alone can you recommend a Saviour, and tell of His love to sinners. Let us—II. SPECIFY SOME OF THE USEFUL INFERENCES WHICH FLOW FROM BELIEF IN THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN LIFE. 1. We should deplore the destruction of it. 2. We should not expose it to injury and hazard. 3. We should be thankful for the continuance of it. 4. We should not be impatient for death. 5. We may congratulate the pious youth. 6. If life be so valuable, let it not be a price in the hands of fools. Learn to improve it. Do not live an animal, a worldly, or an idle life. (*William Jay.*) *To love life a Christian duty*:—The love of life is a principle which evidently belongs to our race. The attachment to life has not been engendered since the fall. It is rather the marred and mutilated relic of one of the features of man's early perfection. This love of life was a fragment of immortality. The love of life survives all that can make life desirable. Take away this principle of the love of life, and the whole fabric of human society would be shaken. The power of the civil magistrate would lose its strong hold on the minds of the rebellious; vice would set no limits to the extent of its profligacy, for no dread would attach to the sternest of penalties. It may be true that the love of life is seldom or never completely lost in the desire for immortality. Life may be lawfully loved—there is not necessarily anything sinful in the love of life. But what are our reasons for loving life? Do we love it because we employ it on worldly pleasures or pursuits, or because it may be consecrated to the glory of God and to the high purposes of eternal salvation? If the latter, then it is an actual duty to desire length of days. Where the heart is converted by the power of the Holy Spirit, the chief longing is to live to God's honour. While it is the great end of our being to promote God's glory, we cannot do this and not at the same time promote our own everlasting happiness. (*Henry Melvill, B.D.*) *The love of life*:—Though these words were uttered by the father of lies, they are no lie. I. THE LOVE OF LIFE IS THE SIMPLEST AND STRONGEST PRINCIPLE OF NATURE. It operates universally on every part of the brute creation, as well as on every individual of the human race, perpetually, under all circumstances, the most distressing as well as the most pleasing, and with a power peculiar to itself; while it arms the feeble with energy, the fearful with courage, whenever an occasion occurs for defending life, whenever the last sanctuary of nature is invaded, and its dearest treasure endangered. It operates with a steady, constant influence, as a law of nature, insensible and yet powerful. It corresponds, in the animated world, with a great principle of gravitation in the material system,

or with the centripetal force by which the planets are retained in their proper orbits, and resist their opposite tendency to fly off from the centre. We see men still clinging to life when they have lost all for which they appeared to live. The Scriptures frequently recognise and appeal to this fundamental principle. The only promise annexed to any of the ten commandments exhibits life as the chief earthly good, and its prolongation as the reward of filial piety. II. SOME REASONS FOR THIS INSTINCTIVE ATTACHMENT TO LIFE. 1. The first reason respects the preservation of life itself. That which, of all our possessions, is the most easily lost or injured, is that on the continuance of which all other things depend. The preservation of life requires incessant attention and exertion. The spark of life is perpetually exposed to the danger of extinction. Nothing but the strongest attachment to life could secure it. Life, we cannot forget, in its highest use, is the season of our trial for an eternal state of being. The results of the whole process of redemption, the accomplishment of the greatest designs of the Deity, are involved in the continuance of this probationary state of existence. 2. The promotion of industry and labour. Life must be loved in order that it may be preserved, and preserved in order that it may be employed. In every state of society, the greater part of the community must necessarily be subjected to labour. Under the best possible form of government, some must produce what is to be enjoyed by others. How great a benefit is that necessary condition of labour which acts as a barrier of defence against the wildness of human passions. 3. The protection of life from the hand of violence. Without some strong restraining sentiment, the life of individuals would be exposed to continual danger from the disordered passions of others. The love of life, so strongly felt in every bosom, inspires it with a proportionate horror of any act that would invade the life of another. The magistrate and the law owe their whole protective efficacy to that sentiment of attachment to existence which is a law written in every heart. III. IMPROVE THE SUBJECT. 1. Infer the fall of man: the universal apostasy of our nature from the state in which it originally proceeded from the Divine Author. Created with this inextinguishable desire of existence, we are destined to dissolution. Our nature includes two contradictory principles—the certainty of death, and the attachment to life. This fact affords the clearest evidence that we are now placed in an unnatural, disordered, disjointed condition; that a great and awful change has passed upon our race since our first father came from the hand of God. This change must be owing to ourselves. 2. The subject reminds us of the salvation which provided us the antidote to our ruined condition. 3. It may serve to remind of the medium by which this Divine life is imparted and received. The connecting medium is faith. 4. The duty and obligation under which we lie: to impart the knowledge and enjoyment of these vital, eternal blessings to our suffering fellow-sinners. (*R. Hall, M.A.*) *Satan's proverb*:—If he did not make, he used it, and so made it his own. It finds expression for an universal truth; it is true to history, and true to experience. Matthew Henry says of this account of Satan, "It does not at all derogate from the credibility of Job's story in general, to allow that this discourse between God and Satan, in these verses, is parabolical, and an allegory designed to represent the malice of the devil against good men, and the Divine restraint which that malice is under." That is not the view which is now taken of the Book of Job by reverent students, but it is interesting, as showing that the parabolic feature in it has always been recognised. I. HOW TRUE THIS PROVERB IS CONCERNING MAN'S CARE FOR HIS BODILY LIFE! In that pastoral age, when property mainly consisted in flocks and herds, skins became one of the principal articles of exchange; they were, in fact, what our coined money is, the medium of purchase and sale. "Before the invention of money, trade used to be carried on by barter—that is, by exchanging one commodity for another. The men who had been hunting in the woods for wild beasts, would carry their skins to market, and exchange them with the armourer for bows and arrows." Translated into our modern language, the proverb would read, "Thing after thing, everything that a man possesses, he would give to preserve his life." There is no intenser passion than the desire to retain life. The tiniest insect, the gentlest animal, holds life as most dear, and battles for it to the very last. The foe that man most dreads, all earthly creatures dread. The impress of sacredness lies on the life even of the meanest and most worthless. Man can calmly lose everything but his life. Poor men cling to life as truly as rich men. Wise men hold life as tightly as ignorant men. Young men regard life no more anxiously than do old men,

Do what you will, you cannot make the fact of your own death real to you. "All men think all men mortal but themselves." The love of life and fear of death is the same in the Christian as in the ordinary man. Conversion to God neither changes the natural instincts of man as a creature, nor the particular elements of a man's character. Good John Angel James used to say, "I am not afraid of death, but I am afraid of dying." All our life long we may be in bondage through fear of death. We are only sharing the common instinct of the creature. "Skin after skin, all that we have we will give for our life." Why has God made life thus sacred? 1. To accomplish His purpose, the time of each man's life must be in His hands. Life is a probation for us all, and one man requires a longer probation than another. God must hold in His hands both the incomings and outgoings of life. And yet man can easily reach and spill his own life. How then shall he be guarded from taking his own life? God has done it by making the love of life the one master-instinct in every man. 2. The order and arrangement of society could not be maintained if men had unlimited control over their own lives, and felt no check from this instinct. Think how the reasons which now induce men to take their own lives would then gain aggravated force. For the smallest things—a trifling anxiety, a passing trouble, a commonplace vexation, slighted love, unsuccessful effort—men would be destroying themselves. What would be the uncertainties, the whirl of change, the wretchedness of this world's story, if men were unchecked by this instinct of life? Widows moan, and orphans weep, and homes are desolated now; but then, what would it be then, if life were lightly esteemed and could be flung away for trifles? 3. But for this instinct of life, man would have no impulse to toil. Through work moral character is cultivated. We must work if we would eat. We must work if we would be happy. We must work if we would be "meetened for the inheritance of the saints in the light." And yet who would work if there were not this instinct of life? What motive would be left to urge us to make earnest endeavours, and to overcome difficulties? The one thing that really inspires our mills, and shops, and warehouses, and studies, is this instinct of life, this passion for life that dwells in all our breasts. 4. This instinct is the secret of our safety from the lawless and violent. Suppose that our life was of no greater value than our property, then we should be at the mercy of every lawless man, who would not hesitate to kill us for the sake of our purse. As it is, even in the soul of the burglar, there is this impress of the sacredness of life, and only at the utmost extremity will he take our life, and so imperil his own. II. WHAT A SATIRE THE PROVERB IS WHEN APPLIED TO MAN'S CARE OF HIS SOUL-LIFE! Yet that soul-life is the man's real and abiding life. His body-life is but a passing, transient thing. The soul-life is Divine and immortal. The body-life is akin to the life of the creatures; the soul-life is kin with God. I live. That is not the same as saying, My heart pulsates, my lungs breathe, my blood courses, my nerves thrill, my senses bring me into relation with outward things. It is equal to saying, An "I" dwells within me. That "I" is a spark struck off from the eternal fire of God. I am a spiritual being, an immortal being. Let the word life mean spiritual life, then how much will men lose rather than lose their souls? How do men reckon sacrifices when their souls are imperilled? What strange delusion can possess men that they can be careless of their priceless treasure? Why do men, who are souls, barter their heavenly birthright for a pottage of worldly pleasure? God Himself seems to wonder over so painful and so surprising a fact. He exclaims, "Why will ye die? O house of Israel, why will ye die?" It is said that within the caterpillar there is a distinct butterfly, only it is undeveloped. The caterpillar has its own organs of respiration and digestion, quite distinct from and independent of that future butterfly which it encloses. There are some insects called Ichneumon flies, which, with a long, sharp sting, pierce the body of the caterpillar, and deposit their eggs in its inside. These soon turn into grubs, which feed within the caterpillar. It is remarkable that the caterpillar seems uninjured, and grows on and changes to the cocoon, or chrysalis, and spins its silken grave, as usual. But the fact is, that these grubs do not injure the worm; they only feed on the future butterfly that lies within the caterpillar. And then when the period for the fluttering of the butterfly comes, there is only a shell—the hidden butterfly has been secretly consumed. Need the lesson be pointed out? May not a man have a secret enemy within his own bosom, destroying his soul, though not interfering with his apparent well-being during the present state of existence; and whose mischievous work may never be detected until the time comes when the soul

should burst forth from the earthly cerements, and spread its wings, and fly free in the heavenlies? Souls are lost now. Souls are won now. To win souls now may cost us sacrifice. Skin after skin a man should be willing to give in order to save his soul's life. (*Robert Tuck, B.A.*) *The fear of death*:—Man is, as the Greek poet speaks, "a life-loving creature." He is ever, whilst sound and sane, averse to death. We may have very little to live for, yet we cling to the thorn which pierces us. The last messenger is unwelcome to royalty in purple, to beggars in rags; to the thoughtless multitude, to the thoughtful few. I. THE AVERSION OF THE SCEPTIC. The unbeliever can approach death only with feelings of intense distress. Death disinherits him of all things, and leaves him poor indeed. Let a shallow scepticism trumpet as it may the supreme attractions of the gulf of nothingness, human nature can only leap into that gulf with a shriek. Alas! that since Christ has lived, death should ever again have become such a king of terrors. II. THE AVERSION OF THE SECULARIST. The man who believes in another world, but who has not lived for it. How reluctant are such to die! It is not difficult to understand this aversion. The Lord has come to demand an account of the stewardship, and the faithless servant trembles. They have lived in sense and sin, and are unprepared for the judgment. The "sting of death is sin." III. THE AVERSION OF THE SAINT. It is a fact that good men have an aversion to dying. We see this in the prayer of David, "O spare me that I may recover strength," &c. Hezekiah's prayer also. The Perfect Man reveals this hesitancy. "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death." Paul also, "Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon." We should like to draw the coronation raiment of purple and gold over this frayed, coarse garb of pilgrimage. And it is ever thus with all the disciples of Jesus. We recoil from dying. On what is this aversion based? 1. There is a natural love of the world we must leave. A person realises a fortune, and on a given day exchanges the old cottage for a mansion. Glad of the aggrandisement, he yet bids adieu to his old home with a regretful sigh. It is something thus with a man leaving this world for a grander destiny. This world may be the battered cottage, poor by the side of the high palace which awaits us, yet is this life and world dear to us. Here we sprang into being, and received our ideas of all glorious things. Our joys and sorrows have made the scenes of life sacred to us, and it is strange how the fibres strike from us, and unite us to the earth on which we live. Thus, when the time comes to part with earth and its ties, there is a struggle in the bosom of the saint. 2. There is a natural distaste for death as considered in itself. We cannot be reconciled to death however we may be assured of its harmlessness. Life is such a magnificent dowry that it makes us nervous to see it placed, even for a moment, on the brink of peril. To a Christian there is but the shadow of death, yet the shadow of such a disaster is abhorrent to our deepest nature. Christianity has taken the sting out of death, and yet one dislikes a serpent even when it has lost its sting. 3. There is a natural shrinking from the mysterious glories of the future. Man always shrinks when on the eve of realising some great ambition. The saint is impelled by desire, and repelled by trembling anticipation. He falters on the verge of the great universe of mysterious glory. Let us seek so to live that our aversion to death may have in it no dark or ignoble elements, and Christ will, perchance, make death light to us—lighter than we sometimes think. (*The Pulpit.*) *The love of life*:—The love of life is a powerful instinct. God has implanted it in the bosom wisely. And during the natural years of life, this instinct holds us to it, as the stem holds an apple to the bough. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Vers. 6-10. **Behold, he is in thine hand.**—*Satan malevolently dealing with Job's personality*:—I. Satan's low ESTIMATE of human nature. His language here clearly implies that even a good man's love of goodness is not supreme and invincible. He states—1. That goodness is not so dear to him as life. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." Self-preservation is a strong instinct in human nature, and therefore a Divine principle; but it is not true that it is ever the strongest feeling in the human heart. A man who has come under the dominion of love for the true, the beautiful, and the good, holds his life as subordinate to the high principles of genuine religion and godly morality. This is a fact which the history of martyrdom places beyond debate. Thousands of men in Christendom to-day can say with Paul, "I count not my life dear unto

me," &c. He states—2. That great personal suffering will turn even a good man against God. Such is the connection of the body with the soul, that great bodily suffering has undoubtedly a tendency to generate a faithless, murmuring, and rebellious spirit. II. SATAN'S GREAT POWER OVER HUMAN NATURE. We infer—1. That his great power moves within fixed limits. 2. That his great power is used to torture the body and corrupt the soul. The ancients ascribed many physical diseases direct to the devil. Physical evils do spring from moral, and the devil is the instigator of the morally bad. See how he corrupts Job's wife. "Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God and die." If you substitute the word "bless" for "curse," you still have the impious spirit of the wife: then in heartless irony she counsels her husband to blaspheme his God. Perhaps she meant, "Thou hast been blessing God under thine affliction thus far, go on with thy cant, and die, for death would be desirable both to thyself and me." Satan acted thus not only on Job's body, but on the soul of Job's wife, and both in order to tempt the patriarch to sin against his Maker. III. Satan's GRAND PURPOSE with human nature. What was his master-purpose? To turn Job against God. And is not this his grand purpose with all men? There is one thought about his purpose, however, suggested by the text, encouraging to us, it is frustratable. Up to the present point he failed with Job. Three things are worthy of attention here concerning Job in frustrating the purpose of Satan. 1. He reproves his wife. "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh." 2. He vindicates God. "What? shall we receive good at the hands of God, and shall we not receive evil?" 3. He is commended by inspiration. Here is the Divine testimony to Job's state of mind amid the torturing of the devil. "In all this did not Job sin with his lips." (*Homilist.*) *Man in the hands of Satan*:—Job has held and still holds a unique place as the representative sufferer of the human race. This hero of meekness, all but overwhelmed with blank hopelessness, paralysed in the inmost nerve of his life, isolated from all that makes living bright and precious, and left, to all human seeming, absolutely helpless in the hands of a slandering and malignant fate, has so burnt his story into the imagination of mankind that it will never disappear so long as hearts are crushed by the wheels of care, and souls are bruised by the blows of temptation. The Old Testament has no more vital element. But is Job a real man, in the hands of a real devil, and sustained and made victorious by a real God, or have we nothing more substantial than fibrous figures woven into a beautiful tapestry by the deft fingers of a nimble fancy? It is plain that the author moves almost wholly in the poetical realm. So the conviction settles in our minds that the thought and fact of this book are cast into a mould as real as that of Agamemnon: a drama intended not for the eye of sense, but for the eye of the mind. Admitting the poetical form of the book, we must ask whether all our highest poetry does not rest on the immutable basis of fact. Illustrate from "In Memoriam," George Eliot's "Spanish Gipsy," "Adam Bede," &c. The history of Job is actual, and not a whit less so, because the form of the story is ideal and dramatic. The important question is, Are the truths which Job's story embodies and illumines, eternal and universal; and do the ideas set forth concerning God and man, evil and good, go to the root of things, and expound the essential nature of our human life? The one thing urgent for us to know, is not, was there a Job, but is there a light from God in the history of Job that guides the reason and conscience? Does Job teach us how to live the best life, and cling with inviolable tenacity to God, not in Uz, but in London? Is God greater than evil? Can He subdue it, and will He? A glance at the prologue of the poem is enough to convince us that the book is expressly written to solve these deep and perplexing problems of the mind. Poem though it be in form, its exhaustless fascination is its philosophy. Like Milton's great classic, it is a defence of the ways of God to men; a bold facing of plausible but false interpretations of life and destiny; a thorough and tremorless exposure of their inherent absurdity and unreason, and an unfaltering vindication of the character of God from all the aspersions of lazily-thinking Zophars, parrot-like Bildads, and fatalistic Elihus. See the special motive of Job's fierce trial. He is not suffering for his sins. It is not a case of the ancestral "eating of sour grapes." Nor is Job put into the furnace of affliction that he may come forth as gold. His affliction is not the apprenticeship of a strong nature to the educational influences of sorrow and temptation. What then is the special motive for this singular and significant experience? Listen to the colloquy in heaven between Satan and God concerning Job! Satan, the slanderer, says,

"Doth Job fear God for nought?" Job knows well enough what he is about, and is simply making the best investment of his powers the market of human life offers. The case is crucial. The test is faultless. The experiment is carried to the maximum of severity. No element of evil is omitted. There then is the stake! How fare the combatants? That is the question at issue. See the swift changes through which Job is put. Satan is permitted to do his worst, and he does it with terrible suddenness and completeness. But all experiments fail utterly. The idea remains triumphant, that God is lovable in Himself and for Himself. Disinterested love of the Eternal is its own reward. He is lovable, notwithstanding fearful evils in our lot, and in our world. (*J. Clifford, D.D.*) **But save his life.**—*The worth of a good man*:—I. BECAUSE IT IS GOOD IN ITSELF. Everything of inherent worth is worthy of preservation, even apart from the idea of utility. The jewel, though it be seldom worn as an ornament, must be carefully kept. So faith in the unseen, a reverent trust in God and fervent piety, had given a jewel-like beauty and value to the character of Job. Hence it must be spared. II. BECAUSE IT IS USEFUL TO SOCIETY. There are many things useful to society. Genius, and the honest pursuit of commercial enterprise, aid the common good of men. But nothing is more beneficial to society than true moral character. Men like Job are the strength, hope, and inspiration of the race. Remove them, and social life becomes dark, cold, and barren. Society has need to pray for the longevity of good men. III. BECAUSE IT SHALL BE A PATTERN TO AFTER GENERATIONS. The Bible is a pattern book of moral life. It is not only a book of cold precepts, but of sympathetic lives. Men need patterns in every sphere of work—in the mechanical and architectural, as well as in the moral. Many a man has become an artist through looking at a beautiful picture. While gazing upon it, the fires of genius have kindled within him. So the lives of men like Job have awakened the desire for piety within many a heart. IV. BECAUSE THE DEVIL WOULD ONLY HAVE LIKED TO PUT AN END TO IT. Could he have killed Job, he would have put out the best light of the times; have plucked the richest blossom of the season. But God would not allow this. He had to expend more discipline on Job yet. God has more love for His people than to let the devil do what he likes with them. The power of Satan is limited, but fearful enough as it is. Are you afflicted? God watches you. Fear not! V. ARE OUR LIVES WORTH SAVING? (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*)

Ver. 9. **Curse God, and die.**—*Job's wife*:—She only comes on the scene to heighten for one moment the intensity of her husband's desolation and misery. "Renounce," she says, "God and die." "Leave the unprofitable service of this God, who has left thee to so undeserved a fate. Leave Him and quit life, a life that has nothing left worth living for." It seems hard indeed, hard above all to those who have known the blessings of an English and a Christian home, that such a sneer and such advice should come from such a quarter. It pains us, as with an unwelcome shock. Let me recall to you that when, some sixty years ago, the poet-painter William Blake drew some wonderfully powerful illustrations to the Book of Job, he, the English husband of a loyal and affectionate wife, refused to follow the course of the story in this terrible detail. All the rest he could portray, step by step; but here he stayed his hand, and those who can turn to his much-prized drawings will see Job's wife vindicated against the scorn of centuries, kneeling beside her husband, and sharing his patient misery. They will see her still by his side, through each and all of his future pangs and agonies, and restored with him to a common happiness in the closing scene. There was something in the record of Job's sufferings too keen and bitter, too remote, may we not thankfully say, from the experience of English and Christian married life, for that sensitive and gifted spirit, so often on the borderland where genius touches madness, to bear to reproduce. And it might well be so. "Curse God and die," she said. The depths of human misery seemed sounded. How many human souls might, in one way or another, have lent an ear to the suggestion. A Roman might have turned upon his unjust gods and died by his own hand, like Cato, with words of defiance on his lips. Others might have sought the same fate in dull despair. Not so Job. (*Dean Bradley.*) *Job's wife*:—Some have spoken very strongly about Job's wife. She has been called a helper of the devil, an organ of Satan, an infernal fury. Chrysostom thinks that the enemy left her alive because he deemed her a fit scourge to Job by which to plague him more acutely than by any other. Ewald, with more point, says, "Nothing can be more scornful than her words, which mean, Thou, who under all the undeserved sufferings which have been

inflicted on thee by thy God, hast been faithful to Him even in fatal sickness, as if He would help or desired to help thee who art beyond help,—to thee, fool, I say, bid God farewell, and die!" There can be no doubt that she appears as the temptress of her husband, putting into speech the atheistic doubt which the adversary could not directly suggest. Brave and true life appears to her to profit nothing if it has to be spent in pain and desolation. She does not seem to speak so much in scorn as in the bitterness of her soul. She is no infernal fury, but one whose love, genuine enough, does not enter into the fellowship of his sufferings. (*R. A. Watson, D.D.*) *A despairing cry*:—Sorrow and pain work a ferment in the soul that is terrible. Our theme is the folly and wickedness of impeaching God. 1. The folly of impeaching the justice, wisdom, or love of God. Think of human ignorance. Compared with the material or brute creation man is great, but not great when compared with his Maker. Sydney Smith satirically described Lord Jeffrey as dissatisfied with the Almighty in the construction of the solar system, particularly as to the rings of Saturn. Men nowadays do soberly set up their judgment in opposition to the will and wisdom of God. They know but part, yet talk as if they understood the Almighty to perfection. 2. The guilt of such a course is equally great. It is a practical repudiation of the authority of God, who commands us to be patient and obedient. It is akin to the dreadful sin of blasphemy, an act that under no circumstances can ever be tolerated. (*C. H. Buckley, D.D.*) *The blasphemy of despair*:—Job's wife is typical of a class of persons that has always existed in the world. Such persons lose sight of all that is bright in life, hem themselves in with the blackest gloom, seek a path only in the darkness where no star shines, allow distrust to take entire possession of their souls, and hatred to reign supreme in the domain of their affections, and then end their career like Pope's reprobate knight, of whom the poet says, "And sad Sir Balaam curses God and dies." In human life we often meet with persons whose gloomy minds throw a shadow on everything with which they come into contact. We protest against pessimism as being false in theory, and impossible in practice. Even dark things have a bright side, which can be seen if looked for in a proper spirit. I. THE CAUSES OF DESPAIR. 1. False views of God. A man's theology very largely influences his life. Spiritual ideas are at the root of all others. Whatever a man thinks of God and religion, will largely mould his character. Despair arises from two causes: the pessimism of men who are opponents of God, haters of God; and the hard, encrusted, stern, unbending Calvinism, which professes to be overpowered by God's love, which love is, however, always limited to those holding the doctrine. The pessimistic raving is indicative of a despair which has taken a fixed and settled position in the soul. Hope has fled, and all the brightness, even to the last spark, has departed from life. 2. Misanthropic notions respecting the human race. The loss of faith in our fellow-men is a prolific cause of despair. We place confidence in men, and we are betrayed; we trust them, and they deceive us. So we lose faith in mankind; we sink into a condition of sullen moroseness, which is but the forerunner of despair. 3. Denial of God's existence. Atheism is a gloomy creed. To take away God is to deprive the world of hope, to rob it of its highest consolation, and consequently to plunge the human race into the blackest despair. II. THE FOLLY OF DESPAIR. 1. It shuts out of view possible changes for the better. The clouds encompass us, the darkness hems us in, we see no light, and we lose hope, never dreaming that behind the mists a sun is shining, which will sooner or later dispel the gloom and illumine the world with its beams. 2. It injures the soul. Like all evil passions, it grows with what it feeds on. 3. It is a rebellion against God. Evil is not the universe. Goodness is eternal. God lives, and His mercy fails not. Despair is rank blasphemy against heaven. III. THE REMEDY FOR DESPAIR. It is the religion of Jesus, with the great and eternal truth which it enunciates—God is love. Recognising the fact that there is a God, and that His mercy is over all that His hands have made, how can we ever despair? We know that we are in His hands, and that therefore we are sure. Let us then leave the demon of despair to atheists, and those who have neither faith in God nor confidence in man, but for ourselves we must cling to the eternal truth that God is love. (*George Sexton, M.A., LL.D.*)

Ver. 10. **Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?** —*A right view of life*:—The inspiration of the Book of Job is sufficiently established —(1) By internal evidence; (2) by the testimony of the Jews; (3) by the manner

in which other inspired writers speak of him. Admiring, reverencing, and feeling for Job, the love of his example makes a strong impression, and to obtain equal resignation, equal possession of our souls in misfortune, we think that we should scarcely deprecate that ordinance which should subject us to equal affliction. Unmoved by every evil, Job declares his trust in God, and justifies his resignation in the words of the text. These words imply—I. THAT EVERYTHING IS ORDAINED BY GOD. With the existence and with the moral government of God, Job was already well acquainted. He knew that the Omniscient Ruler was not indifferent to the affairs of men, that as there was in nature an immutable difference between good and evil, so that difference was accurately marked by the Judge of all. That Job trusted that everything was under the direction of a supreme governor is certified by many passages of this book. Natural good and evil are equally ordered by heaven. It appears a harsh doctrine to say that evil proceedeth from God; but to this expression we are forced by the poverty of language. Job means to say that the happiness and the sufferings of men proceed from the same source,—God, the Governor of all. This sentiment is more worthy of attention in Job, because he lived in a country where there was no recorded revelation of the Divine will. The sentiment is remarkable also from the situation in which it is uttered: at a time when he was reduced to the utmost distress, when even the most heroic would have sunk under such sufferings. These misfortunes might have been accounted for by the agency of man or by chance. They were not of such extraordinary nature as to seem at once to flow from God. Job looked to a higher source. He knew that those things called natural and moral causes are under the direction of the Almighty. Though they operate in the common course of things, yet that course is directed by the unerring hand of Providence, and the continued support of the Omnipotent Ruler. The belief of God is consonant to Scripture. In the governing of the world everything seems to happen by second causes, yet God is the director of these causes. Sometimes God may make a special interference, but God governs usually, bestows good and inflicts evil, by general laws, and not by special appointments, as the emergency of the case may require. We should acknowledge the hand of God in all His dispensations. Men are but the instruments in the hands of God for the accomplishment of His designs. II. JOB CONSIDERED IT AS AN UNAVOIDABLE CONSEQUENCE OF OUR PRESENT STATE THAT THE LIFE OF MAN SHOULD BE CHEQUERED WITH GOOD AND EVIL. His mind seemed prepared for events of the kind that now happened. A uniform state of happiness or misery is never allotted to any one. The virtues of a man cannot be proved, nor his latent evil inclinations detected by one uniform state. And God chooseth to judge men, not by His own previous knowledge of them, but by the manner in which they shall conduct themselves here. In the lot of every one, therefore, there is a mixture. Job's prosperity itself prepared the way for his misfortunes! Adversity seems to attach itself with uncommon perseverance to some individuals; and some men are distinguished by an almost continued course of one fortune. But the most prosperous meet with some adverse incidents. God is what we call a moral governor, that is, He judges the actions of men, and will deal with them according to their conduct. The complete retribution for our deeds we are to expect only in another life. And there is much wisdom in the variety of the dispensations of Providence, independently of the moral government of God. The frailty of our nature unfits us for bearing well uninterrupted prosperity or adversity. (1) Let us, then, submit with thankfulness to this form of the Divine administration, in which everything works together for wise purposes. (2) Let us not dare to blame Providence if we think our evils too severe, or do not see their immediate good tendency. What right have we to censure the administration of heaven? We have not sufficient penetration to discern what is fittest to be done in this immense government of the world, or even in the affairs of men. (3) In this mixed state of good and evil let us look forward to and prepare for that everlasting world, where we shall receive good only at the hand of God. III. JOB WAS RESOLVED TO RECEIVE EACH STATE WITH AN EQUAL MIND. The whole of his history shows that he did so. Job's friends seem to have been impressed with the erroneous notion that God afflicts here in proportion to iniquity. They conceive Job, amidst all his protestations of integrity, to have committed some enormous crime, and to have been a consummate hypocrite. Each, then, in his turn, upbraids the unfortunate sufferer, and accounts for all his misfortunes from the justice of the Almighty. Here now shine forth the virtues of Job, and the calm equanimity of his temper. He is concerned for the honour

of the Supreme Being more than for the justification of his own character. He takes their harsh language in good part. (1) Explain the nature of resignation. Distinguish the various counterfeits that may assume its appearance. The more excellent any grace is, the greater pains is taken to counterfeit it. As a pious resignation is honourable, it has often been assumed where there are no just pretensions to it. Cold insensibility has often assumed the name of resignation. Natural indolence takes this appearance. Habitual carelessness glories in driving from its thoughts the ills of the passing day. And obstinate conceit pretends to preserve an unaltered countenance. But natural temper of any kind is not virtue. Insensibility can never be acknowledged as resignation to the misfortunes of life. Job felt as his situation demanded. As want of feeling does not constitute the grace of resignation, neither is refraining from all utterance of feeling an essential part of it. The feelings of the heart have a natural language. It is the business of religion not to suppress but to correct the feelings of man. Resignation does not preclude endeavours for relief. Religion does not command us to sustain a burden from which exertion may deliver us. It is the duty of man to render his situation as comfortable as circumstances permit. Resignation permits us to feel as nature dictates, but restrains our sorrows within due bounds. (2) Considerations which should lead to the practice of resignation. It is the Lord who doth afflict. Affliction, generally viewed, is the consequence of sin. Blessings are accumulated in the lot of man. We often mistake the real nature of what are called evils. They tend to produce good effects. And Christ, our Lord, bore with perfect resignation evils and afflictions of the most severe nature. A due consideration of these points may, through God's blessing, lead us to the state of mind which Job obtained. (*L. Adamson.*) *God's gifts of good and evil* :— The attitude of Job toward life is at this point heroic, and his speech is one of the great heroic speeches of the world. We shall perhaps apprehend his thought better if for the words "good and evil" we substitute fortune and misfortune, happiness and sorrow. Happiness always seems good to us; sorrow always seems evil. Job has been happy beyond the average lot: fortune has attended him, things have gone well with him, and all that he has done has prospered. What is fortune? It is some nameless intangible force that sides with us, that puts what we want in our way, and that instructs us how to seize the opportunity of success; for the most egoistic of us is, after all, dimly conscious that many things happen to him without his seeking. What is misfortune? It is this same mysterious power ranged against us, and no longer our ally, but our enemy. Without any action on our part, any deviation from the righteousness and moral order of our lives, all things begin to be against us. If we had blasphemed and lost faith in rectitude, if we had been foolish, indolent, or vicious, we could understand it; but we have done and been none of these things. If Job could say, "I deserve this because I did so and so," it would greatly simplify the position; at all events, it would relieve the soul of that most intolerable of all suspicions, that God has blundered. But Job is too honest a man to admit a wrong he has not committed; simply because he is an upright man, he must be upright towards himself as well as towards God. So, then, he is driven to a diviner philosophy. Shall we receive happiness and fortune from the hands of God, and not sorrow and misfortune? Is it not the same power that makes things work for us, and work against us? Is there not something in the very order of life which ensures that every man has his just proportion of bitterness measured out to him, because without that tonic drop of bitterness in the cup the wine of life would corrupt by its own sweetness, and happiness become our worst disaster? That is the thought of Job, and it is a great and memorable thought. Now let us try to analyse this thought: not so much from the intellectual side as from the spiritual and the human. 1. The first thing that Job feels is that happiness and sorrow, fortune and misfortune, are equally of God; and simple as such a thought sounds, it is really the profoundest that the mind of man can conceive. To begin with, it puts an end to the popular conception of the devil, and to all those religious systems of theology which are based upon the antagonism of the Divine and the diabolical spirit. Thus, for example, the main doctrine in the religion of Persia is the presence of two great spirits in the world, the one of light, the other of darkness, who contend for the mastery of man and of the world. Man is seized by each in turn, is blessed and cursed, is comforted and menaced; for the good spirit does nothing but good, and the evil nothing but evil. Thus the world is ruled by a divided deity, and the one work of God is evermore to checkmate and undo the work of the devil:

So far as English theology goes, John Milton and John Bunyan invented the devil between them; and their view of the world is practically the view of the Persian. But now turn to the Book of Job, and what do you find? In the great prologue to the drama, Satan appears indeed; but it is as the chained and impotent antagonist of God. He can do Job no harm without a Divine permission. The devil of Milton, who wages war against the Highest, and all but triumphs, would have been to the writer of this great drama an absolutely impious conception. The devil of the popular imagination, who torments man when God is not looking, and works evil in the world in spite of the goodness of God, would have been an equally impious and intolerable conception. Better were it to have no God than a God who reigns but does not govern; who does good as far as He can, but finds that good for ever undone by a power of evil over whom He has no control. No, says Job, darkness and light both belong to God, and to Him the darkness is as the light. There is but one Ruler of the universe. 2. The second stage of Job's thought is, that it would be equally insensate and selfish to expect only fortune and happiness, and never sorrow or misfortune, in our lives. And why? Because misfortune happens to others, and we see that in some way or other sorrow is part of the human lot. Had Job never known searchings of heart on this very subject during the long day of his prosperity? Is there any man who can avoid sometimes wondering why things go so well with him and so ill with others? Does not the happy man sometimes feel as though he had cheated in the great game of life, and in escaping sorrow had evaded something of the burden of existence which all ought to bear according to their strength? We all remember the exquisite story of the renunciation of Buddha: how he sees the leper by the wayside, the old man tottering on the dusty road, the corpse carried out to burial, and asks, "Is life always like this?" and then goes back with sad eyes to his palace, and a voice in his soul which tells him he has no right to enjoy only when there is so much to endure. And we remember also how that thought worked in his gracious and tender heart until he felt that he could not fulfil his destiny unless he also sorrowed; that not to sorrow was not to share the true brotherhood of the world: and so he goes forth in the dead of night, and rides far and fast, till he comes to the forest solitude, where he puts aside his kingship and becomes only a man, a beggar with the beggar, an outcast with the outcast. It was so that Job felt in this first shock of his calamity. He had received good through such long years: should he complain now that he received evil? He had received good; let him now show that happiness had not corrupted him, by at least having the grace of gratitude, and learning to say with reverence and resignation, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." 3. One thing at least is certain, and it is a thing that Job deeply feels in this hour: that whatever part happiness may play in our lives, sorrow is necessary for us, as a factor in our moral development. Let us be sure of it—it does not do for us to be too happy. Few of us can carry the full cup without spilling it. Even those who have the finest natural endowment of tenderness and sentiment are apt to grow proud, hard, callous, indifferent to suffering, careless of the deeper poetry of life and the higher visions of the spirit, when happiness knows no admixture of sorrow. But who has not felt his heart strangely softened in the hour of loss? Who has not found himself looking on the world with gentler and more pitiful glances after having looked into the eyes of death? The evidence of this real need of sorrow in human life is seen in the fact that all the great lives of the world have been the tried lives. The names that thrill us, the histories that inspire our virtue, the episodes of heroism that gladden us and exalt us, are all linked in some way with suffering. There is, in fact, nothing in mere happiness that is exalting or inspiring. There is no more uninteresting person in the world than the person who has uniformly succeeded in life. We would rather have died with Gordon in the Soudan than have made a fortune out of nitrates; have done the work that Livingstone or Moffat did, than have "fed on the lilies and lain on the roses" of life with the luckiest millionaire who never knew a want unsatisfied or a calamity that could not be averted. Some acquaintance with sorrow is absolutely necessary to modify the corrupting effect of too uniform a happiness. The great lives have usually been lives that were greatly tried, and herein is their fascination; the greatest men have always been those who know the use of sorrow, and have learned to say: What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? Do we find it hard to say this? Do we who call ourselves Christians find it hard? I do not say that it is, or ever

can be, easy; but if we are indeed Christians we shall not fail in grace to say it. For what commentary on the words of Job is there so penetrating or complete as the story of Jesus? With a consciousness of perfect integrity, such as not even Job could hope to emulate, He never murmured under the worst stroke of calamity. He turned His back to the smiter, and was, as a lamb before her shearers, dumb. And His one word amid it all is an even grander word than Job's; it is—"Father, not My will, but Thine be done." And finally, in the very spirit of Job, He accuses no evil power of malice, but sees in all the tragedy something permitted by God for His own supreme and blessed ends, and knows that through the evil of men God's purpose will be done, and God's goodness find a final and complete vindication. 4. I notice, finally, then, that there are two kinds of peace possible to us: the peace of fact, and the peace of principle. The peace of fact is but another phrase for stoicism. It is in a sense the peace of nature: the natural stubborn elements in us which collect and harden themselves under misfortune, and refuse to yield. In all ages of the world this kind of peace has been possible to men. It is always possible for us to train ourselves in silence, in mute resistance to the stroke of fate, and to resist endlessly. But the higher peace is the peace of principle, and this is the peace of Christ. It is not negative, but positive. The peace of fact is the peace of Prometheus under the unjust wrath of Heaven; the peace of principle is the peace of Job, in the sense that God is good. It is sustained by our faith in certain principles and supreme truths, the chief of which is the unbounded goodness and unerring wisdom of God. It is the peace of conquest; the peace of inner vision; the peace of justified and resolute hope. (*W. J. Dawson.*) *Relative good and evil in human life*:—Things that are evil in our estimation may be the appointment of the only wise God. Many such things do occur in human life, and to reconcile our minds to these is one great object, and one of the happiest effects of religion. The thought suggested by the text, that we receive many blessings from that God who sees fit at times to visit us with distress, is happily adapted to effect these ends. I. THE BLESSINGS WHICH GOD HAS CONFERRED UPON US ARE FAR MORE NUMEROUS THAN THE PAINFUL EVENTS WHICH HE MAY HAVE PERMITTED TO BEFALL US. Recall the blessings of existence, that honourable rank which we hold among the creatures. Remember His parental care. And let us not forget His most precious benefits which respect our more important and eternal concerns,—the provision He has made for our instruction, improvement, spiritual comfort, and everlasting happiness. Now number up all the evils you have experienced through life. Do they not in a manner disappear amid these so countless blessings? Man is indeed born to trouble. A material frame and an imperfect state, our own irregular passions or the passions of others, must necessarily be sources of many evils. But how few of these fall to the lot of any one individual. II. THE GOOD WE HAVE RECEIVED IS UNSPEAKABLY GREAT AND IMPORTANT; THE EVILS WE HAVE SUFFERED ARE COMPARATIVELY BUT LIGHT AND INCONSIDERABLE. How precious are the gifts of reason, of memory, of judgment. How excellent the feelings and affections of the heart. Still more valuable are our spiritual blessings. Compared with all these in point of real weight and importance, what are all the ills which we now experience? They reach only to our mortal nature, and are confined to the period of the present life. What has been the amount of the evils which you have received from the hand of God? He may have deprived you of this world's goods; or removed from you tender and affectionate friends; or visited you with bodily distress and pain. If God has continued to us blessings of the highest value, dare we repine if He mingle them with light afflictions which only lessen some of the enjoyments of a present state? III. GOD'S GOODNESS IS UNCEASING AND UNINTERRUPTED; ANY EVILS WHICH HE SENDS ARE OCCASIONAL AND TEMPORARY. A continued exertion of power and goodness preserves us in being, God unceasingly furnishes the means of life. Every moment of our lives we taste and see of the goodness of God. But is it in this manner that God hath dispensed His judgments and afflictions? It is but occasionally that we feel God's chastening hand. And suffering is seldom of long duration. IV. THE GOOD WE RECEIVE FROM THE HAND OF GOD IS ALTOGETHER UNMERITED; THE EVILS WE EXPERIENCE ARE WHAT WE JUSTLY DESERVE. Always unprofitable, too often ungrateful, in many instances disobedient and rebellious, we cannot imagine a claim we should have to the goodness of God. Yet amid all this unworthiness and demerit, innumerable and inestimable blessings have been conferred upon us. Recall the evils which we have experienced through life, and say whether they are not the appointments

of perfect righteousness, and upon the whole far less severe than we deserve. May we not frequently trace those of which we most loudly complain to our own folly and perverseness? And do not our human frailties justify God if He were pleased to send even severer evils than any we have experienced? The consideration of the good which we receive should not merely silence the murmurs of discontent, it should reconcile our minds to the afflicting dispensations of His providence. God's goodness gives us a just view of His character, and lays a foundation for trust and confidence in Him. If that God who has given us such unquestionable proofs of His goodness sees fit to visit us with evil, it must be with a kind and benevolent design—for some gracious and important end. Whatever distress may be allotted to us, or in what trying situations we may be placed, yet His goodness, His loving-kindness are still exercised towards us. Shall our feelings and affections towards God be regulated by some rare acts of His providence towards us, rather than by His long-continued uniform conduct? This surely would be most unreasonable. (*Robert Bogg, D.D.*) *The evils of life*:—Experience will convince us that unmixed happiness was never intended to be the portion of man in his present state. The good and evil of life are so intimately connected together that while we pursue the one we often unavoidably meet with the other. There is no condition of life but has its own troubles and inconveniences. Neither the virtuous nor the wise, the learned nor the prudent, in their pilgrimage through life, can altogether avoid those rocks which often prove so fatal to the peace of the mind. Pain, in a certain proportion, is always infused as an essential ingredient in the cup of which it is appointed for all men to drink. A general conviction of the wisdom and goodness of Providence ought, in some measure, to reconcile us to the hardships and miseries to which we are subjected while we continue in this life. But our persuasion of the rectitude of God does not rest merely on general principles. Our reason, assisted by revelation, is able to discover several wise purposes that are answered most effectually by the present mixture of good and evil in the world. It calls forth the faculties of the mind into action, and obliges men to shake off those habits of indolence and inactivity that are so fatal to the further improvement of the soul. To the happiness of man, as a reasonable being, it is necessary that his several faculties be all duly exercised on objects suited to the peculiar state of each. Only a world of difficulties and inconveniences would furnish employment for all our powers. There is in every man a natural principle of indolence, which renders him averse to exertions of every kind, but particularly to those of thought and reflection. Uninterrupted prosperity tends to increase this natural indolence. Inconveniences serve to quicken our invention, and to excite our industry, in discovering by what means we may most effectually remedy these inconveniences. I. THE EVILS OF LIFE OPEN OUR EYES, AND MAKE US SENSIBLE OF REAL WANTS. They constrain us to collect all our strength, and to summon up all our resolution to withstand. Losses and disappointments rouse men to greater diligence and assiduity. Difficulties serve to form our souls to habits of attention, of diligence, and activity. Obstacles give a new spring to the mind. Difficulties overcome enhance the value of any acquisitions we may have made. II. THE EVILS OF LIFE EXERCISE AND IMPROVE THE VIRTUES OF THE HEART. The world, as a state of moral discipline, would be inadequate for its purpose if all events that befall us were of one kind. The situation most favourable to the progressive improvement of the human character is a mixed state of good and evil. Prosperity gives opportunity to practise temperance and moderation in all things. Calamities are equally favourable to the interests of virtue in the human heart. They correct levity and thoughtlessness. Adversity gives a seasonable check to vain and overweening self-conceit. A patient resignation to the good pleasure of the Almighty must likewise be reckoned among the happy fruits produced by afflictions. Adversity disengages us from this life, directs our attention, and raises our views to another and a better world. We may therefore infer how much it is our duty to acquiesce in the wisdom and goodness of Providence, which has appointed the intermixture of good and evil in this probationary state of our existence. (*W. Shiels.*) *On the mixture of good and evil in human life*:—A mixture of pleasure and pain, of grief and joy, of prosperity and adversity, is incident to human nature. That there is a variety of good and evil in the world, of which every man who comes into it partakes at some time or other, requires no further proof than to desire each individual to reflect on the various changes that may have taken place through his life, and then to determine for himself whether the world has always gone either smoothly or

roughly with him. Some persons seem to pass through life more pleasantly than others. Some seem to meet with hard usage on all sides. Reasons for the mixture of good and evil in human lives may be given. I. THIS LIFE IS INTENDED FOR A STATE OF PROBATION AND TRIAL. It is by the mixture which befell holy Job that we become acquainted with his true character. Had he been less under the rod of affliction at one time, or less kindly treated by the Almighty at another, he would not have proved himself that "perfect and upright man" which his behaviour in both states discovered him to be. By similar means good men in all ages of the world have been proved; the providence of God rendering their condition sometimes prosperous and sometimes grievous, as the surest way of trying their virtue and confirming their faith. II. THE MIXTURE OF GOOD AND EVIL PREVENTS OUR BUILDING TOO MUCH ON PROSPERITY, OR SINKING TOO EASILY INTO DESPAIR ON ADVERSITY; either of which, by the certainty of their continuance, would endanger our casting off all dependence upon, and hopes from, the over-ruling providence of God. By the uncertainty of things here the most successful and happy persons are kept in some awe through fear of a change of condition and circumstances; whilst the most unfortunate may live in constant hope of a relief from their troubles; and both be thereby taught a due dependence on God in every state and condition of life. III. THIS MIXTURE OF GOOD AND EVIL SETS US UPON LOOKING FORWARD TO, AND ENDEAVOURING TO OBTAIN, A MORE FIXED AND UNCHANGEABLE STATE THAN FALLS TO OUR PRESENT LOT. Were we to receive nothing but good here, there is no doubt but we should think it good for us always to be here; but by reason of the mixture of evils there are few who would not be glad to exchange a worse condition for a better. What must we do to make ourselves easy under such changing conditions? Not surely covet to return to such inconstant enjoyments as may be suddenly taken away from us; but rather strive to obtain those of a more durable nature. Reason teaches us that things perishable and subject to change are not worthy to be compared to those which are more durable, and always the same. God is pleased to afflict His greatest favourites, to make them the more earnest in their pursuits after future happiness, as well as to qualify them for the attainment of its superior degrees. (*C. Moore, D.D.*) *Good and evil*:—Our use of these words is very lax. There is a sense in which it is impossible for us to receive that which is evil at the hand of God. There is a sense in which we speak of Him as one from whom all good gifts come. The terms good and evil may be absolute or they may be relative. A thing may be in itself absolutely good, whereas to me it may be relatively what seems evil. I may individually be a sufferer for that which is for the general good. On the other hand, that which is absolutely evil may be to me relatively a source of advantage. The sick rooms of the human race are the school-rooms of compassion, and the battlefields of the world are the training-grounds of heroism. Distinguish between that which is in itself intrinsically good and evil and that which is to us in our experience good and evil. On this distinction will hinge very many of our relations to God. God has placed man upon the earth in a universe that is endowed with infinite possibilities, and He has left man to find out these possibilities for himself; and man, until he found them out, has constantly injured himself through ignorance, and has frequently mistaken that which was created for his benefit and thought it a curse. Take, for example, such a power as electricity. What were the thoughts of generations now long buried when they watched the summer sky blazing with fire, or stood by the blackened ruins of some stricken homestead? Did they dream then, in their ignorance, that this same force should one day flash intelligence from pole to pole, and carry a faint whisper upon its docile current? Did it not seem to them then, nothing but pure beauty, nothing but cruel violence? Does it not seem to us now, infinite wisdom? Man has to learn the use of the weapons in the armoury of God, and until he has learnt their use he does not know what they are, he misapplies them, and oftentimes injures himself, then rebels and calls out against God's cruelty. The wise man—that is, the religious man—arguing from what he knows to what he does not know, believes that the wisdom and goodness of God will soon shine out clear in the light of later knowledge. God could only have made man as He has made him, a child in the eternal years, and placed him in the midst of laws and forces and powers the use of each and all to be learned by experience. (*W. Covington, M.A.*) *Evil from the hand of God*:—The story of Job shows—1. The instability of all human affairs, the uncertainty of all earthly possession. 2. That the best of men may be the most afflicted. Afflictions are no certain proof of the Divine displeasure

nor that the afflicted are unrighteous persons. 3. That however God, for wise and gracious purposes, may afflict His servants, He will not forsake them in their afflictions, but will make the most painful events work for their good, and terminate in their happiness. Everything shows the present life to be, not a state of uninterrupted enjoyment, but of trial and discipline; a mixed scene, in which pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, prosperity and adversity, are intermingled. And the Scriptures teach those sentiments, and exhibit those examples of suffering virtue, which are calculated to afford the good man support and comfort under all the trials and afflictions of life. Our text supposes that evil as well as good comes from the hand of God, and that we ought to receive, or accept, the one at His hand as well as the other. I. SHOW THAT EVIL AS WELL AS GOOD COMES FROM THE HAND OF GOD. That second causes operate in producing the evils that take place, and that creatures are the instruments of them, is no reason why they should not be considered as coming from the hands of God. The government of God is carried on, and His designs are accomplished, by the agency of second causes. When we speak of second causes, a prior cause is always supposed, on whom they are dependent, and to whom they are subservient. In other parts of Scripture evil as well as good is declared to come from the Divine hand (Jud. ii. 15; 2 Sam. xii. 11; 1 Kings ix. 9; 2 Kings vi. 33; Neh. xiii. 18; Isa. xlv. 7; Jer. iv. 6; Amos iii. 6; Mic. i. 12, &c.). All things, evil as well as good, are under the government of God. By evil is meant whatever is painful; by good, whatever is pleasurable. Sin, what is called moral evil, cannot exist in God, nor proceed from Him. Actions are righteous or wicked according to the views and motives of the actor. Sin exists only in the creature, and proceeds entirely from the creature: it consists in what is contrary to the will of God. It is denominated evil because it is painful and bitter in its effects. God has so constituted man, and connected causes and effects in the moral world, that whatever is morally wrong is productive of pain and misery. His wisdom and goodness in this constitution of things is manifest. II. THOSE CONSIDERATIONS WHICH SHOULD DISPOSE US, WITH DEVOUT SUBMISSION, TO RECEIVE EVIL AT THE HAND OF GOD, AS WELL AS GOOD. 1. Everything is under the direction of a Being who is infinitely wise, powerful, and good. He is too wise and just and good and merciful to allot any more pains and sufferings to any of His creatures than are merciful. 2. Some measure of evil seems to be necessary in the present state of man for his discipline and improvement, and to prepare him for higher enjoyment. The present life is the mere infancy of our existence. Our Father allots to us, not what is most gratifying, but what will best promote our improvement. Evil is included in the means which God employs in training up His children for immortality and glory. The greatest characters have been formed in the school of adversity. Man is formed to be the child and pupil of experience, to gain knowledge from practice, to become virtuous and happy by the free exercise of the powers God has given him, and so evil seems unavoidable until, instructed by experience, man chooses only good, and is prepared for the full enjoyment of it. 3. At the hand of God we are continually receiving much good. Whatever evils we experience, enjoyment preponderates. The ordinary course of things is a state of enjoyment, of which evil is an infraction. The evils we lament are but an abatement of the good we receive; therefore it is right that we should be always resigned and thankful. Much of the evil man feels he creates to himself by his unreasonable desires and improper views and sentiments. 4. Strictly speaking, nothing is evil as it comes from the hand of God. We call it evil because it occasions us pain and suffering. Under the government of God there is no absolute evil. Evil is partial and temporary; its extent is limited; it had a beginning, and will end in universal happiness. 5. Observation and experience may teach us that, in many instances, God hath made evil productive of good. See the stories of Job, and of Jacob. 6. As God has made some of the greatest evils productive of good, it is rational to conclude that He will make all evil subservient to and productive of good. This conclusion naturally arises from just views of His character, perfections, and government. Learn, then, to look above creatures, to look through all second causes; to see God in all things, and all in God. Let us be always resigned to His will, put our whole confidence in Him, and be entirely devoted to Him. Let us look forward to the happy time when evil shall be no more; but life and peace and joy and happiness shall be universal and eternal. (*Anon.*) *On submission to the Divine will*:—Under the distresses of human life, religion performs two offices: it teaches us

how we ought to bear them; and it assists us in thus bearing them. Three instructions naturally arise from the text. I. THIS LIFE IS A MIXED STATE OF GOOD AND EVIL. This is a matter of fact. No condition is altogether stable. But the bulk of mankind discover as much confidence in prosperity, and as much impatience under the least reverse, as if providence had first given them assurance that their prosperity was never to change, and afterwards had cheated their hopes. What reason teaches is to adjust our mind to the mixed state in which we find ourselves placed; never to presume, never to despair; to be thankful for the goods which at present we enjoy, and to expect the evils that may succeed. II. BOTH THE GOODS AND THE EVILS COME FROM THE HAND OF GOD. In God's world, neither good nor evil can happen by chance. He who governs all things must govern the least things as well as the greatest. How it comes to pass that life contains such a mixture of goods and evils, and this by God's appointment, gives rise to a difficult inquiry. Revelation informs us that the mixture of evils in man's estate is owing to man himself. His apostasy and corruption opened the gates of the tabernacle of darkness, and misery issued forth. The text indicates the effect that will follow from imitating the example of Job, and referring to the hand of the Almighty the evils which we suffer, as well as the goods which we enjoy. To dwell upon the instruments and subordinate means of our trouble is frequently the cause of much grief and much sin. When we view our sufferings as proceeding merely from our fellow-creatures, the part which they have acted in bringing them upon us, is often more grating than the suffering itself. Whereas if, instead of looking to men, we beheld the cross as coming from God, these aggravating circumstances would affect us less; we would feel no more than a proper burden; we would submit to it more patiently. As Job received his correction from the Almighty Himself, the tumult of his mind subsided; and with respectful composure he could say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away," &c. III. WE WHO RECEIVE GOOD FROM THE HAND OF GOD, SHOULD RECEIVE WITH PATIENCE THE EVILS WHICH HE IS PLEASED TO INFLICT. Consider—1. That the good things which God has bestowed afford sufficient evidence for our believing that the evils which He sends are not causelessly or wantonly afflicted. In the world which we inhabit, we behold plain marks of predominant goodness. What is the conclusion to be thence drawn, but that, in such parts of the Divine administration as appear to us harsh and severe, the same goodness continues to preside, though exercised in a hidden and mysterious manner? 2. That the good things we receive from God are undeserved, the evils we suffer are justly merited. All, it is true, have not deserved evil equally. Yet all of us deserve it more or less. Not only all of us have done evil, but God has a just title to punish us for it. When He thinks proper to take our good things away, no wrong is done to us. To have enjoyed them so long was a favour. 3. The good things which at different times we have received and enjoyed are much greater than the evils which we suffer. Of this fact it may be difficult to persuade the afflicted. Think how many blessings, of different sorts, you have tasted. Surely more materials of thanksgiving present themselves than of lamentation and complaint. 4. The evils which we suffer are seldom, or never, without some mixture of good. As there is no condition on earth of pure, unmixed felicity, so there is none so miserable as to be destitute of every comfort. Many of our calamities are purely imaginary and self-created; arising from rivalship or competition with others. With respect to calamities inflicted by God, His providence has made this merciful constitution that, after the first shock, the burden by degrees is lightened. 5. We have even reason to believe that the evils themselves are, in many respects, good. When borne with patience and dignity, they improve and ennoble our character. They bring into exercise several of the manly and heroic virtues; and by the constancy and fidelity with which we support our trials on earth, prepare us for the highest rewards in heaven. (*Hugh Blair, D.D.*) *Submission under afflictive dispensations of providence*:—I. THE SENTIMENT OF THIS INQUIRY. We may define evil as a something done or suffered by us which is contrary to the original purpose of God in our creation, and to the original constitution of our nature. Thus there is sin, or moral evil. There is physical evil, in the numberless infirmities, pains, and sufferings of life. All the evil which exists in the world is either sin in itself, or sin in its consequences. But though afflictions are the evidences of sin's existence, and the penalty of its commission, they may be overruled to moral advantage. We may regard Job as proposing the inquiry, Shall we, sinful, weak, and erring mortals, who have forfeited all rights to the blessings of providence, receive only

good from God, and be exempt from evils, which for our sins we most righteously deserve? Shall we have no mixture of judgment with mercy, of chastisement with favour? II. THE REASONABLENESS OF THIS SENTIMENT. 1. We deserve evil. We have sinned. If we saw and felt as we ought to do, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, our inquiry would be, "Shall we receive any good at the hand of God?" 2. We often incur evil by our own conduct. The courses which multitudes pursue bring sorrow and disaster, disease and difficulties. How many of the miseries of mankind result altogether from sin, from vicious indulgence, from a reckless course of dissipation, or from sheer folly and imprudence! The Divine Being was not bound in justice to prevent the disordered state of man, nor to arrest its evils, when it had taken place. 3. We are in a state of probation. Trials form a test of character, a trial of principles, a sifting of motives. Afflictions are designed to promote our moral improvement. III. THE SPIRIT OF JOB'S INQUIRY. It is the language of devout submission. It is the language of heavenly hope and lofty confidence in God. Job entertained a profound veneration for the Divine character, and a high-toned reliance upon infinite goodness and faithfulness. (*Henry H. Chettle.*) *Good in evil*:—I. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF JOB'S APPEAL? The appeal relates rather to ourselves than to God. The whole connection turns upon the state of the recipient. The question turns upon ourselves. God is in no sense the author of evil. All originated with the creature. The word evil here refers to physical evil. Job is speaking of his own sufferings. The meaning and force of this appeal is seen in attending to the meaning of the word "receive." To receive is very different from to submit. Receive is usually employed in a good sense. You receive what is good. It supposes a willingness on the part of the subject, especially when the term is employed by the person himself. Shall we bless God for the good and not for the evil? Shall we not give Him credit for both? II. ARGUMENTS LIKELY TO INDUCE THIS STATE OF MIND. Since God gives us good, when a dispensation of a seemingly different character comes, we ought to be slow to say that it is of a different character in its consequences. When trouble and suffering come, we ought to infer that it is intended for our advancement in good. All the good we have has travelled to us through an intensity of suffering; it is applied to us, and comes to us through suffering. 1. Good was procured to us through suffering. A suffering Saviour. 2. Good is applied to us through evil. If we suffer with Christ we shall be glorified with Him. 3. Good is consummated to us through evil. (*Capel Molyneux, B.A.*) *On the duty of resignation*:—I. HOW FAR WE ARE ALLOWED TO GRIEVE FOR OUR CALAMITIES: or how far grief is consistent with a state of resignation. Christianity may regulate our grief, as it does every other passion; but does not pretend to extinguish it. Ungrateful and unwelcome things will make harsh and ungrateful impressions upon us. Our sensibility, whether of joy or misery, arises in proportion to our ingenuity. A man of a coarser frame shall slight those afflictions which fall heavy upon a more refined disposition. An over-refined delicacy, however, is almost as bad an extreme, as an unfeeling stupidity. It is allowable, it is even commendable for us to feel a generous movement of soul, and to be touched with the distresses of other people. Grief may even sometimes be necessary to take off any hardness of heart, and to make it more pliant and ductile, by melting it down. If our self-feeling be the foundation of our fellow-feeling, then, as soon as reason can shine out in its full strength, the virtues of humanity and tender-heartedness will spring up, as from a willing soil, in a mind prepared and softened by grief. The first starts and sallies of grief, under any calamity, are always pardonable; it is only a long and continued course of grief, when the soul refuses to be comforted, that is inexcusable. And it is most inexcusable when it bears no proportion to its real cause. Melancholy in excess is an accursed spirit. Violent tempestuous sorrows are like hurricanes; they soon spend themselves, and all is soon clear and serene again. There is more danger from a silent, pensive grief, which, like a slow lingering fog, shall continue a long time, and blot the face of nature all around. We must guard against any settled habit of grief. It is our duty to promote social happiness. Cheerfulness and inoffensive pleasantry make us agreeable to others, whereas habitual melancholy damps the good-humour of society. Not to enjoy with cheerfulness the blessings which remain to us, is not to treat them as what they are, namely, blessings, and consequently matters of joy and complacency. Sorrow is criminal when we have little or nothing to torment us but, what is the greatest tormenter of all, our own uneasy spirit. They who are continually complaining of inconveniences seem incapable of relishing

anything but heaven; for which a complaining temper will by no means prepare them. II. UPON WHAT PRINCIPLES OUR RESIGNATION TO GOD IS TO BE FOUNDED. A full confidence in the Deity, Job had, that He would make the sum of his happiness, either here or hereafter, greatly exceed that of his misery. To found virtue upon the will of God, enforced by proper sanctions, is to found it upon a rock. Arguments from the unendowed beauty of virtue, and from the abstract fitnesses of things, are of too fine and delicate a texture to combat the force of the passions, or to stand the shock of adversity. The hopes of a better world can alone make this tolerable to us. We know little of a future state from the light of nature. Revelation has enlarged our views, it insures to us, what reason could never prove, a fulness of pardon upon our repentance, and an uninterrupted enjoyment of clear happiness, truth, and virtue, for ever and ever. . . . What we must feel as men, we may bear as more than men, through the grace of God. III. SOME RULES FOR THE PRACTICE OF THIS DUTY OF SUBMISSION. 1. Do not expect perfect happiness. That depends not upon ourselves alone, but upon a coincidence of several things which seldom hit all right. 2. If you would not be overmuch troubled at the loss of anything, take care to keep your affections disengaged. As soon as you have placed your affections too intensely beyond a certain point on anything below, from that moment you may date your misery. We lean upon earthly things with too great a stress, the consequence of which is, that, when they slip from under us, our fall is more hurtful, in proportion to the weight and stress with which we relied upon them. 3. Reflect on the advantages you have rather than be always dwelling on those you have not. Turn your thoughts to the bright side of things. Lead a life which knows no vacancy from generous sentiments, and then "the spirit of a man will sustain his infirmities." How many are more miserable than you! 4. Reflect, how reasonable it is, that our wills should be conformable and resigned to the Divine. Look then upon this world as one wide ocean, where many are shipwrecked and irrecoverably lost, more are tossed and fluctuating, but none can secure to themselves, for any considerable time, a future undisturbed calm. The ship, however, is still under sail, and whether the weather be fair or foul, we are every minute making nearer approaches to, and must shortly reach the shore. And may it be the haven where we would be! Then shall we understand that what we mistook for and miscalled misfortunes, were, in the true estimate of things, advantages, invaluable advantages. When all human means fail, the Deity can still, upon any extraordinary emergency, adapt His succours to our necessities. (*J. Seed, M.A.*) *Submission under affliction*:—The value of scriptural precepts is often doubted from the tardiness with which their favourable results manifest themselves; indeed the good effects of obedience are frequently waited for in vain, and the pursuit of righteousness is attended with decided inconvenience and suffering. Under such circumstances we must arm ourselves against the scoff of the unbeliever; and the observations of those who seek excuses for the practice of evil; and the suggestions of our own sinful hearts. Instances are not infrequent of whole lives being passed, without any shadow of recompense for the most assiduous and scrupulous adherence to the commands of the Almighty. Then it is men find the incstimable advantages of clinging to the Word of God. Consistency of moral and religious goodness is the peculiar duty of a Christian. Those who feel the imperfection of present joys, must use their best endeavours to guide themselves by the Word of God invariably. The Scriptures teach us to submit with humble resignation to the dispensations of providence. No state of society can be imagined, as long as a disproportion of talent, industry, and virtue prevails among men, in which we can avoid seeing a vast deal of misery around us: the extent of that misery is generally apportioned to our degree of deficiency in one or all of these qualities. But distress and misfortune may be due to a good man's frailties, and it is reasonable to suppose that we should avoid many chastisements if we would make diligent search into our own hearts. The best of men find abundant weaknesses on which to exercise their vigilance, their self-denial, their self-abasement, and self-correction. Well might Job feel apprehension lest his children, in their prosperity, should forget God, and cling to the creature more than the Creator. We find a remarkable example of religious consistency in one who had not the full benefit of the Christian dispensation. It has been said that the disorder with which Job was afflicted generally produced in those subject to it impatience and desperation. Under the taunts of the friends Job fell into infirmity and sin. His chief failure was vanity, the frequent accompaniment of every

human virtue. It is not for ordinary men to expect any peculiar interference of God to restore them to reason and humble submission to the Divine will; but the Lord graciously condescended to remind His servant of the power against whose decrees he had presumed to murmur; and then to show him the Divine mercy in restoration. What an example does this goodness of God to Job afford, to trust in Him, to serve and humbly obey Him, to persevere in the strict line of duty, and to guide and govern ourselves implicitly by His blessed Word, under every trial of temptation or of suffering. (*M. J. Wynyard, B.D.*) **In all this did not Job sin with his lips.**—*The result of a partial test*:—A man may find occasions for self-congratulation in his resignation to affliction, and of pride even in the thought of his humility. And certainly, in a subordinate sense, we may reflect upon these things with pleasure; with very different sensations, at least, from those with which we remember our perverseness and our sins. But the danger is lest this glorying should intrude into the highest place, and become incongruous with what ought to be the thoughts of a sinner saved and upheld by grace alone. The danger is that it should come to diminish, in his view, the glory of his Redeemer's righteousness and holiness, and should somewhat weaken in his mind the thought of his entire dependence, as a weak and helpless creature, upon His power and continual aid. The heart-breaking thought of the restored penitent, though not so blessed in itself, is far less dangerous, than in some minds the exultation of one who, consistently with truth, can "thank God that he is not as other men are." "In all this Job sinned not with his lips," admonishing us, that a different scene will be opened in the subsequent pages. And those who have stood their ground in severe trials, and have exhibited a faithful and consistent testimony, should reflect how much it may have depended on the ordering of the circumstances of their distress,—that the trouble ended where it did end, or that the enemy was not suffered to do his worst. It is a proud thing to think I should have stood, where we see a brother fall! Therefore it is that the apostle calls upon "them that are spiritual," when they would restore by their admonitions or reproof a brother who is overtaken with a fault, to do it in a spirit of meekness, "considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." (*John Fry, B.A.*) *Patience as simple resignation*:—We have here put before us the highest and most perfect type of "patience," in the sense of simple resignation. It is the greatest picture ever drawn of that calm, unhesitating, and profound acquiescence in the will of God, which, to borrow the words of Dean Stanley, was one of the "qualities which marked Eastern religions, when to the West they were almost unknown, and which even now is more remarkably exhibited in Eastern nations than among ourselves." "Thy will be done" is "a prayer which lies at the very root of all religion." It stands among the foremost petitions of the Lord's Prayer. It is deeply engraven in the whole religious spirit of the sons of Abraham, even of the race of Israel. In the words, "God is great" (Allah Akbar), it expresses the best side of Mohammedanism, the profound submission to the will of a heavenly Master. It is embodied in the very words, Moslem and Islam. And we, servants of the Crucified One, must feel that to be ready to leave all in God's hands, not merely because He is great, but because we know Him to be wise, and feel Him to be good, is of the very essence of religion in its very highest aspect. Bishop Butler has well said that though such a passive virtue may have no field for exercise in a happier world, yet the frame of mind which it produces, and of which it is the fruit and sign, is the very frame of all others to fit man to be an active fellow-worker with his God, in a larger sphere, and with other faculties. And the very highest type of such submission we have set before us in Job. Poor as he now is, he is rich in trust and in nearness to his God; and Christian souls, trained in the teaching of Christian centuries, will feel that if there is a God and Father above us, it is better to have felt towards Him as Job felt, than to have been the lord of many slaves and flocks and herds, and the possessor of unclouded happiness on a happy earth. (*Dean Bradley.*) *Submission*:—When Tiribazus, a noble Persian, was arrested, at first he drew his sword and defended himself; but when they charged him in the king's name, and informed him that they came from the king, he yielded willingly. Seneca persuaded his friend to bear his affliction quietly, because he was the emperor's favourite, telling him that it was not lawful for him to complain whilst Cæsar was his friend. So saith the Christian. Oh, my soul! be quiet, be still; all is in love, all is a fruit of Divine favour. (*Thomas Brooks.*) *Making friends with the inevitable*:—There is an old saying, "Past cure past care." Is this

a proverb that belongs only to the world, or may it receive a Christian application? Surely it is descriptive of the grace of true resignation. We sometimes hear of "bowing to the inevitable"; but the Christian knows a better way than bowing to the inevitable—he makes use of it. There is a wonderful passage in George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss* which illustrates my meaning. Honest Luke is striving to comfort the poor, ruined, and paralysed miller. "Help me down, Luke. I will go and see everything," said Mr. Tulliver, leaning on his stick and stretching out his other hand towards Luke. "Ay, sir," said Luke, as he gave his arm to his master, "you'll make up your mind to it when you've seen everything. You'll get used to it. That's what my mother says about her shortness of breath. She says she's made friends wi't now, though she fought agin it sore when it first came on. She's made friends wi't now." Making friends with the inevitable! That appears to me to be the way of the disciples of Christ—the inevitable loses its sting when we try to turn it to godly ministry. Adversity can be so used as to become our helper to higher things.

Ver. 11. **Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil.**—*Job's friends*:—They had good intentions, and goodness of heart. We have here a striking instance of disinterested friendship. I. ITS CONSTANCY. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar heard of the reverses that had come upon Job. The general way of the world would have caused them to turn their backs upon him. When a man is alone, and possessing no social advantages, he is neglected. So also a man in full health and vigour, amusing, instructive, energetic, is sought after as a companion, but when laid low with disease few care for his company. Job's friends set us a notable example then in their constancy. His losses, poverty, distress, and disease did not alienate their friendship or their regard. II. ITS ACTIVITY. An idle friendship is a useless one. Profession is all very well, but something more than profession is required in a friend. Even kind words will not bind up broken vows. The friendship of Job's friends was active. We see this—1. From the trouble they took. Apparently they lived at some distance off. But distance is nothing to affectionate interest, and they took the journey with the best of motives—that of affording comfort and solace. 2. From the means they employed. They did not run off to Job direct, but they met together and took counsel how they might best accomplish the means they had in view. This involved additional trouble, but it proved how true was the interest they felt. III. ITS WISDOM. Sympathy is often misdirected. It loses its power and efficacy by some shortsighted indiscretion. It takes a long time to learn how to administer consolation in the most acceptable manner. How did they begin their purpose? By openly blurting out their purpose and object? By commonplaces of condolence? By wisely shaking their heads and parrot-like repeating the expression, "We thought it would come to this! This is the lot of all men"? Nay, they manifested their sympathy by silent tears. We must all have sorrow, we shall all need sympathy. Let us be very thankful if we have faithful friends, and may we know how best to show them regard. And may the subject lead us to value above all the blessed sympathy of Christ. (*J. J. S. Bird.*) *Genuine friendship*:—I. IT WAS DEEPENED BY ADVERSITY. The effect on their minds of the overwhelming calamities which overtook Job was not to drive them from him, but to draw them to him. Adversity is one of the best tests for friendship. The Germans have a proverb, "Let the guests go before the storm bursts." False friends forsake in adversity. When the tree is gay in summer beauty, and rich in aroma, bees will crowd around it and make music amongst its branches; but when the flower has fallen, and the honey has been exhausted, they will pass it by, and avoid it in their aerial journeys. When your house is covered with sunshine, birds will chirp at your windows, but in the cloud and the storm their notes are not heard—such bees and birds are types of false friends. Not so with true friendship; it comes to you when your tree of prosperity has withered; when your house is shadowed by the cloud and beaten by the storm. "True friends," says an old writer, "visit us in prosperity only when invited, but in adversity they come to us without invitation." In this respect, Christ is the highest manifestation of genuine friendship. He came down from His own bright heavens because of our adversity. "He came to seek and to save the lost," &c. II. IT WAS PROMPTED TO RELIEVING LABOUR. The friendship of these men was not a passing sentiment, an evanescent emotion, it was a working force; it set them to—1. A self-denying work. They left their homes and directed their footsteps to the

scene of their afflicted friend. Travelling in those days meant something more than it does in these times, when means of transit are so accessible, agreeable, and swift. And then, no doubt, it required not a little self-denying effort to break away from their homes, their numerous associations, and the avocations of their daily life. Their friendship meant self-denying effort. This is always a characteristic of genuine friendship—spurious friendship abounds in talk and evaporates in sighs and tears; it has no work in it. 2. A self-denying work in order to relieve. They "came to mourn with him and to comfort him." Man can comfort man. The expressions of true sympathy are balm to a wounded heart, and courage to a fainting soul. In this feature of genuine friendship Christ was again transcendent. "He came to preach deliverance to the captive—to open the prison door to them that are bound—to bind up the broken-hearted," &c. III. IT WAS VICARIOUSLY AFFLICTED. "And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven." If this language means anything, it means soul suffering. The very sight of their friend's overwhelming afflictions harrowed their hearts. We are so constituted that the personal sufferings of our friend can bring sufferings to our heart as great, and often greater. IV. IT WAS TENDERLY RETICENT. Why were they silent? We are sometimes silent with amazement; sometimes because we know not what words to utter on the occasion; sometimes because the tide of our emotion rises and chokes the utterance. Why were these men silent? For any of these reasons? Perhaps for all. Anyhow, in their silence there was wisdom—silence on that occasion was better than speech. (*Homilist.*) *Sympathy*:—"Weep with them that weep." Just as we should be glad in the gladness of others, so we must grieve in the griefs of others. There are people who find it almost impossible to do this. They can neither feel for nor with others. They are naturally unsympathetic. This exhortation comes to such as a duty. They must learn the art, and so thoroughly that they will sympathise naturally and truly. It is no excuse to say that we cannot. We must. Dr. Dale is a case in point. This is what his son says of his father: "He was not selfish, but he was apt to be self-absorbed, engrossed by his own thoughts, and so absorbed as to be heedless of those whom he met, and of what was going on around him; he often gave offence unwittingly. His nature was not sympathetic. The faculty so bestowed on some, he had to cultivate sedulously and patiently as one of the moral virtues. . . . He was conscious of his defect, and set himself to overcome it, not as a mere infirmity, but as a fault. He became sympathetic by sympathising." Dr. Dale was not singular in this instinctive lack of sympathy. There are many similarly destitute of the grace of sorrowing. (*Ibid.*) *Interview of Job and his three friends*:—The misfortunes of princes have a particular tendency to excite our pity and compassion, even though their afflictions may have arisen from their own imprudent and culpable behaviour. Many instances of such generous behaviour might be collected from profane history. See the case of David in his treatment of King Saul. Among the foremost of those who seem to have been hurled suddenly from the highest pinnacle of fortune to the very lowest pit of misery and wretchedness stands holy Job, a powerful and wealthy prince of the patriarchal ages. Touched with the sad tidings of his sufferings, three neighbouring chieftains agree to visit and condole with their suffering friend. Their design was, on their setting out, humane, charitable, and friendly. Yet from the unhappy turn things took, their visit was but the occasion of new sorrow to Job. They had heard of Job's calamities, but appear to have been overwhelmed when they saw his miserable condition. They evidently thought thus: As his afflictions are so extraordinary and personal, so must his crimes have been his own also. We have heard of no public wickedness, so he must be a secret sinner; and the best advice we can give is, urge him to confess and bewail his guilt, that so he may obtain God's pardon, and be restored to his former prosperity. The false principle they maintained was, that God never suffers the righteous to be afflicted. To them Job's calamities were a sure sign of his proportionate wickedness. One of them was cruel enough to say, "God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth." Practical reflections. By the tenor of Eliphaz's speeches we may judge that he was artful and insinuating, specious and plausible, one who knew how to make the most of a bad argument. Bildad speaks in a graver and milder strain; but the fierceness of Zophar exceeds all bounds. When reason fails, anger and abuse supply its place. Let us be cautious

how we trample down a bruised reed, how we despise one over whom the rod of affliction, and poverty, and misery hangeth; as if we thought that the faculties of the soul, the integrity of the heart, depended on the health and clothing of the body. Let us be cautious how we let pride and perverseness influence our reason; and particularly in disputes about matters of opinion let us be careful never to judge harshly or uncharitably of those who differ from us; never to entrench and fortify ourselves within the pale of error, when conviction and truth knock aloud for admittance. What positive good may we learn from imitating the behaviour of holy Job himself? View him in the great and exalted character of a pious and good man, combating adversity, and vexed and harassed with the unjust and cruel suspicions, the peevish and petulant accusations of mistaken friends. He tries to convince them of their mistake. At last he appeals to the whole tenor of his life and manners. See how remarkably pious were all his principles, how solid his virtue, how eminent his true wisdom in fearing God, and God alone! Job's patience is proverbially known. A word is necessary on Job's infirmities. Job was not without his failings. As long as he was left to the workings of his own mind, it is said that "he sinned not." But when his integrity was called in question by his perverse friends, it wrung from him some little excursion of complaint, some few passionate exclamations, which, in the bitterness of his anguish, he could not suppress. There was sometimes also a weariness of life, a wishing for death, an impatience of spirit, which were shades and blemishes in character. Job was sometimes led beyond the bounds of decency, but he quickly repented in dust and ashes, and was as quickly received again into God's favour. From whence we may learn how readily God overlooks and forgives the infirmities of our nature, provided the heart is staunch in its obedience. (*C. Moore, M.A.*) *The mistaken friends*:—Job was irritated and out of temper when he said to his friends, "Miserable comforters are ye all." Like many another man, before and since, Job was wounded in the house of his friends." The individuality of these three men comes to view in their first speeches. "They are not represented as foolish, obstinate bigots, but as wise, humane, almost great men. True-hearted, truly loving, devout, religious men." Eliphaz is the true patriarchal chieftain, grave and dignified, erring only from exclusive adherence to tenets hitherto unquestioned. "He deals with the infirmity of all mortal natures, and the blessed virtue of repentance." "Bildad, with little originality or independence of character, reposes partly on the wise saws of antiquity, partly on the authority of his older friend." His mistake is this: It is quite true that nothing which God sends to man proceeds from injustice, but it is not true that everything comes from justice. Bildad thinks his commonplace utterance is sufficient to explain all the mysteries of human life. "Zophar was, apparently, a younger man; his language is violent, at times coarse and offensive; he represents the prejudiced and narrow-minded bigots of every age." From the haughty elevation of his narrow dogma he cannot even apprehend Job's form of experience. The very point of the poem is that what these men say is true in itself, but becomes unsuitable, and even false, when attempt is made to apply it to a particular case. 1. Observe the condition of mind in which these friends found Job. It was precisely the condition most difficult of comprehension by any one who thinks that religious experience ought to take certain definite and prescribed forms. Job had not that light of immortality shining on the mystery of life and suffering, which has come to us in Christ. What could we do with human suffering if that blessed light were blotted out? The calamities of Job had been overwhelming. He was in the first stage of distress. He was desperate. He was bowing, almost in despair, while all the waves and billows were passing over him. He was crushed, humbled, agonised; for the moment his trust in God was paralysed. Self-restraint was temporarily lost; he half suspected change in God, and felt all the agony of a soul that was being forsaken. Such a state of mind is not guilty. It is but natural response. But it puzzles many. The condition revealed in chap. iii. seems to many persons hopelessly wrong. And unless something in our own experience reveals the secret, it is quite hopeless to attempt to vindicate it. We have seen men in just this state of mind. We have passed through it ourselves. The man Christ Jesus shows us the truth of this experience. In agony of soul, that is in harmony with the agony of Job, He cried from the darkness of His Cross, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" 2. How did these friends think to comfort such a man, in such a frame of mind? The friends had three rounds of conversation

(if Zophar's third be recognised in chap. xxvii.); but they have only one idea, which is variously presented and illustrated. It may be stated in the form of a syllogism. God, who is just, bestows blessings on the godly, but afflicts the wicked. But Job is most heavily afflicted by God. Therefore Job is wicked, and deserves the punishment of his sins; and is bound to repent, confess, and bewail those sins. In the first speech all this is stated in general terms; all is impersonal, indirect; the rule of the world, the order of providence, the infirmity of mortal nature, the virtue of repentance. In the next speech Eliphaz takes Job's desperate words as the proof that their suspicion was well founded. Some secret and terrible impiety accounted for his exceptional sufferings. Becoming excited as their views are resisted, the friends get so far as to threaten Job with even more and greater sufferings. It was manifest in those days; it is much more manifest now, that no one explanation of human suffering can be sufficient. The troubles of life may be sent as the punishment of sin; they may be sent as chastisement and discipline. But there are continually cases arising of suffering for which neither punishment nor discipline provide adequate explanation. The dealings of God with men cannot be arbitrarily mapped out and limited, as the believers in dogma think they can. 3. What was the effect of their representations on Job? It brought him deeper suffering than any of his former calamities; because it brought him very near to questioning and mistrusting God. It is desperate work keeping hold of God, when a man is compelled to doubt God's justice, and see nothing but His power. The friends who came to comfort Job, in fact, lead him down into the lowest depth of misery, smiting the good man in his tenderest part, in his confidence and hope in God. There is no darkness over any human soul like the darkness of a lost or mistrusted God. Let us learn that the relations between God and His people are large and wide and free. We need to beware of theories and forms of belief, however plausible they may seem, which are forced to explain every case that may arise, or are felt to be untrue to life, to conscience, and genuine feeling. In contrast with the mistaken comforting of these friends we may put the holy charm of Christ's sympathy. His is a fellow-feeling of our infirmity, without any limitation from received opinion. Christ does not approach His suffering disciples as their fellow-men do. Men say: According to our system and theories, it must be thus and thus with him. But Christ comes to the man and says: How is it with thee? Nay, Christ knows exactly how it is with him, and comforts His suffering servant, "as one whom his mother comforteth." (*Robert Tuck, B.A.*)

Ver. 13. **And none spake a word unto him.**—*Silence, not speech, the best service of friendship in sorrow:*—Here is a demonstration of true friendship. Note the way in which these friends at first endeavoured to comfort Job. They did not speak. I. SILENCE IS THE STRONGEST EVIDENCE OF THE DEPTH OF OUR SYMPATHY TOWARDS A SUFFERING FRIEND. 1. The comforting power of a friend lies in the depth of his sympathy. 2. Silence is a better expression of deep sympathy than speech. II. SILENCE IS MOST CONSISTENT WITH OUR IGNORANCE OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE TOWARDS OUR SUFFERING FRIEND. How little we know of God's procedure in the affairs of human life! So long as these friends kept silence they acted as comforters; but as soon as they launched into speech they became Job's tormentors. III. SILENCE IS MOST CONGENIAL WITH THE MENTAL STATE OF OUR SUFFERING FRIEND. The soul in deep sorrow seeks silence and solitude. Mere word-condolers are soul-tormentors. Then be silent in scenes of sorrow; overflow with genuine sympathy, but do not talk. (*Homilist.*) *Silent sympathy:*—Bishop Myriel had the art of sitting down and *holding his tongue for hours*, by the side of the man who had lost the wife he had loved, or of a mother bereaved of her child. (*Victor Hugo.*) **For they saw that his grief was very great.**—*The trials of Job, and his consolations under them:*—"They saw that his grief was very great." Job was the friend of God, and the favourite of heaven: a person known in the gates as an upright judge, and a public blessing; his seasonable bounties made the widow's heart rejoice, and his liberal charities were as eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. Yet of him it is said: "his grief was very great." But the faithful and compassionate God, in whom this patriarch placed all his confidence, sustained his fainting mind, and strengthened his heart in his agonising struggles. 1. THE NATURE, VARIETY, AND SEVERITY OF JOB'S CALAMITIES. His trials began with the loss of all his wealth and property. His afflictions came with an accumulating force. From his honours and usefulness

he was driven, with as much rapidity as from his other sources of comfort. The mournful consequences of being visited with a singular distemper, and of his being stripped of his property and bereaved of his children, was the desertion of those who had formerly professed to venerate his character, and the total loss of influence and reputation in the places of concourse. The general opinion was that God had forsaken him, and therefore men might despise and revile him. Even the wife of his bosom added to his distress. And Job sometimes in his depression lost all sense of God's favour. II. THE CAUSES ASSIGNED WHY AN UNERRING AND RIGHTEOUS GOD PERMITTED SO GREAT AND GOOD A MAN AS JOB TO BE SO SINGULARLY AFFLICTED. Afflictions cannot come upon us without the Divine permission. But Job's friends perverted this sentiment. They urged that all calamities are the punishments of sin secretly allowed, or freely indulged in. Job must have been living in the transgression of the Divine commandments or he would not have been so sorely afflicted. It is made an argument against religion, that its highest attainments cannot exempt the godly from calamities. The just are often more tried than other men. But the truth is, that God is glorified by the afflictions of His children, and their best interests are promoted thereby. 1. Job's trials were designed and calculated to convince him, and to convince the saints in every age, that God is sovereign in His dispensations. He claims it as His right to order the lot of His children on earth according to His own unerring wisdom. So important is the habitual persuasion of the Divine sovereignty, that in chapter XXXVIII. the Almighty is represented as pleading His own cause in this respect. He is the great First Cause, of whom and for whom are all things. His people may well trust in God, though He hides His countenance; venerate their Heavenly Father, though He corrects them; and walk by faith, not by sight. Much of religion lies in submitting to the sovereignty of God, especially when the events of Providence appear to us peculiarly mysterious. 2. Job was tried in order to correct and remove his imperfections, and to promote in his soul that spiritual life which Divine grace had already begun. History represents Job as devoted to God, eminent for holiness, and distinguished for the most active benevolence and extensive usefulness. But there were certain blemishes which needed the powerful influence of the fiery furnace to purify and eradicate. There was a spirit of dejection, fretfulness, and distrust, which at times prevailed over his heroic patience. And there was a self-righteous opinion of his own goodness. With too presumptuous a confidence he wishes to argue matters even with a holy God. His arrogant language he penitently confesses and laments in the last chapter of the book. His tribulation wrought humility and self-abasement, so did it also work patience. His sufferings also increased his compassion for the afflicted. 3. Job's trials were intended to convince him, and to convince mankind, that though God afflicts the dearest of His children, yet He most seasonably and graciously imparts to them both support and deliverance. We cannot expect temporal deliverance and exaltation, like that of Job, but we may be sure that we shall receive of the Lord's hand a double recompense of joy for all our sorrow. III. THE CONSIDERATIONS WHICH SUPPORTED AND RELIEVED THE MIND OF JOB IN HIS DAYS OF ADVERSITY AND TRIBULATION. 1. Seeing the hand of God in all his afflictions. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." 2. The full persuasion that his Redeemer would never abandon him. 3. The prospect of resurrection from the dead, a believing persuasion, and a lively hope of eternal happiness beyond the grave. Although immortality was not then brought to light by any outward revelation, the Spirit of God wrought in this illustrious patriarch that genuine faith which is the evidence of things not seen, and which enabled him to connect humble faith in an ever-living Redeemer with the lively hope of an inheritance in the heavens. (*A. Bonar.*) *The calamity* :—Someone says, "God had one Son without sin, but no Son without sorrow." The line of saints has been a striking one. Men burdened with terrific duties, overwhelmed with affliction, stoned and sawn asunder, persecuted, afflicted, tormented. There is a matter of subsidiary but yet striking interest to which we must advert, namely, the prominence given to Satan in connection with this affliction. The gospel theory of affliction does not name him. "Whom God loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." But here Satan is the accuser, the adversary, and he, with God's permission, brings upon Job all his troubles. But although in the early twilight of truth all things are not discerned so clearly as in gospel noonday, it is striking how near the fullest truth the writer comes. There have been darkling thoughts in

the minds of men on this matter. Some few shallow spirits have never sufficiently resisted temptation to feel its reality and force; nor sufficiently sympathised with the sorrow of the world to feel the mystery of evil. There have been three great lines of thought on this matter of the principle of evil. There have been those who have thought that the Evil One was the Great God, the Lord Almighty. Sometimes they have developed this into the basis of religion, like the devil-worshippers in Santhalistan, in Southern India, and in Ceylon. Sometimes they have made it only the basis of their practical life, as the fraudulent, who, in England, in the nineteenth century, believe the god of falsehood and of fraud a stronger providence than the God of truth and honour; or the despairing and remorseful, who think God vengeance only. Sometimes, as in the old Manichean doctrine, men have shrunk from believing in the supremacy of an Evil Deity, but have believed him equal in power to the Good God, and have explained all the mixing of human conditions by the divided sovereignty which governs all things here. And Ormuzd, the god of light, and Ahriman, the god of darkness, have sat on level thrones, confronting one another in constant but unprogressive conflict. The writer of the Book of Job had never lapsed into the despair that deemed evil supreme, nor into that alarm which feared it was equal in power to God. According to him, Satan is powerless to inflict outward trouble or inward temptation, excepting as permitted by the Lord. Substantially, the doctrine of this book on the power of evil is the doctrine of Christ, the doctrine of the devout in all ages. Give heed to it. Evil is not Divine in its power, nor eternal in its mastery over men. It works within strictest limits; the enemy only by permission can touch either soul or body. Be not afraid, nor yield to despair. Love is the supreme and the eternal thing; therefore rejoice. Accusing Job—God gives Satan liberty and power to afflict. The affliction is suggested by Job's enemy, with the hope of destroying his integrity. It is permitted by God with an intent very different; namely, that of developing it. It is no vivisection of a saint that is permitted merely to gratify curiosity as to the point at which the most vigorous vitality of goodness will break down. Little knowing the Divine issue which would proceed from his assault, the enemy goes forth to his envious and hateful task. There is an awful completeness about this calamity of Job. The strokes of it are so contrived that, although some interval may be between them, they are all reported in the same day. 1. Observe that affliction is by God's ordinance part of the general lot of man. A state of perfect happiness, if such were possible, would not be suitable for a world of imperfect virtue. 2. We should not be astonished when afflictions touch us. We all get into the way of assuming that somehow we are to be exempt from the usual ills. 3. Remember that a universal experience has testified that affliction has its service, and adversity its sweetness. Without affliction who could avoid worldliness? It is the sorrows of this life that raise both eye and expectation to the joys of the life to come. Without affliction there would be but little refinement—no tender ministries, no gracious compassion, no self-forgetful sympathy. All the *passive* virtues, which are so essential to character, thrive under it—such as endurance, patience, meekness, humility. Prosperity coarsens and sears the conscience; affliction gives it tenderness. The necessity for stronger faith itself strengthens it. 4. It is but a deduction from this to add: Remember, therefore, affliction is not hate, but love. "Whom God loveth He chasteneth." Lord Bacon forgot Job when he uttered his fine aphorism: "Prosperity was the blessing of the Old Testament, but adversity of the new." (*Richard Glover.*)

CHAPTER III.

VERS. 1-26. **After this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day.**—*The peril of impulsive speech:*—In regard to this chapter, containing the first speech of Job, we may remark that it is impossible to approve the spirit which it exhibits, or to believe that it was acceptable to God. It laid the foundation for the reflections—many of them exceedingly just—in the following chapters, and led his friends to doubt whether such a man could be truly pious. The spirit which is manifested in this chapter is undoubtedly far from that calm submission

which religion should have produced, and from that which Job had before evinced. That he was, in the main, a man of eminent holiness and patience, the whole book demonstrates; but this chapter is one of the conclusive proofs that he was not absolutely free from imperfection. We may learn—1. That even eminently good men sometimes give utterance to sentiments which are a departure from the spirit of religion, and which they will have occasion to regret. Here there was a language of complaint, and a bitterness of expression, which religion cannot sanction, and which no pious man, on reflection, would approve. 2. We see the effect of heavy affliction on the mind. It sometimes becomes overwhelming. It is so great that all the ordinary barriers against impatience are swept away. The sufferer is left to utter language of murmuring, and there is the impatient wish that life was closed, or that he had not existed. 3. We are not to infer that, because a man in affliction makes use of some expressions which we cannot approve, and which are not sanctioned by the Word of God, that therefore he is not a good man. There may be true piety, yet it may be far from perfection; there may be a general submission to God, yet the calamity may be so overwhelming as to overcome the usual restraints on our corrupt and fallen nature; and when we remember how feeble our nature is at best, and how imperfect is the piety of the holiest of men, we should not harshly judge him who is left to express impatience in his trials or who gives utterance to sentiments different from those which are sanctioned in the Word of God. There has been but one model of pure submission on earth—the Lord Jesus Christ. And after the contemplation of the best of men in their trials we can see that there is imperfection in them, and that if we would survey absolute perfection in suffering we must go to Gethsemane and Calvary. 4. Let us not make the expressions used by Job in this chapter our model in suffering. Let us not suppose that because he used such language, therefore we may also. Let us not infer that because they are found in the Bible, that therefore they are right; or that because he was an unusually holy man, that it would be proper for us to use the same language that he does. The fact that this book is a part of the inspired truth of revelation does not make such language right. All that inspiration does in such a case is to secure an exact record of what was actually said; it does not, of necessity, sanction it, any more than an accurate historian can be supposed to approve all that he records. There may be important reasons why it should be preserved, but he who makes the record is not answerable for the truth or propriety of what is recorded. The narrative is true; the sentiment may be false. (*Albert Barnes.*) *Good men not always at their best*:—1. The holiest person in this life doth not always keep in the same frame of holiness. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" This was the language we lately heard; but now cursing—certainly his spirit had been in a more holy frame, more sedate and quiet, than now it was. At the best in this life we are but imperfect; yet at some time we are more imperfect than we are at another. 2. Great sufferings may fill the mouths of holiest persons with great complainings. 3. Satan, with his utmost power and policy, with his strongest temptations and assaults, can never fully attain his ends upon the children of God. What was it that the devil undertook for? was it not to make Job curse his God? and yet when he had done his worst, and spent his malice upon him, he could but make Job curse his day,—this was far short of what Satan hoped. 4. God doth graciously forget and pass by the distempered speeches and bitter complainings of His servants under great afflictions. (*J. Caryl.*) *Good men weakened by calamities*:—The calamities and the suffering have wrought upon the weakened man. Depressed in spirit, perplexed in mind, in great bodily pain, Job opens his mouth and lifts up his voice. Great suffering generates great passions, and great passions are oft irrepressible, and hence the danger of extravagant speech. "Better," says Trapp, "if Job had kept his lips still." Surely that were impossible in an human being! One, and only One, was silent "as a sheep before her shearers is dumb." Brooks says, "When God's hand is on our back our hand should be on our mouth." (*H. E. Stone.*) *Mistaken speech*:—Job's tongue is loosened and his words are many. And what other form of speech was so true to his inmost feeling as the form which is known as malediction? The speech is but one sentence, and it rushes from a soul that is momentarily out of equipoise. Our friends often draw out of us the very worst that is in us. We best comment upon such words by repeating them, by studying the probable tone in which they were uttered.

Thank God for this man, who in prosperity has uttered every thought appropriate to grief, and has given anguish a new costume of expression. 1. Notice how terrible, after all, is Satanic power. Look at Job if you would see how much the devil can, under Divine permission, do to human life. Perhaps it was well that, in one instance at least, we should see the devil at his worst. 2. See what miracles may be wrought in human experience. In Job's malediction, existence was felt to be a burden; but existence was never meant to be a heavy weight. It was meant to be a joy, a hope, a rehearsal of music and service of a quality and range now inconceivable. But under Satanic agency even existence is felt to be an intolerable burden. Even this miracle can be wrought by Satan. He can turn our every faculty into a heavy calamity. He can so play upon our nerves as to make us feel that feeling is intolerable. But the speech of Job is full of profound mistakes, and the mistakes are only excusable because they were perpetrated by an unbalanced mind. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Infirmity appearing*:—At the ebb. As soon as the tide turned, numbers of crows and jackdaws came down upon the shore. While the beautiful waves were splashing over the sand there was no room for these black visitors; but as soon as the waters left, the harvest of these scavengers began. It seemed as though they must have carried watches, so well did they know the time of the receding tides. When the tide of grace runs low, how infirmities come upon us! If the tide of joy ebbs, the black birds of discontent soon appear, while doubts and fears always make their appearance if faith sinks low. (*Footsteps of Truth.*) *Defect in the best of men*:—Life at its best has a crack in it. Somehow the trail of the serpent is all over it. The most perfect man is imperfect, the most innocent man has his weak point. The infant Achilles in the Greek legend is dipped in the waters of the Styx, and the touch of the wave makes him invulnerable; but the water has not touched the heel by which his mother held him, and to that vulnerable heel the deathly arrow finds its way. Siegfried, in the "Nibelungen Lied," bathes in the dragon's blood, and it has made him, too, invulnerable; but, unknown to him, a lime-tree leaf has fluttered down upon his back, and into the vital spot where the blood has not touched his skin the murderer's dagger smites. Everything in the Icelandic Saga has sworn not to injure Balder, the brightest and most beloved of all the northern gods; but the insignificant mistletoe has not been asked to take the oath, and by the mistletoe he dies. These are the dim, sad allegories by which the world indicates that even the happiest man cannot be all happy, nor the most invincible altogether safe, nor the best altogether good. (*Dean Farrar.*) *Job's distemper*:—Albeit Job's weakness do thus for a time break forth, when his reason and experience are at under, and he is sensible of nothing but pain and sorrow, yet he doth not persist in this distemper, nor is it the only thing that appears in the furnace, but he hath much better purpose afterward in the behalf of God. And therefore, as in a battle men do not judge of affairs by what may occur in the heat of the conflict, wherein parties may retire and fall on again, but by the issue of the fight; so Job is not to be judged by those fits of distemper, seeing he recovered out of them at last; those violent fits do serve to demonstrate the strength of grace in him which prevailed at last over them all. 1. There are, in the most subdued child of God, strong corruptions ready to break forth in trial. The best of men ought to be sensible that they have, by nature, an evil heart of unbelief, even when they are strong in faith; that they have lukewarmness under their zeal, passion under their meekness. 2. Albeit natural corruptions may lurk long, even in the furnace of affliction, yet long and multiplied temptations will bring it forth. (1) Every exercise and trial will not be a trial to every man, nor an irritation to every corruption within him. (2) The length and continuance of a trial is a new trial, and may discover that which the simple trial doth not reach. (3) When men get leisure in cold blood to reflect and pore upon their case it will prove more grievous than at first it doth. (4) When men are disappointed of what they expect under trouble (as Job was of his friends' comfort), it will grieve them more than if they, in sobriety, had expected no such thing. Doctrine—The Lord, in judging of the grace and integrity of His followers, doth afford many grains of allowance, and graciously passeth over much weakness, wherein they do not approve themselves. (*George Hutcheson.*) *Job cursing his day*:—How can Job be set up with so much admiration for a mirror of patience, who makes such bitter complainings, and breaks out into such distempered passions? He seems to be so far from patience that he wants prudence; so far from grace, that he wants reason itself and good nature; his speeches report him mad or

distracted, breaking the bounds of modesty and moderation, striking that which had not hurt him, and striking that which he could not hurt—his birthday. Some prosecute the impatience of Job with much impatience, and are over-passionate against Job's passion. Most of the Jewish writers tax him at the least as bordering on blasphemy, if not blaspheming. Nay, they censure him as one taking heed to, and much depending upon, astrological observations, as if man's fate or fortune were guided by the constellations of heaven, by the sight and aspect of the planets in the day of his nativity. Others carry the matter so far, on the other hand, altogether excusing and, which is more, commending, yea applauding Job, in this act of "cursing his day." They make this curse an argument of his holiness, and these expostulations as a part of his patience, contending—1. That they did only express (as they ought) the suffering of his sensitive part, as a man, and so were opposite to Stoical apathy, not to Christian patience. 2. That he spake all this not only according to the law of sense, but with exact judgment, and according to the law of soundest reason. I do not say but that Job loved God, and loved Him exceedingly all this while, but whether we should so far acquit Job I much doubt. We must state the matter in the middle way. Job is neither rigidly to be taxed of blasphemy or profaneness, nor totally to be excused, especially not flatteringly commended, for this high complaint. It must be granted that Job discovered much frailty and infirmity, some passion and distemper, in this complaint and curse; yet notwithstanding, we must assert him for a patient man, and there are five things considerable for the clearing and proof of this assertion. 1. Consider the greatness of his suffering: his wound was very deep and deadly, his burden was very heavy, only not intolerable. 2. Consider the multiplicity of his troubles. They were great and many—many little afflictions meeting together make a great one; how great, then, is that which is composed of many great ones! 3. Consider the long continuance of these great and many troubles: they continued long upon him—some say they continued divers years upon him. 4. Consider this, that his complainings and acts of impatience were but a few; but his submission and acts of meekness, under the hand of God, were very many. 5. Take this into consideration, that though he did complain, and complain bitterly, yet he recovered out of those complainings. He was not overcome with impatience, though some impatient speeches came from him; he recalls what he had spoken, and repents for what he had done. Look not alone upon the actings of Job, when he was in the height and heat of the battle; look to the on-set, he was so very patient in the beginning, though vehemently stirred, that Satan had not a word to say. Look to the end, and you cannot say but Job was a patient man, full of patience—a mirror of patience, if not a miracle of patience; a man whose face shined with the glory of that grace, above all the children of men. Learn—(1) The holiest person in this life doth not always keep in the same frame of holiness. (2) Great sufferings may fill the mouths of holiest persons with great complainings. (3) God doth graciously pass by and forget the distempered speeches and bitter complainings of His servants under great afflictions. (*Joseph Caryl.*) *The speech of Job and its misapprehensions:*—Job's speech is full of profound mistakes, which are only excusable because they were perpetrated by an unbalanced mind. The eloquent tirade proceeds upon the greatest misapprehensions. Yet we must be merciful in our judgment, for we ourselves have been unbalanced, and we have not spared the eloquence of folly in the time of loss, bereavement, and great suffering. We may not have made the same speech in one set deliverance, going through it paragraph by paragraph, but if we could gather up all reproaches, murmurings, complainings, which we have uttered, and set them down in order, Job's short chapter would be but a preface to the black volume indited by our atheistic hearts. Job makes the mistake that personal happiness is the test of Providence. Job did not take the larger view. What a different speech he might have made! He might have said, Though I am in these circumstances now, I was not always in them: weeping endureth for a night, joy cometh in the morning: I will not complain of one bitter winter day when I remember all the summer season in which I have sunned myself at the very gate of heaven. Yet he might not have said this, for it lies not within the scope of human strength. We must not expect more even from Christian men than human nature in its best moods can exemplify. I know that Christian men are mocked when they complain; they are taunted when they say their souls are in distress; there are those who stand up and say, Where is now thy God? But "the best of men," as one has quaintly said, "are but men at the

best." God Himself knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust; He says, They are a wind which cometh for a little time, and then passeth away; their life is like a vapour, curling up into the blue air for one little moment, and then dying off as to visibleness as if it had never been. The Lord knoweth our days, our faculties, our sensibilities, our capacity of suffering, and the judgment must be with Him. Then Job committed the mistake of supposing that circumstances are of more consequence than life. If the sun had shone, if the fields and vineyards had returned plentifully, answering the labour of the sower and the planter with great abundance, who knows whether the soul had not gone down in the same equal proportion? It is a hard thing to keep both soul and body at an equal measure. "How hardly"—with what straining—"shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven." Who knows what Job might have said if the prosperity had been multiplied sevenfold? "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked." Where is the man who could bear always to swelter under the sun-warmth of prosperity? Where is the man that does not need now and again to be smitten, chastened, almost lacerated, cut in two by God's whip, lest he forget to pray? Let suffering be accounted a seal of sonship, if it come as a test rather than as a penalty. Where a man has justly deserved the suffering, let him not comfort himself with its highest religious meaning, but let him accept it as a just penalty. But where it has overtaken him at the very altar, where it has cut him down when he was on his way to heaven with pure heart and pure lips, then let him say, This is the Lord's doing, and He means to enlarge my manhood, to increase the volume of my being, and to develop His own image and likeness according to the mysteriousness of His own way: blessed be the name of the Lord! Why has Job fallen into this strain? He has omitted the word which made his first speech noble. In the first speech the word "Lord" occurs three times, and the word "Lord" never occurs in this speech, for purely religious purposes; he would only have God invoked that God might carry out his own feeble prayer for destruction and annihilation; the word "God" is only associated with complaint and murmuring, as, for example—"Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it" (iii. 4); and again: "Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?" (iii. 23.) This is not the "Lord" of the first speech; this is but invoking Omnipotence to do a puny miracle: it is not making the Lord a high tower, and an everlasting refuge into which the soul can pass, and where it can for ever be at ease. So we may retain the name of God, and yet have no Lord—living, merciful, and mighty, to whom our souls can flee as to a refuge. It is not enough to use the term God; we must enter into the spirit of its meaning, and find in God not almightiness only, but all-mercifulness, all-goodness, all-wisdom. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Yet we must not be hard upon Job, for there have been times in which the best of us has had no heaven, no altar, no Bible, no God. If those times had endured a little longer our souls had been overwhelmed; but there came a voice from the Excellent Glory, saying, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee." Praised for ever be the name of the delivering God! (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *The maddening force of suffering*:—A man's language must be construed according to the mood of his soul. Here we have sufferings forcing a human soul—I. TO THE USE OF EXTRAVAGANT LANGUAGE. 1. Great sufferings generate great passions in the soul. Hope, fear, love, anger, and other sentiments may remain in the mind during the period of ease and comfort, so latent and quiescent as to crave no expression. But let suffering come, and they will rush into passions that shake and convulse the whole man. There are elements in every human heart, now latent, that suffering can develop into terrific force. 2. Great passions often become irrepressible. Some men have a wonderful power of restraining their feelings. But passion sometimes rises to such a pitch in the soul that no man, however great his self-control, is able to repress. Like the volcanic fires, it will break through all the mountains that lie upon it, and flame up to the heavens. 3. When great passions become irrepressible they express themselves extravagantly. The flood that has broken through its obstructions does not roll on at once in calm and silent flow, but rushes and foams. He speaks not in calm prose, but in tumultuous poetry. II. TO DEPLORE THE FACT OF HIS EXISTENCE. 1. The fact that he existed at all. 2. That, having existed, he did not die at the very dawn of his being. Incidentally, I cannot but remark how good is God in making provision for our support before we enter on the stage

of life. The fact that suffering can thus make existence intolerable suggests the following truths—(1) Annihilation is not the worst of evils. Better not to be at all than to be in misery; better to be quenched than to burn. Another truth suggested is—(2) Desire for death is no proof of genuine religion. Another truth suggested is—(3) Hell must be an overwhelmingly terrible condition of existence. Hell, the Bible tells us, is a condition of excruciating and hopeless suffering. There death is sought, but cannot be found. III. Here is suffering urging a man TO HAIL THE CONDITION OF THE DEAD. 1. As a real rest. Lying still in unconscious sleep, beyond the reach of any disturbing power. How profound is the rest of the grave! The loudest thunders cannot penetrate the ear of the dead. He looked at death—2. As a common rest. "Kings and counsellors," princes and paupers, tyrants and their victims, the illustrious and obscure—all are there together. The state of the dead, as here described, suggests two practical thoughts. (1) The transitoriness of all worldly distinctions. The flowers that appear in our fields at this season of the year vary greatly in form, size, hues. Some are far more imposing and beautiful than others; but in a few weeks all the distinctions will be utterly destroyed. It is so in society. Great are the secular distinctions in this generation, but a century hence and the whole will be common dust. How egregiously absurd to be proud of mere secular distinctions. (2) The folly of making corporeal interests supreme. IV. HERE IS SUFFERING URGING A MAN TO PRY INTO THE REASONS OF A MISERABLE LIFE. Has the great Author of existence any pleasure in the sufferings of His creatures? There are, no doubt, good reasons, reasons that we shall understand and appreciate ere long. 1. Great sufferings are often spiritually useful to the sufferer. They are storms to purify the dark atmosphere of his heart; they are bitter ingredients to make spiritually curative his cup of life. Suffering teaches man the evil of sin; for sin is the root of all anguish. Suffering develops the virtues—patience, forbearance, resignation. Suffering tests the character; it is fire that tries the moral metal of the soul. 2. Great sufferings are often spiritually useful to the spectator. The view of a suffering human creature tends to awaken compassion, stimulate benevolence, and excite gratitude. From this subject we learn—(1) The utmost power that the devil is capable of exerting on man. (2) The strength of genuine religion. (*Homilist.*) *The cry from the depths*:—The outburst of Job's speech falls into three lyrical strophes, the first ending at the tenth verse, the second at the nineteenth, the third closing with the chapter. 1. "Job opened his mouth, and cursed his day." In a kind of wild, impossible revision of Providence, and reopening of questions long settled, he assumes the right of heaping denunciations on the day of his birth. He is so fallen, so distraught, and the end of his existence appears to have come in such profound disaster, the face of God as well as of man frowning on him, that he turns savagely on the only fact left to strike at—his birth into the world. But the whole strain is imaginative. His revolt is unreason, not impiety, either against God or his parents. He does not lose the instinct of a good man, one who keeps in mind the love of father and mother, and the intention of the Almighty, whom he still reveres. The idea is, Let the day of my birth be got rid of, so that no other come into being on such a day; let God pass from it—then He will not give life on that day. Mingled in this is the old-world notion of days having meanings and powers of their own. This day had proved malign—terribly bad! 2. In the second strophe cursing is exchanged for wailing, fruitless reproach of a long past day, for a touching chant in praise of the grave. If his birth had to be, why could he not have passed at once into the shades? The lament, though not so passionate, is full of tragic emotion. It is beautiful poetry, and the images have a singular charm for the dejected mind. The chief point, however, for us to notice is the absence of any thought of judgment. In the dim under-world, hid as beneath heavy clouds, power and energy are not. Existence has fallen to so low an ebb that it scarcely matters whether men were good or bad in this life, nor is it needful to separate them. It is a kind of existence below the level of moral judgment, below the level either of fear or joy. 3. The last portion of Job's address begins with a note of inquiry. He strikes into eager questioning of heaven and earth regarding his state. What is he kept alive for? He pursues death with his longing as one goes into the mountain to seek treasure. And again, his way is hid, he has no future. God hath hedged him in on this side by losses, on that by grief; behind, a past mocks him, before is a shape which he follows, and yet dreads. It is indeed a horrible condition, this of the baffled

mind to which nothing remains but its own gnawing thought, that finds neither reason of being nor end of turmoil, that can neither cease to question, nor find answer to inquiries that rack the spirit. There is energy enough, life enough to feel life a terror, and no more; not enough for any mastery even of stoical resolve. The power of self-consciousness seems to be the last injury—a Nessus shirt, the gift of a strange hate. . . . Note that in his whole agony Job makes no motion towards suicide. The struggle of life cannot be renounced. (*Robert A. Watson, D.D.*) *Birth deplored:*—The Puritan mother of Samuel Mills, who, when her son, under the stress of morbid religious feeling, cried out, "Oh, that I had never been born!" said to him, "My son, you are born, and you cannot help it," was more philosophical than he who says, "I am, but I wish I were not." A philosophy that flies in the face of the existing and the inevitable forfeits its name. (*T. T. Munger.*)

Ver. 17. **There the wicked cease from troubling.**—*Wicked men trouble the world:*—True rest and wickedness never meet; rest and the wicked meet but seldom. And it is but half a rest, and it is rest but to half a wicked man, to his bones in the grave; and it is rest to that half but for a little time, only till the resurrection. The word here used, and in divers other places, signifieth wickedness in the height, and men most active in wickedness. So that when Job saith, There the wicked are at rest, he means those who had been restless in sin, who could not sleep till they had done mischief, nor scarce sleep for doing mischief; he means those who had outrun others in the sinful activity (Acts xxvi. 11). 1. Wicked men are troublers both of themselves and others. There the wicked cease from troubling; as if the wicked did nothing in the world, but trouble the world. Wicked ones are the troublers of all; they are troublers of their own families, troublers of the places and cities where they live, the troublers of a whole kingdom, troublers of the Churches of Christ, and the troublers of their own souls. 2. Wicked men, by troubling others, do as much weary and tire out themselves. 3. Wicked men will never cease troubling until they cease to live. In the grave they cease troubling, there they are at rest. If they should live an eternity in this world, they would trouble the world to eternity. As a godly man never gives over doing good, he will do good as long as he lives, though he fetches many a weary step; so wicked men never give over doing evil, until they step into the grave. And the reason of it is, because it is their nature to do evil. The wicked will sin while they have any light to sin by; therefore God puts out their candle, and sends them down into darkness, and there they will be quiet. The wicked shall be silent in darkness. (*J. Caryl.*) **And the weary are at rest.**—*The rest of the grave:*—In the grave—where kings and princes and infants lie. This verse is often applied to heaven, and the language is such as will express the condition of that blessed world. But, as used by Job, it had no such reference. It relates only to the grave. It is language which beautifully expresses the condition of the dead, and the desirableness even of an abode in the tomb. They who are there are free from the vexations and annoyances to which men are exposed in this life; the wicked cannot torture their limbs by the fires of persecution, or wound their feelings by slander, or oppress and harass them in regard to their property, or distress them by thwarting their plans, or injure them by impugning their motives. All is peaceful and calm in the grave, and there is a place where the malicious designs of wicked men cannot reach us. The object of this verse and the two following is to show the reasons why it was desirable to be in the grave, rather than to live and to suffer the ills of this life. We are not to suppose that Job referred exclusively to his own case in all this. He is describing, in general, the happy condition of the dead, and we have no reason to think that he had been particularly annoyed by wicked men. But the pious often are; and hence it should be a matter of gratitude that there is one place, at least, where the wicked cannot annoy the good, and where the persecuted, the oppressed, and the slandered, may lie down in peace. For "there the weary be at rest," the margin has "wearied in strength." And the margin is according to the Hebrew. The meaning is, those whose strength is exhausted, who are worn down with the toils and cares of life, and who feel the need of rest. Never was more beautiful language employed than occurs in this verse. What a charm such language throws even over the grave—like strewing flowers and planting roses around the tomb! Who should fear to die, if prepared, when such is to be the condition of the dead? Who is there that

is not in some way troubled by the wicked—by their thoughtless, godless life; by persecution, contempt, and slander? (comp. 2 Pet. ii. 8; Psa. xxxix. 1.) Who is there that is not at some time weary with his load of care, anxiety, and trouble? Who is there whose strength does not become exhausted, and to whom rest is not grateful and refreshing? And who is there, therefore, to whom, if prepared for heaven, the grave would not be a place of calm and grateful rest? And though true religion will not prompt us to wish that we had lain down there in early childhood, as Job wished, yet no dictate of piety is violated when we look forward with calm delight to the time when we may repose where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest. O grave, thou art a peaceful spot! Thy rest is calm; thy slumbers are sweet. (*Albert Barnes.*) *Desire to depart:*—Thorns in our nest make us take to our wings; the embittering of this cup makes us earnestly desire to drink of the new wine of the kingdom. We are very much like our poor, who would stay at home in England, and put up with their lot, hard though it be; but when at last there comes a worse distress than usual, then straightway they talk of emigrating to those fair and boundless fields across the Atlantic, where a kindred nation will welcome them with joy. So here we are in our poverty, and we make the best of it we can; but a sharp distress wounds our spirit, and then we say we will away to Canaan, to the land that floweth with milk and honey, for there we shall suffer no distress, neither shall our spirits hunger any more. (*J. Trapp.*) *Departed trouble, and welcome rest:*—"There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest." The day was, when it was thought fit that the Christian's last resting-place should be surrounded by gloomy and repulsive associations. It is not of peaceful rest that the burying-place of the Middle Ages would remind you. We all remember the locked up, deserted, neglected churchyard, all grown over with great weeds and nettles, and not like God's acre at all. How much more appropriate are the quiet, beautiful, open, carefully tended cemeteries of to-day! It is not merely better judgment but sounder faith that is here. It is a thoroughly Christian thing, to scatter the beauties of nature around the Christian grave. In the text I see something that is like turning the ghastly, neglected, nettle-grown churchyard which we may remember in childhood, into the quiet, sweet, thoughtful sleeping-place which we find so common now. The text speaks to us over nearly four thousand years. Job lived in days when the light of truth was dim; Jesus had not yet brought life and immortality to light; so it is possible that we are able to understand Job's words more fully and better than he understood them himself. The text may be read first of the grave; but in its best meaning it speaks of a better world, to which the grave is the portal. I. THESE WORDS AS SPOKEN OF THE GRAVE, "THE HOUSE APPOINTED FOR ALL LIVING." We need not justify the impatient burst in which Job wished, as many others have wished since, that he had never been born. Job speaks of the rest to which he would gladly have gone. He would have slumbered with the wise, the great, and the good: how he would have lain still and been quiet, where trouble could never come, in the peaceful grave. There "the wicked cease from troubling." There is one place into which the suffering can escape, where their persecutors have no power. There is nothing more striking about the state of those who have gone into the unseen world than the completeness of their escape from all worldly enemies, however malignant and however powerful. But there is something beyond the mere escape from worldly evil. Now the busy heart is quiet at last, and the weary head lies still. What a multitude there is of these weary ones. But there is a certain delusion in thinking of the grave as a place of quiet rest. The soul lives still, and is awake and conscious, though the body sleeps; and it is our souls that are ourselves. We have no warrant for believing that in the other world there will be any season of unconsciousness to the soul. II. TAKE THE WORDS IN THEIR HIGHER AND TRUER MEANING. They speak of a better world, whose two great characteristics are safety and peace. 1. There is safety and the sense of safety. Everything wicked—evil spirits, evil thoughts, evil influences cease from troubling. Everything evil, whether within us or around us, shall be done with. If evil were gone, trouble would go too. The great thing about evil and trouble here is not so much the pain and suffering they cause us, as the terrible power they have to do us fearful spiritual harm. 2. Besides the negative assurance, that trouble will be done with in heaven, we have the promise of a positive blessing. "There the weary are at rest." The peace and happiness of the better world are summed up in that word. "The end of work is to enjoy

rest," said one of the wisest of heathen. Doubtless there will be rest from sin, from sorrow, from toil, from anxiety, from temptation, from pain; but all that fails to convey the whole unspeakable truth; it will be the beatific presence of the Saviour that will make the weary soul feel it never knew rest before! In that world the bliss will be restful, calm, satisfied, self-possessed, sublime. The only rest that can ever truly and permanently quiet the human heart is that which the Saviour gives. His peace. And He gives it only to His own. (*A. K. H. Boyd.*)

Ver. 19. **The small and great are there.**—*The common lot:*—Notice the sameness of all men in their birth. One and all are equal by nature. All inherit the sin of their first parents. The necessary consequence following from this truth is that there is a need of a "new birth" for every one that would inherit everlasting life. There is, however, a distinction among men in their lives. There is a vast difference between men, both in spiritual and in temporal things. The inferences are simply these. If we look at men in matters temporal, and receive the truth that God makes one man great and another man small, we learn to be contented in whatsoever position of life God Himself has placed us. We learn that God is willing to make man that which man ought to be, even though He has to work with such wretched materials as we are made of. But whatever men's differences in life, there is nevertheless a similarity in their death. "The small and the great are there." Whether young or old, all must come to this. "He seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish." "Man being in honour, abideth not." (*H. M. Villiers, M.A.*) *Small and great in death:*—1. Death seizeth equally upon all sorts and degrees of men. The small and the great are there. The small cannot escape the hands, or slip through the fingers of death, because they are little; the greatest cannot rescue themselves from the power, or break out of the hands of death, because they are big. 2. That death makes all men equal; or, that all are equal in death. As there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory (1 Cor. xv. 41). So there is one terrestrial glory of kings, and another glory of nobles, and another glory of the common people, and these have not the same glory in common; even among them, one man differs from another man in this worldly glory; but when death comes, there is an end of all degrees, of all distinctions; there the small and the great are the same. There is but one distinction that will outlive death; and death cannot take it away; the distinction of holy and unholy, clean and unclean, believer and an infidel; these distinctions remain after death, and shall remain for ever. (*J. Caryl.*)

Ver. 20. **Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery.**—*Christian posture of the problem of evil in life:*—This question of universal, intellectual, and moral interest, as to the purpose of evil, is a question which has always been raised by ghastly facts in human life, parallel to Job's. Why wert thou so visited, didst thou ask, O Job? Why but that, through thy momentary temptation to wonder and murmur, that beautiful patience and admirable piety of thine might be afterwards developed, and that thou mightest thus set up on earth a school of patience and trust in God, where all the after generations of men might study? Even so we may answer this old "why and wherefore" in our own experience. To what do we owe all that is soft, beautiful, and gentle in this rough, cross world, but to just such instances as we deplore? Job's question, Why the light of human life is mixed with bitterness and misery, is answered then, in the demonstration that we are indebted for what is most valuable in temper, character, and hope, not alone to what is sunny and sweet, but to the shadow that hides our landscape, and the wormwood that dashes our cup. For the present let us not be anxious to know more. (*C. A. Bartol.*) *Reasons for life's continuance:*—When it is asked why a man is kept in misery on earth, when he would be glad to be released by death, perhaps the following among others may be the reasons. 1. Those sufferings may be the very means which are needful to develop the true state of his soul. Such was the case with Job 2. They may be the proper punishment of sin in the heart, of which the individual was not fully aware, but which may be distinctly seen by God. There may be pride, and the love of ease, and self-confidence, and ambition, and a desire of reputation. Such appear to have been some of the besetting sins of Job. 3. They

are needful to teach true submission, and to show whether a man is willing to resign himself to God. 4. They may be the very things which are necessary to prepare the individual to die. At the same time that men often desire death, and feel that it would be a relief, it might be to them the greatest possible calamity. They may be wholly unprepared for it. For a sinner, the grave contains no rest; the eternal world furnishes no repose. One design of God in such sorrows may be to show to the wicked how intolerable will be future pain, and how important it is for them to be ready to die. If they cannot bear the pains and sorrows of a few hours in this short life, how can they endure eternal sufferings? If it is so desirable to be released from the sorrows of the body here,—if it is felt that the grave, with all that is repulsive in it, would be a place of repose, how important is it to find some way to be secured from everlasting pains! The true place of release from suffering, for a sinner, is not the grave; it is in the pardoning mercy of God, and in that pure heaven to which he is invited through the blood of the Cross. In that holy heaven is the only real repose from suffering and from sin; and heaven will be all the sweeter in proportion to the extremity of pain which is endured on earth. (*A. Barnes.*) *The will of God a sufficient reason for existence:*—The will of God is reason enough for man, and ought to be the most satisfying reason. If God say, I will have life remain in a man that is bitter in soul, that man should say, Lord, it is reason I should, because it is Thy pleasure, though it be to my own trouble. Yet it is but seldom that God makes His will His reason, and answers by His bare prerogative: He hath often given weighty reasons to this query. First, the life of nature is continued, that the life of grace may be increased. Again, such live in sufferings, that they may learn obedience by the things which they suffer. God teacheth us by His works, as well as by His Word, His dealings speak to us. Another reason of this "wherefore" may be this, God sets up some as patterns to posterity; He therefore gives the light of life to some that are in misery, to show that it is no new nor strange thing for His saints to be in darkness. 1. That the best things in this world may come to be burthens to us. See here a man, weary of light and life. 2. It is a trouble to possess good things when we cannot enjoy them. (*J. Caryl.*) *Why is the miserable man kept alive?*—The question here asked is, Why should man, whose misery leads him to desire death, be kept in life? A very natural question this. A modern expositor has answered the question thus—1. Those sufferings may be the very means which are needful to develop the true state of the soul. Such was the case with Job. 2. They may be the proper punishment of sin in the heart, of which the individual was not fully aware, but which may be distinctly seen by God. There may be pride, and the love of ease, and self-confidence, and ambition, and a desire of reputation. Such appear to have been some of the besetting sins of Job. 3. They are needful to teach true submission, and to show whether a man is willing to resign himself to God. 4. They may be the very things which are necessary to prepare the individual to die. At the same time that men often desire death, and feel that it would be a great relief, it might be to them the greatest possible calamity. They may be wholly unprepared for it. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 23. **Why is light given to a man whose way is hid?**—*The light given—the way hidden:*—How immediately this question speaks to us! How it seems to describe that mental and moral incongruity of which we are more or less the subjects—that feeling in which we are so often disposed to say to our Maker, Why hast Thou made me thus? This is the subject of the Book of Job—the mystery of life—the vanity of knowledge—the mysterious conflict of what man feels he is, and what he feels he might be, and desires indeed to be. In the text is—I. A GREAT CERTAINTY. "Light is given." Man is the subject of supernatural light. The light of nature, as it is called, is not generated and developed in the order and course of mere nature. The light within the soul falls from other worlds, from unseen, unrealised heights beyond the soul. God lights up the faculties, kindles the imagination, informs the judgment, and animates the hope. I take it as a great certainty that we have a strange light kindled within our being, unaccountable and awful. How is Christ "the light of the world"? It is as He imparts to the world by His words a new consciousness. Christ deepens the springs and widens the horizons of our knowledge. God has never left Himself without a witness. "Light is given." II. A GREAT PERPLEXITY. "The way is hid." It seems that the light only reveals itself, neither the objects nor

the way. It seems as if our consciousness became paralysed at the touch of speculation, a dark, black wall rises where we anticipated we should find a way. The great conflict now, as ever, waging here, is the conflict between light and will. The light faculty in us disports itself over a wide field of intelligence, and scans and comprehends all objects; but the will finds itself powerless, and inquires of the light, To what good is it that thou art here? Man's happiness is in the equilibrium of these two. In human life there are heretics of the understanding; these are those properly called such—heresiarchs: and heretics of the will; the infirm of purpose. How happy are they who, small as their circle of light and life may be, find no disharmony; small, but a state in which the understanding is in harmony with the will. Does it not seem to thee, frequently, that thou art a man whose way is hid? This smiting perplexity, why, it occasionally strikes us all. God is love, but what a world of pain! Man is free, but what a hemming in of his being in every direction! Then come the errors and mistakes of actual life. III. THE GREAT SOLUTION—THE CONSOLATIONS OF THE LIGHT. I advance beyond the text. Light can only be seen in Christ. God only known in Him. 1. It is so from the very nature of the soul. The soul in its nature is light. Divinely derived, it can never forfeit its light power, but it is in eclipse. God has made the soul the fountain of light in its intentions, in its innate power to reason correctly on natural data. There is a light within, but it is unavailing without help from without; for the corruptions and the powers of the senses all tend to embase the light. 2. Why is light given? This is comfort—some light is given. He who has given some will give more. 3. Why is light given to a man whose way is hid? To enable him to find his way, and to escape beyond the hedge. Light is not its own end. It has an end beyond itself. Light is given to teach a man his dependence; to teach him to look beyond himself. Is it not humbling to find our entire inadequacy to even the most ordinary occasions of life? We step constantly into a labyrinth where our greatest cunning will not avail for us. 4. That which is naturally illegible to sense, and to the apprehension of sense, is legible to faith. Life, hidden still to the spirit of speculation, is revealed to the spirit of prayer. (*E. Paxton Hood.*) *Light and life*:—My object is to call your attention to life itself, and the reason why it is given. We do not ask the question, Why do I live? until trouble comes. Life is not a mystery to the little child, or the maiden, or the young man. It is when adversity comes to us, that we ask, "Wherefore is light given and life?" Why do we live? We are to recognise the fact that all things and all persons are of God, and exist for the pleasure of God, if we would solve this problem. If you leave God out of your reckoning, then it matters not what conclusion you may come to. There are some who think that God is equally glorified by the salvation or the ruin of a sinner. He is not. The very end of God is defeated in the ruin of the sinner. God has created us, and placed us here, not simply that we may live in this world, but that we may live for evermore. God has made us living men and women that we may serve and enjoy Him for ever. (*Charles Williams.*) *Light on a hidden way*:—When Job put this question he was as far down in the world as a man can be who is not debased by sin. Two things, in this sad time, seem to have smitten Job with most unconquerable pain. 1. He could not make his condition chord with his conviction of what ought to have happened. He had been trained to believe in the axiom, that to be good is to be happy. Now he had been good, and yet here he was as miserable as it was possible for a man to be. And the worst of all was, he could not deaden down to the level of his misery. The light given him on the Divine justice would not let him rest. His subtle spirit, restless, dissatisfied, tried him every moment. 2. There appeared to be light everywhere, except on his own life. If life would strike a fair average; if other good men had suffered too, or even bad men, then he could bear it better. But the world went on just the same. Other homes were full of gladness. Perhaps not many men ever fall into such supreme desolation as this, that is made to centre in the life of this most sorrowful man. But one may reach out in all directions and find men and women who are conscious of the light shining, but who cannot find the way; who, in a certain sense, would be better if they were not so good. The very perfection of their nature is the way by which they are most easily bruised. Keen, earnest, onward, not satisfied to be below their own ideal, they are yet turned so woefully this way and that by adverse circumstances, that, at the last, they either come to accept their life as a doom, and bear it in grim silence;

or they cut the masts when the storm comes, and drift a helpless hull broadside to the breakers, to go down finally like a stone. In men and nations you will find everywhere this discord between the longing that is in the soul, and what the man can do. Try to find some solution of the question of the text. We cannot pretend to make the mystery all clear, so that it will give no more trouble. Job, in his trouble, would have lost nothing and gained very much, if he had not been so hasty in coming to the conclusion that God had left him, that life was a mere apple of Sodom, that he had backed up to great walls of fate, and that he had not a friend left on earth. His soul, looking through her darkened windows, concluded the heavens were dark. Is not this now, as it was then, one of the most serious mistakes that can be made? I try to solve great problems of providence, perhaps, when I am so unstrung as to be entirely unfitted to touch their more subtle, delicate, and far-reaching harmonies. As well might you decide on some exquisite anthem when your organ is broken, and conclude there is no music in it because you can make no music of it, as, in such a condition of the life, and such a temper of the spirit, try to find these great harmonies of God. Job and his friends speculate all about the mystery, and their conclusions from their premises are generally correct, but they have forgotten to take in the separate sovereign will of God, as working out a great purpose in the man's life, by which he is to be lifted into a grander reach of insight and experience than ever he had before. They were both wrong and all wrong. God often darkens the way that the melody may grow clear and entire in the soul. If this man could have known—as he sat there in the ashes, bruising his heart on this problem of providence—that, in the trouble that had come upon him, he was doing what one man may do to work out the problem for the world, he might again have taken courage. No man lives to himself. Job's life is but your life and mine, written in larger text. . . . God seldom, perhaps never, works out His visible purpose in one life: how, then, shall He in one life work out His perfect will? Then while we may not know what trials wait on any of us, we can believe, that as the days in which this man wrestled with his dark maladies are the only days that make him worth remembrance, so the days through which we struggle, finding no way, but never losing the light, will be the most significant we are called to live. Men in all ages have wrestled with this problem of the difference between the conception and the condition. But it is true that "men who suffered countless ills, in battles for the true and just," have had the strongest conviction, like old Latimer, that a way would open in those moments when it seemed most impossible. (*Robert Collyer.*) *The sorrowful man's question:*—Job's case was such that life itself became irksome. He wondered why he should be kept alive to suffer. Could not mercy have permitted him to die out of hand? Light is most precious, yet we may come to ask why it is given. See the small value of temporal things, for we may have them and loathe them. I. THE CASE WHICH RAISES THE QUESTION. "A man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in." He has the light of life, but not the light of comfort. 1. He walks in deep trouble, so deep that he cannot see the bottom of it. Nothing prospers, either in temporals or in spirituals. He is greatly depressed in spirit. He can see no help for his burden, or alleviation of his misery. He cannot see any ground for comfort either in God or in man. "His way is hid." 2. He can see no cause for it. No special sin has been committed. No possible good appears to be coming out of it. When we can see no cause we must not infer that there is none. Judging by the sight of the eyes is dangerous. 3. He cannot tell what to do in it. Patience is hard, wisdom is difficult, confidence scarce, and joy out of reach, while the mind is in deep gloom. Mystery brings misery. 4. He cannot see the way out of it. He seems to hear the enemy say, "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in" (Exod. xiv. 3). He cannot escape through the hedge of thorn, nor see an end to it: his way is straitened as well as darkened. Men in such a case feel their griefs intensely, and speak too bitterly. If we were in such misery, we, too, might raise the question; therefore let us consider—II. THE QUESTION ITSELF. "Why is light given?" &c. This inquiry, unless prosecuted with great humility and childlike confidence, is to be condemned. 1. It is an unsafe one. It is an undue exaltation of human judgment. Ignorance should shun arrogance. What can we know? 2. It reflects upon God. It insinuates that His ways need explanation, and are either unreasonable, unjust, unwise, or unkind. 3. There must be an answer to the question; but it may

not be one intelligible to us. The Lord has a "therefore" in answer to every "wherefore"; but He does not often reveal it; for "He giveth not account of any of His matters" (Job xxxiii. 13). 4. It is not the most profitable question. Why we are allowed to live in sorrow is a question which we need not answer. We might gain far more by inquiring how to use our prolonged life. III. ANSWERS WHICH MAY BE GIVEN TO THE QUESTION. 1. Suppose the answer should be, "God wills it." Is not that enough? "I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it" (Psa. xxxix. 9). 2. To an ungodly man sufficient answers are at hand. It is mercy which, by prolonging the light of life, keeps you from worse suffering. For you to desire death is to be eager for hell. Be not so foolish. It is wisdom which restrains you from sin, by hedging up your way, and darkening your spirit. It is better for you to be downcast than dissolute. It is love which calls you to repent. Every sorrow is intended to whip you Godward. 3. To the godly man there are yet more apparent reasons. Your trials are sent to let you see all that is in you. In deep soul-trouble we discover what we are made of. To bring you nearer to God. The hedges shut you up to God; the darkness makes you cling close to Him. Life is continued that grace may be increased. To make you an example to others. Some are chosen to be monuments of the Lord's special dealings; a sort of lighthouse to other mariners. To magnify the grace of God. If our way were always bright we could not so well exhibit the sustaining, consoling, and delivering power of the Lord. To prepare you for greater prosperity. To make you like your Lord Jesus, who lived in affliction. Improvement—Be not too ready to ask unbelieving questions. Be sure that life is never too long. Be prepared of the Holy Spirit to keep to the way even when it is hid, and to walk on between the hedges, when they are not hedges of roses, but fences of briar. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **Whom God hath hedged in.**—*Hedged in*:—We often read of God loving man, of God punishing man, but not of His hedging him in. And yet the idea is as solemn as it is striking, and as beautiful as it is solemn. Its application depends upon the manner in which we regard it, for the fact may be applied in different ways. Let us consider—I. WHO IT IS GOD HEDGES IN. 1. Sometimes it is the wicked. When the violent man rages against God and is calculated to injure the cause of righteousness, he is restrained. The voice comes, "Thus far shalt thou go and no further." Pharaoh was hedged in. Even Satan is hedged in. 2. Sometimes it is the righteous. Here we have an instance before us in the case of Job. He had done nothing to merit punishment. So it was with Jeremiah. He was shut up. Good men must be expected to be surrounded by a hedge. Such a position often causes suffering, sorrow, and pain. II. HOW DOES GOD HEDGE IN? He manifests His power to do so—1. By providential government. How often do people realise practically the power of these words! They have wished to enter upon a different sphere of labour, to remove from one place to another, or to stay in the place they inhabit. But difficulty after difficulty has arisen, obstacle after obstacle has presented itself, till the person has found that he could not break through the hedge which surrounds him. 2. By affliction, sorrow, and distress. 3. By bodily pain or weakness. The Divine purposes are inscrutable. III. WHY DOES GOD HEDGE IN? 1. To keep evil men from doing mischief. The unbridled lusts and passions of the wicked are not satisfied with self-satisfaction; they must persecute, injure, and destroy. Almighty God puts a bound to their licence for the benefit of the world. 2. To prevent good men from sin. To save the souls of weak but righteous men; He will keep them from the opportunity of being led astray. 3. To save His servants from danger. 4. To keep them engaged in some particular work. 5. To teach patience and resignation. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 26. **Yet trouble came.**—*Trouble and usefulness*:—What a heathen would have called "the blind and infamous dispensations of fortune," Christians speak of as the unlikelihoods and inequalities of the providence of God. The facts, however, are not altered, though you may alter their representation. This world of ours, in its moral aspects, is not a likely world. Not that even in the absence of a special revelation, still less with this in our hands, it giveth us the idea of terrestrial affairs being left to take their chance; but that there is, on the part of a Superior Power, a design to regulate these affairs so differently from as at times to be the reverse of what might have been expected. Design there is, but it is not in those directions in which we should look for it. It does not appear

with what intent men, whether philosophers or theologians, have been so anxious to frame apologies for God's providence; bending the stubborn truths of human history to some theory of their own devising, and using worse for better reasons to support that theory. This hath been called, after Milton, "the justification of the ways of God to man." It is a very supererogatory work. Man need not be more anxious to justify God than God is to justify Himself. God will be justified by and by; but at present He requireth not us to assist Him by explaining away appearances. "God is love." Believe it always; question it never. You throw a doubt over it the moment you set about proving it. Let us take the facts, and forego the apology. To write books to the sons and daughters of affliction, from comfortable parlours and luxurious drawing-rooms, in vindication of the providence of God, is worse than impertinent. No, take the facts of providence as they are. They will do our minds good, not harm, in the contemplation. Men are not to be argued into resignation to God's will; nor are they to be reasoned into affection for His chastisements. All they need to believe is that what happeneth unto them is God's will; then will there be resignation: to see that God doth chastise them; then will they love His chastisements. We do not in any degree oppose this view, by returning to our remark, that this world of ours is an unlikely world. Neither to the righteous nor to the wicked is it such as we should expect it to be. Its order is apparent confusion; its rule a seeming misdirection. God, here and there, appears as though He were opposing Himself; frustrating purposes in one direction, which He appears to be forwarding in another. Look at the victims of trial, at the heirs of suffering, at the children of sorrow, on every side: how capricious, how unaccountable, how incomprehensible, so far as we can judge, the selection! The heaviest burdens laid oftentimes upon the weakest shoulders; the greatest sinners often the slightest sufferers; they who for God have been called to do the most, disabled frequently by their trials from doing aught—powers of usefulness, to our judgment, paralysed for lack of aids which "perish with the using," there; while, yonder, uselessness and incapacity are overwhelmed with means and opportunities. Are these things chances, caprices, accidents? Their seeming to be all these prohibits the supposition of their really being either. We speak of the providence of God as though it were synonymous with momentary interference; whereas, the etymology showeth that it is such a foresight on God's part as to render such interference unnecessary. Considering the case of God's servant Job, though God cleared up this case at the last,—"making Job's righteousness as clear as the light, and his just dealing as the noonday,"—to what self-reproaches, to what mistakes of friends, to what hard speeches of foes, during its progress, must it have given rise! Seemed it right, we might ask, to hazard all these for the sake of some spiritual advantage which might accrue to the tried child of God? Hardly. Seemeth it wise for God to "punish those, in the sight of men, whose hope is full of immortality"? "We know not now, we shall know hereafter." (*Alfred Bowen Evans.*)

CHAPTER IV.

VERS. 1-21. **Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said.**—*The first colloquy*:—At this point we pass into the poem proper. It opens with three colloquies between Job and his friends. In form these colloquies closely resemble each other. But while similar in form, in spirit they differ widely. At the outset the friends are content to hint their doubts of Job, their suspicion that he has fallen into some secret and heinous sin, in general and ambiguous terms; but, as the argument rolls on, they are irritated by the boldness with which he rebuts their charges and asserts his integrity, and grow ever more candid and harsh and angry in the denunciation of his guilt. With fine truth to nature, the poet depicts Job as passing through an entirely opposite process. At first, while they content themselves with hints and "ambiguous givings-out," with insinuating in general terms that he must have sinned, and set themselves to win him to confession and repentance, he is exasperated beyond all endurance, and challenges the justice both of man and God; for it is these general charges, these covert and undefined insinuations of some "occulted guilt," which, because

it is impossible to meet them, most of all vex and disturb the soul. But as, in their rising anger, they exchange ambiguous hints for open, definite charges, by a fine natural revulsion, Job grows even more calm and reasonable; for definite charges can be definitely met; why then should he any longer vex and distress his spirit? More and more he turns away from the loud, foolish outcries of his friends, and addresses himself to God, even when he seems to speak to them. (*Samuel Cox, D.D.*) *The message of the three friends*:—When Job opened his mouth and spoke, their sympathy was dashed with pious horror. They had never in all their lives heard such words. He seemed to prove himself far worse than they could have imagined. He ought to have been meek and submissive. Some flaw there must have been: what was it? He should have confessed his sin, instead of cursing life, and reflecting upon God. Their own silent suspicion, indeed, is the chief cause of his despair; but this they do not understand. Amazed, they hear him; outraged, they take up the challenge he offers. One after another the three men reason with Job, from almost the same point of view, suggesting first, and then insisting that he should acknowledge fault, and humble himself under the hand of a just and holy God. Now, here is the motive of the long controversy which is the main subject of the poem. And, in tracing it, we are to see Job, although racked by pain and distraught by grief—sadly at disadvantage, because he seems to be a living example of the truth of their ideas—rousing himself to the defence of his integrity and contending for that as the only grip he has of God. Advance after advance is made by the three, who gradually become more dogmatic as the controversy proceeds. Defence after defence is made by Job, who is driven to think himself challenged not only by his friends, but sometimes also by God Himself through them. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar agree in the opinion that Job has done evil and is suffering for it. The language they use, and the arguments they bring forward are much alike. Yet a difference will be found in their way of speaking, and a vaguely suggested difference of character. Eliphaz gives us an impression of age and authority. When Job has ended his complaint, Eliphaz regards him with a disturbed and offended look. "How pitiful!" he seems to say; but also, "How dreadful, how unaccountable!" He desires to win Job to a right view of things by kindly counsel; but he talks pompously, and preaches too much from the high moral bench. Bildad, again, is a dry and composed person. He is less the man of experience than of tradition. He does not speak of discoveries made in the course of his own observation; but he has stored the sayings of the wise and reflected upon them. When a thing is cleverly said he is satisfied, and he cannot understand why his impressive statements should fail to convince and convert. He is a gentleman, like Eliphaz, and uses courtesy. At first he refrains from wounding Job's feelings. Yet behind his politeness is the sense of superior wisdom—and wisdom of ages and his own. He is certainly a harder man than Eliphaz. Lastly, Zophar is a blunt man with a decidedly rough, dictatorial style. He is impatient of the waste of words on a matter so plain, and prides himself on coming to the point. It is he who ventures to say definitely, "Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth,"—a cruel speech from any point of view. He is not so eloquent as Eliphaz, he has no air of a prophet. Compared with Bildad, he is less argumentative. With all his sympathy—and he too is a friend—he shows an exasperation which he justifies by his zeal for the honour of God. The differences are delicate, but real, and evident even to our late criticism. In the author's day the characters would probably seem more distinctly contrasted than they appear to us. Still, it must be owned, each holds virtually the same position. One prevailing school of thought is represented, and in each figure attacked. It is not difficult to imagine three speakers differing far more from each other. One hears the breathings of the same dogmatism in the three voices. The dramatising is vague, not at all of our sharp, modern kind, like that of Ibsen, throwing each figure into vivid contrast with every other. (*Robert A. Watson, D.D.*) *Eliphaz as a natural religionist*:—See such an one estimating man's character. I. HE REGARDED THE FACT THAT A MAN SUFFERED AS PROOF OF HIS WICKEDNESS. It is true that the principle of retribution is at work amongst men in this world. It is also true that this principle is manifest in most signal judgments. But retribution here, though often manifest, is not invariable and adequate; the wicked are not always made wretched, nor are the good always made happy in this life. To judge a man's character by his external circumstances is a most

flagrant mistake. 1. Suffering is not necessarily connected (directly) with sin. 2. Suffering seems almost necessary to the human creature in this world. 3. Suffering, as a fact, has a sanitary influence upon the character of the good. II. HE REGARDED THE MURMURING OF A MAN UNDER SUFFERING AS A PROOF OF HIS WICKEDNESS. Job had uttered terrible complaints. Eliphaz was right here: a murmuring spirit is essentially an evil. In this complaining spirit Eliphaz discovers two things. Hypocrisy. Ignorance of God. He then unfolds a vision he had, which suggests three things. 1. That man has a capacity to hold intercourse with a spirit world. 2. That man's character places him in a humiliating position in the spirit world. 3. That man's earthly state is only a temporary separation from a conscious existence in the spirit world. (*Homilist.*) *The error of Eliphaz:*—Let us avoid the error of Eliphaz, the Temanite, who, in reproving Job, maintained that the statute of requital is enforced in all cases, rigorously and exactly—that the world is governed on the principle of minute recompense—that sin is always followed by its equivalent of suffering in this present life. This is not so. To the rule of recompense we must allow for a vast number of exceptions. The penalty does not always follow directly on the heels of sin. It is oftentimes delayed, may be postponed for years, may possibly never be inflicted in this world at all. And meantime the wicked flourish. They sit in places of honour and authority. As it is said, "The tabernacles of robbers do prosper, and they that provoke God are secure. They are not in trouble as other men. They increase in riches, and their eyes stand out with fatness. Yea, I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree." "Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?" 1. It is not because God is unobservant. Ah, no. "The iniquities of the wicked are not hid from Mine eyes," saith the Lord. He seeth our ways, pondereth our goings, hath set a print upon the very heels of our feet. 2. Nor is it because of any indifference on the part of God. Seeing our sin, He abhors it; otherwise He would not be God. 3. Nor is it for want of power. The tide-marks of the deluge, remaining plain upon the rocks even unto this day, attest what an angry God can do. Why then is the sinner spared? And why is the just penalty of his guilt not laid upon us here and now? Because the Lord is merciful. Sweep the whole heavens of philosophy for a reason and you shall find none but this, the Lord is merciful. "As I live," saith the Lord, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." A few practical inferences—1. The fact that a sinner is afflicted here will not exempt him hereafter from the just penalty of his ill-doing. We say of a man sometimes when the darkest waves of life are rolling over him, "He is having his retribution now." But that cannot be. 2. The fact that a sinner does not suffer here is no evidence that he will always go scot-free. If the sentence be suspended for a time, it is only for a time—and for a definite end. The Roman emblem of Justice was an old man, with a two-edged sword, limping slowly but surely to his work. 3. The fact that the wicked are sometimes left unpunished here, is proof conclusive of a final day of reckoning. For the requital is imperfect. Alas, for justice, if its administration is to be regarded as completed on earth! 4. The fact that compensation is often delayed so long, in order that the sinner may have abundant room for repentance, is a complete vindication of God's mercy though the fire burn for ever. 5. The fact that all sin must be and is in every case, sooner or later, followed by suffering, proves the absolute necessity of the vicarious pain of Jesus. God sent forth His only-begotten and well-beloved Son to bear in His own body on the tree the retribution that should have been laid upon us. So He redeemed the lost, yet did no violence to justice. And thus it comes about that God can be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly. (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*)

Vers. 3-5. **Thou hast strengthened the weak hands.**—*Preaching easier than practising:*—Behold, thou hast instructed many, &c. To do each day's duty with Christian diligence, and to bear each day's crosses with Christian patience; thou hast done it well. But how comes it now to pass that thy present doings shame thy former sayings? and that, as it was noted of Demosthenes the orator, thou art better at praising of virtue than at practising of it? What a shame was it that Hilary should complain that the people's ears were holier than the preachers' hearts, and that Erasmus, by a true jest, should be told that there was more goodness in his book of the Christian soldier than in his bosom! Eliphaz from this ground would here argue that Job was little better than a hypocrite; a censure over-rigid, it being the easiest thing

in the world, as a philosopher observed, to give good counsel, and the hardest thing to take it. Dr. Preston, upon his death-bed, confessed, that now it came to his own turn, he found it somewhat to do to practise that which he had oft pressed upon others. (*J. Trapp.*) *Job's usefulness in the past*:—1. That to teach, instruct, and comfort others, is not only a man's duty, but his praise. For here Eliphaz speaks it in a way of commendation, though with an intent to ground a reproof upon it. 2. That such as know God in truth and holiness, are very ready to communicate the knowledge of God unto others. 3. That honourable and great men lose nothing of their honour and greatness by descending to the instruction of others, though their inferiors. 4. That charity, especially spiritual charity, is very liberal and open-hearted. Job instructed not only his own, but he instructed others, he instructed many; he did not confine his doctrine and his advice to his own walls, but the sound thereof went whersoever he went: he instructed many. 5. That the words of the wise have a mighty power, strength, and prevalency in them. You see how efficacious the words of Job were. Job's instructions were strengthenings: thou hast strengthened the weak hands and feeble knees; his words were as stays to hold them up that were ready to fall. When a word goes forth clothed with the authority and power of God, it works wonders. (*J. Caryl.*) **But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest.**—Thou hast instructed many, thou hast strengthened the weak hands, &c. But now it is come upon thee, &c. That is, trouble and affliction are come upon thee. And thou faintest. The word signifies an extraordinary fainting; when a man is so wearied and spent, that he knows not what he doth, when his reason seems tired, as much as his strength. So that the words, Now it is come upon thee, thou faintest, may import thus much; thou art in such a case, that thou seemest to be beside thyself, thou knowest not what thou dost, thou speakest thou knowest not what. The word is translated in the first verse, by grieved; in other Scriptures, by mad and furious (Prov. xxvi. 18). As a mad man who casteth firebrands, &c. And whereas we say (Gen. xlvii. 13), The land of Egypt fainted by reason of the famine, many render it, The land of Egypt was enraged or mad, because of the famine. Want of bread turns to want of reason; famine distracts. The Egyptians were so extremely pinched with hunger, that it did even take away their wits from them; and scarcity of food for their bodies, made a dearth in their understandings. So there is this force in the word. Thou who hast given such grave and wise instruction unto others, from those higher principles of grace, now it is come upon thee, thou art even as a mad man, as a man distracted, not able to act by the common principles of reason. It toucheth thee. It is the same word which we opened before; the devil desired that he might but touch Job; now his friend telleth him he is touched. And thou art troubled. That word also hath a great emphasis in it. It signifies a vehement, amazed trouble; as in that place (1 Sam. xxviii. 21), where, when the woman, the witch of Endor, had raised up Samuel (in appearance) as Saul desired, the text saith, that when all was ended, she came unto Saul, and she saw he was sore troubled: think what trouble might fall upon a man in such a condition as Saul was in, after this acquaintance with the visions of hell; think what a deep astonishment of spirit seized upon him, such disorder of mind this word lays upon Job. Now it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled. Hence observe—1. To commend a man with a "but," is a wound instead of a commendation. Thou hast instructed many, "But," &c. How many are there who salute their friends very fair to their faces, or speak them very fair behind their backs, yet suddenly (as Joab to Amasa) draw out this secret dagger, and stab their honour and honesty to the heart! 2. Observe, great afflictions may disturb the very seat of reason, and leave a saint, in some acts, below a man. 3. That when we see any doing ill, it is good to mind him of the good which he hath done. 4. That the good we have done, is a kind of reproach to us, when we do the contrary evil. 5. It is an easier matter to instruct others in trouble, than to be instructed, or take instruction ourselves in our own troubles. 6. It is a shame for us to teach others the right way, and to go in the wrong ourselves. (*Ibid.*)

Ver 6. **Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope?**—*The confidence of a godly fear*:—These words are understood by divers of the Hebrew writers for a direct and simple assertion, and they give it thus, "Will not, or would not thy fear be thy confidence, and the uprightness of thy ways thy hope?" As if Eliphaz had thus said unto him, Job, thou hast pretended much holiness

and religion, fear and uprightness; why art thou so disquieted now that the hand of God is upon thee? Why art thou so amazed under these sufferings? Would not that fear be thy confidence? And would not that uprightness of thy ways be thy hope? Surely it would, if thou hadst any such fear as thou pretendest; this fear would be thy confidence, and this uprightness thy hope; thou wouldst be very bold, and by hope cast anchor upon the goodness and faithfulness of God in the midst of all this storm: thy heart would be poised, settled, and established, notwithstanding all these shakings. Would not thy fear be thy confidence? 1. They who fear most in times of peace, have most reason to be confident in times of trouble. 2. The uprightness of a man's ways in good times, doth mightily strengthen his hope in evil times. (*Joseph Caryl.*) *Times of trouble are special times for the use of our graces:*—It is as if Eliphaz had said, Thou thyself, and all that knew thee, have spoken much of thy grace, but now is the time to use it; where is it? Show it me now. Where is thy fear and thy confidence? If a man have been reported very skilful at his weapon, when he comes into danger, then is the time to show his skill: and we may say to him, Where is thy skill now? Where is thy art now? So here. Now that thou hast most need of thy graces, where are they? Bring them forth. Are they to seek now? Is thy righteousness as the morning dew, and as a cloud vanished away? (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 7. **Who ever perished, being innocent?**—*Divine retributions:*—This grand maxim, of a just and sure retribution at the hand of God, must be admitted to be sound and true. His blessing is over the righteous, and His face "against them that do evil." Job takes exception to this as a rule of God's providential dealings with mankind, and rejects the inference that, because he is now overwhelmed in trouble, he has been a transgressor. As to the extent of his friend's suspicions, he was right. But still, the rule laid down by Eliphaz must be considered as holding universally. But the reasons of the present proceedings of God are not always within the ken of human observation; the short prosperity of the wicked may be both for a judgment to others and for their own manifestation and increased punishment. Under the execution of the holy discipline, it is not for innocency and righteousness that the children of God suffer; but most commonly for sin—sin unacknowledged and unconfessed; or with some view to their correction and advancement in holiness, where they were too remiss in perfecting it in the fear of God. Eliphaz's maxim was not altogether wrong, even as applied to Job. But his inference of secret hypocrisy, or of some outward notorious transgression, from the judgment that had overwhelmed him, was altogether unwarranted. He is mistaken, too, as well as the poor sufferer himself, if he concluded that this affliction was remediless, and sent for his utter destruction. How different was the aspect of his calamity when the end of the Lord was seen! (*John Fry, B.A.*)

Vers. 8, 9. **Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.**—*Sowing and reaping:*—Eliphaz speaks of himself here as an observer of God's providence; and the result of his observations is, the discernment of the law, that "they who plow iniquity and sow wickedness, reap the same." Was Eliphaz wrong in this? No. He perceived a very great and important law of the kingdom. Where, then, was he wrong? It was in applying this to Job, and in so easily concluding that his severe sufferings were the consequence of his own individual sins. The friends often expressed most beautiful and important truths, and only failed because they misapplied them. For this law, compare Hosea viii. 7, x. 12, 13; Gal. vi. 7, 8. We see the operation of this law in the natural world. There, in that world, as people sow, so they reap; nor do they ever expect it to be otherwise. But in the moral and spiritual world, nothing is more common than to meet with those who sow iniquity, and yet do not expect to reap of the same, either in this world or in the world to come. Men do not expect any consequences to follow a life of carelessness and impenitence. It may be that you have seen solemn and affecting instances of the operation of this law; if not, ministers of Christ will tell you that they have seen them only too often. They have seen those who have lived careless and self-indulgent lives struggle at last in vain. The hardened heart was but the fulfilment of the solemn law of God's kingdom. Amongst the many ways of sowing to the flesh, there is one which we cannot omit. It is the indulgence of pride and self-confident feelings.

St. Paul speaks of sowing to the Spirit. In which way have you been sowing? Do you wish to escape the consequences—the harvest of misery—which, in the very nature of things, will follow your sowing to the flesh? Through grace you may do it. (*George Wagner.*) *An old axiom*:—There was truth underlying the proposition set forth by Eliphaz, applicable to all ages and states of the world. The axiom is a very old one as propounded by Job's expostulator; it may have been older than he; but it is not so old now as to have become obsolete; nor will it ever become so while the world is the same world, and its Governor is the same God. As St. Paul reproduced it in his day, so may we in ours. Its principle is incorporated with this dispensation as much as with the last. It is its application that is modified under the Gospel; the principle is just the same. It is as true now as it was of old time, that men reap as they sow; that the harvest of their recompense is according to the agriculture of their actions. The difference in the truth, as propounded during the age of Moses, and as recognised in "the days of the Son of Man," is, that during the latter, its confirmation and realisation are thrown further forward. The distinction is indicated by the respective forms into which the axiom is cast by Eliphaz and St. Paul. The one saith, "They that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same." The other, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Eliphaz makes both portions of this moral process, present, palpable, perspicuous. The apostle severs the two; projecting the latter portion into the future. With the Jew, this truth was a fact of yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow. With us, it is rather a matter of faith for the future, the far off, the eternal. Eliphaz states the subject in accordance with the order of the past dispensation; as doth St. Paul with the genius of this. In the eyes of the ancient Israelite, the doctrine of Divine retribution was like some mountain of his native country, which upreared its brow close over against him, overshadowing him whithersoever he went; its rugged aspect being all the more sharply defined through the sunshine of temporal prosperity in which his nation reposed, so long as the people were "obedient unto the voice of the Lord their God." As to us, the mountain is in the distance; far away, as Sinai itself is, from many a shore on which the standard of the Redeemer's Cross hath been planted; but visible in the distance still, though its outline be rendered indistinct in the twilight of that mystery which now encompasseth God's government of our world. At the period when Eliphaz reasoned, a state of things had just been inaugurated, under which, as a rule, retribution of a temporal kind was to follow "every transgression and disobedience"; when punishment was to be contemporaneous with the commission of crime; and when a man would begin to reap the fruit of his deeds shortly after his sowing. And the reasoner could not understand how the patriarch, or any one else, could be an exception to the rule; still less, that a state of things inaugurated by both the teaching and the history of Jesus Christ, under which the rule itself would become the exception, was to succeed. That was a state under which God judged men for their sins continually and instantaneously; this a state under which God is not judging them; seeing "He hath appointed a day in which He will judge them by that Man whom He hath ordained"; through whose intercession at the right hand of the Father, judgment is at present suspended. Now it is our consolation to know that whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth; then the man whom the Lord chastened, He might have had a controversy with, and was visiting for his misdeeds. (*Alfred Bowen Evans.*) *Is the old axiom true still?*—1. It is so far true as to assure us that there is a righteous Governor and a just Judge of the world. We cannot apply the rule laid down by Eliphaz. It is a rule to us no longer. We have no right to fix upon any individual or nation upon earth, and to affirm that Almighty God is dealing with the one or the other in a way of retribution, because they may be suffering such and such things. But, notwithstanding this, there is a principle at work in the affairs of men, so far manifest as to show that the world is not left to take its chance, and that the children of men cannot do as they please. 2. It is so far true as it hath respect to the natural constitutions of men. Men cannot transgress the principles of their nature with impunity, nor run counter to the rules of their constitution unharmed. Nature is not to be trifled with. And the retribution that followeth the violation of physical laws is a sure pledge of a retribution that will follow the infringement of moral. 3. It is true so far as to obviate the necessity of our ever taking vengeance into our own hands. God repayeth that we need not. Vengeance is His, that it may not be ours. It has been said, "God avengeth those that do not avenge themselves." 4. It is true

so far as to inspire us with a salutary fear for ourselves. There is to be a resurrection of action as well as of agents; of deeds as well as of doers; of works as well as of men. And we know not how soon, as to some of its details, this resurrection may take place. The transgressor is never safe. Whatsoever wrong any man hath done may be required of him at any time. (*Ibid.*) *The life of the sinner a foolish agriculture*:—I. HUMAN LIFE IS A SOWING AND A REAPING. All the actions of a man's life are inseparable, united by the law of causation. One grows out of another as plants out of seed. The sowing and the reaping, strange to say, go on at the same time. In reaping what we sowed yesterday, we sow what we shall have to reap to-morrow. II. LIFE'S REAPING IS DETERMINED BY ITS SOWING. "I have seen, they that plow iniquity," &c. Like begets like everywhere, the same species of seed sown will be reaped in fruit. He that soweth hemlock will not reap wheat, but crops of hemlock. All moral actions are moral seeds deposited in the soul. III. THE REAPING OF THE SINNER IS A TERRIBLE DESTINY. What a destiny this: to be reaping wickedness, to be reaping whirlwinds of agony. From this subject learn—1. The great solemnity of life. There is nothing trifling. The most volatile sin is a seed that must grow, and must be reaped. Take care! 2. The conscious rectitude of the sinner's doom. What is hell? Reaping the fruit of sinful conduct. The sinner feels this, and his conscience will not allow him to complain of his fate. 3. The necessity for a godly heart. All actions and words proceed from the heart: out of it are the issues of life. Hence the necessity of regeneration. (*Homilist.*) *Sinful sowing and penal reaping*:—1. That to be a wicked man is no easy task; he must go to plough for it. It is ploughing, and you know ploughing is laborious, yea, it is hard labour. 2. That there is an art in wickedness. It is ploughing, or, as the word imports, an artificial working. Some are curious and exact in shaping, polishing, and setting off their sin. So to say such a man is an abomination worker, or a lie-maker, notes him not only industrious, but crafty, or (as the prophet speaks) "wise to do evil." 3. That wicked men expect benefit in ways of sin, and look to be gainers by being evil-doers. They make iniquity their plough; and a man's plough is so much his profit, that it is grown into a proverb, to call that (whatsoever it is) by which a man makes his living or his profit, his plough. Every man tills in expectation of a crop; who would put his plough into the ground to receive nothing? It is even so with wicked men, when they are sinning, they think themselves thriving, or laying up that in the earth a while, which will grow and increase to a plentiful harvest. What strange fancies have many to be rich, to be great, by ways of wickedness! Thus they plough in hope, but they shall never be partakers of their hope. 4. That every sinful act persisted in shall have a certain sorrowful reward. 5. That the punishment of sin may come long after the committing of sin. The one is the seed-time, and the other a reaping-time; there is a great distance of time between sowing and reaping. The seeds of sin may lie many years under the furrows. 6. That the punishment of sin shall be proportionable to the degrees of sin. He shall reap the same, saith the text, the same in degree. If ye sow sparingly, ye shall reap sparingly; on the other side, if ye sow plentifully, ye shall reap plentifully. 7. Punishment shall not exceed the desert of sin. 8. That the punishment of sin shall be like the sin in kind. It shall be the same, not only in degree, but also in likeness. Punishment often bears the image and superscription of sin upon it. You may see the father's face and feature in the child. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap (Gal. vi. 7). (*J. Caryl.*)

Vers. 13–17. **In thoughts from the visions of the night.**—*The spectre's question*:—Disguise it how we may, this is a ghost story. I. ATTEMPT TO REALISE THE SPECTRE. Recollect that for every one of us spirit has clothed itself with shape and vesture, and that the basis of the whole world in which we live is spiritual. Look at some of the circumstances favourable to such a spectre. 1. It was produced by a likeness of moral state. It was a time of thought. The mind was wandering amazed, the labyrinthine way stretched out on every hand, the mind trod the dark pathways. I do not see that we are under any necessity to suppose a ghost, in the real, spectral, objective sense of that word. The thought of Eliphaz is of God. It was God who was "a trouble to him." And shapeless terror, while it was a very objective reality to him, need not be regarded as such by us. It was the answer to the voice of conscience within. 2. The fear anticipated the vision. Where man does not feel he will not fear; where he does not fear the spectre,

he will usually see none, feel none, know none. But man, every man, is accessible to fear. We do not dwell so near to terror as our fathers. Yet what a riddle there is in fear! Until Adam fell, Adam had no conscience, because he was one, his whole nature was a religious sensation. It is different now. The conscience is not free, it would be free, but it is nailed. Conscience is moral fear—conscience is the surgery of the soul. Possibly, all men have not fears. How comes it that man knows what moral fear is? It comes from the forbidden. Our world is a house full of fears, because the fall has removed us into the night, away from God. This is the natural history of fear—of moral fear. What is this natural capacity of fear in me? Nervousness, you say! Nervousness, what is that? It is a term used to describe the fine sheathing of the soul; it is man's capacity for mental and moral suffering. II. FROM THE SPECTRE TO THE QUESTION. The ghost's question touches very appropriately and comprehensively the whole topic also of the Book of Job. It is a message from the dead, or rather, a message from the solemn kingdom of spirits. 1. How large is the field of thought the message covers. It is the assertion of the purity and universality of Divine providence. It is a glance at the alleged injustice of God. Man stands whence he thinks he can behold flaws in the Divine government. Job and his friend had met together in the valley of contemplation in the kingdom of night; in Job it was an experience, in Eliphaz a mournful contemplation. The spectre's question then was a reality. In the vision of the night the soul was shaken with the terror, and it is the overwhelming thought—God. God was only known as terror. What must the appearance of God be, if an apparition can startle so terribly? The spectator was crushed by the spectre, and by the question of the spectre. If thy thoughts transcend nature, not less assuredly does thy Maker transcend thee. 2. The question was directed to the defectibility of man. Consider thyself, thy littleness, thy narrowness, the limited sphere of thy vision. And thou art presuming to find a flaw in the Divine purposes and arrangements. 3. Hitherto, the ghost only crushes; it was not the purpose of the spectre to do more. It asked of man the question which had its root only in the eternal and illimitable will. It referred all to God. But the message probably included the following chapter. III. THE GHOST IS ASKING HIS QUESTION STILL. "Shall mortal man be just with God?" The moral fear of man, his conscience, is his best assurance of God. Man's ideas are the best proof that there is a God over him, higher than he is, infinite in goodness and wisdom. It is from God Himself man derives the terrors that scare him. God Himself has reflected His own being in the conscience within the soul. But then it is a wounded conscience, and needs healing. (*E. Paxton Hood.*) *The discourse of the apparition*:—The text was uttered by an individual for whom we cannot perhaps claim that he spake by the Spirit of God. Eliphaz recounts a vision; he records words which were mysteriously brought to him amid the deep silence of the night. We use the wild and awful circumstances of this vision to give solemnity to the truth which is brought to our notice. "Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?" We have the account of an apparition. A purely spiritual being, such as an angel, assumed a visible though indescribable form, and stood before Eliphaz in the stillness of the night. We see nothing in the statements of Scripture or the deductions of reason, from which to decide that there cannot be apparitions; that the invisible state may never communicate with the visible through the instrumentality of phantoms, strange and boding forms that are manifestly not of this earth. There may easily be a weak and fond credulity in regard of ghosts and apparitions; but there may be also a cold and hard scepticism. The Bible, so far from discountenancing the notion of apparitions, may be said to give it the weight of its testimony, and that too, in more than one instance. Of this one thing may we be fully persuaded, that it would not be on any trivial or ordinary occasion that God drew aside the veil, and commissioned spiritual beings to appear upon earth. So terrible is the apparition in the text, that we naturally prepare ourselves for some very momentous communication. But the expectation does not appear to be answered. If there is an elementary truth, it surely is that man cannot be more just than God, nor more pure than his Maker. There is no debate that a pure theism was the creed of Job and his friends. What, then, are we to gather from the visit of the spectre? We wish you to contrast the solemnity and awfulness of the agency employed with the simplicity and commonness of the message delivered. But is there not often needed some such instrumentality as that of the spectre to persuade even ourselves that mortal man is

neither more just nor more pure than his Maker? The vision was probably granted, and certainly used to oppose an infidelity more or less secret,—an infidelity which, fostered by the troubles and discrepancies of human estate, took the Divine attributes as its subject, and either limited or denied them altogether. Is there no such infidelity among ourselves? We are persuaded that, if you will search your own hearts, you will find that you often give it some measure of entertainment. We are persuaded of this in regard both of God's general dealings and of His individual or personal. (*Henry Melvill, B.D.*) *The spectre:*— It was midnight. All without was hushed and still. No breeze stirred the foliage of the trees. No bird broke the silence with its song. Deep sleep had fallen on man. Eliphaz, the friend of Job, was musing in solitude, either about former visions that he had received, or about some of those grave questions which have in all ages perplexed the minds of thoughtful men. He had evidently had glimpses of the unseen—strange hints and whispers, the full meaning of which he could not grasp. And these had been followed by disturbed and anxious thoughts. His whole frame was trembling and agitated. His spirit was possessed with that vague premonitory awe which precedes the approach of something unusual and unknown. And Eliphaz was not anticipating such communications. But he was alone; and his mind was evidently in a state of bewilderment, groping its way to find a light. He was in a fit condition to receive ghostly impressions:— timorous, restless, anxious, shivering, brooding over mysteries—a condition favourable to the creation of weird shapes and forms. At this solemn hour, whilst thus musing, lo! a spirit passed before him, and then stood still. He could not discern its form clearly. Either he was too frightened to observe it closely, or the darkness was too dense, or the shape of the spirit was not sharply defined. He was so frightened that not only his limbs shook, but even his hair stood on end; and amid the stillness that reigned around, a voice was heard, saying, "Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?" Was it a dream, or a reality? Opinion is divided on this subject. Some think that Eliphaz was wrapped in slumber like those around him; others, that while they slept he was awake. But it is quite possible that the spectre, though not a mere creation of a disordered brain, was visible only to the mind of Eliphaz. It partook somewhat of the character of a dream-vision, though it seems to have affected his bodily frame. The spectre was the medium through which God conveyed to him solemn and important truths. It was God's answer to man's perplexities; and though it first startled, it finally allayed his anxieties and fears. The description is a master stroke, and was evidently written by one who saw what he described. The spirit first gliding by; then pausing, as if to arrest attention; the terror it awakened; the solemn, breathless silence; the obscurity in which it was veiled; and then the gentle voice, with its calming, soothing influence; all indicate that the writer is narrating his own experience. When the spectre appeared to Eliphaz we do not know. It may have been a considerable time before he spoke of it to Job; but he referred to it in his address to the patriarch, because of its supposed applicability to his theory that Job's sufferings were the result of sin. At the present day men often see, in the declarations of God's Word, only so much as can be made to fit in with their pre-conceived opinions; and if Eliphaz spoke about matters that were too high for him, if the words of the spectre, which he regarded as supporting his argument, rather operated against it, does not this fact go to prove that the vision was not a mere invention of his own, but a direct message from the Almighty? Let us turn, however, from Eliphaz and his opinions, and consider what the spectre said to him: "Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?" This was his first utterance, and it contains the germ of all that follows. It declares the rectitude of God. At first such a question as this seems superfluous. Who would think of suggesting that man was purer than his Maker? Who would set up a claim to deal out justice with more regularity and fidelity than He? And yet those who criticise God's dealings with men do virtually set themselves up as His superiors. They would have kept out sin, and prevented the inroads of suffering and sorrow. They would have made men happy all round, and ordained gladness and prosperity from one end of the year to the other. Such are the boasts of self-confident men; and it is in reply to such, apparently, that the spectre utters this solemn appeal. There are few of us, probably, who have not at some time or other passed judgment upon God. How much there is that is mysterious! How much that seems to baffle the skill of the wisest interpreter!

We have traversed the same ground as Eliphaz, and have been as perplexed and bewildered as he. How inscrutable are God's dealings with men! How terrible are the convulsions of nature! How disastrous are the conflicts of nations! How bitter are the sorrows of individual men! But these words will bear another rendering. "Is mortal (or feeble) man just from the side of God, namely, from God's standpoint, or more briefly, before God? Is man pure before his Maker?" The rectitude of God is thus placed in contrast with the frailty of man. This fact, so humbling in itself, and so suggestive of man's inability to do better than God, is brought out more fully in the verses that follow, which most commentators regard as a continuation of the spectre's declaration. "Behold, He put no trust in His servants; and His angels He charged with folly. How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth!" First, the spectre draws a comparison between God and the angels, who are His servants. They are God's servants, not His equals; His messengers, not His counsellors. There are some things which they do not understand; some things which they long desired to look into, but in vain. Some of the angels once fell from their first estate. It would not, therefore, seem to be an absolute impossibility for angels to sin. But God's purity is the essence of His character. All His ways are just and true. And if God put no trust in His angels,—if they are imperfect compared with His infinite perfection,—how much more is this true of men, who may be described as dwelling in houses of clay, and who are crushed as easily as a moth. That is the argument; and surely it is calculated to restrain men from passing judgment upon the equity of God's ways. Then are we qualified to sit in judgment on God? Could we govern the world better than He? Are we even capable of comprehending His plans and purposes? There are still many mysteries around us; and there are still many like Eliphaz, who have brooded over them in silence in the hour when deep sleep falleth upon men. We have thought, perhaps, of the departed, and wanted to know what they were doing. We have pondered the history of our past life,—so strange and chequered,—and asked why we were led, or,—it may be,—driven by circumstances, into the path that we have now to tread. We have caught ourselves drifting into speculations that might lead to dangerous results. We have even been tempted to let go the faith which we once held so dear. It is not fresh facts that are required, but clearer vision;—a disposition to accept that which has been revealed already, and act upon it; for (according to Christ's own words) obedience is the way to knowledge. "If any man do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine." There was no written Word in the days of Eliphaz; no risen Christ; no Holy Spirit in the world to convince the understanding, and sanctify the heart. But it is otherwise now. God has spoken to us in terms far clearer and more explicit than those which He addressed, through the spectre, to the friend of Job. He has not proposed to us simply the question, "Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be purer than his Maker?" He has declared in the most emphatic terms, that He is just and holy; and that instead of dealing with men according to their sins, and rewarding them according to their iniquities, He is gentle and forbearing, even to the hardened and impenitent. He has done more. He has assured us that chastisement is a proof of love; that He inflicts it not for His pleasure, but for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. We have no right to expect that God will explain or justify all His actions. Where, then, would there be room for the exercise of faith? We could not question a spectre, probably, if he were to appear. Most likely he would only terrify and alarm us. But we can turn again and again to the written Word. But God has given us more than the written Word. He sent His Son into the world—"the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person," and through Him we have obtained more light upon the character of God and His relations to men than any spectre could ever have given us. He came from the world of spirits. Eliphaz was afraid of the spectre. And we, probably, should be quite as frightened if a spectre were to appear to us. But there is something more terrible than a spectre. It is the sight of an offended God. When Adam sinned he hid himself among the trees of the garden, for he was afraid to meet God. And so will it be at last with every unpardoned sinner. He may hide himself in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; he may call upon the rocks to fall on him and hide him from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. But it will be of no avail. Eliphaz trembled at the sight of the spectre. But there is something more appalling still; it is the sight of the ghosts

of unforgiven sins. (*F. J. Austin.*) *Supersensuous phenomena:*—Physical science has established the remarkable fact that there may be, and in all probability are, phenomena which cannot be perceived by our senses. There are sounds which a trained ear can distinguish, which altogether escape an ordinary ear. There are musical variations which are detected by the practised ear of a skilled composer which altogether escape an uncultured listener. Sound vibrations of more than 38,000 pulsations a second are inaudible by ordinary persons, but are heard and registered by persons sensitive to the highest notes. Moreover, there appears to be no reason for doubting that there may be sound vibrations all around us of such extreme rapidity that we cannot hear them. Pass from acoustics to optics. White light consists of a complete series of coloured rays which, when refracted through a triangular bar of glass, form a continuous spectrum, passing by imperceptible shades from dark red through yellow, green and blue, to very dark violet. Just the same colours are seen in the rainbow. Now, there are rays at each end of the spectrum which cannot be seen. At one end there are heat rays, and at the other end there are chemical (actinic) rays, which are unperceived by our senses, whose existence is attested by other delicate instruments. And physical science gives no reason to believe that we know the absolute-limit of the spectrum at either end. The man, then, who says he will not believe anything but what he can see, or what comes within the observation of his senses, limits his belief very considerably, and ignores a great deal that exists in the universe. (*T. T. Waterman.*)

Ver. 16. **There was silence, and I heard a voice.**—*Silence and a voice:*—1. God's humbling dispensations toward His people will all come to a good issue, and the close of all His dealings will still be sweet. For after all his humbling and fear, preparing Eliphaz for the vision, and assuring him that God was present, the voice cometh. 2. The composing of our spirits, from the confusions and tumultuous disorders incident to them, is a necessary antecedent to God's revealing of His mind. For when "there was silence, I heard a voice." 3. As for this way of the Lord's speaking by a still, or calm voice, albeit we need inquire after no reason why He makes use of it, who doth all things after the counsel of His own will, yet without wresting we may observe these in it. (1) The Lord hereby did teach that these supernatural truths were mysteries, not blazed abroad throughout the world, but whispered among some few believers. (2) The Lord hereby did press attention on those to whom He revealed His mind, while He spake not so loud as might reach them whether they attended or not, but in a still voice, which might excite them seriously to hearken. (3) Hereby also the Lord declared that He will not be a terror to such as delight to converse with Him in His Word, for to such He would not appear as wind, earthquake, or fire, but in a still sweet voice. (4) However men ought to speak the truths of God so audibly as they may be heard, and with that zeal and fervency that becometh; yet, it is not the clamorous voice that makes the word effectual, but the weight and importance of the matter seriously pressed home by the Spirit of God. For even by this "still voice," God communicated His will, and made it to be obeyed in the world. (*George Hutcheson.*)

Ver. 17. **Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?**—*Man compared with God:*—The sum of the assertion in this verse is, that no man can be more pure and just than God. Let a man be never so just or sincere, yet there ought no comparison be made betwixt his righteousness and God's. Learn—1. God is most righteous, pure, and holy, within Himself and in His administration, so that He can do no wrong, nor ought He to be challenged by any. Sufficient arguments are not wanting whereby to clear this righteousness of God in all His dealings, and particularly in His afflicting godly men, and suffering the wicked to prosper; but when we consider His absolute dominion and sovereignty, and His holiness in Himself, it will put the matter beyond all debate, though we dip no further into the particulars. 2. This righteousness and holiness of God is so infinitely transcendent, that the holiness of the best of men cannot compare with it; but it becomes impurity, except he look on them in a Mediator. 3. Though God be thus just and holy, and that infinitely above the best of men, yet men are not wanting, in many cases, to reproach and reflect upon the righteousness of God, yea, and to cry up their own worth and holiness, to the prejudice of His righteousness. 4. An impatient complainer under affliction doth, in effect, wrong God and His righteousness, and sinfully extol his own holiness. 5. Whatever

liberty men take to vent their passions, and to judge harshly of God and His dealing; and whatever their passion suggest for justifying thereof, yet men's own consciences and reason, in cold blood, will tell them that their sentence is unjust. 6. Men's frailty and mortality bear witness against them, that they are not perfectly pure, and that they may not compare with God. 7. Man, considered not only in his frailties, but even in his strength and best endowments, is infinitely inferior to God. 8. If men consider that God is their Creator and Maker, and that they have no degree of perfection which is not from God, they will find it a high presumption to compete with Him in the point of perfection. (*George Hutcheson.*) *On humility*:—"Shall man be more just than God?" The vision described in the passage from which the text is taken, is awful and sublime. Its spiritual meaning, and the moral instruction it conveys, are of superior interest and importance. That the acknowledged probity of Job's life might not justify such impatience and complaint, Eliphaz, from a vision that was revealed unto him, disparages all human attainments and excellency before God, in order to vindicate the ways of God to man; to prove that all His laws are holy, just, and good; to repress pride and inculcate humility. The duty of humility may be proved—I. FROM MAN'S RELATIVE CONDITION IN THE WORLD. That we did not bring ourselves into existence, and are incapable, for a moment, to support ourselves in it, are self-evident truths. If we, and all that belongs to us, be the gift of God, of what have we to be proud, even in the most favourable estimate we can make of ourselves, and of all our acquisitions? Of scientific improvement and cultivated talents how little reason there is for boasting. Of moral and religious improvement how can he boast who even knows not his secret errors? II. FROM THE EXAMPLE OF OUR SAVIOUR. As it is a perfect pattern of universal excellence, so in the display of this virtue it is eminently instructive. If anything could give addition to such illustrious acts of goodness, it was the mildness, the tenderness, the humility, with which they were conferred. If we be His true disciples, we, like Him, will be clothed with humility, and consider it as the distinguishing characteristic of our Christian profession. III. THE ADVANTAGES WITH WHICH IT IS ATTENDED, STRONGLY ENFORCE THE PRACTICE OF THIS VIRTUE. It paves the way for general esteem, exempts us from the mortifications of vanity and pride; by enabling us to form just views of our own characters, it teaches us where to correct them when wrong, and where to improve their excellence when good; it leaves us in full possession of all our powers and attainments, without envy and without detraction; it repels chagrin and engenders contentment; it is a sunshine of the mind, which throws its mild lustre on every object; and affords to every intellectual and moral excellence the most advantageous light in which it can appear. In short, it is pleasing to God, and equally ornamental and advantageous to man. (*A. Stirling, LL.D.*)

Vers. 18–21. **And His angels He charged with folly.**—*Folly in angels*:—"His angels He charged with folly." Revelation conveys to us the highly interesting information that there is between the great Spirit and man, an intermediate order of spirits whose habitation is in the high and holy place. But the discoveries which Divine revelation makes to us of the invisible world, surprising and sublime as they are, were not intended to raise our astonishment, or gratify our curiosity. They are uniformly brought forward in the Scriptures for practical purposes of the highest kind. The doctrine of angels is introduced to illustrate the amazing condescension of the Son of God. At other times it is taught for the consolation of the saints, who have assurance that they are encompassed, preserved, and provided for by God's invisible host. At other times it is adduced to set forth the greatness, wisdom, and holiness of God on the one hand, and the folly, weakness, and nothingness of man on the other. This is the view introduced in the passage before us. Some of the angels, by pride and rebellion, forfeited their place. Was God, after this, to place His confidence in man, even though created in His image? What is asserted of angels is applicable to them still. God only possesses in Himself all excellence. Angels derive their being, and all its excellences, from Him. If the text is the estimate which the Most High forms of angels, how insignificant and contemptible must we be in His sight! What are our bodies, but moulded, moving, breathing, speaking clay! And what can be frailer than a house of clay! Practical lessons—1. The subject teaches the folly of covetousness and ambition. Covetousness is in itself sinful,

and as it usurps the place due to God in the heart, it is idolatry; but when viewed in the light of the text, it is folly and madness, and wilful madness, which exposes its victim to merited derision. 2. It teaches us to avoid pride and security. 3. It teaches us not to trust or glory in man. Why has God declared His trust in His servants, and accused His angels of folly, but to teach us more effectually the sin and danger of all creature confidence and boasting? (*Thomas M'Crie, D.D.*)

The imperfect angel:—I want to put the truth of God's purity in its right relation to His patience and long-suffering and gentleness. Side by side with the text's setting forth God's unapproachable purity, may be placed such texts as Isa. xlii. 3, Matt. x. 42, which set forth the patience and beneficence of His character, and the scrupulous and delicate equities of His administration. In the addresses of Eliphaz, God's strict and unapproachable purity is depicted in exalted and impressive phraseology. This seer, Eliphaz, sinned through overweening confidence in his own prophetic gift. His error consisted in the misapplication of truths that were obviously inspired, rather than in the premises he laid down as the basis of his appeal to Job. He was right in his abstract principles. We may accept his truth about the inconceivable purity of God. 1. God's ideals of purity are so transcendent and so terrible, that the purity of the angel nearest to His throne is little better than stain, shadow, darkness in comparison. "His angels He chargeth with folly." But is not the whole subject, with the angel in the background, vague, misty, fanciful? It is surely not unscientific to assume the existence of the pure and mighty beings spoken of by seers and prophets of the olden time, nor speculative to ponder well the words which declare that in comparison with God Himself, the angels have about them traces of finite dimness, blemish, imperfection. Are the angels, then, frail and foolish and defective? Are the angels disfigured with limitation, even as we? Put them in comparison with man, fallen man, and they will well justify the title "holy." Bring them into comparison with God, and the title will seem incongruous, arrogant, and misplaced. The fall of some of their number shows that, as a class, the angels have not yet passed beyond the stage of defectibility. They have not risen into a wisdom so complete that no illusion can betray it, nor into a strength so unassailable that no temptation can score its record of disfigurement upon their lives. They are free, it is true, from actual transgression, but they are passing through the first crude stages of a development in which, because of inward weakness and limitation, there is perilous room for the wiles of the tempter. They have not reached the transcendent holiness of God, who cannot be tempted with evil. An incarnation, with its perils and possibilities, would be fatal to an angel. God can never forget the frailty, weakness, limitation, that may be latent in the unfallen types of angelic life. 2. The holiness of an angel will appear as little better than a frailty if we think of it in comparison with the uncreated holiness of God. The Divine holiness has in it a transcendent originality, with which that of the creature can never hope to vie. The holiness of the angel is a mere echo. The angels are but copyists, and their workmanship is unutterably inferior to the original conception. 3. In the judgment of the Most High, the holiness of the angel verges upon a frailty, because of its inferior vitality and its less consuming fervour. No angel knows what it is to love with a mighty intenseness that makes the love necessarily vicarious, and the heart break with pure grief over the sin, and grief, and shame of others. No Bethlehems, or Gethsemanes, or Golgothas have ever immortalised angelic devotion and love. Their love, however crystal pure, is a love to which sacrifice is strange. It does not draw them into incarnations and propitiatory offerings, and down into the shadows of vast redeeming shames and agonies. If Jesus Christ is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, the Father must have been touched in some sense from everlasting with the same sorrow. Before all worlds there was some dim mystery of self-sacrificing pain in the heart of God. 4. The defect of the angel is a defect of narrowness. In comparison with the Catholic and all-comprehending love of God, his love is insular and restrained. All perfect moral qualities are boundless. The graces of these celestial envoys are dwarfed into frailty and insignificance when brought into contrast with the perfect moral life of God. 5. The holiness of the angel has about it the defect and limitation inseparable from the briefness of its own history. It is a frail thing of yesterday in comparison with the holiness of God. Think of the amazing epochs through which God's holiness has been unfolding itself. The worth of a moral quality is proportioned to the period through which it has verified and established itself. Angel

life is but of recent birth. 6. The holiness of the angel has about it the defect of immaturity. The insight and holiness of the angel are but starting-points for some higher and more magnificent evolution of character, the first cell out of which shall issue the wonder and transfiguration of their after destiny. . . . Consider the unparalleled patience and gentleness of God. "His angels He chargeth with folly." Yes; but He keeps them at His feet, and with exhaustless grace carries on their education, epoch after epoch. Is there no contradiction in these views? No. Only He who is infinitely holy can afford to be absolutely gracious and gentle. His very greatness enables Him to stoop. The incomparable holy dare stoop to blemish, and frailty, and weakness, and help it out of its dark and humiliating conditions. There is no contradiction here. Then again, the infinitely holy can discern the hidden promise and possibility of holiness in the weak and erring. It would be an awful thing if we were left to suppose that God was microscopic in His scrutiny for judgment and condemnation only, and not also for blessing and approval. He discerns hope and fine possibility all the more keenly through the very affluence of His own purity. The perfection of righteousness is realised in the perfection of love. (*Thomas G. Selby.*) *On Easter Day*:—In the resurrection we shall be as the angels. And that we might not flatter ourselves in a dream of a better state than the angels have, in this text we have an intimation what their state and condition is—"His angels He charged with folly." I. OF WHOM WERE THESE WORDS SPOKEN? Angels. But it does not appear whether good or bad angels; those that fell or those that stood. Calvin thinks the good angels, considered in themselves, may be defective. The angels were created in a possibility of everlasting blessedness, but not in actual possession of it. This admits of no doubt, because some of them actually did fall. II. WHAT WORDS WERE SPOKEN? 1. What is positively said. 2. What is consequently inferred. (*John Donne.*)

Ver. 19. **Them that dwell in houses of clay.**—*The frailty and mortality of man*:—The great design of God in His Word and in His providence is to humble the pride and cure the fatal presumption of man. I. THE IMPRESSIVE DESCRIPTION HERE OF OUR FRAIL AND MORTAL CONDITION. Angels are pure spirits, men are partly spiritual and partly corporal. "We dwell in houses of clay." The frailty of our frame is thus set forth. Its foundation is in the dust, its origin and subsistence are from the dust. This too is a significant expression, "Who are crushed before the moth," that is, sooner than the moth. II. THIS IMPRESSIVE DESCRIPTION OF OUR FRAILTY IS VERIFIED BY INSTANCES OF DAILY OCCURRENCE. Illustrate by cases of death from simple and sudden accident, and from insidious disease. Draw some practical inferences. 1. If the frame of man is so frail, and liable to death from causes so numerous, what egregious and culpable folly is it to be wholly engrossed in the pursuits and pleasures of the present life. 2. How important to be prepared for a world where death and sorrow are unknown! But what is a due preparation for immortal bliss! 3. If the body is so frail and mortal, and the mind so apt to turn and stray from the solemn consideration required, how necessary is it to pray for light and grace to direct and fix our thoughts on this deeply interesting subject! To learn the method of profitably numbering our days on earth, we all need Divine teaching, and this must be sought of Him who is willing to impart it. (*Essex Remembrancer.*)

Ver. 21. **They die, even without wisdom.**—*Dying in ignorance*:—"Alas! while the body stands so broad and brawny must the soul be blinded, dwarfed, stupefied, almost annihilated? Alas! This too was a breath of God: bestowed in heaven, but on earth never to be unfolded. That there should one man die ignorant who had capacity for knowledge, this I call a tragedy." (*Carlyle.*) *Unpreparedness for death*:—"One should think," said a friend to the celebrated Dr. Samuel Johnson, "that sickness and the view of death would make men more religious." "Sir," replied Johnson, "they do not know how to go to work about it. A man who has never had religion before, no more grows religious when he is sick than a man who has never learned figures can count when he has need of calculation."

CHAPTER V.

VERS. 1–7. **Call now, if there be any that will answer thee.**—*Moral evil as viewed by an enlightened natural religionist*:—How does Eliphaz appear to view sin? I. AS EXCLUDING THE SINNER FROM THE SYMPATHY OF THE GOOD. He may mean here, either, Who will sympathise with thy opinions as a sinner? or, Who will sympathise with thy conduct as a sinner? "Call now, if there be any that will answer thee." Thy conduct is such that none of the holy will notice thee. This was all untrue as applied to Job, yet it is perfectly true in relation to sin generally. Sin always excludes from the sympathy of the good. II. AS BY ITS OWN PASSIONS WORKING OUT THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SINNER. "Wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one." His own wrath and his own envy. The malefic passions, in all their forms, are destructive. III. AS ENJOYING PROSPERITY ONLY TO TERMINATE IN RUIN. 1. Sinners often prosper in the world. They "take root." 2. The prosperity must come to a termination. It is only temporary. It often vanishes during life. 3. At the termination the ruin is complete. IV. AS FATED TO PRODUCE MISERY WHEREVER IT EXISTS. 1. Misery follows sin by Divine ordination. 2. A sinful man, so sure as he is born, must endure trouble. Such was this old Temanite's view of moral evil, and, in the main, his view is true. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 2. **And envy slayeth the silly one.**—Plutarch says of human passions that they are not evil in themselves, but good affections, which nature has furnished us withal, for great and noble uses. Right, reason, wisdom, and discretion ought to rule; but all our powers and passions have their proper place, and they follow the resolution of our judgment, and exert themselves so far as reason shall direct. Were this order well observed, how blest, how happy, should we be! But how shamefully do we invert the order of our nature! If brutes could understand, they would rejoice in their condition of necessity, and despise our estate of liberty and reason, when they observe how fatally we abuse them. By indulging our passions we destroy our happiness. Eliphaz insults this holy sufferer Job, and would have him believe that he was this malicious man whose vice had killed him, and this envious man whose spite had slain him. Still, apart from Job, the maxim of the text remains a truth,—"Envy slayeth the silly one." I. EXPLAIN THE VICE OF ENVY. When may a man be said to be of an envious mind? Envy is a regret of mind, or an inward trouble at the prosperity of another. There are other vices, as ambition, malice, pride, that carry a resemblance of envy, and are related to it; but they either proceed from a different principle, or terminate in some particular object. They are confined and limited, but envy is indefinite. The principle, the formal reason of this singular vice of envy is, a repining, a gnawing, a trouble in the mind, that any man should prosper. It is more or less predominant and rancorous according to the tempers of men and the indulgence that it finds. Sometimes it appears without disguise; the passion of the envious overcomes him. Sometimes you may see it in a man's very gratulations; you may discern his envy in his most kind expressions. Sometimes he vents his angry tumour in a pleasing narration of all the evil, or the darker part, of your condition. Sometimes his envy bubbles out in vain insinuations of his own deserts. Sometimes it lurks in a vain pretence of self-denial, of a mortified temper, and of a contempt of the world. Sometimes they throw their envy upon their spleen, and then they think they may vent it freely, and without reflection upon themselves. Sometimes it appears under a cloak of piety and religion. And envy will express itself, as occasion offers, in rapine, violence, and murder. II. THE TRUTH OF HIS CHARACTER. Or how justly it is said of an envious man, that he is a silly one. His folly is extreme, apparent, and indisputable. Wisdom consists in three particulars. In a perfect knowledge of our happiness, or what is proper for us to pursue, and what to shun. In a right understanding of the fittest means, whereby we may attain the good and avoid the evil. In a skilful application of those means to their ends, that they may operate the most effectually towards the bringing our designs to pass. How folly is directly opposite to wisdom. A fool is one whose understanding is prejudiced, whose judgment is not free; who is governed by his passions, drawn into false opinions, wild, unreasonable ends, and destructive measures. But such a silly one as this is, is that of the text; he endures and cherishes a vice that blinds his reason, and puts him out of all

possibility of being happy. An envious man is a common nuisance, that every one is offended with, and no man can endure. Silly man; while he designs to hurt his neighbour, he destroys himself. His spite and indignation make him overshoot all modest bounds. There is such a complication of evil qualities in envy and detraction; of curiosity, conceit, and pride; of meddling, judging, and malicious censure, as makes the guilty nauseous to all. No man can be happy but in the way of his nature. And therefore he that will grasp at that which is out of his line, he that must have what he lists, and will have all things go according to his mind, or will be angry, is sure to be always miserable. He that does not consider his condition simply, as it is in itself, but with relation and respect to other persons, shall never be easy while he lives. III. THE FATAL EFFECTS OF THIS FOOLISH VICE. It destroys him. 1. It affects his body. Envy, peevishness, and discontent, ferment and sour the blood, precipitate the motion of the spirits, urge outrageous passions, fill the mind with angry thoughts, hinder rest, destroy appetite, take away all enjoyment, breed grief and melancholy, and end in a sickly, livid look, in lassitude, consumption, and despair. 2. It vitiates his mind, and destroys the moral life. If envy divests a man of his virtue and his reason, it must of necessity destroy his soul too. IV. THE METHODS OF RECOVERY. 1. He that would be free from envy must endeavour to deserve, as well as may be, both of God and man. True virtue gives a man an humble opinion of himself; acquaints him with his own defects, or what he is not, as well as what he is. 2. You must bring your mind to a good opinion of your own condition. He that would be easy in his mind must govern his desires, and make the best of what he has. 3. You must wean your affections from the world, and learn to value it at no higher a rate than it deserves. What then remains but that we endeavour to subdue our passions, to master our spirits, and to live according to reason in the world. (*J. Lambe, D.D.*) *Wrath and envy*:—I. WE HAVE WRATH. Notice—1. Its nature. Wrath is not comely, but it is sometimes useful. A man who never knows anger is in nine case out of ten a colourless being who has neither energy nor brilliance nor power. God is angry. The apostle implies that it may be indulged in without sin. But there are extremes. It may betoken an ungoverned disposition; it may indicate a cruel, passionate, vindictive spirit. It may show a hasty, thoughtless, impetuous, unbalanced character. Apart from this, unnecessary wrath is disagreeable and unpleasant to all. Its habitual indulgence alienates all good. This brings us to note—2. Its consequence—"Wrath killeth the foolish man." How does it kill? It killeth the best feelings. It stifles all sense of justice, right, caution, honour. It checks the best impulses and engenders cruelty. It killeth peace and happiness. How many an after-pang it produces, how bitter the divisions, the heart-burnings, the evil it causes! It filleth the body itself. Instances are not uncommon of life being forfeited in a fit of anger. It undermines the health and, even if it has no more effect, creates a morose, peevish, miserable disposition. II. ENVY. The word translated "envy" may mean "indignation." The two are only divided one from another by a very narrow line. Envy is an evil indignation with another because he happens to be better off than ourselves. We are told that "envy slayeth the silly man." Notice how this is the case—(1) It weareth away his peace. Look at Ahab envying the vineyard of Naboth. For desire the covetous man fretteth away his life. (2) It recoils with fatal consequences. It causes deadly results. It leads to the commission of crimes, which bring deadly punishments. Envy is the father of murder. It urged on Cain to put his brother to death. Hence it causeth the slaying of those who give way to it. One word on the description of the characters here spoken of. They are called "foolish" and "silly." What apt and suggestive names for those who give way to the influence of such injurious and pernicious passions, as they afterwards find to their own injury and loss! The name applied to those who refuse to obey the dictates of Divine wisdom is "fools." (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 3. **I have seen the foolish taking root.**—1. Wicked men may flourish in great outward prosperity. 2. Wicked men may not only flourish and grow, but they may flourish and grow a great while. I ground it upon this; the text saith that they take root: I have seen the foolish take root; and the word notes a deep rooting. Some wicked men stand out many storms, like old oaks; like trees deeply rooted, they stand many a blast, yea, many a blow. Spectators are ready to say, such and such storms will certainly overthrow them, and yet still they stand; but though they stand so long that all wonder,

yet they shall fall. 3. Outward good things are not good in themselves. The foolish take root. The worst of men may enjoy the best of outward comforts. Outward things are unto us as we are. If the man be good, then they are good. There is a great difference between the flourishing of a wise man and the flourishing of a fool; all his flourishing in the earth is no good to him, because himself is not good. Spiritual good things are so good that, though they find us not good, yet they will make us good; we cannot have them indeed, and be unlike them. 4. The enjoyment of outward good things is no evidence, can be made no argument, that a man is good. And yet how many stick upon this evidence, blessing themselves because they are outwardly blessed! (*J. Caryl.*)

Vers. 6, 7. **Affliction cometh not forth of the dust.** — *Human suffering:*—"Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, nor doth trouble spring out of the ground." The liability of man to suffering is one of the most palpable truths addressed to our observation or experience, and at the same time one of the most affecting that can call forth the susceptibilities of a well-regulated mind. Innumerable and diversified are the immediate or proximate causes from which these sorrows spring. The study of human suffering is unquestionably a melancholy one, and to some it may appear not only gloomy but also useless. It is therefore, above all things, expedient that we labour to extract from suffering its due improvement, as forming one part, and an important part, of the dealings towards us of a God of mercy—a God who has engaged to make all things work together for the good of His people. I. IS THERE ANYTHING IN US OF OURSELVES THAT NATURALLY OR NECESSARILY EXPOSES US TO SUFFERING? The text at least insinuates that there is. It is strong even in its negative statement, and replete with meaning, when it informs us that "affliction cometh not of the dust." Reason tells us that in ourselves there must be some provoking cause of the woes we feel. We must have offended our Maker. Revelation settles this matter on a surer basis. The great fact is, that by sin the human race have purchased sorrow, and by their guilt they have provoked it. Never has there lived and died a man whose history has not furnished evidences innumerable of the dependence of sorrow upon sin. In many instances we can trace up a definite affliction to a definite sin. These instances concern both individuals and nations. II. HAS GOD ANY BENEVOLENT END IN VIEW IN INFUSING AFFLICTION SO COPIOUSLY INTO THE CUP OF OUR TEMPORAL LOT? That suffering, while it traces itself to sin, as its provoking cause, is measured out by the God of heaven, and is decidedly under His control, at once as to degree and duration, is a truth which we deem it unnecessary to pause in proving. How are we to reconcile the Divine agency in the matter with the goodness and the love which, while they characterise, at the same time constitute, the glory and the grandeur of His nature? 1. God often sends afflictions to His enemies for the purpose of melting their hearts and subduing them to Himself. Even in the natural world, and in the conduct of men, we are conversant with such a thing as the production of real good out of seeming evil. Every day and hour God is making the dispensations of His providence, more especially afflictive dispensations, to subserve, to pave the way for, and to promote, the purposes of His grace. As God pulverises, purifies, and invigorates the weary soil by the keen blasts, the nipping frosts, and the drifting snows of winter, thus preparing it for a favourable reception of the seed by the husbandman in the spring, so does God not unfrequently, by the rude storm of adversity or the chilling visitation of affliction, soften, melt down, and prepare the barren hearts of the children of men for the good seed of the Word of truth. 2. God often sends affliction to His enemies with a view to their conversion into friends. And when He visits it upon His people, it is for the purpose of promoting their improvement and advancement in the Divine life. Even in the case of the wicked, God's judgments are not necessarily of a penal character. But uniformly, and without exception, in the case of His genuine people, affliction is sent in love. And inconceivably various are the benevolent ends affliction is calculated to subserve and promote. Learn that we should be humble under affliction. The simple reflection that it springs from and is attributable to our own disobedience and guilt should be sufficient to summon up and to keep alive this emotion. We should also learn to be resigned when the hand of the Almighty is laid upon us. And in every case we should seek to improve affliction for God's glory and our own good. (*W. Craig.*) *The uses of suffering:*—It is a common thing for men to look upon pain as wholly evil. But deeper reflection shows that suffering is not thus purely

evil—a thing to be utterly feared and hated. It is often an instrument employed for good. I. SUFFERING CANNOT BE WHOLLY EVIL. 1. A life without trouble would be one of the worst things for man. 2. Nothing which is a necessity of our nature is utterly evil. Suffering is one of those things which no one can avoid in this imperfect state of existence. 3. The innocent often suffer. A great deal of pain is endured which cannot be deemed retributive, cannot be termed punishment. Look at the animal creation, and at the sorrows which men unjustly endure—the cruel wrongs of poor slaves, innocent prisoners, and oppressed peoples. 4. The most highly gifted natures are the most susceptible of pain. 5. Jesus Christ condescended to endure suffering. II. SUFFERING ANSWERS USEFUL PURPOSES. 1. It is a motive power in the development of civilisation. 2. It is one of the great regenerative forces of society. 3. One of the most beneficent uses consists in its preventive power. 4. It is the necessary condition of sacrifice. 5. It affords scope for the exercise of the passive virtues. 6. It will make the joys of heaven more rich and sweet. Remember that all discipline benefits or injures according to the spirit in which we receive it. (*T. W. Mays, M.A.*) *The troubles of life Divinely appointed*:—I. THIS IS A TROUBLESOME WORLD. 1. The elements of which the world is composed are not only troublesome, but often destructive to mankind. 2. The great changes which take place in the world from year to year render it not only troublesome, but very distressing and destructive to its inhabitants. Every one of the four seasons of the year brings with it peculiar trials, labours, dangers, and diseases. 3. Many parts of the world are filled with a vast variety of animals, which are extremely hostile and troublesome to mankind. 4. This world is full of evil, on account of the moral depravity which universally prevails among its human inhabitants. Man is the greatest enemy of man. 5. This is a troublesome world on account of the heavy and complicated calamities which are inflicted by the immediate hand of God. II. WHY HAS GOD ORDAINED THIS STATE OF THINGS? He could have made this world as free from trouble as any other world now is, or even will be. There is reason to believe that God framed the world in view of the apostasy of Adam, and adapted it to the foreseen state of his sinful posterity. 1. God ordained this to be a troublesome world, because mankind deserve trouble. 2. To wean mankind from it. 3. To prepare those who live in it for their future and final state. Improvement—(1) Since God has ordained this to be a troublesome world, it is a very great favour that He has given us His Word, which unfolds His wise and holy designs in making and governing all things. (2) God has wise and good reasons for not making this world any more troublesome than it is. (3) As all are born to trouble, some are not so much more happy than others as we imagine. (4) It is folly and presumption in any to expect that they shall escape the common evils of life, and enjoy uninterrupted prosperity and happiness. (5) We ought to live in the universal exercise of sympathy and compassion, and in submission to the will of God. (6) All who live in this troublesome world should be truly religious. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *On affliction*:—I. AFFLICTION IS THE APPOINTMENT OF PROVIDENCE. What the vanity of false science would ascribe to second causes is, by sound observation, as well as by the sacred writings, attributed to the providence of God. It is neither the effect of chance nor the result of blind necessity. Here complete happiness is not the destined portion of mortals. On this point personal experience will not contradict the report of general observation. "We are born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward." The present is a probationary stage. In the first stage of our being we are subjected to moral discipline. To a probationary state, suffering is requisite. II. AFFLICTION IS INTENDED TO IMPROVE OUR NATURE AND PROMOTE OUR HAPPINESS. It contributes much to the formation of a character that is amiable and respectable. It purifies the soul, strengthens mutual sympathy, and makes us men of a milder nature. It produces pious resignation and humility. Adversity is a happy means of correcting the haughty disposition. Affliction has often humbled the mighty. It begets fortitude. A brave and generous people, becoming affluent and luxurious, lose their martial intrepidity and their virtue. They who struggle with hazards and hardships acquire the highest energy of soul—a firm, intrepid spirit, that is not disquieted by apprehensions and alarms, nor even appalled by danger which threatens existence. Affliction does us good by moderating our attachment to the world. When the angel of adversity takes away those gifts from the prosperous which engrossed their affection, it is fixed more on the Giver. Affliction is the salutary correction of a Father, who intends it to be ultimately

productive of the happiness of His children. The Lord makes good to arise out of evil. Present trouble is connected with future happiness. Then "sorrow not as those who have no hope." Never indulge gloomy views of human life, nor murmur at the chastening of the Almighty. Always act a virtuous part. It is guilt, and guilt alone, which arms affliction with the stings of scorpions. Be virtuous, and you shall never have the bitterness of remorse to add to the severity of misfortune. (*T. Laurie, D.D.*) *On afflictions*:—Why is misery permitted to enter into the creation, to interrupt its harmony, to deface its beauty, and counteract the plan of the Creator? Some heathens have inferred that the world cannot be under the care and direction of an all-powerful Superintendent. Some philosophers say the souls of men had existed in a former state, and the evils and sufferings of this life were to be considered as inflictions for crimes committed in their state of pre-existence. Others framed the hypothesis of two supreme, co-eternal, and co-equal beings, acting in opposition to each other. The sacred writings give a different account of those evils that afflict mankind. It is in them taught that the degenerate state of our nature requires such correction and discipline, such an intermixture of good and evil as we now observe and experience in the world. Our present state of being is a state of trial or school of virtue. Afflictions, far from being indications of God's neglecting and disregarding His creatures, are expressions of His paternal care and affection. The afflictions of heaven are never sent but with a merciful intention. Notice some moral and religious advantages that may result from afflictions. 1. Afflictions have a natural tendency to form us to virtue by disposing the mind to consideration. Sin cannot stand the test of consideration. Suffering has a natural tendency to reform the disobedient and inadvertent, to confirm and improve the virtues of the good, and to secure and advance the future happiness of both. 2. Sufferings remind us of God's providence and of our dependence. This they do by the conviction they bring that our strength is but weakness, and that we are subject to infirmities which we cannot remove, and to wants which we cannot supply. 3. Sufferings have a tendency to correct in us a too partial and confined attachment to the world. It is doubtless in the actual power of the Almighty to secure us a smooth and easy passage through this vale of life, and guard us from all evil. But what His power might grant His wisdom sees fit to withhold. In our future state, when we take a retrospective view of our lives, they will appear in a light very different from that in which we see them at present. What we now consider as misfortunes and afflictions will appear to have been mercies and blessings. We shall see that the intentions of the Deity were benevolent when His inflictions seemed severe. Let us, then, meet every dispensation of Providence with the most submissive resignation to the will of that supremely gracious Sovereign of nature whose unerring wisdom can alone determine what is good or evil for us, and whose unbounded goodness will direct all things finally to the happiness of His creatures. (*G. Carr.*) *Preparation for and improvement of our afflictions*:—The words of Eliphaz imply that the general state of man in this world is a state of trouble and affliction. Yet those afflictions and troubles do neither grow up by a certain regular and constant source of nature, nor are they merely accidental and casual. They are sent, disposed, directed, and managed by the conduct and guidance of the most wise providence of Almighty God. If there were no other ends in God's sharp providence than to keep men humble and disciplinable, His ways would be highly justified. I. WHAT PREPARATION IS FIT TO BE MADE EVERY MAN BEFORE AFFLICTIONS COME. 1. A sound conviction of the truth that no man can by any means expect to be exempt from afflictions. Every man shares in common public calamities. And every man has his own personal evils, such as befall the body, the estate, the name, or men's friends and relations. No man is exempt from these crosses at any time by any special privilege, and sometimes they have fallen in together in their perfection, even upon some of the best men that we read of. Even the most sincere piety and integrity of heart and life cannot give any man any exemption or privilege from afflictions of some kind. This consideration may silence that murmuring and unquiet and proud distemper that often ariseth in the minds of good men; they are ready to think themselves injured if they fall under the calamities incident to mankind. They sometimes even take up the idea that they are hated or forsaken of God because sorely afflicted. 2. Another preparative is to reason ourselves off from overmuch love and valuation of the world. Philosophy hath made some short essay in this business, but the doctrine of the Gospel has done more. (1) By giving us a

plain and clear estimate and valuation of this world; and (2) by showing us a more valuable, certain, and durable estate after death, and a way of attaining it. 3. Another preparative is to keep piety, innocence, and a good conscience before it comes. Have the soul as clear as may be from the guilt of sin, by an innocent and watchful life in the time of our prosperity, and by a sincere and hearty repentance for sin committed. 4. Next preparative is to gain a humble mind. When affliction meets with a proud heart, full of opinion of its own worth and goodness, there ariseth more trouble and tumult than can arise from the affliction itself. If any man considers aright, he hath many important causes to keep his mind always humble. 5. Another preparative is a steady resolved resignation of a man's self to the will and good pleasure of Almighty God. That will is sovereign, wise, and beneficent. 6. The last preparative is, labour to get thy peace with God through Jesus Christ. II. How AFFLICTIONS INCUMBENT UPON US ARE TO BE RECEIVED, ENTERTAINED, AND IMPROVED. 1. A man under affliction should have a due consideration of God as a God of infinite wisdom, justice, and mercy. 2. He should realise that afflictions do not rise out of the dust, but are sent and managed by the wise disposition of Almighty God. 3. That the best of men are visited by afflictions, and it is but need they should. 4. That all the Divine dispensations are so far beneficial or hurtful as they are received and used. 5. The consequences of all these considerations lead us into the following duties: To receive affliction with all humility, with patience, and subjection of mind; to return unto God, who afflicts; to pray unto God; to depend and trust upon God; to be thankful; to put ourselves upon a due search and examination of our hearts and ways. III. THE TEMPER AND DISPOSITION OF MIND WE SHOULD HAVE UPON AND AFTER DELIVERANCE FROM AFFLICTIONS. 1. We ought solemnly to return our humble and hearty thanks to Almighty God. 2. Endeavour to express the thankfulness by a sincere and faithful obedience to the will of God. 3. Take good heed lest the heart be lifted up into presumption upon God. And—4. Be vigilant and watchful lest evil take you at unawares. Nothing is more likely to procure affliction than security and unpreparedness of mind. It is well also to keep deliverances out of affliction in memory. (*M. Hale.*) *Is affliction reasonable?*—This world really is what it seems to be—a passing stage for the discipline and improvement of beings destined for another existence. It is, however, one thing to theorise soberly and rationally upon the wondrous plan of Providence, and another to apply the truth which is thus recognised practically to ourselves. While we cannot help believing what appears to be true, such belief may go but a very short way in determining us to do what appears to be reasonable. Hence the variance between profession and practice, between principle and conduct, which appears in the world. And hence the necessity for some more pressing and operative motives than those of mere abstract reason and conviction, to compel such an attention to the truths of our Divine religion as may make its efficacy savingly felt. . . . If the first and greatest of the uses of adversity be to lead us to the knowledge of God, the second in importance is to make us feel for our fellow-men, and to call into exercise our dormant charities. What manner of man is he who can behold unmoved the piteous spectacle of human misery which everyday life exhibits? Truly, not such an one as either approves himself to his God or recommends himself to his fellow-men. God's dealings with us have their chiefest reference to the purification of our hearts and minds, and the development of our faculties and affections. As far as these ends are produced, the purposes of His providence are answered. But His object vindicates His goodness, His means approve His wisdom. Important as is the duty of relieving the distressed, it is subordinate to the still more important one of purifying our own hearts and minds, and renewing a right spirit within us. Indeed, it is only as the former is subservient to the latter of these duties that it can be religiously commended. Have we, then, any bowels of compassion toward our fellow-men, or any sentiment of gratitude towards God, if we withhold that liberal exercise of charity which He has thus graciously promised to consider as done unto Himself by imputation? The means with which you have been blessed by Providence have not been conferred upon you chiefly or primarily for your own sakes. (*S. O'Sullivan, A.M.*) *The shortness and vanity of human life*:—I. A PATHETICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SHORTNESS, &C., OF HUMAN LIFE. Afflictions and calamities of innumerable kinds seem necessarily and constantly to attend the life of man. II. A DECLARATION THAT THESE MISERIES AND TROUBLES DO NOT ARISE FROM CHANCE OR NECESSITY. They come from

the wise providence of God governing the world. This, indeed, is the only true and solid comfort that can possibly be afforded to a rational and considerate mind. III. IT IS IMPLIED THAT THERE ARE MANY JUST AND GOOD AND USEFUL ENDS UPON ACCOUNT OF WHICH GOD PERMITS SO MANY AFFLICTIONS. 1. Some of those things which we usually esteem among the troubles and afflictions of life are such as may justly, and must necessarily, be resolved into the absolute sovereignty and dominion of God. Of this kind are mortality in general, and the shortness of human life; the unequal distribution of riches and honour and the good things of this present life; the different capacities and abilities of mind; the different tempers and constitutions of body; the different states and conditions wherein God has originally placed man in the world. Of these things there can, there needs, be no other account given than the absolute sovereignty and dominion of God. Hath not the Master a right to employ His servants in what several stations He pleases, more or less honourable, provided, in His final distribution, He deals equitably with each of them in their several and respective degrees? 2. A greater part of the troubles of life, and the afflictions we are apt to complain of, are not the immediate and original appointment of God at all, but the mere natural effects and consequences of our own sin. Most sins, even in the natural consequences of things, are, at some time or other, attended with their proper punishment. This consideration ought to make us acquiesce, with all humility and patience, under that burden which not God, but our own hands have laid upon us. But even the afflictions which are the consequences of our own folly may, by a wise improvement, by bearing them as becomes us, and by exercising ourselves to wisdom under them, become the matter of an excellent virtue, and may turn into the occasion of much religious advantage. 3. Some of the greatest afflictions and calamities of life are the effects of God's public judgments upon the world for the wickedness and impiety of others. These are sufficient grounds of contentment and acquiescence, of willing submission and resignation to the Divine will. The ends God intends in afflictions are four—1. To teach us humility and a just sense of our own unworthiness. 2. To lead us to repentance for our past errors. 3. To wean us from an over-fond love of the present world. 4. To try, improve, and perfect our virtues, and make some particular persons eminent examples of faith and patience to the world. Two inferences. (1) It is a very wrong and unjust conclusion to imagine, with Job's friends, that whoever is much afflicted must consequently have been very wicked, and that God is very angry with him. (2) From what has been said there appears great reason for men to resign themselves with all patience to the will of God; and to rely upon Him with full trust and assurance (in all possible circumstances of life) that He will direct things finally to our best advantage. (*S. Clarke, D.D.*) *Trouble a part of human life*:—A life without trouble would be very uninteresting. Our opportunities for greatness would be narrowed down if trials were gone. I watched a glorious sunset, marvelling at the beauty wherewith the evening skies were all ablaze, and adoring Him who gave them their matchless colouring. On the next evening I resorted to the same spot, hoping to be again enraptured with the gorgeous pomp of ending day, but there were no clouds, and therefore no glories. True, the canopy of sapphire was there, but no magnificent array of clouds to form golden masses with edges of burning crimson, or islands of loveliest hue set in a sea of emerald; there were no great conflagrations of splendour or flaming peaks of mountains of fire. The sun was as bright as before, but for lack of dark clouds on which to pour out his lustre his magnificence was unrevealed. A man who should live and die without trials would be like a setting sun without clouds; he would have scant opportunity for the display of those virtues with which the grace of God had endowed him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 8, 9. **I would seek unto God.**—*Marvels and prayer*:—Nothing could be better than the counsel proffered in the text, nothing more certain than the grounds on which he rests his counsel. To seek unto God, and spread out one's cause before Him, that must be the best thing to do in any emergency. Does not the wonderful actually take place often in human life? Is it only in the great world that marvels occur, unexpected and great elevations, turnings, unfoldings, light, and help? Is it not mere blindness that refuses to see the marvellous in our own sphere, and seeks it far away in old times, or on foreign shores? If we believe that God encompasses and pervades all human life, shall we not see God's hand in all these things, and learn to look to Him with expectation, what-

over our circumstances may be? I. WHY, THEN, DO WE NOT EXPECT MARVELLOUS THINGS FROM GOD? 1. One reason is that we go too much by past experience. We have difficulty in rising above the familiar. 2. Some think too much of law. The idea of law pervading all things, not only facts and phenomena of nature, but thought and feeling, soul and heart, has wrought itself deep into many minds. There seems no room for the strange, the marvellous. Men forget two things, freedom and God. A spirit is something not included in the rigid system of law. A spirit is itself a cause, and originates. It produces. That lies in the very nature of a moral being; and God is infinitely free, and deals with the soul in ways unsearchable. 3. Men think only of their own working, and not of God's. Consequently they settle down into small expectations. 4. We fear to lessen our own diligence by the expectation of great and marvellous things being done for us. II. SOME REASONS WHY WE SHOULD CHERISH THE EXPECTATION OF THE GREAT AND MARVELLOUS. Such an expectation is essential to the praying spirit. Prayer expects great things. Could it not breathe courage and joy into us in our own individual sphere, if we could live habitually in the belief that God may do astonishing things for us—raising us out of difficulties, opening a way for us where none appears? (*J. Leckie, D.D.*) *Refer all to God*:—Zachary Macaulay and Wilberforce, the friends of slaves, lived near to each other and were great friends. The latter had such a high opinion of the learning of the former that when he wanted information about any matter he would cry jokingly, "Come, let us look it out in Macaulay." To compare small things with great, this is just what we ought to do when in a moral difficulty. "Come," we should say, "let us look it out in Christ: what would He wish us to say or do in this matter?" It is chiefly because the Bible tells us the mind of God as revealed in Jesus Christ that it is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. (*Quiver.*) **Which doeth great things and unsearchable.**—*The great God as viewed by an enlightened natural religionist*:—He regarded Him as—I. A TRUSTWORTHY GOD. Four things demonstrate the trustworthiness of the Almighty. 1. His love. We could not trust an unloving God. Before we commit our cause, our interest, our all to any being, we must be assured of his love to us. 2. His truthfulness. Truthfulness lies at the foundation of trustworthiness. It is, alas, too true that we trust the false, but we trust them believing that they are true. God is true in Himself. He is truth. He is the One Great Reality in the universe. God is true in His revelations. It is "impossible for Him to lie." 3. His capacity. Capability of realising what we expect and need in the object in which we confide is essential to trustworthiness. 4. His constancy. Constancy is essential to trustworthiness. II. That he regarded Him as a WONDER-WORKING GOD. His God was not merely a trustworthy, but an active God. 1. Eliphaz refers to His works in general, "which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number," or as the margin has it, "till there be no number"—passing beyond the bounds of arithmetical calculation. To all His numerous works he applies the epithets "great," "unsearchable," "marvellous." His works in the material universe are wonderful. Go through all the scientific cyclopædias in the libraries of the world, and you will only have a few specimens of His marvellous achievements. Take the microscope, and you may, like Lauwenhoeck, discover a thousand million animalculæ, whose united bulk will not exceed the size of a grain of sand, and all having distinct formations, with all the array of functions essential to life. Take the telescope: and survey "the milky way," and you will find the central suns of a million systems all larger than the solar economy to which our little planet belongs. His works in the spiritual world are even more wonderful. 2. Eliphaz refers to His works in particular. (1) He refers to the vegetable sphere. "Who giveth rain upon the earth: and sendeth waters upon the fields." What a blessed thing is rain! In seasons of drought its value is deeply felt. Our little sages ascribe rain to certain laws: they point us to the shifting of winds and changing of temperatures as the causes of rain. But this old sage of Teman referred the showers to God. "He giveth rain upon the earth." This is inspired philosophy. (2) He refers to the human sphere. He sees God in human history. In God's conduct towards mankind he sees two things. He favours the good. He confounds the evil. (*Homilist.*) *God a great worker*:—The works of God answer the style or attributes of God. He is a great God, and His are great works. The works of God speak a God. And here are four things spoken in this one verse, of the works of God, which speak aloud: this is the finger of God. I will first bundle them

together, and then both take and weigh them asunder. 1. Great things. 2. Unsearchable. 3. Wonderful. 4. Innumerable; or without number. No works of man or angel are capable of such a fourfold stamp as this; no, nor any one work of all the creatures put together. Man may fathom the works of man, his closest ways are not past finding out. More directly. First, He doth great things. There is a greatness upon everything God doth: the great God leaves, as it were, the print of His own greatness even upon those things which we account little: little works of Nature have a greatness in them considered as done by God; and little works of Providence have a greatness in them, considered as done by God: if the thing which God doth be not great in itself, yet it is great because He doth it. Again, when it is said God doth great things we must not understand it as if God dealt not about little things, or as if He let the small matters of the world pass, and did not meddle with them: great in this place is not exclusive of little, for, He doth not only great, but small, even the smallest things. The heathens said their Jupiter had no leisure to be present at the doing of small things, or it did not become him to attend them. God attendeth the doing of small things, and it is His honour to do so. You will say, What is this greatness, and what are these great things? I shall hint an answer to both, for the clearing of the words. There is a twofold greatness upon the works of God. There is (so we may distinguish)—First, the greatness of quantity. Secondly, the greatness of quality or virtue. And as these works of creation, so the works of providence are great works: when God destroys great enemies, the greatness of His work is proclaimed. So, great works of mercy and deliverance to His people are cried up with admiration, and hath given us such a deliverance as this, saith Ezra ix. 13. The spiritual works of God are yet far greater; the work of redemption is called a great salvation. It is the property of God to do great things: and because it is His property He can as easily do great things as small things. And if it be the property of God to do great things, then it is a duty in us to expect great things. 1. He that doth great works ought to have great praises. 2. Seeing God doth great works for us, let us show great zeal for great love unto the Lord. (*J. Caryl.*) **Unsearchable.**—*The works of God unsearchable:*—And these works are unsearchable, two ways. First, in regard of the manner of doing: we cannot find out the ways and contrivances of God's work. His ways are in the deep, and His footsteps are not known. Secondly, His works are unsearchable in their causes or ends; what it is which God aims at or intends, what moves or provokes Him to such a course is usually a secret. He doth such things as no man can give an account of, or render a reason why. If the works of God are unsearchable, then, we are to submit unto the dispensations of God, whatsoever they are; though we are not able, according to reason, to give an account of them. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 11. **That those which mourn may be exalted to safety.**—*The exaltation and safety of the penitent:*—I. OF THE CHARACTER WHICH GOD APPROVES. That of the lowly and contrite. 1. He is not adverting to those who are low and depressed in outward circumstances. Divine lowliness is the effect of grace. 2. There can be no true humiliation for sin which does not express itself in godly sorrow. II. HOW HE EXPRESSES THAT APPROBATION. "He resisteth the proud; He giveth grace to the humble." God expresses His approbation of His saints, not only by their elevation to exalted privileges and honours, but by their security. (*Stephen Bridge, M.A.*)

Ver. 12. **He disappointeth the devices of the crafty.**—*The disappointment of the crafty:*—The word "crafty" may mean "prudent," but usually it denotes such as are wickedly "cunning." The meaning of the text is, that with how much art and subtilty soever wicked men may lay their plots and ill designs, there is a God who both can and frequently doth disappoint and baffle them, make them vain, and of none effect. I. WHEN MAY WE SUPPOSE THE DISAPPOINTMENTS OF CRAFTY MEN'S DEVICES TO BE FROM GOD? That is, as the extraordinary effects of His particular and special providence. Reference need not be made to such as are miraculous. 1. When a disappointment shall be brought about in a way evidently strange, surprising, and unusual. 2. The hand of God is in those disappointments which involve men either in those very mischiefs which they had prepared for others, or at least in others, for their grievousness and soreness, not unlike them. 3. When the devices of wicked men shall luckily meet with a

disappointment, just at that very time, when they are ripe and ready for execution. 4. When good men, at the very time of their praying for their enemy's disappointment, shall obtain their desire. 5. When a great number of unexpected accidents shall, as it were, conspire to begin, carry on, and at last consummate any notable disappointment. II. How eminently God's hand appeared in the deliverances of this nation. Which we this day, Nov. 5, commemorate. III. Practical inferences. God's deliverances should—1. Discourage the crafty from forming any more schemes. 2. Encourage us, in all our straits and difficulties, to place our hope and confidence in God. 3. To make our earnest prayers to God for help in our time of need. 4. Since God has done such wonderful things for us, we must be sure not to forget to glorify Him. (*Sir Wm. Dawes, Bart., D.D.*) *The designing projects of ambitious men defeated* :—1. It hath been a matter of fatal experience that there always were, in all ages of the world, devices of wicked men, and designs of mischief; and it is consistent with the wisdom and goodness of God to suffer designing men to carry on their ambitious projects with a probable show of success. (1) Possibly to exercise the prudence and courage of the innocent, and virtuous, when their designs are laid very deep. (2) To discover the inveterate malice and secret cruelty of those men's tempers, who, under the calm, mild, and endearing names of religion, and the public good, do stick to no villainies to push on their black designs. (3) Perhaps that God may manifest His particular and vigilant care of His Church, even reduced to extremities. 2. These devices have been, by the good providence of God, miraculously defeated. They have been vain, not only in respect of others against whom they were levelled, but also mischievous to those that contrived them. 3. The natural result of these particulars is to praise God, and we, being delivered, ought to glorify Him. (*Tho. Whincop, D.D.*)

Ver. 13. **He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.** — 1. The wisdom of natural men is nothing but craft or wit to do wickedly. 2. Satan makes use of subtle, crafty men, and abuseth their parts for his own purposes. 3. The crafty are full of hopes that their devices will succeed; and full of trouble, because they succeed not. 4. What such plot and devise, they labour to act and effect. 5. Crafty men may devise strongly, but they have not strength sufficient to accomplish their devices. 6. It is a great and wonderful work of God, to disappoint the devices and stop the enterprises of crafty men. (*J. Caryl.*)

Ver. 16. **So the poor hath hope.**—*The expediency of preventive wisdom* :— By God's different treatment of men, according to their different characters, the afflicted receive comfort, and the unrighteous are silenced and restrained. "So the poor hath hope, and iniquity stoppeth her mouth." The words recommend—I. A careful imitation of the Divine goodness, by showing a compassionate regard to those who are really destitute and afflicted. The amiable perfection of the great Original, the excellence and beauty of unlimited goodness, if duly regarded, must prove a sufficient persuasive to study this resemblance; the rational and delightful resemblance of that Divine bounty which is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all His works. An example so perfect may justly warm our hearts to attempt the nearest imitation which human frailty can accomplish; to be merciful as our Father, our Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, our kindest Friend, our constant Benefactor. II. The restraint and correction of the disorderly and the wicked. "And iniquity stoppeth her mouth." How affecting it is to consider that so many thousand wretched creatures are now actually employed in multiplying distempers, now swallowing those deadly potions, that, by slower degrees indeed, but with the certainty of a bullet, must soon fatally end their days. How infectious, how shameless is this horrible vice! These things ought not so to be. What then is to be done to stop, to remedy this growing evil? Inattention cannot do it. Despair cannot do it. Public communities and private persons, every one in his respective station must exert his zealous, honest endeavours in this important cause; the cause of religion and humanity, the cause of our country, and the cause of God. Once resolve upon the good work—and resolve to pursue it—with God's blessing, it is half accomplished. (*Lord Bishop of Worcester*, 1750.)

Vers. 17, 18. **Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth.**—*Happiness* :— "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth." There are comparatively

few happy ones on this world of ours. What is happiness? The word is derived from "hap." It may signify a happening of any kind, good or bad. Luck and hap stand to each other in the relation of cause and effect. Now "hap" means joyous haps alone. Happiness practically means the preparation for all haps, of whatever sort they may be. The happy man is he of deep and earnest thought, who, with judicial calmness, can weigh all events, and estimate their value for himself: the man who can honestly probe his own purposes in life, and fairly test their moral worth. He can force every hap or event of life to leave him a higher man than it found him. The man who is prepared to meet and master all crosses is the only man who can say, "All things work together for my good." All are within the control of a power that can compel them to do his will; all are within the compass of a goodness that will compel them to be my correctors. All haps of life are his. It may be urged that other than Christian men can possess this power; that any one may, by mastering the laws of human nature and of society, by strengthening the power of will, and adhering to the determined purpose, achieve this mighty sovereignty. But it may be said that all this energy of purpose is God's work, though it be not known as Christian work. Every good thing is from above. And surely right effort, for a right purpose, is a good thing. Happiness and pleasure are frequently used as though they were synonymous terms, when in truth they are nothing of the kind. All men of pleasure are not necessarily happy men. The Christian is a man of pleasure, he lives to please, not himself however, but God. Happiness and pleasure are synonymous in the Christian life, and in that alone. (*J. M'Cann, D.D.*) *God's merciful chastening of His children*:—I. THE LORD CORRECTS HIS PEOPLE. By "correct" understand "rebuke." It is a rebuke that He sendeth, and that to detect our sins. Forget not that those whom He corrects are His children. If you ask why He chastens them, it is because they are but children. Do not imagine that because God thus dealeth with His children, He does not deal with them in apparent severity. Look at the instance of Job. But though there may be an appearance of severity, it is always in tenderness. It is but "in measure." Remember this, whatever God may take away from His child, He never takes away Himself. II. AN EXHORTATION. "Despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty." By the term "Almighty" we are to understand "God all-sufficient." All-sufficient in everything, power, tenderness, sympathy, all we want. The word "despise" is used in the sense of loathing, a feeling of disgust at the chastening of the Almighty. God makes the ingredients of the cup sometimes very bitter. We may despise the chastening by forgetting whose chastening it is. We despise it when we slight it. III. THE CONSOLATION. The same God that gives the wound, can alone bind it up. This truth we should be learning every day. (*J. H. Evans.*) *Happy under Divine corrections*:—1. That afflictions to the children of God at sorest are but corrections. Blessed is the man whom God corrects. You will say, But what is a correction? And how differenced from judgments and punishments, and wherein do they agree? They agree, first, in the efficient cause. God lays His hand on man in both. Secondly, they agree in the matter; the same evil, the same trouble to one man is a correction, to another a judgment. Thirdly, they may agree also in the degree; a trouble or an affliction may fall and lie as heavy, and be as painful to sense upon a child of God, as upon the vilest wretch in the world; he may be as poor, as friendless, as sick as any wicked man. What, then, is this correction? And where will the correction and the judgment part? I conceive that the infirmities of the saints, and the sins of the wicked differ, as judgments and corrections differ. Then, where do they part? Surely, where corrections and judgments part. Especially in two things. (1) In the manner how; (2) In the end why they are inflicted. First, the Lord never corrects His children with such a heart as He carries in laying trouble upon wicked men. The heart of God is turned toward His children when He corrects them; but His heart is turned from a wicked man when He punishes him. Secondly, the difference is as broad about the end. When God lays the rod of correction upon His child, He aims at the purging out of his sin, at the preventing of his sin, at the revealing of a fatherly displeasure against him for his sin. The Lord would only have him take notice that He doth not approve of him in such courses. When these ends are proposed, every affliction is a correction. But the afflictions of the ungodly are sent for other ends. First, to take vengeance on them. Secondly, to satisfy offended justice. 2. A child of God is in a happy condition under all corrections. Corrections are not sent to take away his comforts, but to

take away his corruptions. Again, corrections are not manifestations of wrath, but an evidence of His love (Rev. iii. 21). And if any doubt, can a man be happy when his outward comfort is gone? Doubtless he may: for a man is never unhappy, but when he hath lost that wherein happiness doth consist. The happiness of a godly man doth not consist in his outward comforts, in riches, in health, in honour, in civil liberty, or human relations; therefore in the loss of these he cannot be unhappy. His happiness consists in his relation to and acceptance with God, in his title to and union with Jesus Christ. He hath not lost anything discernible out of his estate. Suppose a man were worth a million of money, and he should lose a penny, would you think this man an undone man? No: his estate feels not this loss, and therefore he hath not lost his estate. 3. A godly man cannot be unhappy while he enjoys God. And he usually enjoys God most, when he is most afflicted. (*J. Caryl.*) *Afflictions sanctified:*—All affliction is not for correction. Note some of the benefits remarked upon by Eliphaz. 1. Restoration. "He maketh sore, and bindeth up," &c. When brought to repentance, by God's correction, the sinner is tenderly nursed back to health. 2. Assurance of God's unwearied kindness. God does not grow tired of the work of rescue. His loving-kindness is signally displayed in His deliverance of the trusting soul from the greatest and most tremendous calamities. The best earthly friend has limitations to his power to help. 3. A relation of amity between the soul and the powers that have injured it. The transgressor of God's laws is chastised, but the man who puts himself in harmony with God's will, and yields submission to His laws, finds all nature tributary to his welfare. 4. Deliverance from anxiety over small and common ills of life. Such are hard to bear. As the heart is, so is the man. Tranquillity of heart comes in answer to prayer, or as a fruit of the Spirit, which God gives to comfort and strengthen His afflicted ones. Faulty as human nature is and needing correction, the chastisement which God administers to accomplish it is indispensable to the highest type of character. (*Albert H. Currier.*) *Afflictions sanctified:*—This passage is true, but it is not the whole truth concerning suffering. Eliphaz takes the position of one who has special insight into Divine truth. I. HE TOUCHES UPON THE FACTS IN THE MATTER. 1. The chief fact before him is that suffering is real. The reality of it is the very substructure of his thought. It is not well for us to brood over sorrows. But it is not well for us to deal with them by shutting our eyes to them. A large part of the Scripture is occupied with the trials of life. Pain is here a colossal, awful fact. 2. Another fact patent to Eliphaz was that suffering comes from God. It is "the chastening of the Almighty." God is not responsible for everything which He permits. He is not responsible for sin. Nor is He responsible for suffering as a whole, which has come into the world as the result of sin. But He is responsible for the method of the application of individual sufferings, now that suffering is here. The saint can look up out of his sorrows and say, "God means something by this for me." From God's point of view no suffering is intended to be wasted. II. ELIPHAZ PROCEEDS TO SHOW THE PURPOSE OF SUFFERING. 1. Its purpose is to lead one to self-inspection, confession of sin, and repentance. 2. But the true intention of it, of course, lies back of the thing itself. Suffering is not for suffering's sake. There is always in God's thought a sequence to come. III. THE RESULT OF GOD'S CORRECTIVE AFFLICTIONS IS SHOWN. 1. Eliphaz shows it to be an advance for the soul, which is led by them to penitence. 2. He shows that outward prosperity comes to those who accept God's correction and turn from their sins. In his words we find an idealisation of the prosperity of the righteous. There may be a literal reference to the present life. It may refer to the blessedness in the future life of the saint who patiently accepts God's correction here. Righteousness as a rule pays, and wickedness as a rule does not pay. The conclusion of the whole matter is set forth in the words, "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth." (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *Divine chastisement conducive to happiness:*—"Happy is the man whom God correcteth." How multiform and unexpected are the incidents of human life! I. WHEN DOES THE CHASTISEMENT OF THE ALMIGHTY CONDUCE TO OUR HAPPINESS? 1. When it induces thoughtfulness. It is surprising how little we think, *i.e.*, think seriously and well. Of eternal things we hardly think at all. The correction of the Almighty leads us to say, "Wherefore hath the Lord done this?" Hence thoughtfulness deepens and increases. 2. When it reminds us of our frailty. The consideration of our latter end avails much to moderate our attachment to a world the fashion of which passeth away, and from which we ourselves are

hastening. 3. When it induces more earnest prayer. It is no easy matter to keep alive the power of religion in the soul. Nothing but habitual watchfulness and prayer will do it. To this we are naturally averse, and this natural aversion doth remain even in them that are regenerate. There are few who do not know how cold and formal, how negligent and careless we can become in prayer. Happy is it when our trouble leads us to greater and more importunate earnestness in prayer. 4. When it raises our minds above sublunary things. The soul, chastened and corrected here, will affect the rest which remains for her hereafter. 5. When it endears to us the Lord Jesus Christ. When our sin is discovered to us, how all-desirable does Jesus Christ become. Never do we so fully appreciate this gift as when we are racked with pain, worn with disease, and when, standing on the verge of time, we are about, expectantly, to launch away into the eternal world. II. WHY, THEREFORE, SHOULD CHASTISEMENT NOT BE DESPISED? 1. Because it is the correction of a tender Father. A loving father does not willingly afflict his child. Amidst our severest sufferings God is our Father still. 2. Because God is almighty to save and to deliver. A father may make as though he heard not the cry of a corrected child: nevertheless, the cry of a broken and contrite heart will move and interest him. 3. Because God designs our spiritual good thereby. The Lord woundeth and maketh us sore, purposely for the fuller and more glorious manifestation of His own power and goodness, first in the humiliation, and then in the salvation of our souls. He empties us of self-love and carnal complacency, to fill us with His grace and Spirit. He tries our faith to prove its preciousness. Shall we then dread the fire that refines? 4. Because Christ went before us to glory through sufferings. Nothing should be undervalued that tends to make us like Jesus Christ. 5. Because it tends to meeten us instrumentally for heaven. There must be a preparedness of mind for its society, its converse, its employments. This is nowhere so readily acquired as in the school of affliction. (*W. Mudge.*)

The afflictions of the good:—The view of Eliphaz seems to be—I. THAT AFFLICTION, THROUGH WHATEVER CHANNEL IT MAY COME, IS TO A GOOD MAN A BENEFICENT DISPENSATION. "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty," &c. He regards affliction, in these verses, as coming from a variety of sources. He speaks of "famine," of "war," of "the scourge of the tongue" (slander), and points even to the ravages of wild beasts, and the stones of the field. Truly, human suffering does spring up from a great variety of sources, it starts from many fountains, and flows through many channels. There are elements both within him and without that bring on man unnumbered pains and sorrows. But his position is that all this affliction, to a good man, is beneficent. Why happy? 1. God corrects the good man by affliction. "Whom God correcteth." 2. God redeems the good man from affliction. "For He maketh sore, and bindeth up; He woundeth, and His hands make whole. He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee." The affliction is only temporary: the Almighty in His time removes it. He that maketh sore binds up, He that woundeth maketh whole. 3. God guards the good man in affliction. "Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue; neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh. At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh; neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth." The Eternal is with His people in the furnace: He is a wall of fire round about them, He hides them in His pavilion. "My God hath sent His angel to shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me." 4. God blesses the good man in affliction. These blessings are indicated—(1) Facility in material progress. "For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field; and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee." Whether the "stones and beasts of the field" here point to the obstructions of the agriculturist, or to the progress of the traveller, it does not matter, the idea is the same,—the absence of obstructions. In worldly matters the great God makes straight the path of His people. (2) Peace and security in domestic life. "Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out." (3) Flourishing posterity. "Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great (margin, much), and thine offspring as the grass of the earth." This is a blessing more esteemed in distant ages and Eastern lands than in modern times and Western climes. 5. God perfects the good man by affliction. It will ripen the character and prepare for a happy world. Three ideas—(1) That true religion is a life which grows in this world to a certain maturity. (2) That when this maturity is reached, his removal from the world will take place. (3) That affliction is one of the means that brings about this

maturity. II. THAT THIS AFFLICTION, AS A BENEFICENT DISPENSATION TO A GOOD MAN, SHOULD BE DULY PRIZED AND PONDERED BY HIM. Reverence the chastening of the Almighty. Do not murmur; do not complain. It would be well if the afflicted saint would ever ponder the origin, the design, the necessity and tendency of his sufferings. Conclusion—This first address of Eliphaz—1. Serves to correct popular mistakes. It is popularly supposed that the farther back we go in the history of the world, the more benighted are men: that broad and philosophic views of God and His universe are the birth of these last times. But here is a man, this old Temanite, who lived in a lonely desert, upwards of 3000 years ago, whose views, in their loftiness, breadth, and accuracy, shall bear comparison, not only with the wisest sages of Greece and Rome, but with the chief savants of these enlightened times. This old Temanite was outside the supposed inspired circle, and yet his ideas seem, for the most part, so thoroughly in accord with the utterances of the acknowledged inspired men, that they are even quoted by them. 2. Suggests a probable theological misunderstanding. Most biblical expositors and theological writers regard Eliphaz as considering Job a great sinner, because he was a great sufferer. How can this be reconciled with the fact that Eliphaz starts the paragraph with, "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth"? In the whole of the paragraph, in fact, he shows that it was a good thing for a good man to be afflicted. Does he contradict himself? It may be so, for he was human, and therefore errable; but my impression is, that Eliphaz drew his conclusion that Job was a great sinner, not merely, if at all, from his great sufferings, but from the murmuring spirit which he displayed under them, as recorded in the third chapter. (*Homilist.*) *Chastening not to be despised*:—1. There is, or possibly may be an averseness in the best of God's children for a time, from the due entertainment of chastenings. Every affliction is a messenger from God, it hath somewhat to say to us from heaven; and God will not bear it, if His messengers be despised, how mean soever. If you send a child with a message to a friend, and he slight and despise him, you will take it ill. 2. The lightest chastenings come from a hand that is able to destroy. When the stroke is little, yet a great God strikes. Although God give thee but a touch, a stripe which scarce grazes the skin: yet He is able to wound thee to the heart. Know, it is not because He wants power to strike harder, but because He will not, because He is pleased to moderate His power; thou hast but such a chastening, as a child of a year old may well bear; but at that time, know, thou art chastened with a hand able to pull down the whole world; the hand of Shaddai, the Almighty gives that little blow. Men seldom strike their brethren less than their power; they would often strike them more, their will is stronger than their arm. But the Lord's arm is stronger (in this sense) than His will. He doth but chasten, who could destroy. (*J. Caryl.*) *Benefits of afflictions*:—Volcanic dust makes rich soil. Splendid flowers are being grown in the matter from La Soufriere that was once molten and terrifying. After the eruption of 1812 the quantity of vegetables produced on an estate near Kingston was unprecedented. So afflictions and hardships fertilise the soul and make it more prolific in patience, sympathy, faith, and joy.

Ver. 21. **Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue.**—*The scourge of the tongue*:—I. THE SCOURGE. "The scourge of the tongue." 1. There is the lying tongue. It perverts facts. It turns the lame out of the way and misleads the blind. 2. There is the cursing tongue. 3. There is the obscene tongue. 4. There is the scolding tongue. What martyrs have some members of a family become! A scolding tongue withers and blights everything it comes across, just like the lightning withers and blasts the tree it strikes. It is as a goad to an ox, the mosquito to the traveller, the thorn eating into the gangrened flesh. II. THE DELIVERANCE. "Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue." It is one of the peculiarities of God's promises that He does not undertake to remove evils. We shall be hid—1. By the direct influence of Divine power. God will restrain the evil speaker and the rage of the ungodly. 2. By the sanctifying influence of Divine grace. There are some creatures who when water is poured on them repel the same by the nature of their skin or feathers. So the heart which is prepared by grace, casts aside and rejects the evil word, or the cruel insinuation, or the boisterous abuse; these things have no power over it. 3. By the resignation of a chastened spirit. The chastened spirit of the Christian disarms the shafts of the evil tongue, and, bending before the furious blast, is

spared the poignant stings of malice. 4. By the prospect of future freedom. The nauseous taste of medicine is little heeded when the anticipated end is considered, which is restored health and renewed strength. So in the view of future glory and entire sanctification, the present bitterness will be little regarded. (*J. J. S. Bird.*) *The scourge of the tongue:*—Some folks lay themselves out to be as unpleasant as they can, and say disagreeable things. They are the wasps of human intercourse. The candid friends whom Canning so abhorred, the people who "speak their mind," but have a mind that were far better not spoken. (*H. O. Mackey.*)

Ver. 24. **Thy tabernacle shall be in peace.**—*Returning from a journey:*—These words may be considered as a promise made to a good man, with regard to his absence from home. When he goes a journey at the call of providence, he may leave all his concerns with the Lord whom he serves, for He will guide his steps, and suffer no evil to befall him nor any plague to come nigh his dwelling. The person to whom this promise is made is supposed to have a house. It is called a "tabernacle," "or tent." It would be well for us to view our abode, however pleasing and durable it may appear, as only a temporary residence—a shelter of accommodation for a traveller. David calls his palace the "tabernacle of his house." Home has a thousand attractions. But dear as it is, we must sometimes leave it. Sometimes journeys are necessary. When God calls us abroad, He will take care of us, and we may hope to find the proverb true, The path of duty is the path of safety. Hence he is reminded of the welfare of his house and family in his absence. Thou shalt know that thy tabernacle is in peace. Peace means prosperity. Peace is harmony. There can be no happiness in a family, among the members of which are found reserve, suspicions, bickerings, contentions. Peace is preservation. To how many disasters is a family exposed if God withdraws His protection. Nor shall the tabernacle only be preserved, but the owner too. We always travel in jeopardy. Are no suitable returns to be made to the God of our salvation? A man would sin if his gratitude were not lively and practical. He would sin, did he not confide in God for the future more simply and firmly. Learn, domestic piety crowns domestic peace. (*William Jay.*)

Ver. 26. **Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age.**—*The death of the Christian:*—I. DEATH IS INEVITABLE. "Thou shalt come." This remark is very trite, simple, and common. But while this is a truth so well known, there is none so much forgotten. II. DEATH TO THE CHRISTIAN IS ALWAYS ACCEPTABLE. "Thou shalt come to thy grave"; intimating a willingness and a cheerfulness to die. Thou shalt not be dragged or hurried. A Christian has nothing to lose by death. III. THE CHRISTIAN'S DEATH IS ALWAYS TIMELY. "In full age." But good people do not live longer than others. The most pious man may die in the prime of youth. The text does not say "old age," but "full age." A "full age" is whenever God likes to take His people home. There are two mercies to a Christian. He will never die too soon. And he never dies too late. IV. THE CHRISTIAN WILL DIE WITH HONOUR. "Like a shock of corn." I believe we ought to pay great respect to saints' bodies. "The memory of the just is blessed." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The good man's grave:*—If this passage be taken in its restricted application to the mere animal existence of man on earth, the promise it contains will be found to be fulfilled in only a few comparatively of the people of God. But in the case of such, life means something more than mere duration, or the mere succession of outward events. A good man's life consists chiefly in the extent to which he realises the fruits of his godliness, and the fulness of his age is reached in the maturity of those graces which are implanted within him by the Spirit of God. In this light the passage may be regarded as verified in the case of every really pious man, whatever be the term of his continuance here on earth. The passage suggests the following thoughts—The spiritual life in man is always progressive. Where real spiritual vitality exists, maturity is always reached before the individual is removed by death. The whole process is under the watchful eye of the Great Proprietor of all. And we are reminded of the true nature and real purposes of death to the child of God. It is simply the agency by which he is transferred from a scene where his longer continuance would be injurious, to a higher and nobler sphere. The question naturally arises, In what relation the two terms of existence, which lie on either side of the point

of transit, stand to each other? Had the question been asked in the case of an unfallen being, there would be no difficulty in answering it. The difficulty concerns fallen but redeemed man. For them the grave is robbed of its terrors. Around it gather associations, not of defeat but of victory; not of humiliation but of honour. Through its portals the weary pilgrim passes to his home. Paganism, conscious only of the presence of decay, kindled for the dead the funeral pyre; but Christianity, expectant of the resurrection, lays their bodies reverently in the dust, and inscribes upon their sepulchre, "In Christ he sleeps in peace." (*W. Lindsay Alexander, D.D.*) *A pious old age*:—I. IN WHAT DOES THIS RIPENESS OR FITNESS FOR HEAVEN CONSIST? There must be in such a character sincerity. I mean there must be integrity in their first transactions with God. A shock of corn fully ripe reminds us of steadfastness. To be spiritually minded is also implied in a Christian's ripeness or fitness for glory. II. IN WHAT RESPECTS IS SUCH A GOOD OLD AGE DESIRABLE? There is nothing desirable in old age itself. 1. It is a proof of sincerity. 2. It gives opportunity for considerable growth in grace. 3. It recommends religion to others. 4. It tends to an extraordinary fitness for heaven. Such are some of the advantages of a religious old age. And this is a subject in which all are deeply concerned. Improve the present season, for "what a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (*S. Lavington.*) *Ripe for the harvest*:—The life of man, morally and spiritually considered, must not be measured by length of days, but rather by the degree to which the end of existence has been attained. Consider this interesting promise. 1. The emblem under which it is conveyed suggests to us the care and affection with which the great Head of the Church regards the progress and the end of His servants. 2. The comparison of the text implies that progress belongs to the very nature of religion, and therefore is its invariable and indispensable law. 3. There is a state of grace attainable on earth which may be fitly described as a state of maturity. Consider in what that maturity consists. 4. It should reconcile us to such losses to reflect that a state of maturity necessitates the reaping. (*Daniel Katterns.*) *Preparation for death*:—I. A CONSIDERATION OF THE CHANGE TO TAKE PLACE IN THE DISSOLUTION OF THE BODY. Through man's transgression death entered the world—"so death passed upon all men." Our first parent came from the hands of God, created after His likeness, impressed with immortality. II. A CONSIDERATION OF THE PERIOD OF DEATH'S ARRIVAL. How few die in old age! It is "full age" with us when we are prepared to depart—when the work is done we have to do. III. THE MANNER OF DEATH'S ARRIVAL. The last enemy wears a thousand forms. IV. SOME REFLECTIONS. Christians do not repine at God's decree. The Christian is taught to believe that whilst the spirit is in God's keeping, the body also is not undeserving His cognisance. (*George Anthony Moore.*) *The parable of harvest*:—This text literally reads, "Like as a shock of wheat that is lifted up." It is a perfect vision of the closing days of harvest. It is the consummation of the year; the last triumphant act in a long drama of skill and patience. 1. The first parable of harvest is, that harvest is God's memorial, and the parable of His love. His promise is that while the bow is in the heaven, spring-time and harvest shall not fail. God sets the bow for a sign, a bright watcher or minister, to declare His goodwill to us. How miraculous a thing is the wheat harvest of the world! The wheat harvest in the East is the one supreme event of the year. This is the first and chief lesson of the harvest; we are God's pensioners, and He spreads the table in the wilderness. 2. The order of the world is use first, and beauty second. There are many things more beautiful than corn. True, it has a certain humble grace of its own, but it is the democratic grace of the worker, not the aristocratic grace of the idler. You could live in a world without roses, but not in a world without corn; you like to have perfume, but you must have bread. 3. The harvest is the parable of life itself. How little spoils both. How irrevocable the tendencies of each! A slight error spoils the year's husbandry, as slight errors often spoil a whole life. See in corn an illustration of the solidarity of life itself. The corn travels the wide world over. It has no local limit, it is cosmopolitan. It has no personal life; its life is for the race. In these respects the parable of life is revealed. We live in infinite relations, beyond our relation to the soil we thrive in, and the age we are said to live in. We sow ourselves as corn is sowed, and others reap; even as we before reaped what others sowed. 4. The harvest is the parable of death. What is death? We know that decomposition is recomposition. Nothing perishes, for there is no waste in nature.

Here we have the revelation of the true purpose of life—which is *use*; and of the true triumph of life—which is to be sacrificed, as the corn must be plucked and ground before it can become bread. (*G. W. Dawson.*) *How to grow old gracefully:* or how to grow old so that age, as it advances, may be an honour and comfort to us, and terminate in peace and happiness. 1. Bear in mind that we must grow old. This is the law of our being, fixed and certain as the law of mortality. 2. If we would grow old gracefully, we must possess true piety; faith in Christ as our Saviour, and hope in God as our everlasting portion. 3. We must cultivate a love of nature. 4. We must continue to take an interest in the young, and in whatever is moving around us, affecting the welfare of society and the cause of Christ. 5. There are some peculiar faults and sins—incident to age—against which we must be guarded, if we would grow old gracefully. Such as peevishness. "There are two things which a man ought not to fret about,—what he can help, and what he cannot." Avarice or covetousness. Jealousy of whatever is new, and a proneness to think that things are growing worse because they are different from what they were in former days. And an unwillingness to let go of the duties, responsibilities, and honours of life, retire from the stage of action and be forgotten. This is indeed a hard lesson to learn. 6. There are certain virtues which demand to be cultivated, if we would grow old gracefully. Such as patience, liberality, cheerfulness, hopefulness, readiness to yield the field of labour and responsibility to them that are younger; and an habitual and cheerful posture of readiness to leave the world and go to be with Christ. (*J. Hawes, D.D.*) *Christian maturity*:—By a natural instinct, man reads in all the short-lived objects around him the images of his own decay. Nothing is lovelier to look upon, nothing is more evanescent in its loveliness, than the varied vegetation which clothes the landscape. And in its evanescence man has ever contemplated the emblem of his mortality. These emblems are not altogether mournful. While there are those suggestive of an untimely fate, there are others that delineate the end of man in its seasonableness as a natural close, a full consummation, a ripeness as of the harvest. Contemplate the true maturity of man. I. THE MATURITY OF MAN IN ITS CHARACTERISTICS. To die old seems a natural wish. Death in old age comes not with a shock, as of something abrupt, unexpected, but as a natural issue—the culmination of life's manifest destiny, the measurement of the full circle of life's journey. It carries the associations of the sunset, of the harvest—tender, but not sombre and sad. And these are right and religious feelings. For man's life on earth is a great thing, a sacred power, a most momentous and immeasurable trust. The error of mankind is not that they place life too high, but that they think far too little of its true value, of its most awful responsibility. Scripture has not taught us to think lightly of life, or to wish an early removal from it. It cultivates the appreciation of life as a great and holy thing. Used as a power of getting and of doing good, life is a glorious privilege. Life on earth has its completed circle—its threescore years and ten—when it has rounded that little orbit, the bodily life has reached its maturity, beyond which it is not fitted to survive, and sinks into the dust as naturally as the ripened corn falls into the ground. But if that were all, it were hard to tell why it should be a thing of Divine promise. That were a poor consolation, to have the full term of life, and to come to the grave in however ripe an age, if the grave were all. But the body is not the man—only the vehicle and tabernacle of the man. It is the soul that is the man; and the man is then only "as a shock of corn in his season," when he is mature in the spiritual and immortal part. The decay of the body imposes no inevitable decline in the soul's higher life. Time leaves no mark on the mind, except of growing power. If, then, the full age of man be of the spirit—ripeness for immortality—what are the characteristics of one ready to be garnered into heaven? 1. Christian maturity is the fulness of spiritual life. Man is of "full age" when the whole circle of Christian excellences is present in the character, and each unfolded in its due proportion. When all the graces meet in a person, they robe him with a glory known only to Christianity. The last attainment is completeness. Christianity is the union of all the graces, not only in their completeness, but in their individual fulness. In our second birth are included all the elements of final perfection—not then come to their full measure, but from that moment the formative principles of character should advance to maturity. 2. Christian maturity is the fulness of spiritual experience. We associate experience with life—Christian experience with the Christian life; and this adds elements and aspects to the piety, which

are not found in its first rise—mellowing, sobering, enriching the whole spiritual man, as with the golden glow of autumn. There is a wide difference between the effect of worldly experience and of Christian experience. The former disenchants the heart of all its youthful illusions, and makes it distrust all appearances and persons, and hope for nothing better than vanity and vexation of spirit. The effect of Christian experience is to transfer the hopes and affections to the realities of a higher world, and to deepen their power. The follower of Christ is conducting a great experiment as to the power of the Gospel. And he finds as he goes on, that it justifies all his confidence. Faith becomes experience—less liable to be moved away by blasts of unbelief, or by assaults of temptation. The disciple becomes an established Christian. 3. Christian maturity is completed by spiritual usefulness. Christianity will make a man useful in every way, secular as well as religious. But no measure of secular service can be accepted as an apology for the neglect of the higher work, which is laid to every man in Christ's kingdom. Spiritual life and experience are the preparatives and the power of usefulness. As they are enlarged, they nourish and enrich that spiritual fruitfulness which puts the crown on Christian maturity. II. THE CONDITIONS OF CHRISTIAN MATURITY. How is it prepared? The shock of corn is the result of a process. Christian maturity represents the whole course and combination of influences that have been at work in the man. Nothing can mature that has not life. Among the conditions of a Christian maturity we name—1. Early decision for Christ. True piety takes its rise in a cordial surrender to Christ, and it reaches its maturity in the completeness of that surrender. 2. Progressive piety. There would be no harvest if the seed-plant only rooted and sprung up above ground, and never advanced any further. There is a succession of stages of growth—"first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." No man, at whatever stage of his Christian course you find him, is all that he needs to be. There must be progress in Christian intelligence, growth in Christian faith—which worketh by love. There must be assiduous cultivation of piety, which will include a growing love to the sanctuary, to the Bible, to the service of prayer, to the scene of communion. There will be a growing devoutness approaching ever closer to the spirit of heaven, and waiting the call to enter into the joy of the Lord. (*J. Riddell.*) *Death in a ripe old age*:—Many men avoid all consideration of death, and never venture to speak on the subject. If this be the result of ignorance, it is to be lamented; if it be the result of doubt as to their future existence, their reserve and silence may tend greatly and unnecessarily to perpetuate and increase the doubt. A future life was the expectation of the sages of antiquity, seeing that such an end of man as appears at his death is unworthy of the great powers conferred upon him by the Creator, and inadequate to man's knowledge and earnest thought and prayer about an endless life. Jesus Christ has brought life and immortality to light by His Gospel. He has with great simplicity and beauty revealed to us the character and providence of His Father and our Father, of His God and our God. This is the highest evidence of, and surest testimony to a future life possessed by our race. It is worthy of universal reception, and brings light to the understanding and solace to the heart. Death has a mighty power to destroy many things that mar the happiness of life. What a lesson it reads to the covetous, the malicious! What a beautiful scene, or what a painful and miserable scene, a death-bed can be made! But in the case of the truly good, the power of the life will be greater than the impression of the death. (*R. Ainslie.*) *Corn husking time*:—"As a shock of corn cometh in in his season." There is difference of opinion as to whether the Orientals knew anything about the corn as it stands in our fields. After harvest in America, the farmers gather, one day on one farm and one day on another, put on their rough husking apron, take the husking peg, which is a piece of iron with a leathern loop fastened to the hand, and with it unsheath the corn from the husk, and toss it into the golden heap. Then the waggons will come along and take it to the corn crib. Possibly the Hebrews knew about Indian maize, and husked it just as we do. Lessons—1. It is high time that the king of terrors were thrown out of the Christian vocabulary. Many talk of death as though it were the disaster of disasters, instead of being to a good man the blessing of blessings. 2. First frost and then sunshine. We all know that husking time was a time of frost. We remember we used to hide between the corn stacks, so as to keep off the wind. But after a while the sun was high up, and all the frost went out of the air, and hilarities awoke the echoes. So we all realise that the death of our friends is the

nipping of many expectations, the freezing, the chilling, the frosting of many of our hopes. But the chill of the frosts is followed by the gladness that cometh in like a shock of corn cometh in in his season. 3. The husking process. The husking time made rough work with the ear of corn. The husking-peg had to be thrust in, and the hard thumb of the husker had to come down on the swathing of the ear, and then there was a pull, and a ruthless tearing, and a complete snapping off, before the corn was free. If the husk could have spoken it would have said, "Why do you lacerate me?" That is the way God has arranged that the ear and the husk shall part. That is the way He has arranged that body and soul shall separate. You can afford to have your physical distresses when you know that they are forwarding the soul's liberation. This may be an answer to the question, "Why is it that so many really good people have so dreadfully to suffer?" Some corn is hardly worth husking. With good corn the husking work is severe. There must be something valuable in you, or the Lord would not have husked you. 4. Husking-time was a neighbourly reunion. There was joyous feasting together when the work was done. Heaven will be a time of neighbourhood reunion. 5. All the shocks come in in their season. Not one of you having died too soon, or too late, or at haphazard. Cut down at just the right time. Husked at just the right time. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *Consolations in the death of aged Christians*:—"Thou shalt come to thy grave in full age." In this text there is the promise of a comfortable death. Thou shalt come to thy grave with freedom of mind, and without reluctance, satisfied with life, waiting for a release, and at full maturity, dropping kindly like ripe fruit, or as a stack of corn fully ripe is gathered into the barn or storehouse at the time of harvest. Aged Christians—I. LAY UNDER THE COMMON SENTENCE OF DEATH ALL THEIR DAYS. They were under the sentence of death all the while they lived in this world, and a long life was only a longer reprieve. We knew that our friends were mortal, all the while they lived with us. II. IT IS COMFORTABLE TO CONSIDER HOW LONG THEY WERE SPARED, AND CONTINUED TO US IN A USEFUL STATE. What great reason for thankfulness to God for sparing the comfort of their useful lives. Often, then, recall the more remarkable instances of their former usefulness, and exemplary character while they lived. We have not done with our departed friends when we have lodged them in the grave; we must remember what was eminent and exemplary in the several stations of life, and circumstances of things through which they passed. III. CONSIDER THE GREAT HONOUR PUT UPON THEM WHO WERE LONG SERVICEABLE IN THIS WORLD. They have had a greater exercise of Divine care over them, and a larger experience of Divine goodness in the many expressions of a gracious concern for their good, of seasonable interposure, and distinguishing favour. What a mercy it was to our deceased friends to ripen by long standing, in wisdom and experience, and to be successful instruments of the Divine glory, and of good to the world, for a great while together! IV. CONSIDER HOW OFTEN THE AGED OUTLIVE THEIR OWN USEFULNESS. It is no wonder if active natures and brisk spirits, long exercised in painful service, begin at length to decay. The more zealous and industrious they are in the service of God, the more likely they are to find their natural strength abated in advancing age. Sometimes good and useful men are disabled for service by the weakening of their intellectual powers. Then their death becomes less grievous. V. CONSIDER HOW WELL PREPARED THEY WERE FOR DEATH, AND HOW RIPE FOR ANOTHER WORLD. It is a melancholy thing to think of an aged person dying unprepared. But when they are prepared in the habitual temper of their minds and a blessed composure of spirit, what an evidence this becomes of the truth and value of religion. VI. CONSIDER THE MERCIFUL RELEASE FROM THE LONG FATIGUES AND CONFLICTS OF LIFE. They are set free from all the burdens of nature, which sometimes are very grievous, and all the afflictions of life, which often create them a great deal of trouble. All the labours of life and difficulties of service cease. They are delivered from the power of all their spiritual enemies, and set out of reach of all their attempts. VII. CONSIDER THE BLESSED STATE THEY ARE ENTERED UPON, AND THE INFINITE ADVANTAGE OF A REMOVAL. They leave a state of sin and sorrow, of the burdens of nature and miseries of life, for a state of purity and peace, of liberty and enlargement, where all their burdens are removed and their desires satisfied. Consider with pleasure the high advancement and honour of our deceased friends, the noble enjoyments, the pure delights, the perfect satisfaction and joy. An undue concern for the death of good men, looks a little selfish, and like envying their happiness. VIII. THINK OF THE NEARNESS OF

OUR OWN DISSOLUTION, AND HOW SOON WE SHALL MEET TOGETHER AGAIN. We are following them apace to the other world. What a comfort it is to be followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises. IX. IT IS A CONSIDERABLE REASON OF COMFORT THAT THERE ARE MANY SURVIVING RELATIONS LEFT. We can never say that we are wholly bereaved. Men sometimes live in their posterity several ages. (*W. Harris, D.D.*) *The grave relieved of its terror* :—Eliphaz urges Job to repent of his wickedness, and promises him great good as the consequence. His words suggest—I. THAT OLD AGE WILL HELP TO RELIEVE THE GRAVE OF ITS TERROR. Life to those in old age has lost its genial glow; desire has failed; the limbs have lost their vigour; the appetites their relish; the senses their keenness; the faculties their activity; the heart, most of its friendships, its hopes, its aims. They have outlived their interest in the world; their old friends are in the dust; they are surrounded by strangers; they bow beneath the weight of years, and oftentimes welcome the grave. Yes, apart from religion, there is much in old age to make the grave even attractive. But how few of the human family are allowed to reach the grave in this way. II. THAT SPIRITUAL MATURITY WILL HELP TO RELIEVE THE GRAVE OF ITS TERROR. 1. True religion is a life which grows in this world to a certain maturity. 2. When this maturity is reached in a man, his removal from this world will take place. It ripens in some much sooner than in others. 3. The removal of such from the world will be no terror to them. It will take place under the superintendence of the great Husbandman. This spiritual maturity it is that deprives the grave of its terror. Here then are two helps to relieve for us the terror of the grave. Old age is one. Spiritual maturity of character is the great relieving power. (*Homilist.*) *The Christian ripe for the garner* :—I. MARK THE ANALOGY BETWEEN CORN AND A GOOD MAN. "Thou shalt come to thy grave," &c. 1. In both cases there is labour. Spontaneous harvests do not spring up in this world. If a larger yield is to be produced, and a better quality obtained, he puts more management into his land, and bestows more labour upon it, and the result, in most instances, is a rich crop. 2. The life of a good man, like corn, is a great mystery. If the little, tiny seed which grows in your field baffles you, how much more God's work in the human heart! We need not trouble ourselves about the process; the great question is, "Has the incorruptible seed of the Word of God entered into my nature?" 3. Corn has life in it, and will grow! The men who tell us that Christianity is being played out, are the men into whose souls it has never been played in! 4. The good man, like corn, is nourished by various influences. Through how many processes must a tiny seedling pass, and to how many influences must it be subjected, before it becomes bread on our tables? And how many influences are necessary to form and mature the character of a good man? 5. The great agent is the Holy Spirit, who softens the heart to receive "the incorruptible seed." 6. Adversity helps to mature a good man's character. It is said that each day's sunshine, in the month of June, is worth a million of money to our farmers; but if all the days of summer and autumn were unbroken sunshine, would that be helpful to full barns and big hay stacks? No! David said, "It was good for me that I was afflicted," and millions have made the same confession. These blights and disappointments of life are designed to remind us that eternal fields are within our reach—fields which are always rich in golden harvests. Temporal loss often leads to spiritual gain, and millions have exclaimed, with Richard Baxter, "Oh! healthful sickness! Oh! comfortable sorrow! Oh! gainful loss! Oh! enriching poverty! Oh! blessed day that I was afflicted!" II. AND WHAT IS MEANT BY A GOOD MAN COMING TO THE GRAVE IN A FULL AGE? "Thou shalt come to thy grave," &c. 1. That he has filled up the measure of human life. We often measure life by length; God measures it by depth and breadth. We look at quantity; God looks at quality. Many a man has died full of good works, long before he has reached forty years of age. Others have passed the alloted span of human life, and left no good works behind them. 2. Coming to the grave like a shock of corn, fully ripe, means the maturity of Christian character. The farmer knows the proper time for cutting down the corn. If he cut it down too soon the ear would not be filled, and if he waited too long, the best of the corn would be shaken and wasted. Our times are wholly in the hands of unerring wisdom and unsearchable goodness, and He will not allow death to overtake us too soon, or be delayed a moment too long. 3. And observe the certainty of all this. "He shall come." Some bestow great labour on that which yields them no profit. The old age of a good man is always richer than

his youth. God cares as much for the poor remnant of an old man's life that remains, as for the fresh and stainless period of his youth. And one of the most enviable sights out of heaven, is that of a good old man, waiting, with undimmed powers and unsoured temper, till his Master shall say, "He is ripe for the garner." Indeed, when such a man dies, it is heaven's testimony that he is ready for heaven. The great Dr. Clarke, in old age, looking back on a useful life, and forward to a glorious rest, said, "I have enjoyed the spring of life: I have endured the toils of summer; I have culled the fruits of autumn. I am now passing through the rigour of winter, and I am neither forsaken of God nor abandoned of man. I see at no great distance the dawn of a new day: the first of a spring which shall be eternal. It is advancing to meet me. I run to embrace it. Welcome, eternal spring." Did you ever meet with a godly man who was not prepared to die when death came? Never! 4. A good man, like a shock of corn, is safely garnered. Corn is laid up to be preserved; but that is not all. It is also laid up that it may be used. The best use of corn comes after it has been cut down. Some people imagine that heaven will be a place of perpetual indolence and selfish delights. That is not the Bible conception of heaven. I know that heaven is a place of rest, but then, as Baxter says, "it is not the rest of a stone, but a rest consistent with service; an activity without weariness, a service which is perfect freedom." When a good man dies, he is not flung away as a useless instrument, to be no longer employed in his Master's service, but passes from the humbler services on earth to the nobler service of heaven; from an obscure to a loftier service, "where His servants do serve Him." The sanctity of a good man's soul is not lost at death, but will continue to grow for ever. (1) To the unconverted we say, "Sow to yourselves in righteousness" (Hos. x. 12). (2) To the Christian we say, "Be not weary in well doing," &c. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true," &c. (Phil. iv. 8, 9). (3) Let the aged be encouraged. (*H. Woodcock.*) *The ripened life garnered*:—I. TO PRODUCE THE SHOCK OF CORN, THERE MUST HAVE BEEN SEED SOWN. II. THE SEED SOWN MUST HAVE CONTAINED THE PRINCIPLE OF CORN LIFE. III. THERE MUST HAVE BEEN A PREPARED AND PROPER SOIL. IV. THE SEED MUST HAVE GROWN GRADUALLY. V. THE PLANT MUST HAVE BEEN SUPPLIED WITH NOURISHMENT FROM THE ROOT INWARDLY AND BY AIR, RAIN, &C., OUTWARDLY. This is absolutely necessary in nature, or the plant will wither and die. It is the same in the kingdom of grace. "The trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord" (Isa. lxi. 3), must be sustained by the sap from the root, and by the Spirit's operation through the Word and ordinances. VI. IN GROWING UP IT MUST HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO MANY VICISSITUDES. Cold, heat, drought, flood, and tempest are common between seed-time and harvest; and our Lord has declared to His disciples, that in this world they shall have tribulation. VII. IT MUST HAVE HAD SUNSHINE TO RIPEN IT. No harvest without sunshine; nor can the soul ripen without the shinings in of the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. 1. Of the truth. 2. Of God's countenance. 3. Of heaven. Conclusion—1. The husbandman sows seed for the purpose of reaping a joyful harvest. He cuts down the corn when it is golden in the ear that it may not be lost, and when the Lord's time is fully come, He sends forth His reapers. 2. The husbandman separates the grain from the straw, so the Lord separates the spirit from the body. "The body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness." 3. The ingathering is profitable and joyous. (1) To the husbandman. Christ sees the travail of His soul, and is satisfied. (2) To the angels and Church above. (3) To the glorified spirit. 4. Shall we then mourn or regret our loss? (*W. P. Tiddy.*) *A ripe old age*:—We have here pictured a ripe and venerable old age—a good man coming safely out of all the drill and discipline of the present life, taken up from all, and housed for ever in the glory and garner of the sky. Polishing and ripening are rough and warm work. The soul of man undergoes rough and trying treatment here; but the path of sorrow is the way to joy; and the path of suffering is the way to glory. I. THE SUGGESTIVE SIMILE BY WHICH THE LIFE OF THE AGED SAINT IN THIS WORLD IS DEPICTED. Corn, ripe corn, ready for the husbandman and home. Corn suggests the ideas of preciousness, maturity, diversity of influences, and manifoldness. Let us seek that our lives may be valuable as ripe corn, and not valueless as empty chaff. II. THE GLORIOUS DESTINY FOR WHICH THE AGED SAINT IN THIS WORLD IS BEING DISCIPLINED. 1. The saint as well as the sinner has to meet the same inevitable lot, so far as the body is concerned. 2. The saint goes to his grave, but the wicked is driven there. 3. The good are not destroyed when they

come to the grave, but are gathered into the garner. Let these reflections cheer us in remembrance of our departed, sainted friends, and in anticipation of our own departure. (*F. W. Brown.*) *The ripe Christian*:—The illustration is drawn from agricultural life. It is the close of harvest, and the busy reapers are carrying home the spoil. There are few scenes to be witnessed upon earth more pleasing and attractive. How suggestive of comfort and plenty! What a picture of happy industry and well-rewarded toil! How exquisite the patches of colour! How merry and melodious the song! Mark how skilfully the reaper handles his sickle, and clutches the corn; one sweep, and the whole armful is down, and laid so neat and level that when the band is put round the sheaf almost every straw is of equal length. The single stem is called "a stalk of corn"; the armful, which the reaper cuts down with one sweep of his hook, is called "a sheaf"; whilst a bundle of sheaves, placed together and set upright, ready to be borne away to the homestead, is styled, from an old Dutch root, "a shock of corn." Well, what an interesting and significant metaphor this is! and how suggestive! How much there is in that bundle of wheat-sheaves, now ready to be carried home, to remind you of the aged Christian, who has served his generation by the will of God! What anxiety has been expended upon that corn! Through what risks and storms has it come! A thousand contingencies might occur to check the growth or affect the quality of the grain, and the value of the harvest. But now it has been brought safely through all these risks. The little green thing has become a vigorous and fruitful stalk. The farmer's solicitude is over; his months of anxious toil are ended; the grain is safely gathered in—how much in all this to suggest the closing scene in the life of a ripe believer. "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season." As we read the text we naturally think of the old and grey-headed saint. How many years of anxiety have been expended upon him! How many storms have swept over him! Through what a variety of experience has he passed! Perhaps in early life he gave little promise of a long and useful career. Yet here he is, come to life's close in happiness and honour. He has weathered the blasts, he has borne his fruit, he has served his generation, and all that remains for him is just to be gathered in—gently borne away to the homestead of heaven. Yet I would not have you run away with the idea that the text applies exclusively to the aged. This prominent idea is not so much old age, as ripeness, maturity. It does not say, "Thou shalt come to thy grave in old age," but "in a full age." There is a difference. Old age is not absolutely promised to all God's people; but a "full age" is. It is noticeable that, although in the early history of the human race many lived to a great length of time, even to hundreds of years, it is not recorded in Scripture of any of these that they died "in a good old age, and full of years"; not until we come to Abraham is such a record given; although his term of life was but a fourth of that of many who had gone before him; the reason probably being that, though Abraham's years were fewer, yet his virtues were greater; his life was a life of faith, and therefore of completeness. I have seen a matured saint cut off at twenty; and another man, not nearly so ripe, at threescore and ten. You may remember how, addressing young men, Solomon, with characteristic sagacity, makes the distinction I am indicating. "My son," he says, "keep my commandments: for length of days, and long life, shall they add to thee"; intimating, of course, that the natural tendency of virtue is to lengthen a man's days; but that, whether such a man's days shall be many or few, he shall, at all events, have "a long life," in the sense of a full and complete one.

"They err, who measure life by years,
With false and thoughtless tongue:
Some hearts grow old before their time,
Others are always young.
'Tis not the number of the lines
On life's fast-filling page;
'Tis not the pulse's added throbs,
Which constitute true age."

Amongst moral and responsible beings, that life is really the longest, however brief its outward term, into which the largest amount of beneficent activity is condensed. Thoughts suggested here in regard to a good man's death. I. It is not unwelcome. "Thou shalt come to thy grave." He is not driven or dragged

to it, as may be said of many an ungodly man. God makes him willing when He has made him ready. I have often been struck with the fact that, when the end of a Christian's life begins to draw near, however reluctant he had been hitherto to leave the world, and however he may even have dreaded his departure, all that reluctance and fear melts away. 2. The death of a good man is seasonable. "As a shock of corn cometh in in his season." 3. As death is welcome to the ripe believer, and seasonable, so it is honourable. It is no ignominious blow; it is not a crushing, humiliating stroke; it is a release, an enfranchisement, a coronation. (*J. Thain Davidson, D.D.*)

Ver. 27. **Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good.**—"*So it is*":—Thus closed a forcible speech by Eliphaz the Temanite; it may be called his "summing up." He virtually says, "What I have testified in the name of my friends is no dream of theirs. Upon this matter we are specialists; and bear witness to truth which we have made the subject of research and experience. Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good." By this declaration he sets forth his teaching with authority, and presses it home. He persuades Job to consider what he had said, for it was no hasty opinion, but the ripe fruit of experience. I shall not follow Eliphaz; I am only going to borrow his closing words, and use them in reference to Gospel testimony; which is to us a thing known and searched out. I. To begin with, these words may well describe THE QUALIFICATION OF THE TEACHER. He will be poorly furnished if he cannot run in the line which Eliphaz draws in the words of our text. 1. He should have an intimate knowledge of his subject. How can he teach what he does not know? When we come to talk about God, and the soul, and sin, and the precious blood of Jesus, and the new birth, and holiness and eternal life, the speaker who knows nothing about these things personally must be a poor driveller. A blind man, who is teaching others about colour and vision? A preacher of an unknown God? A dead man sent with messages of life? You are in a strange position. 2. I must add that he should have a personal experience of it, so that he can say, "Lo this, we have searched it, so it is." It is unseemly that an ignorant man should keep a school. It is not meet that a dumb man should teach singing. Shall an impenitent man preach repentance? Shall an unbelieving man preach faith? Shall an unholy man preach obedience to the Divine will? He who would learn to plough, must not be apprenticed to one who never turned a furrow. We must know the Lord, or we cannot teach His way. 3. What is wanted in a successful teacher is a firm conviction of the truth of these things, growing out of his having tested them for himself. He must say, with emphasis, "So it is." The Lord's Word must be true. Why do you "hope" about it? Believe it and enjoy it. But people will go hoping and hoping and limping; as if to be lame were the proper thing. A ministry of hesitation must be ruinous to souls. When Divine truth is held fast, then let it be held forth, and not till then. 4. Once more: a needful qualification for a teacher of the Word is earnestness and goodwill to the hearer. We must implore each one of our hearers to give earnest heed. We must cry to him with our whole heart, "Hear it, and know thou it for thy good." Without love, there can be no real eloquence. The great Saviour's heart is love, and those who are to be saviours for Him must be of a loving spirit. True love will do the work when everything else has failed. Knowledge of our subject avails not without love to our hearers. There are three ways of knowing, but only one sort is truly worth the having. Many labour to know, merely that they may know. These are like misers, who gather gold that they may count it, and hide it away in holes and corners. This is the avarice of knowledge. Such knowledge turns stagnant, like water shut up in a close pond—above mantled with rank weed, and below putrid, or full of loathsome life. A second class aspire to know that others may know that they know. To be reputed wise is the heaven of most mortals. One does not eat merely that others may know that you have had your dinner, and one should not know merely to have it known that you know. The third kind of knowledge is the one worth having. Learn to know that you may make other people know. This is not the avarice but the commerce of knowledge. Acquire knowledge that you may distribute it. Light the candle, but put it not under a bushel. Be taught that you may teach. This trading is gainful to all who engage in it. II. THE ARGUMENT FOR THE HEARER. "Lo this, we have searched it, so it is." The argument directed to the hearer is the experience of many, confirming the statement of one. "We have searched it, so it is."

I should like to bear my own personal witness to a few things about which I am fully persuaded. "Lo this, we have searched it, so it is." 1. And my first witness is that sin is an evil and a bitter thing. I think I may speak for you and say, "We have searched this out, and we know that it is so." We have seen sin prove injurious to our fellow-men. 2. I wish to testify to the fact that repentance of sin, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, bring a wonderful rest to the heart, and work a marvellous change in the whole life and character. 3. Next, we beg to bear our witness to the fact that prayer is heard of God. God does hear prayer. We bear our witness to that fact with all our strength, and therefore we say about it, "Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good." 4. Another testimony we would like to bear, namely, that obedience to the Lord, though it may involve present loss, is sure to be the most profitable course for the believing man to take. 5. We beg to say that the old-fashioned Gospel is able to save men, and to arouse enthusiasm in their souls. III. We have here THE EXHORTATION TO THE INQUIRER. 1. "This, we have searched it, so it is; hear it." But oh, if you wish to be saved, hear the Gospel! Let nothing keep you away from God's sanctuary, where the real Gospel is proclaimed. Hear it! If it is not preached exactly in the style which you would prefer, nevertheless, hear it. "Faith cometh by hearing." 2. The next thing that he says is, "Know it." Hear it and know it; go on hearing it until you know it. To know Christ is life eternal. 3. Our text means—know it in a particular way. "Know thou it for thy good." The devil knows a great deal. He knows more than the most intelligent of us; but he knows nothing for his good. All that he knows sours into evil within his rebellious nature. (1) How is a man to know anything for his good? This knowledge must first be a practical knowledge. Does the Word say "Repent"? If you want to know what repentance means, repent at once. If you want to know what faith is, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and when you have believed, you will know what believing is. The best way to know a virtue is to practise it. (2) To know a thing for our good is to know it for ourselves. "Know it for thy good." I find that one rendering is, "Know it for thyself." Another man's God is no God to me; he must be "my Lord and my God." (3) I must add that we only know things for our good when we know them believingly. To a sinner a promise is as dark as a threatening, if he does not believe it. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

CHAPTER VI.

VERS. 1-30. **But Job answered and said.**—*Job's answer to Eliphaz*:—We must come upon grief in one of two ways, and Job seems to have come upon grief in a way that is to be deprecated. He came upon it late in life. He was in solid prosperity and positive and genuine comfort. Grief must tell heavily whenever it comes upon a man in such a condition. This accounts for his lamentation, and whine, and long-drawn threnody. He was not accustomed to it. Some have been born into trouble, and they have become acclimatised. Blessed are they who come upon grief in that method. Such a method appears to be the method of real mercy. Grief must come. The devil allows no solitary life to pass upward into heaven without fighting its way at some point or other. Grief delights in monologue. Job seems scarcely to lay himself down mentally upon the line adopted by Eliphaz. It is most difficult to find the central line of Job's speech. Too much logic would have spoiled the grief. Reasoning there is, but it comes and goes; it changes its tone; it strikes the facts of life as the trained fingers of the player might strike a chord of music. Note how interrogative is Job's speech. More than twenty questions occur in Job's reply. Grief is great in interrogation. Job is asking, "Are the old foundations still here? Things have surely been changed in the nighttime, for I am unaccustomed to what is now round about me." Notice how many misunderstandings there are in the speech of the suffering man! Job not only misunderstood his friends and his pain, he misunderstood all men, and the whole system and scheme of things. How suffering not rightly accepted or understood colours and perverts the whole thought and service of life! Job thinks life not worth living. So much depends on our mental mood, or our spiritual condition. Hence the need of our being

braced up, fired, made strong. We are what we really are in our heart and mind. Keep the soul right and it will rule the body. The Bible never shrinks from telling us that there is grief in the world, and that grief can be accounted for on moral principles. The Bible measures the grief, never makes light of it. But it can be sanctified, turned into blessing. Any book which so speaks as it does deserves the confidence of men who know the weight and bitterness of suffering. Do not come to the Bible only for condolence and sympathy; come to it for instruction, inspiration, and then you may come to it for consolation, sympathy, tenderest comfort, for the very dew of the morning, for the balm of heaven, for the very touch of Christ. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Job's first reply*:—In his reply to Eliphaz, Job first takes hold of the charge of impatience and hasty indignation made in the opening of the fifth chapter. He is quite aware that his words were rash when he cursed his day and cried impatiently for death. But had Eliphaz duly considered his state, the weight of his trouble causing a physical sense of indescribable oppression? We need not fall into the mistake of supposing that it is only the pain of his disease which makes Job's misery so heavy. Rather is it that his troubles have come from God; they are "the arrows of the Almighty." Mere suffering and loss, even to the extremity of death, he could have borne without a murmur. But he had thought God to be his friend. Why on a sudden have these darts been launched against him by the hand he trusted? What does the Almighty mean? The evil-doer who suffers knows why he is afflicted. The martyr, enduring for conscience' sake, has his support in the truth to which he bears witness, the holy cause for which he dies. Job has no explanation, no support. He cannot understand Providence. The God with whom he supposed himself to be at peace suddenly becomes an angry, incomprehensible Power, blighting and destroying His servant's life. Existence poisoned, the couch of ashes encompassed with terrors, is it any wonder that passionate words break forth from his lips? A cry is the last power left to him. So it is with many. The seeming needlessness of their sufferings, the impossibility of tracing these to any cause in their past history, in a word, the mystery of the pain confounds the mind and adds to anguish and desolation an unspeakable horror of darkness. Sometimes the very thing guarded against is that which happens; a man's best intelligence appears confuted by destiny or chance. Why has he, amongst the many, been chosen for this? Do all things come alike to all, righteous and wicked? The problem becomes terribly acute in the case of earnest, God-fearing men and women who have not yet found the real theory of suffering. Endurance for others does not always explain. All cannot be rested on that. Nor, unless we speak falsely for God, will it avail to say, These afflictions have fallen on us for our sins. For even if the conscience does not give the lie to that assertion, as Job's conscience did, the question demands a clear answer, why the penitent should suffer—those who believe—to whom God imputes no iniquity. If it is for our transgression we suffer, either our own faith and religion are vain, or God does not forgive excepting in form, and the law of punishment retains its force. We have here the serious difficulty that legal fictions seem to hold their ground even in the dealings of the Most High with those who trust Him. . . . The truth is, that suffering has no proportion to the guilt of sin, but is related in the scheme of Divine providence to life in this world, its movement, discipline, and perfecting in the individual and the race. (*Robert A. Watson, D.D.*) *Job's great suffering*:—It was—I. UNAPPRECIATED BY MEN. This is the meaning of the first five verses. Eliphaz had no conception of the profundity and poignancy of Job's suffering. There are two things indicated here in relation to them. 1. They were unutterable. "My words are swallowed up." His whole humanity was in torture. (1) He suffered in body. "He was smitten with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of the head, and he took a potsherd to scrape himself withal, and sat down amongst the ashes." (2) He suffered in mind. "The arrows of the Almighty were within him, whose poison drank up his spirits." 2. They were irrepressible. "Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass? Or loweth the ox over his fodder?" The idea here is, I cannot but cry; my cries spring from my agonies. Had not the wild ass his grass, he would bray with a ravenous hunger; and had not the ox his fodder, he too would low in an agony for food; this is nature, and my cries are natural—I cannot help them. Who can be silent in torture? His suffering was—II. MISUNDERSTOOD BY FRIENDS. "Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg?" This language

seems to me to point to Job's impression of the address which Eliphaz had delivered to him. Job seemed to feel—1. That the address of Eliphaz was utterly insipid. "Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt?" As if he had said, your speech lacks that which can make it savoury to me; it does not apply: you misunderstand my sufferings: I suffer not because I am a great sinner, as you seem to imply: my own conscience attests my rectitude: nor because I need this terrible chastisement, as you have said: you neither understand the cause nor the nature of my sufferings, therefore your talk is beside the mark. 2. That the address of Eliphaz was truly offensive. "The things that my soul refused to touch are as my sorrowful meats." Does not this mean what Dr. Bernard says, "the things you speak—your unmeaning, insipid words and similes—are as the loathsomeness of my food, or are as loathsome to my soul as food now is to my body"? You intrude remarks on me that are not only tasteless, because of their unsuitability, but that are as disgusting as loathsome food. III. INTOLERABLE TO HIMSELF. He longed for death; he believed that in the grave he would have rest. 1. Though his life was unbearable, he would not take it away himself. He felt that he was not the proprietor, only the trustee of his life. 2. He was not forgetful of his relation to his Maker. "I have not concealed the words of the Holy One." I have not shunned to declare my attachment to Himself and His cause. His sufferings did not obliterate his memory of his Creator, drive him from His presence, or impel him to blasphemy or atheism. No, he still held on. God was the Great Object in his horizon; he saw Him through the thick hot steam of his fiery trials. 3. Though his life was unbearable, he knew that it could not last long. "What is my strength that I should hope? and what is mine end that I should prolong my life?" &c. Whether God will loose His hand and cut me off, and thus put an end to my existence or not, I cannot endure long. I am not made "of stone or brass," and I cannot stand these sufferings long. However powerful the human frame may be, great sufferings must sooner or later break it to pieces. 4. Though his life was unbearable, he was conscious of an inner strength. "Is not my help in me? And is wisdom driven quite from me?" No strength like this, physical strength is good, intellectual strength is better, but moral strength is the best of all. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 2. **Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed.**—*Heaping up one scale:*—We have no objection to weigh all Job's griefs. But what shall we put in the other scale? He who counts the hairs of our head, and puts our tears in a bottle, will not make light of human grief. In His scale it will be weighed to the utmost grain. But God has two scales, whereas Job has evidently only one. 1. In one scale look how he has put his SELF. The first personal pronoun is heavy enough in these speeches. Job's friends perceived his egoistic spirit, and heaped up therefore the opposite scale. What art thou compared to the Eternal? Very sublime is the God whom Eliphaz puts over against Job. He fills all—man is nothing. No man's thoughts or sufferings are to be seen or heard or reckoned against the Absolute. But should I not say "I"? Am I in no sense to feel myself and be an egoist? In my solemn hours I cannot but know and dwell with a very real being within me which is my ego. God and sin are nothing to me unless first of all I have a personality. What is the indwelling of Christ, unless I have a separate individuality into which He can come? David says, "I am a little lower than the angels." May I not say the same? Yes, say it; say it loud and clear. But balance it. Put into the other scale, for example, your fellow-men. Other men have as intense a self as you. They, too, are crowned with glory and dignity, and have their range of feelings, strong and tender, like thyself. "Let each esteem other better than himself." Put also into the other scale over against thyself the great Other. Down on the seashore when we wander, or when we look out on the starry heavens, how clearly and with all its mystery we say "I." But as we say it, there comes back from the ebon walls of night the echo of the voice of That Other, which brings ourself into equilibrium. We sweep our hands out and whisper to ourselves, "my power," or we lift up our heads, proud in the consciousness of our knowledge. But when God sweeps His hand across the heavens, or lifts up the might of His knowledge, then the pride of the human heart is humbled. We bow our heads in silence; not crushed out of all consciousness, but balanced and rightly weighed by the thoughts of men and God. 2. Job's egoism arose from his sorrow. How much he makes of his afflictions. His howling is dismal. Chapters vi. and vii. are one long lamentation, with

much poetry in them, but truly a terrible heaping-up of one scale. What shall we do to balance human sorrow? Laugh at it? Call it nothing? Call it commonplace? Nay, let us try and put something over against it which may outweigh it. Philosopher! hast thou aught which can balance a broken heart or a soul convulsed with agony? Surely thou hast something. Let us try your maxims, your precepts of self-control and of wholesome thought. Put them into the opposite scale; Bacon's "Essay on Adversity," beautiful extracts from Marcus Aurelius. Put them all in. Now lift up the balance and see. Ah! they weigh nothing. Scientist! canst thou do this great work? Go and tell Job your germ theories. Explain to him the nature of his sloughing sores, and see if you can answer his complaint. No, never. Religionist, what can you put into the opposite scale? Let us hear your doctrine. "God is the potter and man the clay. We are creatures of His, and He can do as seems best. Let us learn to submit to His sovereign will. The discipline is good, though bitter." Oh, what bitter drops of acid are all these to wounded souls. You only crush a man when you hurl at him, at such a time, God's sovereignty. No, let us put into the opposite scale human sympathy. Let us acknowledge all the pain and sorrow and affliction of the sufferer. Let us suffer it, and feel its weight. Let our tears flow. Put our sufferings and our feelings into the opposite scale. Let us seek to put God's sympathy into the opposite scale. Not the absolute hard stern Deity Eliphaz labours to construct. Let us speak of His tenderness and pity. Is it not said, Jesus wept? Christ's tears will outweigh ours. When looking down into the dark and horrid grave, listen what Christ says, "Thy brother shall rise again." That is Christ's sympathy to balance thy crushing pain. 3. Job asks of God the question, "What have I done?" Ah! well might he heap up that scale; piling up to the heavens his sins, and offences, and ignorance. Probably there would be no scale large enough to hold our iniquities. Is this right? Oh yes. Know thy sins, O soul, all of them, black as hell and heavy as lead, and high enough to hide the light of heaven. But be not men of one idea. Have two ideas. Look into the other scale and see, if you can, a drop of Christ's precious blood. Lift up the scales, and see if this drop of precious blood does not balance all your sins. Yes! Thank God it does, cries out Bunyan. Nay, more, it outweighs them. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." (*J. D. Watters, M.A.*) *Afflictions weighed*:—1. It is a duty to weigh the saddest estate and afflicted condition of our brethren thoroughly. But what is it to weigh them thoroughly? It is not only to weigh the matter of an affliction, to see what it is which a man suffers, but to weigh an affliction in every circumstance and aggravation of it; the circumstance of an affliction is often more considerable then the matter of the affliction. If a man would confess his sins, he is to confess not only the matter of them, as sins are the transgressions of the law, and errors against the rule, but he must eye the manner in which sin hath been committed, the circumstances with which it is clothed, these render his sin out of measure, and out of weight sinful. Likewise, would a man consider the mercies and favours received from God, would he know them thoroughly, and see how much they weigh, let him look, not only what, but how, and when, and where, and by whom he hath received them. There may be a great wickedness in a little evil committed, and a great mercy in a little good received. Secondly, He that would weigh an affliction thoroughly, must put himself in the case of the afflicted, and (as it were) make another's grief his own: he must act the passions of his brother, and a while personate the poor, the sick, the afflicted man: he must get a taste of the wormwood and of the gall upon which his brother feedeth: in a word, he must lay such a condition to heart. In these two points, this holy art of weighing grief, consists: consideration of circumstances, and sympathy of the smart. Mere speculation moves little. We have no feeling of another's suffering, till we have a fellow-feeling. The bare theory of affliction affects no more than the bare theory of fire heats. 2. It is an addition to a man's affliction, when others are not sensible of his affliction. Our high priest is none of your senseless priests, who care not what the people endure, so they be warm and at ease. 3. We can never rightly judge till we thoroughly weigh the condition of an afflicted brother. For Job conceived that Eliphaz proceeded to judgment before he had been in consideration. 4. A man who hath not been, or is not afflicted himself, can hardly apprehend what another endures who is under affliction. If we had a Mediator in heaven that had not been tempted on earth, we might doubt whether He would be touched with

the feeling of our infirmities, whether sinning infirmities or sorrowing infirmities. (*J. Caryl.*)

Ver. 4. **For the arrows of the Almighty are within me.**—*Sharp arrows:*—Arrows are—1. Swift. 2. Secret. 3. Sharp. 4. Killing. (*J. Caryl.*) *The poisoned arrows of the Almighty:*—By "poisoned arrows" we must understand, not only his boils, the heat and inflammation of which had dried up Job's moisture, vigour, and strength, but all his other outward troubles also, which stuck fast in him; and his inward temptations, and sense of God's wrath flowing therefrom, which, like the inward deep wound of the arrow, had, by the furious poison thereof, so exhausted him that he was ready to faint, and give it over. Learn—1. Though to quarrel and complain of God, in any case, be a great fault, yet it pleads for much compassion to saints when they do not make a stir about their lot, except when their trouble is extreme. 2. It is the duty of those in trouble to turn their eyes off all instruments, that they may look to God. 3. As it is our duty always to entertain high and reverent thoughts of God, so trouble will cause men to know His almighty power. 4. It is a humbling sight of God Almighty's power in trouble, when His strokes are like arrows, and do not only pierce deep, and come suddenly and swiftly upon men, as an arrow doth, but especially do speak God angry at them, in that He makes them His burr (target) at which He shoots. 5. In this case of Job, the number of troubles doth contribute much to afflict the child of God, every particular stroke adding to the weight. 6. Albeit sharp troubles, inflicted by the hand of God, be very sad to the people of God, yet all that is easy in comparison of the apprehension of God's anger in the trouble and perplexities of spirit, and temptations arising upon those troubles. 7. Temptations, and sense of Divine displeasure under trouble, will soon exhaust created strength, and make the spirits of men succumb. 8. It is a great addition to the present troubles and temptations of saints, when terrors and fears for the future do assault and perplex them; especially when they apprehend that God is pursuing them by these terrors. 9. When once a broken mind is haunted with terrors and fears, their wit and fancy may multiply them beyond what they are, or will be, in reality. (*George Hutcheson.*) *Of religious melancholy:*—Job's affliction was sent to him for the trial of an exemplary and unshaken virtue; and because it was sent for that reason only, and not as any mark of Divine displeasure, therefore how great soever the calamity was in another respect, yet was it by no means insupportable, because there still remained to him the great foundation of comfort, in the assurance of a good conscience, and the expectation of God's final favour. He had in his own mind, even in the midst of his affliction, the satisfaction to reflect with pleasure on his past behaviour, and to strengthen his resolutions of continuing in the same course for the future. Though no calamity could well be heavier than that of Job, yet when the disposition of the person comes also to be taken into the act, there is a trouble far greater than his, namely, when the storm falls where there is no preparation to bear it; when the assault is made from without, and within there is nothing to resist it. In other cases, the spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but when the spirit itself is wounded, who can bear it? There is another state, most melancholy and truly pitiable, and that is of those who, neither by the immediate appointment of Providence, as in the case of Job, nor by the proper effect of their own wickedness, as in the case of an evil conscience, but by their own imagination and groundless fears, by indisposition of body and disorder of mind, by false notions of God and themselves, are made very miserable in their own minds. They fancy, though without sufficient reason, that the arrows of the Almighty are within them. Consider the chief occasions of such religious melancholy. 1. Indisposition or distemper of body. This is by no means to be neglected, slighted, or despised: for, as the mind operates continually upon the body, so the body likewise will of necessity influence and operate upon the mind. It is not unusual to see the good understanding even of a reasonable person, borne down and overburdened by bodily disorder. The principal sign by which we may judge when the indisposition is chiefly or wholly in the body is this, that the person accuses himself highly in general, without being able to give any instances in particular; that he is very apprehensive, of he does not well know what; and fearful, yet can give no reason why. The misery is very real, though without good foundation. In such cases all endeavours ought to be used to remove the bodily indisposition. 2. Want of improvement under the exercise of religious duties is complained of.

Many piously and well-disposed persons, but of timorous and melancholy constitutions, are under continual apprehensions that they do not grow better, that they make little or no improvement in the ways of religion, and that they cannot find in themselves such a fervent zeal and love towards God, as they think is necessary to denominate them good Christians. If by want of improvement is only meant want of warmth and affection in the performance of their duty, then there is no just ground for trouble of mind upon that account. In the same person there are sure to be different degrees of affection at different times, according to the varying tempers of the body. No man can keep up at all times an equal vigour of mind. Vain suspicions that our obedience proceeds not from a right principle, from a true and unfeigned love of God, are by no means any just cause for uneasiness of mind, provided that we sincerely perform that obedience, by a life of virtue and true holiness. 3. An apprehension of exclusion from mercy by some positive decree and fore-appointment of God. From nature and reason, this apprehension cannot arise. Nor in Scripture is there any foundation for any such apprehension. There may be some obscure texts, which unstable persons may be apt to misinterpret to their own and others' disquiet; but surely the whole tenour, design, and aim of Scripture should be the interpreter of particular passages. The plain texts should be the rule by which the obscurer ones are interpreted. It is quite evident that there is no ground in Scripture for any pious person to apprehend that possibly he may be excluded from mercy by any positive decree or fore-appointment of God. 4. The fear of having committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. But distinguish between sin against the Holy Ghost and blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Such blasphemy was the sign of an incurably wicked and malicious disposition. It is quite impossible for any truly sincere and well-meaning person to be guilty of this malignity, or to have any reason of apprehending he can possibly have fallen into it. 5. A cause of much trouble to some is found in wicked and blasphemous thoughts. These are not so much sin as weakness of imagination arising from infirmity of body. They may be only signs of a tender conscience, and of a pious disposed mind. 6. Another cause is the conscience of past great sins, and of present remaining infirmities. Infirmities as weaknesses and omissions, are fully allowed for in the Gospel. Forgiveness of them is annexed to our daily prayers. And sins blotted out, ought to be forgotten by us, as God says they are by Him. (*S. Clarke, D.D.*)

Ver. 5. **Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass?**—*The satisfied ass:*—The patriarch introduces this illustration to prove to his friends that his complainings were not in vain. His troubles were not imaginative. This quaint subject is instructive and interesting to all. It teaches two lessons. I. HE WHO IS SATISFIED DOES NOT COMPLAIN. He goes straight on to the enjoyment of the possession he has acquired. The ox or the ass that has abundance of food does not make lamentation. Job meant to say that this was the case with him. If he were only reaping the fruit of his conduct, he would not complain; or even if his suffering had been the result of sinful indulgence, or came to him from evil doing, or thinking, he would have submitted. But he suffered greatly, knowing at the same time that he was altogether innocent. He had not received his just reward, and therefore he did complain. II. EMPLOYMENT IS THE ROOT OF CONTENT. Laziness breeds contention. The man who has honest work to do, and does it, eats and is satisfied. It is your hungry, idle men who are agitators. It is so—1. Because the busy man has no time for brooding on his cares. The ass or the ox at his food has something to occupy his attention, and has therefore not a moment to spare for braying. 2. Because he has no opportunity for shallow noise. If he wished to bray or low, the very fact of having his mouth full would prevent him. So men whose hands are full of employment, cannot cast down the work they are engaged upon, for the mere sake of airing their grievances. When the wild ass has been well filled, and when the ox has finished his fodder, then they will waste their time in mischief and discontent. The proper remedy for restless agitation is plenty of work, and the labour which is ever necessary to procure and prepare our daily wants. (*J. J. S. Bird.*)

Ver. 6. **Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt?**—*Seasoning for Christianity:*—Salt gives a zest to many unpalatable things, and is an invaluable condiment. The health, the digestion, the entire well-being of man, demand its use. The patriarch is alluding to those matters which give zest to

life, even as salt gives zest to food. Some things are pleasant enough to eat, and require nothing wherewith to be seasoned. Sugar is sweet in itself. So there are some occupations and pleasures of life which need nothing to render them enjoyable. But there are other things which, like unsavoury or tasteless food, demand some addition to give them a zest or make them more pleasant to perform. A few examples will make the meaning plain:—I. TAKE A MOTHER AND HER BABE. If we look at her disinterestedly, we shall see what a vast amount of unpleasant labour she must undergo. No toil is too great, no work too exhausting, no effort too repulsive. In itself such patience or self-denial would be considered an intolerable hardship. But when the unsavoury morsel is taken with the salt of love, how sweet to the taste does it become! What would otherwise be a painful labour is turned into a delightful joy. II. TAKE A MAN AND HIS BUSINESS. What is business but a toil—a painful, bitter, wearisome contest, rising early and toiling late? It is one of the unsavoury things to which the words of the patriarch may allude. To swallow it for its own sake alone would cause a good many to make a very wry face. And what is the salt of business? Why, it is money and gain. What a zest these impart to the hardest labour and the early toil! How sweetly goes down the hardship when the clinking coins are counted from the till at night. III. TAKE THE TOILING STUDENT. How hard he labours over his midnight lamp! Amusement is forsworn, pleasures and relaxation are given up. But the flavour improves when eaten with the salt of ambition or the desire of honour. Then the toil is transformed into a pleasure and the trouble into a labour of love. IV. SO ALSO WE MAY TAKE THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER. Who can say that the Christian life is pleasant in itself? It is humiliation, sorrow, bitterness, disappointment. It means an apparently unavailing contest with powers that are more powerful than ourselves. But once flavour the Christian life with salt, and how different it becomes! Flavour the bitterness with the love of God, the blessed sympathy of Christ, the glorious reward beyond, and then as the golden sunshine gilds and beautifies the most rugged scene, so the bitterness is turned into a sheen of glory and the toil is forgotten. (*J. J. S. Bird.*) *The treatment of the unsavoury*:—Unsavoury means insipid, without taste. It is necessary to add salt in order to make it either palatable or wholesome. The literal truth of this no one can doubt. Insipid food cannot be relished, nor would it long sustain life. "The Orientals eat their bread often with mere salt, without any other addition except some dry and pounded sumer-savory, which last is the common method at Aleppo." It should be remembered also that the bread of the Orientals is commonly mere unleavened cakes. The idea of Job in this adage or proverb is, that there was a fitness and propriety in things. Certain things went together, and were necessary companions. One cannot be expected without the other; one is incomplete without the other. Insipid food requires salt in order to make it palatable and nutritious, and so it is proper that suffering and humiliation should be united. There was a reason for his complaints, as there was for adding salt to unsavoury food. Some have supposed that Job means to rebuke Eliphaz severely for his harangue on the necessity of patience, which he characterises as insipid, impertinent, and disgusting to him; as being, in fact, as unpleasant to his soul as the white of an egg was to his taste. Dr. Good explains it as meaning, "Doth that which hath nothing of seasoning, nothing of a pungent or irritating power, within it, produce pungency or irritation? I, too, should be quiet, and complain not if I had nothing provocative or acrimonious; but, alas! the food I am doomed to partake of is the very calamity which is most acute to my soul, that which I most loathe, and which is most grievous and trying to my palate." But I see no reason to think that in this he meant to reproach Eliphaz for an insipid and unmeaning address. (*Albert Barnes.*) *A cure for unsavoury meats: or, salt for the white of an egg*:—This is a question which Job asked of his friends, who turned out to be so unfriendly. Thus he battles with those "miserable comforters" who inflamed his wounds by pouring in verjuice and vinegar instead of oil and wine. The first of them had just opened fire upon him, and Job by this question was firing a return shot. He wanted the three stern watchers to understand that he did not complain without cause. His were not sorrows which he had imagined; they were real and true, and hence he asks this question first, "Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass? or loweth the ox over his fodder?" If these creatures lift up their notes of complaint, it is when they are starving. He was like one who finds no flavour in his food, and loathes the morsel which he swallows. That which was left to him

was tasteless as the white of an egg; it yielded him no kind of comfort; in fact, it was disgusting to him. The speech, also, to which Job had listened from Eliphaz the Temanite did not put much sweetness into his mouth; for it was devoid of sympathy and consolation. Here he tells them that Eliphaz had administered unto him unsavoury meat without salt;—mere whites of eggs, without taste. Not a word of love, pity, or fellow-feeling had the Temanite uttered. We may now forget the much-tortured patriarch Job, and apply this text to ourselves. I. The first point will be this, that A WANT OF SAVOUR IS A VERY GREAT WANT in anything that is meant for food. Everybody knows that all kinds of animal life delight in food that has a flavour in it. It is exactly the same with regard to the food of our souls. It is a very great fault with a sermon when there is no savour in it. It is a killing fault to the people of God when a book contains a good deal of what may be true, but yet lacks holy savour—or what, in others words, we call "unction." But what kind of savour is that which we expect in a sermon? 1. I answer, first, it is a savour of the Lord Jesus Christ. 2. The next necessity to secure savour is a devout spirit in the preacher—a savour of devotion. 3. Another matter goes to make up sweet savour in a discourse, and that is, a savour of experience. But these three things are not the whole of it. There is a sacred something: it is not nameless, for I will name it by and by: it is a heavenly influence which comes into man, but which has no name among the things that belong to men. This sacred influence pervades the speaker, flavouring his matter, and governing his spirit, while at the same time it rests upon the hearer so that he finds his mind awake, his faculties attentive, his heart stirred. Under this mysterious influence the hearer's spirit is in a receptive condition, and as he hears the truth it sinks into his soul as snowflakes drop into the sea. Take away from any preaching or any teaching Christ as the subject, devotion as the spirit, experience as the strength of testimony, and the Holy Ghost as being all in all, and you have removed all the savour; and what is left? What can we do with a savourless Gospel? II. I find a rendering given to the text, which, if it be not absolutely accurate, nevertheless states an important truth, namely, that THAT WHICH IS UNSAVOURY FROM WANT OF SALT MUST NOT BE EATEN. 1. There is a great deal in this world which is unsavoury for want of salt; I mean in common conversation. Alas, it is easy to meet with people—and even people wearing the Christian name—whose conversation has not a particle of salt in it. Nothing that tends to edification is spoken by them. Their talk has an abundance of gaiety, but no grace in it. They exhibit any amount of frivolity, but no godliness. Again, there is some talk in the world—I hope not among professors—which has no salt in it even of common morality; and consequently it corrupts, and becomes impure and obnoxious. 2. Now, the same thing is true, not only of common conversation, but of a great deal of modern teaching. If a man's discoursing has not salt enough in it to keep false doctrine out of it, it is not the kind of food for you. Clean provender is not so scarce that you need to eat carrion. III. The third point is, that THERE ARE CERTAIN THINGS IN THE WORLD WHICH NEED SOMETHING ELSE WITH THEM. "Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg?" There are many things in this world which we cannot tolerate by themselves; they need seasoning with them. 1. One of the first of these may read us a lesson of prudence; that is, reproof. It is a Christian duty to reprove a brother who is in a fault, and we should speak to him with all gentleness and quietness, that we may prevent his going farther into evil, and lead him back to the right way. It is the habit of some brethren to do everything forcibly; but in this case one needs more love than vigour, more prudence than warmth, more grace than energy. Rebuke, however kindly you put it, and however prudently you administer it, will always be an unsavoury thing: therefore, salt it well. Think over it. Pray over it. Mix kindness with it. Rub the salt of brotherly love into it. Speak with much deference to your erring friend, and use much tenderness, because you are not faultless yourself. Savour your admonitions with affection, and may the Lord make them acceptable to those who need them. 2. Now for other matters which many people do not like by themselves; I mean, the doctrines of the Gospel. The true doctrines of the Gospel never were popular, and never will be; but there is no need for any of us to make them more distasteful than they naturally are. Man is a king, so he thinks, and when he hears of another king he straightway grows rebellious. If the Gospel be distasteful we must add a flavouring to it. What shall it be? We cannot do better than flavour it with holiness! Where there is a holy life men cannot easily doubt the principles out

of which it springs. 3. Now, a third egg which cannot be eaten without salt is affliction. Afflictions are very unsavoury things. Afflictions are unsavoury meat. What is to be done with them, then? Why, let us salt them, if we can. Salt your affliction with patience, and it will make a royal dish. By grace, like the apostle, we shall "glory in tribulations also." 4. I will not detain you longer to speak about persecution, though that is another unsavoury article, with which salt of consolation is much to be desired. 5. But, lastly, there is the thought of death. Is not death an unsavoury thing in itself? The body dreads dissolution and corruption, and the mind starts back from the prospect of quitting the warm precincts of this house of clay, and going into what seems a cold, rarefied region, where the shivering spirit flits naked into mystery untried. "What salt," say you, "shall I mingle with my thoughts of death?" Why, the thought that you cannot die; since because He lives you shall live also. Add to it the persuasion that though you be dead, yet shall you live. Thoughts of the resurrection and the swinging open of the pearly gates, and of your entrance there. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 10. **I have not concealed the words of the Holy One.**—*Concealing the words of God:*—1. The testimony of a good conscience is the best ground of our willingness to die. 2. The counsels of God, His truths, must be revealed. It is as dangerous, if not more, to conceal what God hath made known, as to be inquisitive to know what God hath concealed. 3. The study of a godly man is to make the Word of God visible. 4. It is a dangerous thing for any man to conceal the Word of God, either in his opinion or in his practice. (*J. Caryl.*) *God, the Holy One:*—This is a title too big for any one but God. All holiness is in God. God is so holy that properly He only is holy. God is called the Holy One in three respects: Because He is all holy in Himself; because we receive all holiness from Him; and because we are to serve Him in holiness and righteousness all our days. God is holy in His nature. His essence is purity. He is holy in His Word. He is holy in His works. These three put together lift up the glory of God in this title, "The Holy One." Or we may consider God, the Holy One, 1. Radically and fundamentally, because the Divine nature is the root and original, the spring of all holiness and purity. 2. God is the Holy One by way of example and pattern, or in regard of the rule and measure of holiness. 3. By way of motive. He is, as the rule of holiness, so likewise the reason of our holiness. 4. God is the Holy One effectively, because He works, conveys, and propagates all holiness to and in the creature. Man can no more make himself or another holy, than he can redeem another or himself. 5. He is called the Holy One by way of eminency, or super-excellence, because His holiness is infinitely beyond all the holiness of men and angels. Holiness in angels is a quality; holiness in God is His essence. God is above men and angels, because He is absolutely perfect in holiness. And God is ever equally holy, ever in the same degree and frame of holiness. The holiness of man consists in his conformity to the holiness of God. There is a twofold conformity: a conformity to the nature of God, and a conformity to the will of God, or to that which God wills. These make up the total holiness of the creature. (*Joseph Caryl.*) *Concealing the words of God:*—Job's distress was aggravated by the remarks of his friends, but he turned the guns of the enemy upon themselves, and extracted comfort from what was meant to grieve. He had not concealed the words of the Holy One; had taught his family the great sacrificial truth; was a most faithful witness for God, and made open confession of his own faith in the one holy God. I. HERE IS A SIN TO BE AVOIDED—CONCEALING THE WORDS OF THE HOLY ONE. 1. We can conceal these words from ourselves. We do this when we will not permit this word to search our own heart and ways—when we conceal the Gospel, and go about to find out some way of our own for self-salvation. We should hide the Gospel in our heart, but not from our heart. We conceal it when we do not receive the whole of revelation, but pick and choose out portions of it. 2. We conceal these words from others by not confessing the truth at all, or by a sinful silence after confession, or by concealing the words of the Lord by our own words, or by clouding the truth with error, or by an inconsistent life. We must shine as lights. II. ARGUMENTS FOR AVOIDING THIS SIN. 1. The man who conceals the Word is out of order with God. The design of words is to make known the speaker's mind. If you conceal His words you are not in harmony with anything God has made. All declare His glory. Think of the consequences which would have

followed if others had done so. 2. The motive to conceal is sinful. It may be cowardice, self-love, or the avoidance of shame. 3. By concealing God's words we are disloyal to God and unlike the Saviour. Think of how this will appear on a dying bed—"I knew the saving secret, but I never told even a child of it." How will this look at the last day? III. TWO METHODS BY WHICH WE MAY AVOID THIS SIN. 1. By taking care that you make an open profession of your faith and unite with the people of God. 2. When you have done that, by keeping yourself clear of sinful silence by very often speaking to others of the things of God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 14–30. **To him that is afflicted pity should be showed from his friend.**—*A message to doubters*:—Such is the rendering of the Authorised Version; but, unfortunately, it is a rendering which misses almost entirely the thought of the sacred writer. As a glance at the context will show, the words form a part of Job's complaint against his friends. In the darkest hour of his need, when he was despairing, and ready to faint, when, as he says, he was "forsaking" or "losing his hold of the fear of the Almighty," they had failed him. He had looked to them for kindness, for sympathy, and trust, and lo! they had turned against him; and what he says is this: "To him that is ready to faint, kindness is due from his friend. Even to him that is forsaking the fear of the Almighty." And now, beside this re-translation, set this admirable comment from the pen of one of our most brilliant Old Testament scholars: "How ignored," he says, "this great verse has been! How different were the history of religion if men had kept it in mind! How much sweeter and swifter would the progress of Christianity have proved! The physicians of religious perplexity have too often been Job's comforters; and the souls in doubt who should have been gathered to the heart of the Church, with as much pity and care as the penitent or the mourner, have been scorned, or cursed, or banished, or even put to death." My message is to doubters, to those who are forsaking or losing their hold of the fear of the Almighty. The ministers of the temple of truth, it has been happily said, are of three kinds: first, there are those stationed at the gate of the temple to constrain the passers-by to enter in; secondly, there are those whose function it is to accompany inside all who have been persuaded to enter, and display and explain to them the treasures and secrets of the place; and thirdly, there are those whose duty it is to patrol the temple, keeping watch and ward, and defending the shrine from the attacks of its enemies. It was, I need hardly say, this last duty which, in the providence of God, was assigned to Bishop Butler. With what marvellous vigilance and skill he performed his Divinely appointed task every student of his great work knows full well. "Defences of Christianity" usually become obsolete as rapidly as modern weapons of warfare. There is perhaps no class of literature to which the saying "Every age must write its own books" more literally applies than the literature of Apologetics. Nevertheless, greatly as the lines both of attack and defence have shifted since the days of Butler and the eighteenth century, there are few books in the whole range of religious literature which will so well repay the care of the student to-day as Butler's great *Analogy*. "Forty-five years ago," Mr. Gladstone once wrote in a letter to his friend James Knowles, "Bishop Butler taught me to suspend my judgment on things I knew I did not understand. Even with his aid, I may often have been wrong. Without him, I think I should never have been right. And, oh! that this age knew the treasure it possesses in him, and neglects." Without attempting to indicate even in outline the aim and purpose of Butler's work, two or three points may be singled out for special emphasis. 1. There is one lesson at least which no student of Butler can well fail to learn, namely, to treat serious things seriously. From his youth up Butler had been accustomed to meditate deeply on some of the greatest problems of life and religion. The search after truth, he tells us, he had made the business of his life. And it wounded him to the quick to hear men, who had given scarce as many days as he had given years to thinking about Christianity, calmly assuming it to be false, and with a light heart proclaiming to all the world that there was "nothing in it." That a man should be compelled, reluctantly and sorrowfully compelled, to relinquish his old faith, and to sever the ties that bound him to his past—that Butler could understand. But that any man could witness the discrediting of Christianity with something like a chuckle of satisfaction and delight, filled him with amazement. Yes, Butler is very serious, "serious," it has been well said, "as a gamester, serious as a physician with life and death hanging on

the clearness of his thoughts and the courage of his resolve, serious as a general with a terrible and evenly balanced battle on his hands." And is not this a temper which we need more and more to cultivate to-day in our handling of the great questions of religion? There is something truly heartrending in the fashion in which nowadays men will suffer themselves to reason about religion, cheerfully indifferent to the magnitude of the issues at stake. Christianity may be true, Christianity may be false; at least do not let us treat it as though its truth or falsity no more concerned us than the truth or falsity of a mathematical proposition. Let us realise what Christianity is, what it has done, what it is doing, before we strive to discredit its message to men. For, remember, if Christianity be destroyed, it will not mean simply that one star has faded from the firmament above us; it will mean that the sun has gone for ever from our sky. 2. My next point will bring us into closer grips with our subject. Let me remind you, still following Butler's guidance, that intellectual difficulties may be for some of us a necessary part of our probation. I do not mean that this, even supposing it to be true, is sufficient to dispose of our difficulties. But it may help us to look upon them more calmly, more reasonably, if we can learn to think of them as our part in the vast and complex moral discipline which God has appointed for the perfecting of His children on earth. It is not unreasonable to conclude, as Butler does, that "what constitutes, what chiefly and peculiarly constitutes, the probation of some may be the difficulties in which the evidence of religion is involved; and their principal and distinguished trial may be how they will behave under and with respect to these difficulties." Temptation, we know, assails every man; but the methods of the tempter are manifold. Some are tempted to covetousness, some to indulgence of the flesh, some to quick and angry speech, some to sullen gloom and moroseness. But for some among us God has willed it that our testing shall come in the uncertainties and doubts which crowd in upon our minds whensoever we contemplate Him and His truth. As the hammer's stroke on the metal plate reveals the hidden flaw, so in our intellectual trials does God make proof of us. He discovers our pride, He lays bare our insincerity, He tests our love of truth, the moral soundness of our whole being. Blessed, thrice blessed, is he whose life rings true under that all-revealing stroke. 3. It may be, however, this is a line of argument which does not appeal to us. Then let us, still following Butler's guidance, seek the help we need by yet another path. Is not the root of most of the things which are objected against Christianity, and consequently of most of our difficulties in regard to it, in the limitations of our knowledge? And is it not the frank recognition of these limitations which is needed, perhaps above everything else, to win back for us our lost peace of mind? Some of you will remember the quiet scorn which Butler pours upon those who, as he says, "are weak enough to think they are acquainted with the whole course of things." "Let reason be kept to," he goes on; "and, if any part of the Scripture account of the redemption of the world by Christ can be shown to be really contrary to it, let the Scripture, in the name of God, be given up; but let not such poor creatures as we go on objecting against an infinite scheme, that we do not see the necessity or usefulness of all its parts, and call this reasoning." We ask questions which no man can answer, questions to which Christ Himself has given us no answer, and then we murmur because the heavens are silent to our cry. Who will solve for us the grievous mystery of pain? Why is nature "red in tooth and claw"? Why do little children die? Why is all our life so full of griefs and graves? "My God, my God, why——?" Questions like these are naked swords, which pierce the hand that strives to grasp them. Men will meet, said an old Greek, with many surprises when they are dead; and perhaps, adds one of our modern thinkers, one will be the recollection that when we were here we thought the ways of Almighty God so easy to argue about. 4. But, if this is so, if, indeed, we know so little, how, it may be asked, is it possible to come to a decision at all? Press the argument from our ignorance to its logical conclusion, and what does it spell but intellectual suspense, the paralysis of action? What in the long-run is Butler's doctrine but just so much grist to the agnostic's mill? But to argue thus is to forget what Butler himself is careful to point out, namely, that our knowledge, though limited, is real. "We know in part," but we know; "we see in a mirror darkly," but we see. "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path"—not more than that, but also not less than that; not light everywhere, for even revelation does not solve all questions, but light on my path, light to walk by. Many things are dark, but some at least are clear, and we can begin

with these. Is not goodness the principal thing? Is not man's duty to follow after goodness, the highest goodness which is known to him? "We needs must love the highest when we see it." And is not this highest goodness incarnate for us in Jesus Christ? Therefore, whatever else is dark, it must be right to follow Christ. Keep the things that perplex, and perhaps confound you, in their right place. Do not let them blind you to your first and plainest duty. After all, we are under no necessity to have a definite answer for every question which the restless wit of man can frame. Concerning many of them, it does not matter whether we have any opinion or not; neither if we have are we the better nor if we have not are we the worse. These things can wait. That which ought not to wait, which with many of us has waited far too long already, is our decision to yield ourselves to Christ. Once more I say, Whatever else is dark, it must be right to follow Christ. (*G. Jackson, B.A.*) *Mistaken friendship*:—It would be unfair to call the three men false friends. They were sincere, but being mistaken, they failed to discharge the high offices of true friendship. I. THERE ARE TIMES IN A MAN'S LIFE WHEN THE NEED OF FRIENDSHIP IS DEEPLY FELT. 1. Man was made for friendship. Deep and constant is his craving for the love of others, and equally deep and strong is his tendency to reciprocate the same. Without friendship his nature could no more be developed than could the acorn without the sunshine or the shower. Isolation would be man's death, solitary confinement has always been felt the most severe and intolerable of punishments. 2. Man requires friendship. Without the aid of friendship he would die in infancy; he requires friendship to nourish, to succour, and to train him. 3. Affliction intensifies the need of friendship. In times of suffering the need of friendship is specially felt. II. AT THESE TIMES PROFESSED FRIENDS ARE OFTEN TERRIBLY DISAPPOINTING. Job says in language of great poetic beauty and tenderness, that he was as much disappointed with his friends now as were the troop of Tema, and the companies of Sheba, who travelling over the hot sand, parched and wearied, came to a spot where they expected to find refreshing streams and found none. "My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook," &c. He does not mean perhaps that they were false, but that they deceived him not intentionally but by mistake. 1. Instead of pity they gave him unsympathetic talk. Had they wept and said nothing he would have been comforted; or had they spoken to the point and expressed sympathy he might have been comforted; or had they tenderly acknowledged the mystery of the Divine procedure in all, it might have soothed in some measure his anguished heart. But Eliphaz talked grandly and perhaps with a cold heart, he never touched the mark but by implication, charged him with being a great sinner because he was a great sufferer, and strongly reprobated his language of distress. 2. Instead of "pity" they gave him intrusive talk. "Did I say bring unto me, or give a reward for me of your substance?" &c. "If a man applies to his friends for pecuniary aid, and that aid is refused him he may be disappointed, but he cannot at once condemn them and charge them with unkindness, as they may be under circumstances which render it perfectly impossible for them to comply with his request. But if he asks of them nothing but commiseration and sympathy, and even these are denied him, he cannot but consider such denial as a great piece of inhumanity and cruelty. Now this was precisely the case with Job."—Bernard. 3. Instead of "pity" they gave him irrelevant talk. "Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; and cause me to understand wherein I have erred. How forcible are right words! but what doth your arguing prove?" &c. In all this he evidently reproves Eliphaz for the irrelevancy of his talk. He seems to say, you have not taught me anything, you have not explained the true cause of my affliction. Nothing that you have said is applicable to me in my miserable condition. 4. Instead of "pity" they gave him ungenerous talk. Here the patriarch acknowledges that the extravagant language which, in the wildness of his anguish, he used in the fourth chapter was mere "wind." "Do you imagine to reprove words?" &c., and states that their carping at such utterances was as cruel as the overwhelming of the fatherless. Language spoken in certain moods of mind should be allowed to pass by, almost without notice. Anguish often maddens the mind, and causes the tongue to run riot. It is ungenerous in friends to notice language which, under the tide of strong emotions, may be forced from us. (1) He urges them to look upon him, and not at his words. (2) He assures them of the sincerity even of his language. I have an inner sense by which I can determine what is right or wrong in speech. Mistaken

friendship is sometimes as pernicious and irritating as false friendship. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 15-20. **My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook.**—*The uses and lessons of disappointment*:—The meaning of this passage is, that Job had been disappointed. He hoped his friends would have comforted him in his sorrows; but all his expectations from that quarter had failed. He had been like weary and thirsty travellers in a desert, who came to the place where they hoped and expected to find water, but who, when they came, found that the streams were dried up, and had vanished away. I. THE FORMS IN WHICH DISAPPOINTMENTS OCCUR. They are as numerous and as varied as our hopes. There are two uses of hope. One is to stimulate us to exertion by the prospect of some good to be obtained and enjoyed. The other is to be held in the Divine hand as a means of checking, restraining, humbling, recovering, and controlling us. 1. Disappointments which relate to the acquisition of property. Some desire to be rich; and some desire the reputation of being rich. The majority of those who with such ends in view seek property, are destined to be disappointed. 2. Those who aim at distinction in honour and office are often disappointed. 3. Those who attempt to build up their family name, and obtain distinction in their children. Few hopes are more likely to be disappointed. A blight often rests upon the effort to found a family name. Honours are scattered by a rule that no one can study out. 4. Those who seek for happiness solely in the things of this life. Multitudes seek it; a few profess to find it to an extent that rewards their efforts; the man disappointed in one thing, at one time, hopes to find it in another. II. THE REASONS WHY DISAPPOINTMENTS OCCUR. 1. Because the plans and expectations which were formed were beyond any reasonable ground of calculation, based on the ordinary course of events, or what ordinarily happens to man. Many illusions play upon the minds and around the hearts of men. They arise from several sources. We are either ignorant of or forgetful of the usual course of events, and do not take that into our calculation; or we anticipate in the future what does not commonly occur; or we trust in our "star," or our destiny, and suppose that ours is to be an exception to the common lot; or we are merely presumptuous, relying on what we suppose is our talent, or something in us which will exempt us from the common lot of mankind; or we feel that there is a charm around us and our family. So we engage in the execution of our plans with as sanguine a feeling as if we were certain that they would be all successful. As a law of our nature it is wise that this should be so, if we would only admit the possibility that we might be disappointed, and if we would not murmur when disappointment comes. 2. Because our expectations were such as were improper in themselves. They related to things in which we ought not to have cherished hope. 3. Because disappointments may be for our good. He who sees all things perceives that success may be perilous for us. III. LESSONS WHICH OUR DISAPPOINTMENTS SHOULD TEACH. 1. All our plans in life should be formed with the possibility of failure in view. Possibility, not gloomy foreboding. Life would be a burden if fear had the same place in the economy which hope now has. 2. We should form such plans and cherish such hopes as will not be subject to disappointment. Such as relate to religion and are founded on that. Others may be successful, these certainly will be. For evidence of this see that they who become true Christians are not disappointed in what religion promises in this life. The mind has a conviction of its own that religion will not disappoint. And we have God's promises. Those, therefore, who have felt what disappointment is in regard to worldly hopes and prospects, religion invites to herself, with the assurance that it will never disappoint them; and she points them to heaven as the place where disappointment never comes. (*Albert Barnes.*) *Brethren as brooks*:—The figure is derived from the winter brooks which pour down the Arabian wadies, full, turgid, roaring, fed by snow and ice, discoloured—black with the melted ice, but which vanish away under the first heat of the summer sun. I. FRIENDS ARE OFTEN, LIKE WINTER BROOKS, FULL SO LONG AS THEY ARE FED. In this, then, may be found their likeness to that false friendship which is never so strong and noisy and babbling as when it is living upon your substance. As long as these friends can draw from your abundance, their professions are loud—they are like the full, strong stream of winter. II. FRIENDS OFTEN GIVE, LIKE "WINTER BROOKS," PROMISES WHICH ARE UNFULFILLED. The Arabs say of a treacherous friend, "I trust not in thy torrent." The caravan wends its way through the sultry desert.

The drivers remember a valley where, in the spring, the waters flowed in a copious stream. They turn aside to seek it. Behold, nothing but a torrent-scarred gorge! (Note—Verse 18 should be translated thus: "[The caravans] turn aside out of the way; they go to a desert and perish.") Thus with false friendship. In your adversity you recall the promises of those whom you befriended. You turn to them in your distress and perplexity. You go "to a desert"! III. FRIENDS OFTEN WITHDRAW IN ADVERSITY LIKE BROOKS IN SUMMER. "What time they wax warm they become slender; when it is hot they are consumed out of their place." "First the stream flows more narrowly,—then becomes silent and still; at length every trace of water disappears by evaporation." Accurate description of the conduct of "friends," who have not the courage to break openly with you, but desert you by degrees. In the light of this how comforting the reflection that there is a Friend who sticketh closer than a brother. He is the river of the water of life—no failing stream. (*J. L. Lafferty.*) *Friends fail in adversity*:—Sir W. Scott had become a bankrupt by lavish expenditures on his castle, &c. The heaviest blow was, I think, the blow to his pride. Very early he begins to note painfully the different way in which different friends greet him, to remark that some smile as if to say, "Think nothing about it, my lad, it is quite out of our thoughts"; that others adopt an affected gravity, "such as one sees and despises at a funeral," and the best-bred "just shook hands and went on."

Ver. 24. **Teach me, and I will hold my tongue.**—*The virtue of silence*:—This is the passionate outcry of a soul in trouble. Misfortune and loss have fallen heavily upon Job. His spirit is sorely stricken. The presence of Eliphaz and his many words of advice bring neither comfort nor hope, and almost in angry defiance the cry bursts from his lips, "Teach me, and I will hold my tongue. Cause me to understand wherein I have erred. How forcible are right words! but what doth your arguing reprove?" Angrily and hopelessly Job describes himself as "one that is desperate." His eager demand is to know whether the trials and calamities that have come upon him are in reality due to exceeding wickedness and special sinfulness on his part. Let us take the words, "Teach me, and I will hold my tongue," as the prayer of the earnest soul in the presence of God. In the experience of every Christian man occasions arise—alas, how often!—when words of unrestrained anger are allowed to escape from the lips—bitter, biting words that wound many a heart, that work havoc in the home, that make others wonder and even stumble, that bring discredit on the Christian profession. Truly the words of the apostle James are not the language of exaggeration. "The tongue is a fire; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." Well may our prayer to God daily be, "Teach me, and I will hold my tongue." Or, again, is not the same prayer needed in regard to our common conversation? Our speech is not always "with grace," and, apart altogether from words of wrath and bitterness, there is a general carelessness which is to be deplored. Through sheer thoughtlessness incalculable harm is often done. The prayer is indeed necessary. "Teach me, and I will hold my tongue." Usefully, however, as this text may be employed in enforcing common Christian duties and graces, my chief aim is to apply it to the culture of our deeper spiritual experience. The golden virtue of silence is not much in demand at the present time. On all hands the tendency is towards speech. It is a superficial age. Loudness and self-advertisement are in evidence rather than quietness and contemplation. Now I submit that when the prayer for Divine teaching is earnestly offered, there will be greater readiness to keep silence, greater desire for the quieter side of Christian life, greater longing for that deeper spirituality which does not always, or even chiefly, manifest itself in words. Even in the ordinary affairs of life the instructed man is not the man most eager to speak. Knowledge should bring humility, and a deepening sense of the tasks yet to be achieved. It is the man of little knowledge who is generally most eager to parade his opinions. In the spiritual culture of men it is not those who have passed through the deepest experiences that are most ready to speak of such things. The Divine teaching emphasises the importance and the value of silence quite as much as of speech. It enforces the need for quietness and meditation. How weary one often grows of the way in which Christ and Christianity are talked about on every side! How terrible is the lack of serious thought, or the presence of empty and complacent speech! Dr. Martineau has well said, "If theological gossip were the measure of religious faith, we should be the devoutest of all human generations." I fear not! Curiosity,

rather than reality, is the note that is sounded. Even in our Churches we must surely be grieved, and sometimes alarmed, by the lack of depth and seriousness. Earnest thought and prayerful aspiration are not too much in evidence. We talk too much: we strive too much. With our many organisations, societies, schemes, we are in danger of putting too high a value on the power of speech to the depreciation of the spirit that waits in silence and communes with God. Our aim seems largely to be to make speakers. Now I know well the need that exists for such help. Far be it from me to depreciate it! Yet I feel strongly that we are confronted by the peril of overestimating this kind of service. We are only too apt to forget the value of the man of quiet spirit, and to exalt unduly the man of many words and ready speech. I want to enter a plea on behalf of the silent man. There are undoubtedly in all the Churches many who could not give utterance to the deep thoughts and lofty aspirations stirring within them, and yet whose lives have in them the very spirit of Jesus Christ, and stamped upon them what is none other than the beauty of holiness. The time of difficulty and crisis clearly reveals their strength and their value. Great, indeed, is our loss when we fail to appreciate the man of few words, but of real spiritual power. One of our besetting dangers to-day is that of words outrunning experience. This peril must always prevail where speech is unduly exalted and praised. Where all are encouraged and frequently overpersuaded to speak, utterance and conviction will find considerable difficulty in keeping company. Let the expression exceed the experience, and the spirit of unreality will creep in and will soon rule. Unreality will in the end beget contempt for the things professed, and indifference towards them. This is undoubtedly one of the explanations of the falling away of some in our Churches whose zeal has, for a time, been greatly in evidence. On the other hand we often find, especially among young people, that some of the very best of them are reserved in speech on religious matters, unwilling to discuss what is most sacred to them, unprepared as yet to reveal their deepest thoughts and experiences. The forcing-house has no attraction for them, and they shrink back from what seems undue familiarity with Divine things. Too often such are looked upon with suspicion, or spoken of with censure, by many glib of tongue yet unworthy to stand by their side. Let it be borne in mind, then, that while the Divine illumination may make men preachers and teachers, yet its result in producing silence and meditation is not to be overlooked nor lightly regarded. An intense hatred of sin, a clear conception of pardon, an earnest meditation on the wonders of grace and redemption, a tarrying long at the Cross of Calvary and dwelling on its mystery and glory—such vital experiences may well produce in the soul humility, awe, and silence. The quietness of the Divine method must not, then, be lost sight of. The virtue of silence must be more highly prized. Growth should be steady, not sudden; regular, not spasmodic. To this end personal communion with God, individual fellowship with Him is indispensable. The soul that waits in silence learns the deepest lessons, finds the richest treasures. Christ Himself found His truest strength in His solitary companionship with the Father. Silence has its place, therefore, in spiritual development. Speech is not to be underestimated. But there is little danger of that mistake being made. Far greater is the peril of an undue exaltation of the value of speech, and a corresponding depreciation of the virtue of silence. "Teach me, and I will hold my peace," is a prayer full of promise for the common days and common ways of life, as well as for its special experiences and special crises. (*H. P. Young.*)

And cause me to understand wherein I have erred.—*Man liable to error*:—1. Man is subject to error. To error in speech, to error in practice, to error in judgment. Man by nature can do nothing else but err. All his goings are goings astray, and all his knowledge is bottomed upon an heap of false principles. All his works (by nature) are errata, and the whole edition of his life a continued mistake. 2. That man is in a fair way to truth, who acknowledgeth he may err. 3. An error strictly and properly taken is that which we hold or do out of bare ignorance of the truth. 4. That an erring brother or friend must not be importuned barely to leave his error, but he must be made to understand his error. (*J. Caryl.*)

Ver. 25. **How forcible are right words!**—*The force of right words*:—Who has not felt the superiority of the power of Job's words compared with those of the words of his friends? How is this? Job suffered, struggled, and sorrowed, and therefore he learned something of the human heart. Irritating

to him were the words of his friends. Those words were as nothing; they reproved nothing; they appealed to nothing in the sorrow-stricken man. Righteous words would have been precious to him; hence his bitter disappointment after listening to the effusion of Eliphaz. Who has not felt the feebleness of *mere* platitudes when the soul has longed for sympathy? I. THAT WORDS MAY POSSESS A RIGHTEOUS OR UNRIGHTEOUS CHARACTER. "Right words." God declared to Job's friends, "Ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath." 1. The power of speech is a Divine gift. Whether words were originally given, or were elaborated by the faculty of speech, does not alter the question of the Divine origin of the gift. Without speech, where would have been the outcome of man's spiritual energies? How the soul speaks in the voice! "Burning words" proclaim the power of the spirit that is in man. 2. The Divine gift of words is intended to be a righteous power. By perversion of words sin was introduced; by the righteousness of words error and evil shall be destroyed. The words of God "are spirit and life." 3. In proportion to the excellence of the gift will be the responsibility of the speaker. "By thy words shalt thou be justified," &c. II. THE POWER OF WORDS FOR GOOD OR EVIL IS IN PROPORTION TO THEIR RIGHTEOUSNESS OR UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. "Doth not the ear try words?" "Righteous words reprove." 1. The words of God are instruments of righteousness. "Do not My words do good?" (Mic. ii. 7.) 2. The words of man are only righteous as they harmonise with the words of God. "Let your speech be always with grace" (Col. iv. 6). 3. In the "war of words" the righteous words shall be victorious. Great is truth, and must prevail. 4. Divine power operates through the words of the good. "I will be to thee a mouth and wisdom." Therefore "how forcible are right words!" 5. Evil words are destructive. "Whose word doth eat as doth a canker." The unrighteous words of Job's friends possessed a power that forced him to exclaim, "How forcible are right words!" (*Bishop Percival.*) *Right words:*—Words are right three ways. I. IN THE MATTER, when they are true. II. IN THE MANNER, when they are plain, direct, and perspicuous. III. IN THEIR USE, when they are duly and properly applied; when the arrow is carried home to the white, then they are right words, or words of righteousness. When this threefold rightness meets in words, how forcible, how strong are such words! (*J. Caryl.*) *The potency of language:*—Language is more than the expression of ideas. It sustains a more vital relation. Thought is a remote abstraction until it becomes visible, tangible, concrete, in words. Hence Wordsworth, with profound philosophy, wrote, "Language is the incarnation of thought." But more than this, a man knows not what he thinks until he tries to put it into words. The tongue or pen sometimes like a whetstone sharpens thought, giving it edge and point; sometimes like a painter's pencil, it communicates definiteness, precision, and exquisite colouring to the outlines of thought; again, like a prism, it seems to analyse and separate blended ideas; again, like a crystal, it imparts clearness, symmetry, brilliance; or like a mirror, it reflects and multiplies the rays of light. Verily, "how forcible are right words!" (*A. T. Pierson, D.D.*)

CHAPTER VII.

VER. 1. **Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?**—*An appointed time:*—I. THE NATURE OF THE FACT WHICH IS HERE AFFIRMED. 1. That the existence of man will be terminated by death. When sin was committed, the order and harmony of the universe was disturbed, and then the solemn and awful sentence was pronounced. What is the world itself, but a vast charnel house, to be filled with the ashes of innumerable dead? 2. The existence of man is confined to a narrow compass. There has been a serious abridgment of the average length of life. All the Scripture representations describe the extreme brevity of human life. We are pushed on by the hand of time, from the various objects we meet with in our course, wondering at the swiftness with which they are taken from our vision, and astonished at the destiny which winds up the scene and ratifies our doom. 3. The existence of man is, as to its precise duration, uncertain and unknown. We know not the day of our departure. There is an

impervious gloom about our final departure which no man can penetrate. But all is well known to the wisdom of God. With Him all is fixed—to us, all is uncertain. 4. Our departure from this world is for the purpose of our mingling in scenes which are beyond the grave. We do not depart and sink into the dulness of annihilation. This life is but the threshold of eternity; we are placed here as probationers for eternity. II. THE FEELINGS WHICH ARISE FROM THE CONTEMPLATION OF IT. There is a universal inclination to avoid these truths; they are regarded in general as merely professional; and there is much in the world to counteract their influence. All this can only be removed by the Spirit of God. 1. We ought to make our final departure the subject of habitual contemplation. 2. We should be induced to moderate our attachment to the world, from which we shall so soon be separated. 3. You should be induced to seek an interest in that redeeming system by which you may depart in peace, with the prospect of eternal happiness. 4. We should be induced to pursue with Christian diligence those great employments which the Gospel has proposed. (*James Parsons.*) *Life as a clock*:—Our brains are seventy year clocks. The angel of life winds them up at once for all, then closes the cases, and gives the key into the hand of the angel of resurrection. "Tic-tac, tic-tac!" go the wheels of thought. Our will cannot stop them, madness only makes them go faster. Death alone can break into the case, and, seizing the ever-swinging pendulum which we call the heart, silence at last the clicking of the terrible escapement we have carried so long beneath our aching foreheads. If we could only get at them as we lie on our pillows, and count the dead beats of thought after thought, and image after image, jarring through the overtired organ. Will nobody block those wheels, uncouple their pinion, cut the string which holds those weights? What a passion comes over us sometimes for silence and rest, that this dreadful mechanism, unwinding the endless tapestry of time, embroidered with spectral figures of life and death, might have but one brief holiday! (*J. Holmes.*) *The hand of God in the history of a man*:—I. THERE IS A DIVINE APPOINTMENT RULING ALL HUMAN LIFE. Not that I single out man's existence as the sole object of Divine forethought, far rather do I believe it to be but one little corner of illimitable providence. A Divine appointment arranges every event, minute or magnificent. As we look out on the world from our quiet room it appears to be a mass of confusion. Events happen which we deeply deplore—incidents which appear to bring evil, and only evil, and we wonder why they are permitted. The picture before us, to the glance of reason, looks like a medley of colour. But the affairs of this world are neither tangled, nor confused, nor perplexing to Him who seeth the end from the beginning. God is in all, and rules all. In the least as well as in the greatest, Jehovah's power is manifested. It is night, but the watchman never sleepeth, and Israel may rest in peace. The tempest rages, but it is well, for our Captain is governor of storms. Our main point is that God rules mortal life; and He does so, first, as to its term, "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?" He rules it, secondly, as to its warfare, for so the text might most properly be read, "Is there not an appointed warfare for man upon earth?" And, thirdly, He rules it as to its service, for the second clause of the text is, "Are not his days as the days of an hireling?" 1. First, then, God's determination governs the time of human life. (1) We shall all acknowledge this as to its commencement. Not without infinite wisdom did any infant's life commence there and then, for no man is the offspring of chance. Who would wish to have first seen the light at the era when our naked forefathers sacrificed to idols? Our presence on earth in this day of grace was a matter altogether beyond our control, and yet it involves infinite issues; therefore let us with deepest gratitude bless the Lord, who has cast our lot in such an auspicious season. (2) The continuance of life is equally determined of God. He who fixed our birth has measured the interval between the cradle and the grave, and it shall not be a day longer or a day shorter than the Divine decree. (3) So, too, has He fixed life's termination. "Is there not an appointed time for man upon earth?" a time in which the pulse must cease, the blood stagnate, and the eye be closed. Moreover, how consoling is this truth; for, if the Father of our Lord Jesus arranges all, then our friends do not die untimely deaths. The beloved of the Lord are not cut off before their time; they go into Jesus' bosom when they are ready to be received there. 2. But we must now consider the other translation of our text. It is generally given in the margin of the Bibles. "Is there not an appointed warfare to man upon earth?" which

teaches us that God has appointed life to be a warfare. To all men it will be so, whether bad or good. Every man will find himself a soldier under some captain or another. Alas for those men who are battling against God and His truth, they will in the end be clothed with dishonour and defeat. No Christian is free to follow his own devices; we are all under law to Christ. A soldier surrenders his own will to that of his commander. Such is the Christian's life—a life of willing subjection to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. In consequence of this we have our place fixed and our order arranged for us, and our life's relative positions are all prescribed. A soldier has to keep rank and step with the rest of the line. As we have a warfare to accomplish, we must expect hardships. A soldier must not reckon upon ease. If life be a warfare, we must look for contests and struggles. The Christian man must not expect to go to heaven without opposition. It is a warfare, for all these reasons, and yet more so because we must always be upon the watch against danger. In a battle no man is safe. Blessed be God that the text says "Is there not an 'appointed' warfare?" Then, it is not our warfare, but one that God has appointed for us, in which He does not expect us to wear out our armour, or bear our own charges, or find our own rations, or supply our own ammunition. The armour that we wear we have not to construct, and the sword we wield we have not to fabricate. 3. The Lord has also determined the service of our life. All men are servants to some master or another, neither can any of us avoid the servitude. The greatest men are only so much the more the servants of others. If we are now the servants of the Lord Jesus, this life is a set time of a labour and apprenticeship to be worked out. I am bound by solemn indentures to my Lord and Master till my term of life shall run out, and I am right glad to have it so. Now, a servant who has let himself out for a term of years has not a moment that he can call his own, nor have any of us, if we are God's people. We have not a moment, no, not a breath, nor a faculty, nor a farthing that we may honestly reserve. You must expect to toil in His service till you are ready to faint, and then His grace will renew your strength. A servant knows that his time is limited. If it is weekly service, he knows that his engagement may be closed on Saturday; if he is hired by the month, he knows how many days there are in a month, and he expects it to end; if he is engaged by the year, he knows the day of the year when his service shall be run out. As for us, we do not know when our term will be complete. The hireling expects his wages; that is one reason for his industry. We, too, expect ours—not of debt truly, but of grace, yet still a gracious reward. God does not employ servants without paying them wages, as many of our merchants now do. II. Secondly, THE INFERENCES TO BE DRAWN FROM THIS FACT. 1. First, there is Job's inference. Job's inference was that as there was only an appointed time, and he was like a servant employed by the year, he might be allowed to wish for life's speedy close, and therefore he says, "As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and as an hireling looketh for the reward of his work." Job was right in a measure, but not altogether so. There is a sense in which every Christian may look forward to the end of life with joy and expectancy, and may pray for it. At the same time, there are needful modifications to this desire to depart, and a great many of them; for, first, it would be a very lazy thing for a servant to be always looking for Saturday night, and to be always sighing and groaning because the days are so long. The man who wants to be off to heaven before his life's work is done does not seem to me to be quite the man that is likely to go there at all. Besides, while our days are like those of a hireling, we serve a better master than other servants do. 2. I will tell you the devil's inference. The devil's inference is that if our time, warfare, and service are appointed, there is no need of care, and we may cast ourselves down from the pinnacle of the temple, or do any other rash thing, for we shall only work out our destiny. "Oh," say they, "we need not turn to Christ, for if we are ordained to eternal life we shall be saved." Yes, sirs, but why will you eat at meal-time to-day? Why, sirs, nothing in the world more nerves me for work than the belief that God's purposes have appointed me to this service. Being convinced that the eternal forces of immutable wisdom and unfailing power are at my back, I put forth all my strength as becometh a "worker together with God." 3. I will now give you the sick man's inference. "Is there not an appointed time to men upon earth? Are not his days also like the days of an hireling?" The sick man, therefore, concludes that his pains will not last for ever, and that every suffering is measured out by love Divine. Therefore, let him be patient, and in confidence and quietness shall be his strength.

4. Next comes the mourner's inference—one which we do not always draw quite so readily as we should. It is this: "My child has died, but not too soon. My husband is gone; ah, God, what shall I do? Where shall my widowed heart find sympathy? Still he has been taken away at the right time. The Lord has done as it pleased Him, and He has done wisely." 5. Furthermore, let us draw the healthy man's inference. I have no end of business—too much, a great deal; and I resolved "I will get all square and trim as if I were going off, for perhaps I am." You are a healthy man, but be prepared to die. 6. Lastly, there is the sinner's inference. "My time, my warfare, and my service are appointed, but what have I done in them? I have waged a warfare against God, and have served in the pay of the devil; what will the end be?" Sinner, you will run your length, you will fulfil your day to your black master; you will fight his battle and earn your pay, but what will the wages be? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 2, 3. **As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow.**—*Longing for sunset:* —The title of this sermon is the subject of a picture. The artist shows an overworked and weary slave, earnestly looking to the western sky, and longing for the evening shadow which will say his work is done. I. THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF THAT EXPERIENCE IN WHICH THE SOUL "EARNESTLY DESIRETH THE SHADOW," OR THE COMING ON OF THE NIGHT OF DEATH. The natural instinct of man is to desire to live. Yet there is a settled mood or habit of the soul in which there is longing for sunset. 1. One form of this experience arises out of painful and exhausting sickness. Months of bitterness and wearisome nights had, for Job, worn away the instinct of life. The grave seemed to him a desirable refuge from his distresses. 2. When the infirmities of old age creep on, and life continues after the loss of nearly all the friends among whom it was passed. 3. Those under the shadow of a mighty sorrow from God often long for sunset. Worldly disappointments sometimes almost craze the agonised spirit. 4. The baffled hero of the Church, after a long conflict with wickedness, often yearns for the end of his course. (Illustrate from Luther.) 5. The high, Christian experience which finds delight in working for God upon earth, yearns also for a full communion with Him in heaven. II. IS SUCH AN EXPERIENCE HEALTHY AND DESIRABLE IN ANY OF ITS FORMS? When inspired by a clear realisation of the celestial glories, it certainly is both healthy and desirable. The real Christian often needs this longing for God as the solace and hope of his work. But every form of this experience which arises from disgust of life, is both unhealthy and undesirable. It is not a normal condition of the soul of man to wish to die, simply as a relief from the cares and toils of this world. Men love activity. It is a sure sign of unhealth when the manly vigour of the soul succumbs to its sorrows, and longs for the rest of the grave. The physical system is itself broken down. Such a state of mind is also undesirable. It oppresses the soul with a heavy load, so that it can bear no burden of duty. It envelops the life in a cloud of darkness, so that it cannot see the light. It is to be prayed against, laboured against, and lived against, with the utmost tenacity of will. III. HOW FAR IS IT RIGHT OR WRONG TO HARBOUR THIS DISGUST OF LIFE? We cannot condemn this longing for death in the souls of those worn out by disease, but we cannot sanction the very common notion that it is to any extent the proof of grace in the heart. So far as the desire of the grave is concerned, it is simply the breaking down of nature, and not the incoming of grace. It is right too for the aged man to look joyfully towards the end. And if for the aged, why not for the oppressed? No one who is called to live has any right to wish to die. Every Christian is sinning against God, when he permits himself to loathe, or to neglect the actual work to which he is clearly called. Observe, then, the supreme dignity of a joyful, earnest, working life in God. That is better far than a constant longing for sunset. God gives a higher importance to our living than to our dying. Yet, though a working life is to be desired in itself, it is not true that a Christian is always best trained in the sunshine. Some of the most precious of the graces grow best in the darkness, and the choicest disciples very often pass their lives under a cloud. But we must not forget that the shadow will be falling soon, nor neglect to prepare for death. And it is well to keep in mind the blessings which the sunset will bring to the weary saint. (*W. H. Corning.*)

Vers. 3–5. **I am made to possess months of vanity.**—*The wasted weeks*

of sickness :—"Months of vanity" indicate a protracted time of uselessness, when no good cause is furthered by us, and we ourselves seem rather to be failing in piety than growing in grace; a time of suffering without Divine consolation; months which look not even like months of discipline, because no good end seems to be served by the affliction. The modes of spiritual distress are almost as varied as the modes of spiritual progress. I. THE EXPERIENCE OF "MONTHS OF VANITY." We must carefully distinguish between these and months of sin, or of punishment for sin. 1. Job's "months of vanity" were the result of disastrous circumstances. 2. Sickness was another factor of Job's distress. 3. Job suffered from the injudicious sympathy of his friends. There was no lack of tenderness in these men. They were, however, wholly mistaken in the man; they wholly misread the meaning of his affliction and the purpose of God. 4. Job was in the hand of Satan. Are there not times when every woe is aggravated, and all the sufferer's courage sapped by the consciousness that no help is being vouchsafed? There are powers of evil which make themselves felt, thoughts that come charged with doubt, despair, and death. These are the things that try a man, seeming to make his life valueless and his piety a dream. II. THE DIVINE MEANING IN THESE "MONTHS OF VANITY." All this takes place in the providence of God. The consciousness of the sufferer is no true exponent, as his past experience is no measure of the Divine purpose. 1. These "months of vanity" revealed the energy of Job's endurance. There are Christians whose mere endurance is a greater triumph of grace than the labours and successes of others. 2. See the manifest victory of Job's faith. His utterances become more and more the utterances of faith. The manifest victory of faith becomes an enlargement of faith. 3. An enlarged thought of God was another of the fruits of Job's "months of vanity." (See the last chapter.) 4. The profound compassion and awe awakened in others by the sight of the good man's sufferings. We always need to have a new flow of sympathy, to be disturbed in our self-complacency; the tragedy of life unfolds itself to us; we are awestricken to mark God's dealings with human souls. We learn in what a man's life consists; we watch with patience for the assured victory of the human spirit. Life becomes nobler and grander; homely piety takes on a new dignity as the infinite possibilities of the patient soul appear. (*A. Mackennal, D.D.*) *The design and improvement of useless days and wearisome nights* :—I. USELESS DAYS AND WEARISOME NIGHTS MAY BE THE PORTION OF THE BEST OF MEN. To those who, like Job, are righteous and upright in the sight of God, and have been, like him, healthy, vigorous, and useful, "months of vanity" are months void of health, activity, and usefulness. But this to an aged Christian is not so grievous as that there are months of vanity in which he is capable of doing little for the glory of God and the good of his fellow-creatures. An ancient writer calls old age "a middle state between health and sickness." II. MONTHS OF VANITY AND WEARISOME NIGHTS ARE TO BE CONSIDERED AS THE APPOINTMENT OF GOD, AND TO BE IMPROVED ACCORDINGLY. God intends hereby—1. To restrain an earthly spirit, and bring His people to serious consideration and piety. In order to restrain the inordinate love of the world, God is pleased to visit men with pain and sickness. He gives them time to think and consider. 2. To exercise and strengthen their graces, especially their humility, patience, meekness, and contentment. It is very difficult habitually to practise these virtues, especially if we have long enjoyed health and ease. But when God toucheth our bone and our flesh, He calls us to and disposeth us for the exercise of them. 3. To promote the good and advantage of others. It is the observation of a lively writer "that God makes one-half of the human species a moral lesson to the other half." Thus He set forth Job as an example of enduring affliction and of patience. 4. To confirm their hopes and excite their desires of a blessed immortality. They tend to confirm their hopes of it. Reflections—(1) They whose days are useful, and their nights comfortable, have great reason to be continually thankful. (2) Learn to expect and prepare for the days of affliction. (3) Let me exhort and comfort those who are afflicted as Job was. (*Job Orton.*) *On sickness* :—When any disease severely attacks us, we are ready to imagine that our trouble is almost peculiar to ourselves; attended with circumstances which have never been before experienced. So we think, but we are deceived. The same complaint has been formerly made; others have exceeded us in sufferings, as much as they have excelled us in patience and piety. There are disorders which make our beds uneasy. Some circumstances render the night particularly

tedious to those who are sick. 1. Its darkness. Light is sweet. 2. Its solitariness. In the day the company and conversation of friends help to beguile the time. At night we are left alone. 3. Its confinement. In the day change of place and posture afford temporary relief. At night we are shut up, as it were, in a prison. 4. Its wakefulness. If we could get sleep we should welcome it as a very desirable blessing. It would render us, for a time, insensible to pain. Sometimes we cannot sleep. Suggest some useful reflections—(1) Be thankful for former mercies. (2) Be humbled for former sins. Observe the latter part of the text. Our disorders may be not only painful to ourselves, but offensive to those who are near us. Then be not proud of your bodies. Never boast of their strength or their complexion; for both may be destroyed by a short fit of sickness. Learn the much greater loathsomeness of sin. And rejoice in the prospect of having better bodies hereafter. (*S. Lavington.*)

Ver. 6. **My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle.**—*The web of life*:—These words fitly describe the quickness with which the days of our life glide away. The weaver at his frame swiftly throws the shuttle from side to side, backwards and forwards, and every throw leaves a thread behind it, which is woven into the piece of cloth he is making. And Job compares human life to the shuttle's motions. I. THE SWIFTNESS OF OUR DAYS. When anything is gone, and gone for ever, we begin to think more of its value. "Man is like a thing of nought—his time passeth away like a shadow." II. EACH DAY HAS ADDED ANOTHER THREAD TO THE WEB OF LIFE. What is our life but a collection of days? Each day adds something to the colour and complexion of the whole life—something for good or evil. Thus each day is, as it were, a representative of the whole life. Of how great importance then is every day! III. WE WEAVE NOW WHAT WE WEAR IN ETERNITY. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Scriptures declare that our life will be brought into evidence to show whether we were believers in Christ or not. Then let us ask ourselves these questions—1. On what are we resting our hope of salvation? 2. Is it our sincere desire to be conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ? 3. Do we live in the spirit of prayer? 4. How has the day of our life been spent? What have we done for God's glory? (*E. Blencowe, M.A.*) *The web of life*:—I. THE SWIFTNESS OF OUR DAYS. We are apt not to prize them till they are gone. Each was full of mercies: did we appreciate them? Each was full of opportunities: did we use them wisely or abuse them? II. EACH DAY ADDS A THREAD TO THE WEB OF LIFE. Each day has its influence for good or evil, for sin or holiness, for God or Satan. III. WHAT WE NOW WEAVE WE SHALL WEAR IN ETERNITY. What is the web your life is weaving? Application—1. On what are you resting your hopes of salvation? 2. Is it your sincere desire to be conformed to the likeness of Jesus? 3. Do you live in the spirit of prayer? 4. Consider at the close of each day how it has been spent. 5. What, on the whole, is the texture and colouring of the web of your life as you look upon it in the light of another dying or opening year? (*Homiletic Review.*) *The web of life*:—A Christian man's life is laid in the loom of time to a pattern which he does not see, but God does: and his heart is a shuttle. On one side of the loom is sorrow, and on the other joy; and the shuttle, struck alternately by each, flies back and forth, carrying the thread, which is white or black as the pattern needs. And in the end, when God shall lift up the finished garment and all its changing hues shall glance out, it will then appear that the deep and dark colours were as needful to beauty as the bright and high colours. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Life's brevity*:—How brief it is! Who stood sentinel by the gate of Shushan when the royal couriers, bearing hope to the Jews, dashed through, burying their spurs in their horses' flanks—who stood on the platform by the iron rails that stretch from Holyhead to London, when signals flashed on along the line to stop the traffic and keep all clear, an engine and carriage dashed by with tidings of peace or war from America—saw an image of life. The eagle poising herself a moment on the wing, and then rushing at her prey; the ship that throwing the spray from her bows, scuds before the gale; the shuttle flashing through the loom; the shadow of a cloud sweeping the hillside, and then gone for ever; the summer flowers that vanishing, have left our gardens bare, and where were spread out the colours of the rainbow, only dull, black earth, or the rotting wreck of beauty—these with many other fleeting things, are emblems by which God through nature teaches us how frail we are, at the longest how short our days. (*T. Guthrie.*)

Ver. 12. **Am I a sea, or a whale, that Thou settest a watch over me?**—*Watch and ward* :—These words are part of that first great cry to heaven that broke from the stricken soul of Job. He seems to expostulate with the Almighty for treating him so harshly. He, a poor, weak, frail mortal, was being handled as firmly and as severely as though he was as boisterous and encroaching as an angry sea; as savage and as dangerous as a monster of the river or the deep. His heart and his flesh cry out against this. I am not going to upbraid Job for this. It is far more the groaning of the flesh than the insurrection of the soul. God knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust. There are great lessons here, nevertheless. God exercises a direct control in the universe His hand hath made, and all things are under a law of restraint. Job himself was conscious of this restraining law. "Thou settest a watch over me." Every individual has to bend to this superior will; is held in check by this unseen hand. No man can accomplish the full gratification of his desires, can work out the full execution of his plans. He is held back by the force of public sentiment; by the power of conscience; by lack of capacity; by the force of circumstance; and by the direct interposition of the will of God. Job's words imply perplexity, doubt, question, and distress because of this restraint. You and I know his line of feeling and of thought very well, we fret and murmur within the chain that binds us, the fetters that restrain us, the ropes that hold us in. There are good reasons why man should be watched even more closely, reined in more firmly, than anything in the material universe beside. Man possesses a higher nature, and sustains a nearer relationship to God. He is the offspring of God. Man is the only being that has a capacity to break through the lawful boundaries and limits of his place and sphere. He can overleap the laws of moral being, and become a curse to himself and to his kind. He has even a tendency to deviate and rush across the true line of his being, the just and righteous limitations of his nature. Nothing but man in all nature has a tendency to get out of his place. And man is also the only creature capable of definite improvement under the control and superintendence of God. It is a grand thing then, a noble privilege, a gracious mercy that God sets a watch over us, puts us under special ward, and makes His providence so that all things shall work together for good. And our true wisdom lies in this, that we seek, and suffer, and yield ourselves to God's wise and good control. If we will, His government of us shall be the law of love, the law of life. Self-will is our peril. To take our own course is, in the most serious sense, to take our own life. "Thy will be done." That is the way of wisdom. Love holds the reins of government, and God is Guardian, Controller, Governor, and Guide. (*Good Company.*) *Man marked and watched* :—Certain men are not only plagued by conscience and dogged by fear, but the providence of God seems to have gone out against them. Just when the man had resolved to have a bout of drinking, he fell sick of a fever, and had to go to the hospital. He was going to a dance; but he became so weak that he had not a leg to stand upon. He was forced to toss to and fro on the bed, to quite another tune from that which pleases the ball-room. He had yellow fever, and was long in pulling round. God watched him, and put the skid on him just as he meant to have a breakneck run downhill. The man gets better, and he says to himself, "I will have a good time now." But then he is out of berth, and perhaps he cannot get a ship for months, and he is brought down to poverty. "Dear me!" he says, "everything goes against me. I am a marked man"; and so he is. Just when he thinks that he is going to have a fair wind, a tempest comes on and drives him out of his course, and he sees rocks ahead. After a while he thinks, "Now I am all right. Jack is himself again, and piping times have come." A storm hurries up; the ship goes down, and he loses all but the clothes he has on his back. He is in a wretched plight: a shipwrecked mariner, far from home. God seems to pursue him, even as He did Jonah. He carries with him misfortune for others, and he might well cry, "Am I a sea, or a whale, that Thou settest a watch over me?" Nothing prospers. His tacklings are loosed; he cannot well strengthen his mast; his ship leaks; his sails are rent; his yards are snapped; and he cannot make it out. Other people seem to get on, though they are worse than he is. Time was when he used to be lucky too; but now he has parted company with success, and carries the black flag of distress. He is driven to and fro by contrary winds; he makes no headway; he is a miserable man, and would wish that the whole thing would go to the bottom, only he dreads a place which has no bottom, from which there is no escape, if once you sink into it. The providence of God runs hard against him, and thus he sees

himself to be a watched man. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Man magnified in view of God's providence* :—This is an expression of wonder, petulance, and expostulation at the strangeness of God's dealings. They seemed to Job unsuitable and disproportionate. Viewing himself as the object of them, he was amazed and disaffected at their character and scale. He deemed such an exertion of force, such a stretch of observation, such an expense of care and agency, unmeet, and wasted on so inconsiderable and impotent an object. Surely it is unnecessary and unbecoming condescension in Thee to stoop at such an expense of care and effort, to repress his designs and chastise his faults! Contempt and derision are alone suited to the case of such a puny creature. . . . Man is treated by God as though he were a thing of magnitude, consequence, might, and value. The providence of God magnifies man, proves him to be an object of wonderful interest, concern, and solicitude to his Maker. Herein is a mystery. Why am I thus? Wherein does the value consist? None of His stupendous and potent creatures has cost Him, and yet does cost Him so much as poor, feeble, shortlived I, who, if blotted out of creation, would make a void too small to be felt or seen. But God measures values not by material volume, or physical efficiency, but by likeness to Himself, spiritual furniture, length of being. Then, since Thou hast made me thus, I marvel not that Thou dost care for me thus. I marvel not that by so many precautions, and by such frequent checks and corrections, Thou restrainest me from ruining so precious a substance, and filling with wretchedness so durable a being. The discovery of this invisible value may serve to explain the fact of God's vigilance and jealousy over man, but it does not account for the methods in which they are exhibited. The character of God's providence over man is well described in the phrase of Job, "Thou settest a watch over me," which denotes constant distrust, observation, and vigilance, an attitude of suspicion and alarm. Can this be a true picture of the way in which the great God treats feeble man? I should expect more summary and decisive measures. Yet God saves man, as it were, by stratagem, with much painstaking and multiplied endeavours. Here a new phase of human greatness presents itself. Man is not only a spiritual and immortal creature, but a being of will, a voluntary agent, the arbiter of his own destiny. Liberty is a dangerous thing, involving fearful hazards. The control of a wise, good despot might be much safer. God can only "set a watch over me," and eye me with affectionate solicitude. And surely He spares no expense to persuade me to choose aright, and impress me with a sense of my own importance, and of the vastness of the stake dependent on my choice. Then, brethren, esteem and treat yourselves as your God esteems and treats you. So respected and cared for by God, begin to respect and care for yourselves. (*R. A. Hallam, D.D.*) "*Am I a sea, or a whale?*"—Job was in great pain when he thus bitterly complained. I. I have, first, to say that SOME MEN SEEM TO BE SPECIALLY TRACKED AND WATCHED BY GOD. We hear of persons being "shadowed" by the police, and certain people feel as if they were shadowed by God; they are mysteriously tracked by the great Spirit, and they know and feel it. All men are really surrounded by God. He is not far from every one of us. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." Some are singularly aware of the presence of God. Certain of us never were without a sense of God. With others God's watch is seen in a different way. 1. They feel that they are watched by God, because their conscience never ceases to rebuke them. 2. In some this watching has gone farther, for they are under solemn conviction of sin. 3. Certain men are not only plagued by conscience and dogged by fear, but the providence of God seems to have gone out against them. Yes, and God also watches over many in the way of admonition. Wherever they go, holy warnings follow them. II. Secondly, we notice that THEY ARE VERY APT TO DISLIKE THIS WATCHING. Job is not pleased with it. Do you know what they would like? 1. They want liberty to sin. They would like to be let loose, and to be allowed to do just as their wild wills would suggest to them. 2. They wish also that they could be as hard of heart as many others are. 3. Men do not like this being surrounded by God—this wearing the bit and kicking strap—because they would drop God from their thoughts. 4. Once more, there are some who do not like to be shadowed in this way, because they want to have their will with others. There are men—and seamen to be found among them—who are not satisfied with being ruined themselves, but they thirst to ruin others. III. The third part is this—that THIS ARGUMENT AGAINST THE LORD'S DEALINGS IS A VERY BAD ONE. Job says, "Am I a sea, or a whale, that Thou settest a watch over me?" 1. To argue from our insignificance is poor

pleading; for the little things are just those against which there is most need to watch. If you were a sea, or a whale, God might leave you alone; but as you are a feeble and sinful creature, which can do more hurt than a sea, or a whale, you need constant watching. 2. After all, there is not a man here who is not very like a sea, or a sea-monster in this respect, that he needs a watch to be set over him. A man's heart is as changeable and as deceitful as the sea. 3. I shall now go further, and show that, by reason of our evil nature, we have become like the sea. (1) This is true in several ways; for, first, the sea is restless, and so is our nature. (2) Let us say, next, that the sea can be furious and terrible, and so can ungodly men. When a man is in a fury, what a wild beast he can be! (3) Think, again, how unsatisfied is the sea. It draws down and swallows up stretches of land and thousands of tons of cliff, but it is not filled up. (4) Human nature is like the sea for mischief. How destructive is the ocean, and how unfeeling! It makes widows and orphans by the thousand, and then smiles as if it had done nothing! (5) We must not forget that we are less obedient to God than the sea is. Nothing keeps back the sea from many a shore but a belt of sand; and though it rages in storm and tempest, the sea goes back in due time and leaves the sand for children to play upon. It knows its bounds and keeps them. A man will go against wind and tide in his determination to be lost. O sea! O sea! thou art but a child with thy father, as compared with the wicked and rebellious heart of man! It is a bad argument, then. We need to be looked after. IV. Last of all, I would remark that ALL THEY COMPLAINED OF WAS SENT IN LOVE. They said, "Am I a sea, or a whale, that Thou settest a watch over me?" but if they had known the truth they would have blessed God with all their hearts for having watched over them as He has done. 1. First, God's restraint of some of us has kept us from self-ruin. If the Lord had not held us in we might have been in prison; we might have been in the grave; we might have been in hell! Who knows what would have become of us? 2. God will not always deal roughly with you. Perhaps to-night He will say His last sharp word. Will you yield to softer means? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 16. **I would not live alway.**—*Living alway:*—We are led to say with Job, "I would not live alway." I. FROM THE STATE OF THINGS AROUND US. They are subject to dissolution, and are actually dissolving. Every year we behold proofs and symptoms of this. Years as they pass speak to us of the consummation of all things. Is it a thing desirable to live alway in the dissolving scene? II. FROM THE CONDITION OF MANKIND. "One generation goeth and another cometh." "The fathers, where are they?" III. FROM THE NATURE OF HUMAN ENJOYMENTS. Human enjoyments there are, but they are fluctuating, and the memory of our early joys is all of them that remains. Human enjoyments not only fade and decay; they are often blasted in the bud or the blossom. Besides the real disappointments and evils of life there are imaginary evils. Some have hours of deep and awful melancholy. There is a time of life with every thinking person, when he looks no more forward to worldly objects of desire, when he leaves these things behind, and meditates the evening of his day. Then he thinks on the mercies of a past life, and takes up songs of praise. IV. FROM DIFFICULTY IN THE DUTIES OF LIFE. Favourable circumstances often attend our entrance into the world. By and by difficulties arise. It is sometimes difficult to fulfil the demands of justice. Even in a high station honours are apt to fade, and cares to multiply. V. FROM THE REMAINS OF SIN. At first the Christian says, "I will keep all Thy commandments." Then temptation prevails. Experience convinces him that human resolution is weak, that the heart is deceitful, that sin is wedded to mortality. VI. THE DEATH OF FRIENDS MAKES US SAY WITH JOB, "I WOULD NOT LIVE ALWAY." Friendship sweetens life; but the course of human affection is often interrupted, is often varied, is often embittered. The happiest union on earth must be dissolved, and the love of life dissolves with it. A beautiful view of providence opens. That which constitutes our greatest felicity on earth makes us most willing to depart. The friends of our youth have failed. The hour of departure rises on the soul, for we are going to a land peopled with our fathers, and our kindred, and the friends of our youth. Already our spirits mingle with theirs. (*S. Charters.*) *Death better than life:*—"I would not live alway." The preference of death to life is the utterance, not of a devout and hopeful but of a despairing and repining spirit. With such a load of misery pressing upon him, and with no earthly comfort

to relieve his anguish, it is not surprising that this godly man should give vent to his sorrows in a manner which cannot be wholly justified, and for which we find him afterwards expressing his contrition. It is right for a man to choose death rather than sin, but it can never be right for a man to choose death rather than life, when it is the will of God that he should live. A restless and rebellious longing for dissolution must always have the nature of sin: but the deliberate preference of heaven to earth may be characteristic of the Christian. Death is a change desirable to the believer. I. BECAUSE IT IS THE TERMINATION OF ALL THE EVILS AND TEMPTATIONS BY WHICH HE IS SURROUNDED HERE UPON EARTH. The evil, even in the happiest life, outweighs the good. There are but two things really profitable and desirable upon earth,—godliness and contentment; and even these, although they make earthly sorrow tolerable, can neither wholly remove it, nor deprive it altogether of its power to disquiet us. The great work of sanctification is never wholly completed in this life. The holiest man is daily exposed to manifold temptations, and falls under them daily. Such is the power of remaining corruption, that the best man living upon earth is guilty of frequent departures from the requirement of God, and constantly falls short of it. Is this then a state in which a reasonable being would wish to remain for ever? There is, in every child of God, a moral necessity of dying, that he may be fitted for eternal life. II. BECAUSE IT IS THE APPOINTED ENTRANCE INTO A STATE OF PERFECT HOLINESS AND INALIENABLE JOY. The change from earth to heaven is not indeed fully completed till the resurrection. A Christian cannot die. Death to the believer is but a shadow of death. It is wrong to think of the eternal life and happiness which is assured after death to the faithful in Christ, as nothing more than an expansion to all eternity of the life which we now have, exempted from all pain and sorrow, and fed with a continual supply of such pleasures as we are now capable of enjoying. That is a very low and very unscriptural view of the excellency of the glory which is to be revealed. The life which is promised to the believer is nothing less than a participation, through the Incarnate Son, in that fulness of life which makes the eternal being and infinite blessedness of God Himself. Such being the prize of our high calling, let us give all diligence to make our calling sure, lest, having this great hope held out to us, we should fall short of it. (*W. Ramsay.*) "*I would not live alway*":—These words may signify a preference for immediate death, but they are capable of a modified and Christian sense; that this life would be undesirable if it were perpetual; that it would be better to die than to live here always. We have no sympathy with that sour, repining, self-torturing mood, that selects and combines all that is dark and sad and discouraging in the present existence, and calls it a picture of human life. That is an unchristian mood. It is a false view. This world is full of beneficence to all creatures that inhabit it. Man cannot move or think but he experiences the arrangements of the Divine love. True, we meet with much to dishearten and sadden us. If our anxieties and sorrows were all brought together in one view, and it were forgotten how many alleviations and respites there were, how many mercies mingled with sorrows, what strength given for the occasion, what kind remembrance of our frames, and what tempering of the wind to the shorn lamb, the picture would be a black one indeed. But when we further reflect on the end of these chastenings, the wise purposes they serve in our moral education, the blessed results they accomplish for our minds and hearts, then we can bow contentedly to the appointments of God's love. If good was not educed out of evil, evil would be a problem beyond our power to solve. Though troubled, then, by earthly ills, they shall not extinguish our love of life, or make us murmur under its wholesome corrections, its blessed ministries and teachings. Though we would not live alway, it is not because life's cup has no sweetness to delight us, nor is it because it has in it bitterness and tears. The hopes, friendships, and privileges of existence are great, substantial, and noble things. They yield pure, elevated, and entrancing enjoyments. We would live for what of good and fair and affectionate and true there is in the present lot. And, on the other hand, we would live also for its purifying afflictions, its humbling reverses, its spiritualising bereavements, and healthy, though severe discipline. But though we would live, and live contentedly and joyfully, yet would we not live alway here. The whole arrangement of things, and the whole constitution of man, show that this world could not be a final home for us—that we could not endure to be immortal below. Even the most worldly would tire of the world, if they believed that they must abide

in it always. The body, too,—exquisite in its construction, but frail, feeble, fatigued,—this could not be immortal here. We would not live alway, for friends have left us, and gone hence. From the bright and holy scenes of the upper world, from mansions of rest and glory, from bowers of beauty and bliss, they bend to invite us to ascend and dwell with them. That the future state is to be a social state, there can be no doubt. Moreover, our intellectual nature demands a finer culture, a wider range, and fewer lets and hindrances than it has here. With most of us the intellectual possibilities largely remain uncultivated. We wish, for ourselves and for the race, in the good time of our Father's will, a removal to a condition better fitted than this to refine, unfold, and exalt our mental powers, in accordance with the manifest design of their Author, and their own ceaseless aspirations. Then again, we seek a nearer communion with Jesus and with God, higher excellence and virtue, a greater expansion of the moral and spiritual part of our nature. Much may be done, indeed, in this state. Our higher nature, with all its powers and aspirations, will be called into a new and happy exercise, of which the most blessed moments on earth have given us hardly any idea. . . . There is a faith that plucks out the sting of death, a resurrection that brings life and immortality to light. (*A. A. Livermore.*) *Continuance on earth not desired by the believer:*—The love of life is natural to all men. For the wisest purposes it has been implanted within us. But the Gospel has brought life and immortality to light, and has shown us that the valley of the shadow of death forms a passage for the believer to a world of light and glory everlasting. The reception of this Gospel into the heart changes both the scenes of mortality and the state of the mind, so as to regulate the love of life, produce a subjection to the will of God, and lead to a certain and cheery prospect of felicity beyond the grave. I. THE REASONS WHICH LEAD THE CHRISTIAN TO DESIRE A CONTINUANCE IN LIFE. There are some who, through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to bondage. This may be owing to the natural character and habit of the mind, to bodily indisposition, or to the power of temptation; or it may arise from a consciousness that they are destitute of the necessary meetness for heaven. Some desire life that they may yield themselves to Satan as servants. The Christian's desire for continuance may arise—1. From our relative connection with others. We are all bound by strong and tender ties. 2. It may arise from a sense of former slothfulness, or backslidings from the ways of God. Then, when death appears to be approaching, fear is excited. 3. It may arise from love to the Redeemer's cause. II. THE REASONS WHICH LEAD GOOD MEN, NOTWITHSTANDING THEIR NATURAL LOVE OF LIFE, TO DESIRE A DEPARTURE FROM THE PRESENT STATE. They know that there is a state of immortality and glory actually in existence beyond the grave. 1. A prospect of perfect freedom from suffering leads believers to entertain this desire. 2. So does a sense of the evil of sin. 3. The believer longs to quit this mortal state, because death will introduce him to a better Sabbath, and a perfect society. 4. The anticipated enjoyment of God and the Lamb is a strong reason why the righteous would not live alway. Learn what gratitude is due to God for His Gospel. Hence all our hopes arise; and by its cordial reception the believer is delivered from the love of life, and from the fear of death. (*Essex Remembrancer.*) *Why the believer does not wish to live always:*—A truth may sometimes be uttered in a bad spirit. This is. But it may be expressed with an intelligent submission to the Divine will, and be cherished in harmony with the Christian principles. There are reasons which induce the believer to utter this sentiment. 1. He knows it is not the will of God that he should live always. "It is appointed unto all men once to die." 2. Because here the work of grace is but imperfectly developed. At present his piety is only elementary. "Now we know in part." 3. Here the full blessing of justifying righteousness cannot be enjoyed. This blessing is now enjoyed by faith, and faith is fluctuating. 4. Here God is at best but imperfectly worshipped. The holy soul desires to worship God with undivided thought and affection. This outer court worship is too often interrupted by the din and bustle of worldly traffickers. Thoughts and affections are often intruders when the mind would be engaged in God's worship. 5. The change is absolutely necessary for the completion of our blessedness and the perfection of the Divine glory. We must go home to be happy. In the consolations, hopes, and joys the believer realises in death God is glorified. (*Evangelical Preacher.*) *Reasons why good men may look forward with desire to the termination of life:*—The sentiment of the text is not unfrequently the breathing

of a guilty soul—racked with remorse, stung by an accusing conscience, haunted by the recollection of deeds of guilt, and prompted by the hope, if not the sober belief, that death shall prove the end of all. The words of the text, however, do not necessarily imply either impiety or impatience. Even good men may be weary of life, and long for its close. 1. Good men may be so far reconciled to death, from their experience of the evils of life, and the unsatisfactory nature of all earthly enjoyments. In infancy, we rejoice in parental care: in youth, our imagination is gladdened by the beauty and novelty of the scene around us; we live in hope, and are ignorant of the evil to come; in the maturity of life, we exercise, with peculiar satisfaction, our ripened powers, and draw liberally on the stores of friendship and affection. Yet is this world termed a vale of tears; and they who have lived the longest, and enjoyed the greatest portion of the world's good, have with one voice declared their days to have been both few and evil. 2. Good men may be led to look forward with desire to the termination of life, from the changes taking place around them, and particularly the deaths of companions and friends. 3. Good men may be reconciled to death, and may be led even to desire it, from the remains of sin and their growing desire after perfection. (*James Grant.*) *A reasonable desire:*—I. WHERE A CHILD OF GOD WOULD NOT LIVE ALWAYS. On earth. The utmost to be enjoyed or expected on this side heaven, cannot make him wish that it may be always with him as now, that this may be his everlasting abode. 1. You that are men of the world, would you live always? 2. You that have much of this world's goods, would you live alway? II. WHY A CHILD OF GOD WOULD NOT LIVE ALWAY IN THIS PRESENT STATE. It is common for men in distress to wish for death, as having no other notion of it than of its being a freedom from their present pain and misery. 1. Because it is the will of God that the child of God should not live alway. 2. Saints would not live alway, from the concern and zeal they have for God's glory. 3. From love to Christ the saint is willing to depart. 4. A child of God would behave after the example of Christ. 5. As feeling the evils of the present state, and having the believing prospect of a better. (1) Those on earth that are even got nearest to heaven in preparation for it, are imperfect as to grace, and have much of the remains of corruption in them. (2) Saints, while on earth, are in a state of sorrow as well as sin. (3) Saints are in a state of warfare. (4) They are here on trial as probationers for eternity, and so must be full of care and solicitude, how it shall go with them, and lest they should miscarry. (5) In the present state, saints are at a distance from Christ. (6) A child of God has foretastes of a better life. III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THIS SAYING? 1. That the saint believes he is one who is already, through grace, prepared for a better life. 2. While in this world, a child of God should think and speak, not as an inhabitant of it, but as a traveller through it; not as one fixed here, but as one in motion towards a better country, that is, a heavenly. IV. IN WHAT MANNER SHOULD A CHILD OF GOD THUS SPEAK? 1. With a deep sense of the evil of sin, which hath made this world so undesirable. 2. With great seriousness, upon the consideration, how awful a thing it is to die. 3. Not as peremptorily fixing the time to what date he would have his life drawn out, or when cut off, but with entire resignation, referring the matter to God. V. TO WHOM MAY A SAINT SPEAK THUS? 1. To God by way of appeal. 2. To others we may utter this, when speaking of the concerns of our souls, and of eternity, to engage them to regard us as those who are dying, and well satisfied in the choice we have made, of God for our portion, and heaven as our home. 3. To himself. Application—(1) How admirable is the grace of God in the change it makes in His people! (2) What reason have we to bless God for the discoveries of the Gospel. (3) Make sure of a title to a better life and state. (*D. Wilcox.*) *The advantage of not living alway:*—The *Quiver* contains a paper on "Butterflies," by the late Rev. Dr. Hugh Macmillan. This must have been one of the last papers written by that charming writer, and most cultured of men, and it is a curious coincidence that just before the great change came to him he should have written thus, "Death is 'the shadow feared by man,' as apparent destruction; but should we live always as we now live upon the earth, should we never pass through the experience of death, we should remain mere human embryos, undeveloped beings for ever. It is only through death that the mortal can put on immortality. It is only undergoing a metamorphosis as complete as and at present more inexplicable than that which the caterpillar undergoes when it passes through the apparently lifeless condition of the chrysalis and becomes

a butterfly, that we can pass from the seeming hopeless condition of the grave to the winged condition of the angel, acquire the full power of our being, and soar from earth to heaven." (*Christian Endeavour Times.*) *On death:*—There is nothing to which human nature is more averse than to dissolution. Death presents himself to the imagination of every man, clothed with terrors. 1. A due respect to the Divine will would deter us from wishing to "live alway." Our life is not made transient by any malignant power. Why should we turn with regret from any allotment to which it is the will of God we should submit? There is, in submission to the laws to which the all-wise Creator hath subjected our nature, both safety and virtue. 2. We may be reconciled to the necessity of dying by considering who have passed through the gate of death. 3. The condition of this present state is such that no Christian can wish to live in it always. Not that it becomes us to find fault with the circumstances of our present existence. It is problematical whether our virtue or our trials would prevail, if our probation were prolonged; but discretion would seem to plead for the shortest exposure to evil. Death releases us from the temptations, ignorance, and sorrows of this probationary existence. 4. A just consideration of the future life will reconcile us entirely to the transitoriness of this. If to die were to cease to be, we might with a desperate tenacity cling to this present existence, chequered and unsatisfactory as it is. 5. By His death, the "Captain of our salvation" hath overcome death, and made the passage through the grave the ordinary entrance to the reward of our inheritance. What a body of motives is here to induce you, when your Creator shall call you out of this life, to depart willingly! Lay them up in your memories. (*Bishop Dehon.*) *Death preferable to life:*—There are few stronger principles in the human breast than the love of life. The desire of self-preservation is instinctive, and operates long before reason dawns, or experience attaches us to the pleasures of existence. Nor are men attached to life merely by the principle of instinct. "I could willingly die," said an expiring Christian, "were there not friends to whom it is hard to say farewell." Life is made pleasant, and attachment to it is strengthened by friendship and the social relations. And then our fears have exhibited death with terrific aspect, and surrounded it with horrid drapery. The coffin, the shroud, the darkness and dampness, the silence and coldness of the grave, the worm and the corruption, and the untried and eternal state into which death introduces the soul, are circumstances calculated to make the stoutest heart recoil, and cling with closest grasp upon its hold of life. But these attachments and apprehensions are incident to our frailty. Through the grace of God, they may be overcome and renounced. The believer in Christ can say, "I would not live alway." I. There is the greatest wisdom in this choice, since should he live alway, THE EVILS OF THE PRESENT LIFE COULD BE PROLONGED AND PERPETUATED. 1. I would not live alway, exposed to the evils incident to this mortal body—under the continual infliction of God's original curse upon man, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread"; or perpetually exposed to the ravages of the "pestilence that walketh in darkness," and to the violence of the "sickness that wasteth at noonday";—to be for ever a partaker of that nature whose beauty is a "fading flower," whose "strength" is "labour and sorrow," whose eyes fail through dimness, and whose ears grow dull of hearing, and whose head totters with infirmity, and whitens with the frosts of age, whose limbs are scorched with fever, and racked with pain, and then chilled with ague, and shaken with anguish,—to be frozen by the severity of winter and burn by the fervour of summer. 2. I would not live alway, the subject of mental infirmity. What ignorance beclouds the mind of wretched man! How much carefulness and painstaking must be expended before he can be taught things the most necessary to be known! How often is his judgment, even in its most vigorous exercise, erring and imperfect! Frequent are his mistakes, and erroneous his conclusions, even in affairs of the utmost importance, and which intimately concern his own welfare. 3. I would not live alway, in the midst of a selfish and malignant world, where my conduct is misrepresented, my motives misunderstood, my character assailed, and my best interests injured and obstructed; where envy displays her malignant features, and detraction employs her envenomed tongue to destroy my reputution; where jealousy invents, and malice contrives, their cruel purposes to disturb my peace. 4. I would not live alway, the witness, as well as the subject of human miseries. It is painful to the benevolent heart to witness the misfortunes and follies of men.

It is painful to "discern, among the youth, a young man void of understanding," wasting his patrimony in extravagance and dissipation; degrading the noble faculties of body and mind, with which God has endowed him; and descending prematurely down to the grave, and to the shades of eternal death, the victim of accursed intemperance. It is painful to see the impenitent and prayerless sinner, careless of his rebellion, and thoughtless of his danger, sporting with the menaces of Jehovah, and mocking at the threatenings of the Almighty, and yet to know that between him and eternal burnings there only intervenes—what is liable to be sundered at any moment—the thin fragile veil of flesh. 5. Well may the Christian, the witness of such spectacles, and himself the servant of unholy passions, declare, I would not live alway. When his faith is firm, doubts and obscurities will sometimes arise and weaken it. When his hopes are bright, sin and impenitence will obscure and darken them. When his love to God and men is fervent, unholy feelings will spring up and dampen and allay it. When the Sun of Righteousness shines upon him, his iniquities will often arise like a thick cloud, envelop him in spiritual darkness, and leave him in mental misery. 6. I would not live alway, exposed to temptations and enticements to sin. The alluring example of men whom, for some good qualities, the Christian has been taught to respect, will offer its persuasions to divert him from the path of life. Learning, and intelligence, and wit, and persuasion, will be employed by those who in appearance are angels of light, to weaken his allegiance to his crucified Master. 7. Himself the subject and witness of misery and sin, the Christian will say, I would not live alway, especially since God has otherwise determined. His daily prayer will be, "My Father, Thy will be done"; and acquiescence in the will of God will constitute the perfection of his religious character. He will therefore desire to depart from this wretched life, knowing that God has prepared some better thing for him. II. There is wisdom in the Christian's choice, for, should his life not terminate, HE WOULD NOT BE ADMITTED INTO THE JOYS OF HEAVEN. 1. His corruptible body would not then put on incorruption, nor his mortal, immortality. "The righteous shall shine forth as the sun; they shall shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars for ever and ever." The Saviour said that the children of the resurrection will be equal to the angels, and therefore will resemble angels in their glory and beauty. 2. In heaven, the faculties of the mind, as well as those of the body, will in a wonderful measure be strengthened and perfected. The memory, perfected and made retentive, will preserve whatever is committed to its trust. The understanding, thus aided by the other mental powers, redeemed and invigorated, will be making perpetual advances in knowledge. For not only will the faculties of the mind be improved, but the field of investigation will be proportionably enlarged. The scene of observation and improvement will not be this little earth, and its limited productions, but the wonders and glories of the celestial regions. I would not live alway, in prospect of such an increase of knowledge and intelligence, the perpetual subject of mental imperfection, of ignorance and weakness. 3. I would not live alway, away from my home. How many pleasing associations and tender recollections are awakened by the mention of home! Around what place do the affections linger with such strong attachment, or what spot looks bright and happy, when the rest of the world appears dark and cheerless, but that characterised by the expressive word home? Where do the skies wear a peculiar brightness, and nature present peculiar cheerfulness and loveliness, but at home? But heaven is the Christian's home. Here, he is a stranger and a sojourner; but he is travelling to a city which hath foundations, the abode of friendship and peace. Divine love is the sacred principle that animates all hearts in the regions of bliss, from the "rapt seraph" to him who has "washed his robes in the blood of the Lamb." It unites the inhabitants of heaven in an indissoluble bond of harmony, and attaches them to God Himself. Security also is there. Security from the influence of unholy affections, from the temptations and hostility of wicked men, and from the enmity and malice of the great spiritual foe. With the Prince of Peace, peace shall ever reign, and from the right hand of God shall flow the river of His pleasures for evermore. 4. I would not live alway separated from my pious friends, in whose sacred society and holy friendship I found such delight and profit, but who have preceded me in their entrance into glory. For in heaven the pious friendships of this world shall be renewed and perpetuated. 5. I would not live alway, for in the midst of that holy brotherhood is Jesus Christ, their elder brother, the faithful and true

witness; that Jesus, the desire and Saviour of all nations; and whom I desire to see; my Saviour! to whom I have so often prayed, and in whom I have so long trusted; Him who has for years been my invisible teacher and defence, and whom, though not seeing, yet have I loved! (*S. Fuller.*)

Ver. 17. **What is man, that Thou shouldst magnify him?**—*Divine condescension:*—Here is a question that is both answered and unanswerable. I. A SCRIPTURAL SOLUTION OF THE QUESTION. 1. What is man as a creature? A piece of modified dust, enlivened by the breath of God (Gen. ii. 7). An earthen vessel (2 Cor. iv. 7). He is grass (Isa. xl. 6, 8). A drop of a bucket, or dust that will not turn the scale (Isa. xl. 15). Vanity (Job vii. 16; Isa. xl. 17). 2. What is man as a fallen creature? An ignorant creature (Isa. i. 3). A guilty (Rom. iii. 23). A condemned (John iii. 18, 19). A polluted (Job xv. 16; Isa. i. 16). A diseased (Isa. i. 6). Impotent (Ezek. xvi. 4, 6). Rebellious (Numb. xx. 10; Isa. i. 2). II. IN WHAT RESPECTS IT MAY BE SAID THAT THE LORD MAGNIFIED MAN. He magnified man at the creation. By the care He showeth towards him in the course of His providence. By assuming human nature. By giving us such great and precious promises. By making man a sharer of His throne. Observe—1. How amazing that the Lord should thus notice sinful man! He who is the High and Lofty One. 2. The base ingratitude of sinners who rebel against so kind a Benefactor. 3. If God thus magnify man, ought not man to endeavour to magnify God, *i.e.*, praise and extol Him? (*T. Hannam.*) *The dignity and possibility of manhood:*—The doctrine of this text seems to be that man is a creature of such insignificance, so sinful, frail, and unimportant, that he is utterly unworthy of the care and attention that God pays to him. That this is true, none of us doubt. Infidels have often used this truth in their attempts to prove that God cannot pay the regard to man that the Bible declares He does. Yet these words of the text clearly and distinctly teach other truths—the greatness of man, because God has magnified him; the duty of man, because God has blessed him; the possibilities of man, because God has set His heart upon him. View man in the light of his privileges, in the light of his possibilities, in the light of Calvary, he then becomes a creature of infinite worth; and the highest service which a servant of God can be engaged in, is that of seeking the elevation, the conversion of men. It is the nobler aspect of man we are to study. I would lead you young men to self-respect. Distinguish between self-respect and self-conceit. One is the child of ignorance, the other the fair daughter of knowledge. I. THE DIGNITY OF MAN. 1. We are dignified because magnified of God. So far as we know, man is the consummation of creative skill. Man is both material and spiritual, presenting a marvellous combination of the two. He is a middle link in the chain of being, holding both ends together. He partakes much of the grossness of earth, yet much of the refinement of heaven. Without man, between the atom and the angel there would be a chasm. Man is the golden chain between the two. He is a little world in miniature, for in his frame there is an epitome of the universe. Truly, in the character of his being he is magnified. No one who thinks of his capabilities can dispute it. The capabilities of some men must be enormous. The dignity of man is further enhanced, if we consider that he possesses an immortal soul. He has a life that must run parallel with the life of the Eternal; a life that neither sin, death nor hell can quench. How awful does this make the importance of even a single man! Notice also man's exalted position in this world. He is lord of creation. This world was built as a house, for which man is the tenant. 2. We are dignified, because beloved of God. Our text says that God has set His heart upon man. This glorious truth is written on the page of inspiration with the clearness of a sunbeam (John iii. 16). Surely such love must make man the envy of the angels. It seems as though man had received more care, attention, and love than all other parts of His dominion put together. On our weal the Deity has expended Himself, communicated to us in Christ Jesus all that was communicative in His being and character. II. WHAT CONDUCT IS WORTHY OF THE DIGNITY OF MAN? I take a high standard of appeal, and ask you, in the light of your noble faculties, in the light of all the mercies bestowed on you in creation and providence, in the light of God's infinite love, what conduct becomes you? What should be your bearing towards yourselves, your Saviour, your God? You are unanimous in your verdict that a sinful, sensual life is utterly beneath the dignity of manhood. Take another kind of life. A life of mere self-gratification. Perhaps more promising young men are ruined through this kind of living than

any other. But it is unworthy of a man. The end of a life that is true is not happiness in any shape or form, but character that shall fit us for eternity. In every man that has not this as his supreme desire, his one aim, only a fraction of manhood is awakened. The portions of his nature which make it worth while to be, are dormant. The trembling anxiety about our privileges, our welfare, our debt to God—which leads us to trust in Him—this makes a life true. III. WHAT ARE THE POSSIBILITIES OF SUCH A MAGNIFIED BEING? 1. There is a possibility of any lost self-respect being restored. Some of you may have started wrong. This has destroyed self-respect. This is one of the most potent evils incident to a sinful life. Remember that character is under a law of perpetuity. It has an element in it which will make it almost immutable. "Evil tends to evil permanence." Then let me tell you the glad news of the Gospel. There is a possibility of self-conquest. Self-control, for real usefulness, is as necessary as self-respect. How are we to exercise it? Will resolution, will determination do? My only hope is in God the Holy Spirit; in seeking Divine grace and power. To all of us there is the joyous possibility of a sublime life. Then, talk not of destiny, but believe in your own, and working like men, trusting like children, fulfil it. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The philosophy of human worth*:—From the East proceeded first the light of Divine knowledge, of art, and of science, that threefold cord with which the loins of our civilisation are girded. In what boasted philosopher of heathendom do we find a single sentiment, on the subject in point, equal to the one contained in our text? To a Father the patriarch Job confidently looked, both in his prosperity and adversity; it was not to a God afar off that he poured out the feelings of his heart. It is true he was deeply awed at the infinity and consequent mysteriousness of his Divine Father; but while, on the one hand, he was overwhelmed with majesty and incomprehensibility, on the other, he was soothed and cheered with condescension and love. The Divine character, and the ways of providence, appear to have occupied the thoughts of this large-minded and holy man, to the exclusion of almost everything else. It was not a thing, it was a person towards whom his thoughts and affections rationally and instinctively turned. The law which influenced this good man was moral. The grand centre of attraction, and source of all spiritual life and glory, was God Himself, "the Father of lights." Now wherefore did Job thus seek after God, and look upon righteousness, or moral excellence, as the chief concern of his existence? Because something within prompted him to do so. There are two great generic ways in which God reveals Himself to man. Objectively, or through any physical medium such as His works, or assumed experiences, and subjectively, or in the conscious spirit. There was something more than mere figure in these words of our blessed Saviour, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." "What is man that Thou shouldst magnify him?" The patriarch appears to have been astonished that so vile, impotent, and shortlived a creature as man, should be specially noticed and favoured by his Maker. Whatever his ideas may have been of human dignity and worth, it is quite obvious that they were associated with a strong conviction of human degradation and vanity. And is not this a true estimate, the proper mean between two extremes, one of which exalts man far too high, whilst the other debases him far too low? If we looked no further than the outward nature and condition of man, we could only regard him as a unique kind of animal, inferior in some respects, though superior in others, to his fellow-tenants of the earth. Were his animal nature the whole of man, in what would consist his pre-eminence over "the beasts that perish"? And yet this animal nature is all that our senses can take cognisance of. Considering him, however, in the light of analogy, it is clear that there may be undeveloped faculties and destinies, of a high and inconceivable order, slumbering in his breast, but concealed from all inspection. Such was the pleasing theme of poetic song and philosophic speculation. These are by no means adequate effectively to counteract the sceptical conclusions of sense respecting the nature and destinies of man. Hence the uncertainty of the wisest and best of the old heathen philosophers. The plain truth is that the world by wisdom knew nothing conclusively about these things. The vantage ground on which the Bible places our feet, has raised us immeasurably higher than the wisest heathen, as such, ever stood. Guided by the torch of heaven, let us consider why God may be said to "magnify man, and set His heart upon him." 1. Man is magnified by the gift of an intellectual nature. 2. In the possession of a moral nature. 3. In being the object of a Divine redemption. 4. In the omnipresent and omniactive superintendence of Divine providence over human affairs.

5. Immortality and future blessedness strikingly illustrate the text. If you believe these things, what manner of persons ought you to be? (*Jabez Cole.*) *Man magnified by the Divine regard* :—It is the character of almost all speculative systems of unbelief, that, whilst they palliate or excuse the moral pravity of our nature, they depreciate and undervalue that nature itself. Some deny that there is a "spirit in man." Others deny man an immortality. Some would persuade us that we are but atoms in the mass of beings; and to suppose ourselves noticed by the Great Supreme, either in judgment or in mercy, is an unfounded and presumptuous conceit. The Word of God stands in illustrious and cheering contrast to all those chilling and vicious speculations. As to our moral condition, it lays us deep in the dust, and brings down every high imagination. But it never abases our nature itself. Man is the head and chief of the system he inhabits, and the image of God. He is arrayed in immortality, and invested with high and awful capacities both of good and evil. I. CERTAIN CONSIDERATIONS ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TEXT. 1. God hath "magnified" man by the gift of an intellectual nature. We see unorganised matter without life; matter organised, as in vegetables, with life, but without sensation; and, in the inferior animals, with life, sense, and a portion of knowledge, but without reason. But, in man, the scale rises unspeakably higher. His endowments are beyond animal life and sensation, and beyond instinct. Man is the only visible creature which God, in the proper sense of the word, could "love." No creature is capable of being loved, but one which is also capable of reciprocal knowledge, regard, and intercourse. 2. By the variety and the superior nature of the pleasures of which He has made him capable. His are the pleasures of contemplation. These the inferior animals have not. The pleasures of contemplation are inexhaustible, and the powers we may apply to them are capable of unmeasurable enlargement. His are the pleasures of devotion. Can it be rationally denied that devotion is the source of even a still higher pleasure than knowledge? His are the pleasures of sympathy and benevolence. His are the pleasures of hope. 3. The text receives its most striking illustration from the conduct of God to man considered as a sinner. If under this character we have still been loved; if still, notwithstanding ingratitude and rebellion, we are loved; then, in a most emphatic sense, in a sense which we cannot adequately conceive or express, God hath "set His heart" upon us. Mark the means of our reconciliation to God, and mark the result. 4. Consider the means by which God's gracious purpose of "magnifying man," by raising him out of his fallen condition, is pursued and effected. (1) He has, with the kindest regard for our higher interests, attached emptiness to worldly good, and misery to vice. (2) He has been pleased to establish a constant connection between our discipline and correction, between His providential dispensations and moral ends. (3) He has opened His ears to our prayers, and invites them both by command and promise. (4) To bring men to feel their own wants, He sends forth His Gospel, accompanied by His quickening Spirit, thus to render it, what in the mere letter it could not be, "the Word of life," the "Gospel of salvation." II. THE PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT WHICH FLOWS FROM FACTS SO ESTABLISHED. 1. We are taught the folly and voluntary degradation of the greater part of the unhappy race of mankind. 2. The subject affords an instructive test of our religious pretensions. 3. To form a proper estimate of our fellow-men, and of our obligations to promote their spiritual and eternal benefit. (*R. Watson.*) *On the nature and character of man* :—The heathen sage, who bid us know ourselves, might give the precept, but it was out of his power to put us in a way of obtaining the proper information. The present state of man can only be understood from the history of man, as the best natural philosophy must be built upon the history of nature. When man came first from the hands of his Creator, he was neither sinful nor mortal; but as the happiness of a rational being must be the object of his free choice, and cannot possibly be otherwise, life and happiness were proposed to man on such terms as put him to a trial. There can be no reward but to obedience, and there can be no obedience without liberty, that is, without the liberty of falling away into disobedience and rebellion. As man consists of soul and body, and is allied to the visible and invisible world, no transactions pass between God and man without some intermediate visible figure; therefore life and death were proposed to Adam, under the two symbols of the tree of life, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The latter was the instrument of temptation. By partaking of the tree of life, the nature of man would have been refined and spiritualised upon earth. The enemy of God's glory and man's

happiness was permitted to enter into paradise in the form of a serpent, who having prevailed first upon the weaker sex, deceived Adam by her means. Thus the life of paradise was forfeited. It appears then that man is now in a state of banishment from his native paradise, and driven out into the wide world. The tempter who first seduced him into sin, is carrying on the same plan of enmity and opposition to this day. We find such contrarieties in the nature of man as can never be accounted for but from the history of his fall. In the fall of man there are two things to be considered, the sin and the punishment. The act of disobedience proceeded from a sinful desire, suggested by the devil, of rising by forbidden means, and without any dependence upon God, to a state of superior wisdom and greatness. Look attentively into this original act of man's disobedience, and you will discover that every lust and passion of which man is capable, prevailed on that occasion. The "lust of the flesh" was indulged in eating; the "lust of the eye" in coveting what was forbidden; and the "pride of life" in the affectation of a superior condition, to which there was no title. Man cannot now sin by the same act as Adam did; but all his sin is after that pattern. His three vices are, intemperance, covetousness, and pride. There is an irregular conflict in human nature which we cannot account for, but upon the principle of original sin. The effect of original sin is evident from that lamentable symptom of it, an alienation of the mind from God: for there certainly is in man, such as he is now, a distaste of God, and of all that relates to Him. This cannot be nature, it must be a depravation of nature. The other evidences of the fall of man are to be found in its punishment, which comprehends the several particulars of labour, poverty, sickness, and death. It appears then that man is in a fallen state, subject to the power of sin, and the penalty of disobedience. In consequence of this evil nature, it is good for man to be afflicted, as it is necessary that his dross should be separated by a fiery trial in the furnace. (*W. Jones, M.A.*) *God's dealings with insignificant man:*—Pride is the great besetting sin of our corrupt nature. This it is which unfolds man's self-righteousness, self-seeking, self-dependence, and self-complacency, in all their varied forms. It will show itself as family pride, professional pride, intellectual pride, yea, and in that low and contemptible exhibition of it, even the love of personal attraction. I. MAN'S LITTLENESS. As a creature. As a fallen creature. Is it too much to say that he is lower than the beasts? It is a strong expression. Is it too much to say that sin has sunk man as low as Satan? Man is a sinful, guilty, and condemned creature. The law condemns him. All that is in God condemns the impenitent, unbelieving sinner. Man is a proud, self-righteous sinner. There is no man but what has some apparently good qualities—at least, he thinks he has them—and these blind him to all his bad qualities, and he thinks he can blind God with them. II. GOD'S MOST WONDROUS DEALINGS WITH MAN. Out of these materials does God choose a people and erect a temple to His own glory. How wonderful is the exhibition of God's grace in the conversion of a sinner! Look at the wondrous display of grace in redemption, and in bringing all the redeemed ones safe to glory. See in this subject the greatness of God: notice how contemptible is our pride when we can look down upon others. Though our Lord shows us our littleness, yet we ought not to forget that He has magnified us. (*J. H. Evans, M.A.*) *God's perpetual providence in life; its mystery and its meaning:*—The question must have been asked by Job in the profoundest earnestness. The sudden shocks of sorrow had been bringing him face to face with the awful mysteries of eternal providence, and making him feel their power as he had never felt it before. The question expresses one of the first of those great mysteries which the stern reality of trouble had forced upon his thoughts. It was no curious inquiry on his part; it was one which the agony of his life had compelled him to meet. You will perceive this by considering the experience he had recently passed through. He had reached that desire for death which sometimes rises from the strong pressure of deep and sorrowful thought. Then arose the mysterious question, Why did God prolong his life? To live amid the desolation of his great sorrow, and struggling with awful doubts, was a constant trial, and why did God thus "try him every moment" by keeping him alive? Remember, too, that Job had remained for days and nights in silence under the open sky. Looking at nature in his sorrow, the mighty march of the stars, in the far-off wilderness of space, and the solemn glory of the day as it rose and faded, and the voices of the winds as they came and went through the land, would all make him feel the majesty of God and the insignificance of man. Taking the words in their broadest meaning, the subject presented

by them is God's perpetual providence in life. I. ITS MYSTERY. We shall not feel it as Job felt it unless we accept his belief in the incessant action of God's providence in human history. He did not regard life as governed by general laws usually, and by the living God only occasionally. He said God "visited man every morning." Job's view of human life was that the souls of men were surrounded and influenced by the ever-present, ever-acting God. How common is the belief that "in the beginning" God created certain general laws, and that He has retired into His eternity, leaving them to govern the universe, interfering Himself now and then, when a great crisis demands His action. We speak of general and special providence as if there were some real distinction between the two, and as if all providence were not the activity of the living God, equally present everywhere. Now this distinction is unscriptural and unreasonable. If God directs the great events, He also directs every event, for all are bound together. Besides, how do we know which are great and which are small? We must go back to the strong, simple faith of such men as Job and David before we can realise the mystery which they felt in life. Accepting, then, that view of an incessant providence, the difficulty which Job felt must have risen from two sources: the greatness of God, "What is man, that Thou shouldst magnify him?" and the nature of the discipline through which He conducted life, "That Thou shouldst try him every moment?" 1. Take the first source of the mystery which Job felt in the unceasing providence of God: the greatness of God compared with the insignificance of man. He felt God was so great, that for Him to visit man in sorrow was to magnify the frail child of time by exalting it to even a moment's notice of the Infinite One. We do not feel the mystery of God's dealings with man with the same intensity as Job and the men of old time must have felt it. 2. Look at the other aspect of God's perpetual providence—The nature of the discipline through which God conducts life. This was evidently the other source of the difficulty that perplexed the patriarch. Life had become to him one overwhelming trial, yet he believed that every element of that trial was sent or permitted by God. Why? Some men have to learn the mystery of discipline in the sternest school of suffering. Now, accepting the Bible faith that God orders all our life, is it not evident He is trying us every moment? Why does He stoop from His vast empire to visit thus the creatures of a day? Christianity has revealed two things, corresponding to the twofold character of this mystery. (1) The boundless capacities of man. Christianity throughout magnifies man, by representing him as at present but in the childhood of his eternal growth. It is true that men in the old time felt the dignity of humanity, but Christ, by taking it upon Himself, clothed it with a new grandeur. Until He came, men, in a great measure, looked on life from the side of time. Christ dwarfed the temporal by revealing the immortal. At the same time, He made men feel the awfulness of life, by showing how it might be the commencement of an infinite progress towards the holiest. God's infinite eye sees in every man the germ of what he may and will become. Frail, feeble, fading like the grass he may be, but in him is the germ of a nature that will unfold and greaten into an angel of God; and within the sin-scarred and suffering body of humanity, the Divine Eye sees spirits whose capacities only the life of eternity can unfold. (2) The education of man by trial. Christianity brings this out with peculiar force. Our characters must be tested. We fancy we hold the reins of our natures. We think we are strong, and rejoice in our fancied strength. And then God sends us trials, disappointments, bitter lessons of sorrow, and under their startling light we discover our weakness and evil. We grow earth-bound, become wrapped in life's transient interests: God sends us suffering, and in the long, lonely watchings of pain, we catch glimpses of eternal realities. This, then, is the meaning of God's perpetual providence in life. Seeing man as he is to be; seeing that his infirmities must be removed by trial, "He visits him every morning, and tries him every moment." (*E. L. Hull, B.A.*) *The tragedy of life*:—This is a cry wrung from the heart of a man who was passing through a season of awful tribulation. His life, which was formerly smooth and prosperous, had now become, all at once, a very tragedy of sorrow. Not one gleam of hope was visible throughout the whole range of his earthly circumstances. His misfortunes had indeed come in battalions. What wonder if Job, thus crushed to the very dust by his calamities and by his friends, deserted, as it seemed, both by God and man, and left to wrestle all alone with his sorrow, should, out of his weakness, utter this cry of remonstrance to the Almighty? Here Job, feeling himself overwhelmed by his calamities, is remonstrating with

God for taking so much notice of man as even to visit him with trial. Why cannot the Almighty "let" a poor worm "alone"? Surely it is "magnifying" man unduly—it is making altogether too much of a creature so frail—for God thus to "turn His thoughts towards man," and "visit" him with such incessant and overwhelming "trials"! When we ourselves have been passing through some bitter experience, have we not been tempted to feel as if the trial were overdone? Have we not been tempted to think, Surely the Almighty could have effected His purpose with less expenditure of suffering? Thinking of the woes of humanity, we ask, Why is there not more economy of all this pain? Why break a butterfly on the wheel? It is the old thought of Job, born of the old and ever-recurring mystery that attends so much of the earth's sorrow. We must meet the mystery with faith. We ought to believe that He who can keep in their places Orion and the Pleiades, can make no mistake in guiding and overruling human destinies. We ought to believe that the Father of all is as loving as He is wise, and that, in spite of all appearances, there is throughout His universe a true economy of suffering. What God Himself is, remains our best reason for trusting Him in everything He does. Consider some of the ends which are subserved by what we may call the tragic element in our human life. 1. It tends to deliver us from shallow and frivolous conceptions of our own nature. There are many influences at work which tend to give to human nature and life an aspect of littleness. Our very being is itself animal as well as spiritual. We have many needs and cravings in common with the brutes. Our nature, moreover, touches the surrounding world at countless points, many of which are as "pin-points." Things which are in themselves but trifles, have often a wondrous power over us. No doubt the comedy of life has also its uses. God has not endowed us with the sense of humour for nothing. Laughter is a kind of safety-valve. But there is danger of our life being dwarfed into pettiness, and of our losing a true sense of the inherent dignity of our nature. Precisely here comes in the tragic element of life to counteract this tendency. Just as the loftiest mountains throw the largest and deepest shadows, so these dark shadows of human experience bear witness to the original grandeur of our being. You cannot have tragedy without a certain greatness. Even those tragedies of life which are due directly to human sins, testify to the greatness of the nature which has been so sadly and shamefully perverted. With regard to those terrible calamities which sometimes come into men's experience without any fault of their own, how often is it the case that these ordeals of trial bring to light the noblest traits of character. Is not the Cross of Calvary itself the crowning illustration of how the loftiest greatness of humanity may be revealed against the dark background of the deepest sorrow? Look also at affliction as a means of discipline and education, and we can scarcely fail to be impressed with the greatness of that nature which God subjects to trials so great. This is the thought which lies latent even in poor Job's remonstrance. Whatever we may do with our life, God evidently does not trifle with it; whatever we may think of our nature, God evidently does not think lightly of it. Thus, then, the tragic element in our life tends to redeem it from pettiness, to deliver us alike from prosaic stolidity and shallow sentimentalism, and to inspire us with a sense of the sacredness of our being. 2. This same element in life confronts men directly with the thought of God. Men, in their sinfulness, banish God from their hearts, and try to forget Him in their lives. But God refuses to be forgotten. For our own good, He will, if necessary, simply compel us to recognise His presence. He will make men feel that a higher will than theirs is at work. When there comes some sudden and extraordinary visitation, men are aroused to reflection. The appalling magnitude of the calamity startles them. The very fact that some event presents an inscrutable mystery, awakens them to the sense of an infinite wisdom overruling the projects and actions of mankind. 3. This same tragic element of life tends to deepen our reverence and tenderness towards our fellow-men. Our very experience of the world sometimes tends to make us hard and cold and censorious. Even our own troubles do not always deepen the springs of our charity. We may shut ourselves up in our griefs, and morbidly exaggerate our trials until we become morose and peevish, instead of sympathetic and gentle. But here, too, comes in the tragedy of life to counteract this selfish tendency. Ever and again there occurs some terrible event involving others in a sorrow which dwarfs our own griefs. And a great calamity invests even the meanest with interest. It tends to draw us out of ourselves, and to open the floodgates of sympathy and benevolence. Think, finally, how we are living together under

the shadow of the closing tragedy of all. Prince and peasant, master and servant, all are travelling to that. Death gives a tragic touch even to the beggar's personality. Let us cultivate reverence and tenderness towards one another; for we are all of us living in a world that has its terrible possibilities of experience. (*T. Campbell Finlayson.*) *Measured by the shadow*:—So Job speaks out of deep affliction; he is puzzled to know why God heaps sorrows on man and makes his life one long trial. How is it that the Almighty should consider a weak mortal sufficiently important to be made the object of so much interest and the subject of such severe correction? Let us attempt an answer to this question. I. Man is A CREATURE OF CONSEQUENCE, or God would not thus visit him. The Psalmist asks the same question, but from a very different point of view (Psa. viii. 3, 4). It is here that we usually look for the signs of human greatness and royalty—in the direction of man's power, action, rule, and achievement. Job is concerned with man's weakness, perplexity, suffering, humiliation, and failure. What is man, that Thou shouldst magnify him with miseries? Job feels the greatness of man in the greatness of his suffering. The conflict and sorrow of human life are indubitable signs of dignity. We often enough look poor, feel poor, but we cannot be poor. There is a singular greatness about us somewhere, or we should not be distinguished by infinite and endless sorrows. Our importance is demonstrated by the length and depth of the shadows that we make. The shouts of conquerors, the sceptres of princes, the triumphs of scientists, the masterpieces of artists, and the scarlet of merchantmen are so many signs of our status; yet the sense of anxiety, the problems which torture the intellect, our wounded affections, the smart of conscience, our painful sense of limitation and disability, the groan of the afflicted, the burden of living, and the terror of dying are not less signs of our fundamental greatness. Is it not, indeed, often the case that we are more affected by the dignity of men when they suffer than when they are strong? that in misfortune we discern a loftiness and sacredness never discovered in them in their prosperity? and if we never felt their majesty in life, do we not awake to it when they die, and uncover at their grave? It is also true that in deep affliction we realise most vividly the greatness of our own nature. Stripped of outward, meretricious greatness, Job begins to feel that he is great; his sorrows show him his consequence before God. The very humility born of trouble is a sign of greatness. II. Man is A CREATURE OF GUILT, or God would not thus visit him. 1. There is no cruelty in God. Nero condemned men to prison and then treated them as condemned malefactors simply to feast his eyes on their agonies, by and by releasing them. This world is no laboratory of aimless vivisection. "For He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." 2. There is no injustice in God. "The right of a man before the face of the Most High." Nowhere is the right of a man more sacred than before the face of the Most High. 3. There is no levity in God. Some talk as if this world were a mere spectacle, a great theatre of shadows where God watches the long tragedy with an æsthetic eye. But there is no levity in the Ruler of the universe. All revelation teaches how real human sorrow is to God. What, then, is man, that God visits him with endless correction? Why does He fill his soul with anguish? There is only one answer: man is an offender, his sin is the secret of his misery. In vindicating himself against his friends Job denied that he was guilty of any conscious, specific, secret transgression; but he knew that he was a sinner before God. Immediately after the text he confesses, "I have sinned." It was all there: his suffering brought home the sense of guilt. The broken law makes the shadow of death. III. Man is A CREATURE OF HOPE, or God would not thus visit him. "What is man, that Thou shouldst magnify him?" Sinful and afflicted as he may be, he is yet a creature of hope, or God would not thus lavish discipline upon him. Terrible as this world may be, it is not hell, nor the region of despair. Hope is written with sunbeams on the forehead of the morning; spring writes the lovely word in the grass with flowers; it is emblazoned in the colours of the rainbow. God visits us, then, that He may awake in us the consciousness of sin, and discipline us out of our sin into health of spirit. Again and again Job says, "Let me alone." And that appeal is often on our lips. "Let me alone," cries one, that I may examine this curious world, and do not disturb me with thoughts of infinity and eternity. "Let me alone," pleads another, so that I may enjoy life, and do not harass me about righteousness, guilt, and judgment. "Let me alone," entreats a third, and cease to interrupt my money-making by sickness and misfortune. "Let me alone," cry those whose hearths are threatened; leave my friends,

and spare me bitter bereavements. But this is exactly what God will not do. He visits us every morning, and tries us every moment, that He may arouse us to our true state, great need, and awful danger. Having awoke in us the sense of sin, through the discipline of suffering God perfects us. Yes, this—this is the grand end. "Behold, I will melt them, and try them" (Jer. ix. 7). "The Lord hath proved thee and humbled thee, to do thee good at thy latter end." (*W. L. Watkinson.*) **And try him every moment.**—*Continual trial*:—Why doth God try us every moment? Because we are one moment in one temper, and the next moment in another. The acting frame of a man's heart this hour cannot be collected from the frame it was in an hour before; therefore there is a continual trial. Some things if they be tried once, they are tried for ever; if we try gold, it will ever be as good as we found it, unless we alter it: as we try it to be, so it continues to be. But try the heart of man this day, and come again the next and you may find it in a different condition; to-day believing, to-morrow unbelieving; to-day humble, to-morrow proud; to-day meek, to-morrow passionate; to-day lively and enlarged, to-morrow dead and straightened; pure gold to-day, and to-morrow exceeding drossy. As it is with the pulse of a sick man, it varieth every quarter of an hour, therefore the physician tries his pulse every time he comes, because his disease alters the state of his body. So it is with the distempered condition of man's spirit. God having tried our pulse, the state of our spirit, by crosses or by mercies this day, next day He tries us too, and the third day He tries us again, and so keeps us in continual trials, because we are in continual variations. That sickness and disease within us alters the state and condition of the soul every moment. Our comfort is that God hath a time wherein He will set our souls up in such a frame as He shall need to try us, but that once. Having set us up in a frame of glory, He shall not need to try our hearts for us, or to put us to the trial of ourselves any more, we shall stand as He sets us up to all eternity. (*J. Caryl.*)

Ver. 20. **I have sinned; what shall I do unto Thee, O Thou Preserver of men!**—*The sinner's surrender to his Preserver*:—I. A CONFESSION. "I have sinned." In words this is no more than a hypocrite, nay, a Judas, might say. Do not many call themselves "miserable sinners" who are indeed despicable mockers? Yet seeing Job's heart was right his confession was accepted. 1. It was very brief, but yet very full. It was more full in its generality than if he had descended to particulars. We may use it as a summary of our life. "I have sinned." What else is certain in my whole career? This is most sure and undeniable. 2. It was personal. I have sinned, whatever others may have done. 3. It was to the Lord. He addresses the confession not to his fellow-men but to the Preserver of men. 4. It was a confession wrought by the Spirit. See verse 18, where he ascribes his grief to the visitation of God. 5. It was sincere. No complimentary talk, or matter of ritualistic form, or passing acknowledgment. His heart cried, "I have sinned," and he meant it. 6. It was feeling. He was cut to the quick by it. Read the whole chapter. This one fact, "I have sinned," is enough to brand the soul with the mark of Cain, and burn it with the flames of hell. 7. It was a believing confession. Mingled with much unbelief, Job still had faith in God's power to pardon. An unbelieving confession may increase sin. II. AN INQUIRY. "What shall I do unto Thee?" In this question we see—1. His willingness to do anything, whatever the Lord might demand, thus proving his earnestness. 2. His bewilderment: he could not tell what to offer, or where to turn; yet something must be done. 3. His surrender at discretion. He makes no conditions, he only begs to know the Lord's terms. 4. The inquiry may be answered negatively. What can I do to escape Thee? Thou art all around me. Can past obedience atone? Alas! as I look back I am unable to find anything in my life but sin. Can I bring a sacrifice? Would grief, fasting, long prayers, ceremonies, or self-denial avail? I know they would not. 5. It may be answered evangelically. Confess the sin. Renounce it. Obey the message of peace: believe in the Lord Jesus, and live. III. A TITLE. "O Thou Preserver of men!" Observer of men, therefore aware of my case, my misery, my confession, my desire for pardon, my utter helplessness. Preserver of men. By His infinite long-suffering refraining from punishment. By daily bounties of supply keeping the ungrateful alive. By the plan of salvation delivering men from going down to the pit. By daily grace preventing the backsliding and apostasy of believers. Address upon the point in hand—1. The impenitent, urging them to confession.

2. The unconcerned, moving them to inquire, "What must I do to be saved?" 3. The ungrateful, exhibiting the preserving goodness of God as a motive for love to Him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *What to do in case of sin:*—1. What to do in case of sin is a point of the highest consideration. 2. Sincere confession of sin makes the soul very active and inquisitive about the remedies of sin. 3. A soul truly sensible of sin is ready to submit to any terms which God shall put upon him. 4. God is to be consulted and inquired after in all doubtful cases, especially in our sin cases. (*J. Caryl.*) *Complaining to God:*—It is his God whom the pious Job is thus apostrophising. "I, the poor pismire in the dust, will my error or my wrong-doing affect Omnipotence? Ah! pardon my transgression, whatever it be, ere it be too late! A little while, and I shall lie down in the dust, and even Thy keen eye will look for me in vain." What are we to say to such language? It is a monotone that you will hardly find monotonous. Where is the patience, the submission, so calm, so dutiful, so beautiful of the Job whom we knew before? Is there a trace of it left? Surely from first to last we have not as yet one touch of such meek acquiescence in suffering, as we have seen, some of us, on beds of pain—such as we would pray earnestly to attain unto, in some measure, in our own hour of trial. We see nothing of the frame of mind in which a Moslem, whose very name implies submission, or a Stoic, a Marcus Aurelius, to say nothing of a Christian, would wish to meet the sharpest pang. We feel—do we not?—that the very object of these wild cries is partly to intensify our sense of the woes that fell on Job, yet mainly to make us feel how boundless is his bewilderment at finding this terrible measure of suffering meted out as the seeming recompense for a life of innocence. And yet we are intended to feel with him. Admirable, pious, well-intentioned as are the words of Eliphaz, they seem to belong to another spiritual world than that of Job's cries. We cannot but feel the sharp contrast between them, and you will feel with me that some great question must be at stake, some vital problem stirring in the air, or we should not be called on to listen, on the one hand, to the calm, well-rounded, unimpeachable teaching of Eliphaz, and, on the other, to the bitter, impassioned complaints, the almost rebellious cries of one whose praise is in all the Churches. This, then, is the one question which will be pressed on us more and more as we read the book, How is it that the saint, the saintly hero, who stands in the forefront of the drama, uses language which we dare not use, which we would pray to be preserved from using in our bitterest hour of suffering? How is it that, thus far at least, the foremost of his opponents speaks nothing which is not to be found on the lips of psalmist or prophet, little that is not worthy of lips which have been touched by a still higher teaching? How is it that, for all this, we shall, as we know, in due time have the highest of all authorities for holding that he and they, in their insight into the highest truths, fall below the Job whom they rebuke, and whom we ourselves cannot but reprove? Surely, so far, the great Judge of this debate must be listening with full approval to the good Eliphaz; with stern, if pitiful displeasure to the wild cries of Job. (*Dean Bradley.*)

Ver. 21. **And why dost Thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity?** — *Why some sinners are not pardoned:* — No man should rest until he is sure that his sin is forgiven. I. I shall first take our text as A QUESTION THAT MAY BE ASKED, AS IN JOB'S CASE, BY A TRUE CHILD OF GOD. "Why dost Thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity?" Sometimes this question is asked under a misapprehension. Job was a great sufferer; and although he knew that he was not as guilty as his troublesome friends tried to make out, yet he did fear that, possibly, his great afflictions were the results of some sin. "If it be caused by sin, why dost Thou not first pardon the sin, and then remove its effects?" I. Now I take it that it would have been a misapprehension on Job's part to suppose that his afflictions were the result of his sin. Mark you, we are, by nature, so full of sin that we may always believe that there is enough evil within us to cause us to suffer severe affliction if God dealt with us according to justice; but do recollect that, in Job's case, the Lord's object, in his afflictions and trials, was not to punish Job for his sin, but to display in the patriarch, to His own honour and glory, the wonders of His grace. It may happen to you that you think that your present affliction is the result of some sin in you, yet it may be nothing of the kind. It may be that the Lord loves you in a very special manner because you are a fruit-bearing branch, and He is pruning you that you may bring forth more fruit. There are certain kinds

of affliction that come only upon the more eminent members of the family of God: and if you are one of those who are thus honoured, instead of saying to your Heavenly Father, "When wilt Thou pardon my sin?" you might more properly say, "My Father, since Thou hast pardoned mine iniquity, and adopted me into Thy family, I cheerfully accept my portion of suffering, since in all this, Thou art not bringing to my mind the remembrance of any unforgiven sin, for I know that all my transgressions were numbered on the Scape-goat's head of old." 2. Sometimes, also, a child of God uses this prayer under a very unusual sense of sin. You know that, in looking at a landscape, you may so fix your gaze upon some one object that you do not observe the rest of the landscape. If you fix your eye upon your own sinfulness, as you well may do, it may be that you will not quite forget the greatness of Almighty love, and the grandeur of the atoning sacrifice; but, yet, if you do not forget them, you do not think so much of them as you should, for you seem to make your own sin, in all its heinousness and aggravation, the central object of your consideration. There are certain times in which you cannot help doing this; they come upon me, so I can speak from my own experience. 3. There is another time when the believer may, perhaps, utter the question of our text; that is, whenever he gets into trouble with his God. I fear that some of you must have known at times what this experience means; for between you and your Heavenly Father—although you are safe enough, and He will never cast you away from Him—there is a cloud. You are not walking in the light, your heart is not right in the sight of God. II. THE QUESTION IN OUR TEXT MAY BE ASKED BY SOME WHO ARE NOT CONSCIOUSLY GOD'S CHILDREN. "Why dost Thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity?" 1. And, first, I think that I hear somebody making this kind of inquiry, "Why does not God pardon my sin, and have done with it? When I come to this place, I hear a great deal about atonement by blood, and reconciliation through the death of Christ; but why does not God just say to me, 'It is true that you have done wrong, but I forgive you, and there is an end of the matter'?" With the utmost reverence for the name and character of God, I must say that such a course of action is impossible. God is infinitely just and holy, He is the Judge of all the earth, and He must punish sin. God will not permit anarchy in order that He may indulge your whims, or vacate the throne of heaven that He may save you according to your fancy. 2. Perhaps somebody else says, "Well, then, if that is God's way of salvation, let us believe in Jesus Christ, and let us have pardon at once. But you talk about the need of a new birth, and about forsaking sin, and following after holiness, and you say that without holiness no man can see the Lord." Yes, I do say it, for God's Word says it. The curse of sin is in the evil itself rather than in its punishment; and if it could become a happy thing for a man to be a sinner, then men would sin, and sin again, and sin yet more deeply; and this God will not have. 3. "Well," says another friend, "that is not my trouble. I am willing to be saved by the atonement of Christ, and I am perfectly willing to be made to cease from sin, and to receive from God a new heart and a right spirit; why, then, does He not pardon me, and blot out my transgressions?" Well, it may be, first, because you have not confessed your wrong-doing. May it not be possible, also, you who cannot obtain pardon and peace, that you are still practising some known sin? 4. "Well," say you, "I do not know that this is my case at all, for I really do, from my heart, endeavour to give up all sin, and I am sincerely seeking peace with God." Well, perhaps you have not found it because you have not been thoroughly earnest in seeking it. 5. There is still one thing more that I will mention as a reason why some men do not find the Saviour, and get their sins forgiven; and that is, because they do not get off the wrong ground on to the right ground. If you are ever to be pardoned, it must be entirely by an act of Divine, unmerited favour. Now perhaps you are trying to do something to recommend yourself to God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

CHAPTER VIII.

VERS. 1-3. **Then answered Bildad the Shuhite.**—*Bildad's unsympathetic speech* :—Bildad grasps at once, as we say, the nettle. He is quite sure that he has the key to the secret of the distribution among mankind of misery and happiness. It is a very simple solution. It is the doctrine that untimely death, sickness, adversity in every form, are alike signs of God's anger; that they visit mankind with unerring discrimination; are all what we call "judgments"; are penalties, *i.e.*, or chastisements, meant either simply to vindicate the broken law, or else to warn and reclaim the sinner. And so, in what we feel to be harsh and unfeeling terms, he applies at once this principle, like unsparing cautery, to the wounds of his friend. Bildad tries to overwhelm the restless and presumptuous audacity of Job with a hoard of maxims and metaphors drawn from the storehouse of the "wisdom of the ancients." He puts them forward in a form that may remind us for a moment of the Book of Proverbs. "As the tall bulrush or the soaring reed-grass dies down faster than it shot up, when water is withdrawn, so falls and withers the shortlived prosperity of the forgetters of God. The spider's web, frailest of tenements, is the world-old type of the hopes which the ungodly builds." The second friend is emphasising what the first had hinted. "There are no mysteries at all, no puzzles in human life," the friends say. "Suffering is, in each and every case, the consequence of ill-doing. God's righteousness is absolute. It is to be seen at every turn in the experience of life. All this impatient, fretful, writhing under, or at the sight of pain and loss, is a sign of something morally wrong, of want of faith in Divine justice. Believe this, Job; act on it, and all thy troubles will be over; God will be once more thy friend—till then He cannot be." (*Dean Bradley.*) *Bildad's first speech* :—I. A REPROOF THAT IS SEVERE. "How long wilt thou speak these things?" Job had poured forth language that seemed as wild and tempestuous as the language of a man in a passion. But such language ought to have been considered in relation to his physical anguish and mental distress. Great suffering destroys the mental equilibrium. II. A DOCTRINE THAT IS UNQUESTIONABLE. "Doth God pervert judgment?" The interrogatory is a strong way of putting the affirmative; namely, that God is absolutely just, and that He never deviates from the right. III. AN IMPLICATION THAT IS UNKIND. "If thy children have sinned against Him, and He have cast them away for their transgression." Surely it was excessively heartless even to hint such things to the broken-hearted father. IV. A POLICY THAT IS DIVINE. "If thou wouldst seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplication unto the Almighty." Bildad recommends that this policy should be attended to at once, and in a proper spirit. He affirms that if this policy be thus attended to, the Almighty would mercifully interpose. V. AN AUTHORITY NOT TO BE TRUSTED. "Inquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers." He appeals to antiquity to confirm what he has advanced. Two things should be considered. 1. There is nothing in past times infallible but the Divinely-inspired. 2. There is always more of the inspired in the present than in the past. VI. A CONSIDERATION THAT IS SOLEMN. "We are but of yesterday, and know nothing." This fact, which is introduced parenthetically, is of solemn moment to us all. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 3. **Doth the Almighty pervert justice?**—*Judgment and justice* :—These two words may be taken as expressing one and the same thing. If we distinguish them, judgment may serve to express God's righteous procedure in punishing the wicked; and justice His procedure in vindicating the righteous when they are oppressed. Job is unjustly charged, and accordingly he vindicates himself. 1. Job's maintaining of his own righteousness is not a quarrelling of God's righteousness, who afflicted him. Job held both to be true, though he could not reconcile God's dealing with the testimony of his own conscience, that did evidence his weakness, but not charge God with unrighteousness. 2. As for his complaints of God's dealings, he was indeed more culpable therein than he would at first see and acknowledge; yet therein he intended no direct accusation against God's righteousness. Learn—(1) The justice of God is so uncontrovertedly clear in all His proceeding, whether He act immediately, or mediately by instruments, that the conscience of the greatest complainer, when put to it seriously, must subscribe to it; and all are bound to the defence of it, as witnesses for God.

(2) Such as know God, in His perfect and holy nature and attributes, will see clear cause to justify God in His proceeding; and particularly they who look upon His omniscient power and all-sufficiency, will see that He can neither be moved to injustice by hope of any reward, nor hindered to be just by the fear of the greatness of any, or any other by-respect. (3) Though God be unquestionably just, yet His dispensations may, sometimes, be such toward His people as they cannot easily reconcile His justice in His dealing, with the testimony of their own consciences, concerning their own integrity. (4) The study of God's sovereignty will solve many difficulties in the sad lots and sufferings of saints. (*George Hutcheson.*)

Vers. 5–7. **If thou wouldst seek unto God betimes.**—*The sinful man's search:*—I. WHAT IS IT THAT GOD REQUIRETH? A diligent and speedy search. It is a work both in desire and labour to be joined with God. How must we search? Faithfully, humbly, continually. Whom we must seek. God, for four causes. 1. Because we have nothing of ourselves, nor of any other creature. 2. Because none is so present as He. 3. Because none is so able to help as He. 4. Because there is none so willing to help as He. When we must seek. Early. "Even in a time when He may be found." II. HOW IS THE SEARCH TO BE MADE? In prayer. Prayer is a shield against the force of our adversary. Prayer hath ever been the cognisance, and the victory, and the triumph of the faithful; for as the soul giveth life to the body, so prayer giveth life to the soul. III. WHAT EFFECT THIS SEEKING AND PRAYING SHOULD HAVE ON US. "If thou wert pure and upright." God's promises for the performance hereof yield unto us most plentiful matter of doctrine and consolation. In God's promises note His mercy, which exceedeth all His works. Note His bountiful kindness, His patience and long-suffering, and His love. God increase the love of these things in our hearts, and make us worthy of Christ's blessings, which He hath plentifully in store for us; that after He hath heaped temporal blessings upon us, He will give us the blessing of all blessings, even the life of the world to come. (*H. Smith.*)

Ver. 6. **Surely now He would awake for thee.**—*Prayer awaking God:*—God sleeps, not in regard of the act, but the consequents of sleep. Natural sleep is the binding or locking up of the senses. The eye and ear of God is never bound. But to man's apprehension the affairs of the world pass, as if God did neither hear nor see. When men are asleep things are done which they can take no notice of, much less stop and prevent. Sleeping and awaking, as applied to God, note only the changes of providence. The words teach—1. That holy prayer shall certainly be heard. 2. That prayer shall be heard presently. Holy prayers are never deferred the hearing. The giving out of the answer may be deferred, but the answer is not deferred. 3. Prayer is the best means to awaken God. Two things in Scripture are said to awaken God. The prayers of His people, and the rage and blasphemy of His enemies. 4. Seeing that God is awakened by prayer, our prayer ought to be very strong and fervent. If God do but awake for us, all is presently (speedily) well with us. (*Joseph Caryl.*)

Ver. 7. **Though thy beginning was small.**—*The day of small things:*—Small beginnings, in certain cases, are productive of great ends. I. THE CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS. Though obvious and simple, they are very easily overlooked. A pure motive seems the first. A double aim rarely succeeds. The man who has only one aim has only one enemy to encounter. Another "condition of success" may be found in the nature of the aim. Where we aim at that which is good—that which conduces to God's glory, or man's benefit, or to both—we have singular advantages on our side. The waves are on the side of God's enemies; they "cast up mire and dirt," but that is all. The current is on the side of His friends—of those, as we said above, who seek to do good. One other condition of success, always infallible, if not always essential, is a distinct promise on our side. What God promises, He predicts; what He predicts, He performs. II. SOME OF THE SPECIAL CASES to which these considerations apply. And the preaching of the Gospel in the world as a "witness," is that which comes to hand first. How insignificant and small was its beginning! It is true that other religions also have prevailed widely from a small beginning, but they are only subordinate illustrations, so to speak; for they prevailed, so far as they did, from the modicum of Bible truth which they had in them as compared with the religions they dis-

placed. Thus, Buddhism and Christianity, for example, were each founded by one man; but the man in one case was a peasant, in the other was a prince. So Mohammedanism spread by conquering; Christianity, by being conquered. Brahminism, again, prevails in India, but in India alone, I believe; in all other lands it is an exotic which cannot maintain life; whereas Christianity holds sway, even if hated, among all the leading races of the world. Another case is that of the growth of grace in the heart. In this let no one despise the day of small things; let no one be surprised not to find himself a full-grown Christian in one night. If in other respects your beginning seems right, it is all the better, if anything, for being small. The work of God's Spirit is gradual, as a rule. (*Mathematicus, M.A.*) *Beginning to be interpreted by the end*:—If evolution can be proved to include man, the whole course of evolution and the whole system of nature from that moment assume a new significance. The beginning must then be interpreted from the end, not the end from the beginning. An engineering workshop is unintelligible until we reach the room where the completed engine stands. Everything culminates in that final product, is contained in it, is explained by it. The evolution of man is also the completion and corrective of all other forms of evolution. From this point only is there a full view, a true perspective, a consistent world. (*H. Drummond.*) *The beginning, increase, and end of the Divine life*:—This was the reasoning of Bildad the Shuhite. He wished to prove that Job could not possibly be an upright man, for if he were so, he here affirms that his prosperity would increase continually, or that if he fell into any trouble, God would awake for him, and make the habitation of his righteousness prosperous. Now, the utterances of Bildad, and of the other two men who came to comfort Job, but who made his wounds tingle, are not to be accepted as being inspired. They spake as men—as mere men. With regard to the passage which I have selected as a text, it is true—altogether apart from its being said by Bildad, or being found in the Bible at all; it is true, as indeed the facts of the Book of Job prove, for Job did greatly increase in his latter end. Evil things may seem to begin well, but they end badly; there is the flash and the glare, but afterwards the darkness and the black ash. Not so, however, with good. With good the beginning is ever small; but its latter end doth greatly increase. "The path of the just is as the shining light," which sheds a few flickering rays at first, which exercises a combat with the darkness, but it "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Good things progress. I. First, then, for THE QUIETING OF YOUR FEARS. Thou sayest, my hearer, "I am but a beginner in grace, and therefore I am vexed with anxiety, and full of timorousness." Perhaps thy first fear, if I put it into words, is this: "My beginning is so small that I cannot tell when it did begin, and therefore, methinks I cannot have been converted, but am still in the gall of bitterness." O beloved! how many thousands like thyself have been exercised with doubts upon this point! Be encouraged; it is not needful for you to know when you were regenerated; it is but necessary for you to know that you are so. If thou canst set no date to the beginning of thy faith, yet if thou dost believe now, thou art saved. Does it not strike you as being very foolish reasoning if you should say in your heart, "I am not converted because I do not know when"? Nay, with such reasoning as that, I could prove that old Rome was never built, because the precise date of her building is unknown; nay, we might declare that the world was never made, for its exact age even the geologist cannot tell us. Another doubt also arises from this point. "Ah! sir," saith a timid Christian, "it is not merely the absence of all date to my conversion, but the extreme weakness of the grace I have." "Ah," saith one, "I sometimes think I have a little faith, but it is so mingled with unbelief, distrust, and incredulity, that I can hardly think it is God's gift, the faith of God's elect." When God begins to build, if He lay but one single stone He will finish the structure; when Christ sits down to weave, though He casts the shuttle but once, and that time the thread was so filmy as scarcely to be discernible, He will nevertheless continue till the piece is finished, and the whole is wrought. If thy faith be never so little, yet it is immortal, and that immortality may well compensate for its littleness. Having thus spoken upon two fears, which are the result of these small beginnings, let me now try to quiet another. "Ah!" saith the heir of heaven, "I do hope that in me grace hath commenced its work, but my fear is, that such frail faith as mine will never stand the test of years. I am," saith he, "so weak, that one temptation would be too much for me; how then can I hope to pass through

yonder forest of spears held in the hands of valiant enemies? A drop makes me tremble, how shall I stem the roaring flood of life and death? Let but one arrow fly from hell, it penetrates my tender flesh; what then if Satan shall empty his quiver? I shall surely fall by the hand of the enemy. My beginnings are so small that I am certain they will soon come to their end, and that end must be black despair." Be of good courage, have done with that fear once for all; it is true, as thou sayest, the temptation will be too much for thee, but what hast thou to do with it? Heaven is not to be won by thy might, but by the might of Him who has promised heaven to thee. Let me seek to quiet and pacify one other fear. "Nay, but," say you, "I never can be saved; for when I look at other people, at God's own true children,—I am ashamed to say it,—I am but a miserable copy of them. So far from attaining to the image of my Master, I fear I am not even like my Master's servants. I live at a poor dying rate. I sometimes run, but oftener creep, and seldom if ever fly. Where others are shaking mountains, I am stumbling over mole-hills." If some little star in the sky should declare it was not a star, because it did not shine as brightly as Sirius or Arcturus, how foolish would be its argument! Hast thou ever learned to distinguish between grace and gifts? For know that they are marvellously dissimilar. A man may be saved who has not a grain of gifts; but no man can be saved who hath no grace. Have you ever learned to distinguish between grace that saves, and the grace which develops itself afterwards? Remember, there are some graces that are absolutely necessary to the saving of the soul; there are some others that are only necessary to its comfort. Faith, for instance, is absolutely necessary for salvation; but assurance is not. II. Upon this head I wish to say a word or two for the CONFIRMATION OF YOUR FAITH. Well, the first confirmation I would offer you is this: Our beginnings are very, very small, but we have a joyous prospect in our text. Our latter end shall greatly increase; we shall not always be so distrustful as we are now. Thank God, we look for days when our faith shall be unshaken, and firm as mountains be. I shall not for ever have to mourn before my God that I cannot love Him as I would. We are growing things. Methinks I hear the green blade say this morning, "I shall not for ever be trodden under foot as if I were but grass; I shall grow; I shall blossom; I shall grow ripe and mellow; and many a man shall sharpen his sickle for me." But further, this cheering prospect upon earth is quite eclipsed by a more cheering prospect beyond the river Death. "Our latter end shall greatly increase." Faith shall give place to fruition; hope shall be occupied with enjoyment; love itself shall be swallowed up in ecstasy. Mine eyes, ye shall not for ever weep; there are sights of transport for you. Tongue, thou shalt not for ever have to mourn, and be the instrument of confession; there are songs and hallelujahs for thee. Perhaps some one may say, "How is it that we are so sure that our latter end will increase?" I give you just these reasons:—we are quite sure of it because there is a vitality in our piety. The sculptor may have oftentimes cut in marble some exquisite statue of a babe. That has come to its full size; it will never grow any greater. When I see a wise man in the world, I look at him as being just such an infant. He will never grow any greater. He has come to his full. He is but chiselled out by human power; there is no vitality in him. The Christian here on earth is a babe, but not a babe in stone—a babe instinct with life. Besides this, we feel that we must come to something better, because God is with us. We are quite certain that what we are, cannot be the end of God's design. We are only the chalk crayon, rough drawings of men, yet when we come to be filled up in eternity, we shall be marvellous pictures, and our latter end indeed shall be greatly increased. Christian! remember, for the encouragement of thy poor soul, that what thou art now is not the measure of thy safety; thy safety depends not upon what thou art, but on what Christ is. III. Now for our last point, namely, FOR THE QUICKENING OF OUR DILIGENCE. 1. First, take heed to yourself that you obey the commandments which relate to the ordinances of Christ. But further, if thou wouldst get out of the littleness of thy beginnings, wait much upon the means of grace. Read much the Word of God alone. Rest not till thou hast fed on the Word; and thus shall thy little beginnings come to great endings. 2. Be much also in prayer. God's plants grow fastest in the warm atmosphere of the closet. 3. And, lastly, if thy beginning be but small, make the best use of the beginning that thou hast. Hast thou but one talent? Put it out at interest, and make two of it. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 9. **For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow.**—*The intellectual poverty of life:*—The two unquestionable truths that Bildad here expresses are the transitoriness and the intellectual poverty of our mortal life. We "know nothing." Bildad seems to indicate that our ignorance arises partly from the brevity of our life. We have no time to get knowledge. 1. We know nothing compared with what is to be known. This may be said of all created intelligences, even of those who are the most exalted in power and attainment. "Each subsequent advance in science has shown us the comparative nothingness of all human knowledge."—Sir R. Peel. 2. We know nothing compared with what we might have known. There is a vast disproportion between the knowledge attainable by man on earth, and that which he actually attains. Our Maker sees the difference. 3. We know nothing compared with what we shall know in the future. There is a life beyond the grave for all, good and bad, a life, not of indolence, but of intense unremitting action,—the action of inquiry and reflection. I. IF WE ARE THUS SO NECESSARILY IGNORANT, IT DOES NOT BECOME US TO CRITICISE THE WAYS OF GOD. How often do we find some poor mortals arrogantly occupying the critic's chair, in the great temple of truth, and even suggesting moral irregularities in the Divine procedure. II. DIFFICULTIES IN CONNECTION WITH A REVELATION FROM GOD ARE TO BE EXPECTED. Place in the hands of one deeply conscious of his ignorance, written with profundity of thought, and extensiveness of learning, and would he not expect to meet with difficulties in every page? How monstrous then it is for any man to expect to comprehend all the revelation of the Infinite Mind. The man who parades the difficulties of the Bible as a justification of his unbelief, or as an argument against its Divinity, is pitiably ignorant of his own ignorance. Were there no difficulties, you might reasonably question its heavenly authorship. Their existence is the signature of the Infinite. III. THE PROFOUNDEST MODESTY SHOULD CHARACTERISE US IN THE MAINTENANCE OF OUR THEOLOGICAL VIEWS. It is the duty of every man to get convictions of Divine truth for himself, to hold these convictions with firmness, and to promote them with earnestness; but at the same time, with a due consciousness of his own fallibility, and with a becoming deference to the judgment of others. The more knowledge, the more humility. True wisdom is ever modest. Those who live most in the light are most ready to veil their faces. IV. OUR PERFECTION IS TO BE FOUND IN MORAL QUALITIES RATHER THAN IN INTELLECTUAL ATTAINMENTS. If our well-being consisted in exact and extensive information of our great Maker and His universe, we might well allow despair to settle on our spirits. Few have the talent to become scientific, fewer still the means; but all can love. And "love is the fulfilling of the law"; and love is heaven. V. THERE MUST BE AN AFTER-LIFE AFFORDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE. We are formed for the acquisition of knowledge. If we are so necessarily ignorant, and there be no hereafter, our destiny is not realised, and we have been made in vain. VI. WE SHOULD WITH RAPTUROUS GRATITUDE AVAIL OURSELVES OF THE MERCIFUL INTERPOSITION OF CHRIST AS OUR GUIDE TO IMMORTALITY. Unaided reason has no torch to light us safely on our way. Our gracious Maker has met our case, He has sent His Son. That Son stands by you and me, and says, "Follow Me." (*Homilist.*) *On the ignorance of man, and the proper improvement of it:*—What do we know of ourselves? We carry about with us bodies curiously made; but we cannot see far into their inward frame and constitution. We experience the operation of many powers and faculties, but understand not what they are, or how they operate. We find that our wills instantaneously produce motion in our members, but when we endeavour to account for this we are entirely lost. The laws of union between the soul and the body, the nature of death, and the particular state into which it puts us; these and many other things relating to our own beings are absolutely incomprehensible to us. One of the greatest mysteries to man is man. What do we know of this earth, and its constitution and furniture? Almost all that we see of things is their outsides. The substance or essence of every object is unintelligible to us. We see no more than a link or two in the immense chain of causes and effects. There is not a single effect which we can trace to its primary cause. And what is this earth to the whole solar system? And what is the system of the sun to the system of the universe? And if we could take in the complete prospect of God's works, there would still remain unknown an infinity of abstract truths and possibles. Observe too our ignorance of the plan and conduct of Divine providence in the government of the universe. We cannot

say wherein consists the fitness of many particular dispensations of providence. There is a depth of wisdom in all God's ways which we are incapable of tracing. The origin of evil is a point which in all ages has perplexed human reason. And then carry thought to the Deity Himself, and consider what we know of Him. His nature is absolutely unfathomable to us, and in the contemplation of it we see ourselves lost. This imperfection of our knowledge is plainly owing—1. To the narrowness of our faculties. 2. To the lateness of our existence. We are but of yesterday. 3. To the disadvantageousness of our situation for observing nature and acquiring knowledge. We are confined to a point of this earth, which itself is but a point compared with the rest of creation. Our subject ought to teach us the profoundest humility. There is nothing we are more apt to be proud of than our understanding. Our subject may be of particular use in answering many objections against providence, and in reconciling us to the orders and appointments of nature. There is an unsearchableness in God's ways, and we ought not to expect to find them always free from darkness. Our subject should lead us to be contented with any real evidence which we can get. And our subject should lead our hopes and wishes to that future world where full day will break in upon our souls. (*R. Price, D.D.*) **Our days upon earth are a shadow.**—*Life a shadow*:—The author of "Ecce Homo" has remarked that Westminster Abbey is more attractive than St. Paul's Cathedral. The reason is obvious. Westminster Abbey is full of human interest. There lie our kings, poets, and conquerors. Statues of great men in characteristic attitudes confront us at every turn. St. Paul's, on the contrary, is comparatively barren in this respect. An imposing temple it is, nevertheless, almost empty. As much may be said of Dante and Milton. The poems of the former are occupied with the hopes and fears, loves and hates of those who were "of like passions with ourselves," whereas the productions of the latter are occupied with heaven and hell rather than with our own familiar earth. To which of these classes the Bible belongs we need not state. While Divine in its origin, it is intensely human in its theme, end, and sympathies. Man's dangers and duties, character and condition, absorb the anxiety of each sacred writer. The text reminds us of this. It speaks of life. Our existence is compared to a shadow. The figure is a favourite one in the Old Testament. No less than eight times is it used. What does it mean? I. A SHADOW IS DARK. We always associate the word with that which is gloomy and sombre. And, alas! how dark is life to many! To them the statement of Holy Writ emphatically applies, "Man that is born of woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery." As Sydney Smith observed, "We talk of human life as a journey, but how variously is that journey performed! There are those who come forth girt, and shod, and mantled, to walk on velvet lawns and smooth terraces, where every gale is arrested and every beam is tempered. There are others who walk on Alpine paths of life against driving misery and through stormy sorrows, over sharp afflictions; walk with bare feet and naked breast, jaded, mangled, and chill." Yonder is a poor lad, a wretched city arab. He cannot read or write. He does not know that there is a God. He has hardly heard the name of Christ. Father and mother he does not recollect. His "days upon earth are a shadow." Here is a young widow, scarce out of her teens. Less than twelve months ago she was a blooming bride; now she weeps at her husband's grave. Her fondest earthly expectations are blasted. Her "days upon the earth are a shadow." There is a large and prosperous household. Father and mother, son and daughter, have a noble ambition—to excel each other in kindness. Brothers and sisters emulate one another in affection. On a certain morning, however, a letter is laid upon the breakfast-table which tells them that, by one blow of misfortune, they are ruined. The home-nest is destroyed. They must go forth, separated for life, in order to procure their subsistence. Their "days upon earth are a shadow." All lives are more or less shadow-like. II. A SHADOW IS NOT POSSIBLE WITHOUT LIGHT. Natural or artificial radiance is essential to shade. As much may be affirmed of our troubles. They are accompanied by the light of the Sun of Righteousness. To console us in all trial we have the light of God's presence. "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee." A vessel crossing the Atlantic was suddenly struck with a terrible wind. She shivered and reeled under the stroke. Passengers and crew were thrown into confusion. The captain's little girl awoke during the disturbance, and, raising herself in bed, said, "Is father on deck?" Assured that he was, she laid herself down quietly and slept again. We may do the same. Calmly ought we to trust

our Heavenly Father, who is always with us in life's storms. Does the reader remember the dying words of John Wesley? As he was drawing near his end he tried to write. But when he took up the pen he discovered that his right hand had forgotten its cunning. A friend offering to write for him asked, "What shall I write?" "Nothing but this: The best of all is, God with us." Such was the support of the expiring saint, and such is an unfailing source of strength to us in every hour of trial. We have also the light of God's purpose. The very meaning of certain commonly used words bears important testimony to the kindly and wise object of the Lord in afflicting us. "Punishment" is derived from the Sanskrit "pu," to cleanse. "Castigation" comes from "castus," pure. "Tribulation" has grown out of tribulum, a threshing instrument, whereby the Roman husbandmen separated the corn from the husks. To quote from a living author: "A Chinese mandarin who has a fancy for foreign trees gets an acorn. He puts it in a pot, places a glass shade over it, waters it, and gets an oak; but it is an oak only two feet high. God does differently. He puts the sapling out of doors; He gives it sunshine and pure air. Is that all? No. Hail whistles like bullets in its branches, and seems as if it would tear them to ribbands. But is the tree the worse for it? No; it is cleansed from blight and mildew. Then come storm and tempest, bowing the tree until it appears as if it must fall. But only a few rotten boughs are removed, and the roots take a firmer hold, making the tree stand like a rock. Then comes the lightning, like a flaming sword, rending down huge pieces. Surely the tree is marred and injured now! Not at all. The lightning has made a rent through which the sunlight reaches other parts." This is a picture of God's dealings with us. The storms of trouble develop holiness and virtue. Two men stand by the ocean. As he looks at the grand green waves, galloping like Neptune's wild horses, and shaking their foaming manes with delight, one of them sees in the ocean an emblem of eternity, a symbol of infinitude, a manifestation of God. But the other, as he glances at it, sees in it nothing but a fluid composed of oxygen and hydrogen, forming a convenient means of sending out shiploads of corn and iron, silk and spices. "To the pure all things are pure." Let us be righteous, and we shall find spiritual help in everything. If we have but a heart yearning after Christ, we shall never fail to get strength and solace from nature, revelation, and mankind. The same bee has a sting for its foe and honey for its friend. The same sun sustains and ripens a rooted tree, but kills the uprooted one. The same wind and waves sink one ship and send another to its destination. III. A SHADOW AGREES WITH ITS SUBSTANCE. It corresponds in shape. The tree has a shadow, which is its precise similitude. It corresponds in size. A small house or stone has a small shadow. Life is a shadow. God is the sun. What is the substance? Eternity. Surely it is not outstraining the figure to say this. Life is a "shadow of good things to come" in the other world. But is it so? Is life a "shadow of good things to come"? That depends upon circumstances. The character of our being hereafter agrees with the character of our being here. The people of Ashantee believe that the rank and position of the dead in the other world are determined by the number of attendants he has. Hence, on the death of his mother, the king sacrificed three thousand of his subjects on her grave, that she might have a large retinue of followers, and therefore occupy a situation of eminence. In this horrible custom there is the germ of a solemn truth. Our moral and spiritual state in eternity are regulated by our experience in the present. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "He that is holy, let him be holy still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." Oh, what a mighty argument on behalf of goodness! Be it not forgotten. God help us in our daily deeds to remember that our thoughts, feelings, acts, help to decide our everlasting destiny. May we so affectionately serve Christ and so zealously bless our fellows that our inevitable future may be bright and glorious. IV. A SHADOW IS USEFUL. It is serviceable in many ways. Sometimes it saves life. "The shadow of a great rock in a weary land" is of more value than we in our climate can fully understand. Distance may be measured by shadows. The height of mountains has been discovered thus. Time, too, is ascertainable by shadows. Orientals are known to practise this method of finding the hour of the day. To be true followers of Christ, our lives, like the shadow, must be marked by utility. St. John closes his Gospel with these remarkable words, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." Nay (we feel inclined to say), not so, thou beloved

disciple! Surely thou art wrong. Think again. Withdraw thy hyperbole of enthusiasm. We venture to correct thee. Less than "the world itself"; very much less will "contain" an accurate account of all thy blessed Master did. Peter gives us His whole biography in five words, "Who went about doing good." Doing good; that was the entire work of Jesus. Good, good, good, nothing but good. Good of all kinds, good at all times, good to all sorts of men. To be His real servants, then, we must distinguish ourselves by usefulness. We can do so. It is astonishing how much may be accomplished. We have before quoted Sydney Smith; we will borrow another thought of him. He argues that if we resolve to make one person in each day happy, in ten years we shall have made no less than three thousand six hundred and fifty happy! Is not the effort worth making? Let us try the experiment. It will not be in vain. Neither shall we go unrewarded. No bliss is like that which attends benevolence. V. A SHADOW IS SOON GONE. It cannot last long. Speedily does it depart. Life is short. Our sojourn on earth soon ends. Do not then trifle with the Gospel. Your opportunity for seeking salvation will soon be gone. (*T. R. Stevenson.*) *Life as a shadow*:—On the face of the municipal buildings at Aberdeen is an old sundial, said to have been constructed by David Anderson in 1597. The motto is, "Ut umbra, sic fugit vita."

Ver. 11. **Can the rush grow up without mire?** — The rush to which he refers did not grow in the dry and parched land of Uz, which was the place where Bildad and Job lived. It grew principally in Egypt, and in one or two places in Northern Palestine. It is no other than the famous bulrush of the Nile, of which the ark was made in which the infant Moses was concealed; an ark of bulrush being supposed to be a powerful charm for warding off all evil. The smooth rind or skin of this remarkable plant that once grew in great abundance in Egypt, but is now very scarce, supplied when dried and beaten out and pasted together the first material used for writing on. Our word paper comes from its name papyrus. Perhaps Bildad, who from his style of speech was evidently a learned man, possessed an old Egyptian book made of papyrus leaves, in which he found the picturesque proverb of my text; and it would be a very curious thing if on the very leaf of a book made of the skin of the papyrus or rush, there should be inscribed an account of the way in which the papyrus or rush itself grew on the swampy banks of the Nile. "Can the rush grow up without mire?" Every plant needs water. Water forms the sap which circulates through the veins of every plant; it is the internal stream along which little successions of floats continually go, carrying the materials of growth to every part of the structure. In Egypt we see in a very remarkable way the dependence of plants upon water; for vegetation only grows as far as the life-giving overflow of the annual inundation of the Nile extends. Beyond that point there is nothing but the parched, leafless desert. Nothing can be more striking than the dry, white sand, and the long luxuriant grass side by side. There is no mingling of barren and fertile soil; and the two endless lines of grey and green come abruptly into contact. But while other plants thus need water, and are dependent upon it, they can nevertheless cling to life and preserve their greenness even during a pretty long drought. The rush, on the contrary, cannot exist without water, even for the shortest period; and the burning sun of Egypt would destroy in a few hours every water-plant that grows in the Nile, were the stream to fail and cease to bathe their roots. Bildad tells us this in very striking language. He says, "While it is yet in its greenness and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb." No other plant so quickly withers in the absence of water, just because it is made to grow in the water. All its structure is adapted to that kind of situation and to no other. Its material is soft and spongy and filled with water, which evaporates at once when the circulation is not kept up. There are in nature two kinds of plants at the opposite poles from each other, and each wonderfully suited to the place in which it grows. There is the cactus, found in the dry-parched deserts of Mexico, where there is no water, no running stream, and no rain for weeks and months together. It has thick, leathery, fleshy stems instead of leaves, without any evaporating pores on their surface, so that whatever moisture they get from the rare rain or the dew by their roots, they keep and never part with, and therefore they can stand the most intense and long-continued drought, having a reservoir within themselves. And there is on the other hand the rush which grows with its root in the waters of the Nile, and, like a vegetable sponge, cannot

live for an hour without that outside water ascending its stem and flowing through all its structure. You know our own common rush cannot do without water. It always grows beside springs and the sources of streams, and on marshy lands. Wherever you see rushes growing you may be sure that the soil is full of water; and if the farmer drains the field where rushes grow, they soon disappear. The moral which Bildad draws from that interesting fact of natural history is that as the rush requires water for its life, so man can only live by the favour of God (Jer. xvii. 7, 8). Your natural life is like that of the rush that grows in the water. Seven-tenths of your bodies is water. Seven-tenths of your bodies came from the last rains that fell. Your life is indeed a vapour, a breath, a little moisture condensed. You begin as a fish, and you swim in a stream of vital fluids as long as your life lasts. You can taste and absorb and use nothing but liquids. Without water you have no life. You know after a long drought how restless and parched and irritable you feel; and what a relief and refreshment the rain is when it comes. It shows you how necessary water is to the well-being of your bodies; how you cannot exist without it. And if this be the case as regards your natural life, what shall be said in regard to your spiritual? God is as necessary to your soul as water is to your body. Your souls thirst for God, for the living God; for He, and He alone, is the element in which you live and move and have your being. You are made for God as the rush is made for the water; and nothing but God can suffice you, as nothing but water can suffice the rush. The rush with its head in the torrid sunshine, and its root in the unfailing waters is stimulated from below and from above. Nothing can exceed the luxuriance of the rush, or papyrus, in the waters of Merom, a lake to the north of the Sea of Galilee. Now, what you require for your spiritual well-being is that you should grow beside the well of water that springeth up unto everlasting life. Jesus can be to you as rivers of waters in a dry place. You can flourish in the withering atmosphere of the world, and endure the fiery trials of life, just because all your wellsprings are in God, and the sources of your human steadfastness and hope are high up in heaven. You are independent of the precarious supplies of the world. The sun shall not light upon you nor any heat; and the things of the world that would otherwise be against you will work together for your good. Seek, then, to grow in grace; for you must grow in something, and if not in grace, then you will grow in sin and degradation, in conditions for which you were not made, which will be continually unsuitable to you, and which will make you always wretched. The soil of grace is the only circumstance in which you can flourish and accomplish the purposes for which God made you; for there the roots of your being will draw living sap continually from the fountain of living waters that perpetually wells up. Growth in grace is not subject to the changes and decays of earth. It is the only growth on which death has no power. Without Christ you can do nothing; you are like the rush without the water in which it grows, dry, withered and dead. With Christ you are like the rush with its root in the river; you will flourish and grow in that holiness whose end is everlasting life. You will indeed be a papyrus displaying on its own leaf the reason of its flourishing condition, in the unmistakable hieroglyphics of nature which he who runs may read; a living epistle of Christ, known and read of all men. (*Hugh Macmillan, D.D.*) *A sermon from a rush*:—The great book of nature only needs to be turned over by a reverent hand, and to be read by an attentive eye, to be found to be only second in teaching to the Book of Revelation. The rush shall, this morning, by God's grace, teach us a lesson of self-examination. Bildad, the Shuhite, points it out to us as the picture of a hypocrite. I. First, then, THE HYPOCRITE'S PROFESSION: WHAT IS IT LIKE? It is here compared to a rush growing in the mire, and a flag flourishing in the water. This comparison has several points in it. 1. In the first place, hypocritical religion may be compared to the rush, for the rapidity with which it grows. True conversions are often very sudden. But the after-growth of Christians is not quite so rapid and uninterrupted: seasons of deep depression chill their joy; hours of furious temptation make a dreadful onslaught upon their quiet; they cannot always rejoice. True Christians are very like oaks, which take years to reach their maturity. 2. The rush is of all plants one of the most hollow and unsubstantial. It looks stout enough to be wielded as a staff, but he that leaneth upon it shall most certainly fall. So is it with the hypocrite; he is fair enough on the outside, but there is no solid faith in Christ Jesus in him, no real repentance on account of sin, no vital union to Christ Jesus. He can pray, but not in secret, and the essence and

soul of prayer he never knew. The reed is hollow, and has no heart, and the hypocrite has none either; and want of heart is fatal indeed. 3. A third comparison very naturally suggests itself, namely, that the hypocrite is very like the rush for its bending properties. When the rough wind comes howling over the marsh, the rush has made up its mind that it will hold its place at all hazards. So if the wind blows from the north, he bends to the south, and the blast sweeps over him; and if the wind blows from the south, he bends to the north, and the gale has no effect upon him. Only grant the rush one thing, that he may keep his place, and he will cheerfully bow to all the rest. The hypocrite will yield to good influences if he be in good society. "Oh yes, certainly, certainly, sing, pray, anything you like." We must be ready to die for Christ, or we shall have no joy in the fact that Christ died for us. 4. Yet again, the bulrush has been used in Scripture as a picture of a hypocrite, from its habit of hanging down its head. "Is it to hang thy head like a bulrush?" asks the prophet, speaking to some who kept a hypocritical fast. Pretended Christians seem to think that to hang down the head is the very index of a deep piety. 5. Once more: the rush is well taken as an emblem of the mere professor from its bearing no fruit. Nobody would expect to find figs on a bulrush, or grapes of Eshcol on a reed. So it is with the hypocrite: he brings forth no fruit. II. Secondly, we have to consider WHAT IT IS THAT THE HYPOCRITE'S RELIGION LIVES ON. "Can the rush grow up without mire? Can the flag grow without water?" The rush is entirely dependent upon the ooze in which it is planted. If there should come a season of drought, and the water should fail from the marsh, the rush would more speedily die than any other plant. "Whilst it is yet in its greenness and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb." The Hebrew name for the rush signifies a plant that is always drinking; and so the rush lives perpetually by sucking and drinking in moisture. This is the case of the hypocrite. The hypocrite cannot live without something that shall foster his apparent piety. Let me show you some of this mire and water upon which the hypocrite lives. 1. Some people's religion cannot live without excitement: revival services, earnest preachers, and zealous prayer-meetings keep them green; but the earnest minister dies, or goes to another part of the country; the Church is not quite so earnest as it was, and what then? Where are your converts? Oh! how many there are who are hothouse plants: while the temperature is kept up to a certain point they flourish, and bring forth flowers, if not fruits; but take them out into the open air, give them one or two nights' frost of persecution, and where are they? 2. Many mere professors live upon encouragement. We ought to comfort the feeble-minded and support the weak. But, beware of the piety which depends upon encouragement. You will have to go, perhaps, where you will be frowned at and scowled at, where the head of the household, instead of encouraging prayer, will refuse you either the room or the time for engaging in it. 3. Some, too, we know, whose religion is sustained by example. It may be the custom in the circle in which you move to attend a place of worship; nay, more, it has come to be the fashion to join the Church and make a profession of religion. Well, example is a good thing. Young man, avoid this feeble sort of piety. Be a man who can be singular when to be singular is to be right. 4. Furthermore, a hypocrite's religion is often very much supported by the profit that he makes by it. Mr. By-ends joined the Church, because, he said, he should get a good wife by making a profession of religion. Besides, Mr. By-ends kept a shop, and went to a place of worship, because, he said, the people would have to buy goods somewhere, and if they saw him at their place very likely they would come to his shop, and so his religion would help his trade. The rush will grow where there is plenty of mire, plenty of profit for religion, but dry up the gains, and where would some people's religion be? 5. With certain persons their godliness rests very much upon their prosperity. "Doth Job serve God for nought?" was the wicked question of Satan concerning that upright man; but of many it might be asked with justice, for they love God after a fashion because He prospers them; but if things went ill with them they would give up all faith in God. 6. The hypocrite is very much affected by the respectability of the religion which he avows. III. We have a third point, and that is, WHAT BECOMES OF THE HYPOCRITE'S HOPE? "While it is yet in its greenness and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish." Long before the Lord comes to cut the hypocrite down, it often happens that he dries up for want of the mire on which he lives. The excitement, the encourage-

ment, the example, the profit, the respectability, the prosperity, upon which he lived fail him, and he fails too. Alas, how dolefully is this the case in all Christian churches! Yet again, where the rush still continues green because it has mire and water enough on which to feed, another result happens, namely, that ere long the sickle is used to cut it down. So must it be with thee, professor, if thou shalt keep up a green profession all thy days, yet if thou be heartless, spongy, soft, yielding, unfruitful, like the rush thou wilt be cut down, and sorrowful will be the day when, with a blaze, thou shalt be consumed. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 13. **So are the paths of all that forget God.**—*Withering paths:*—I. CONSIDER THE SIN OF FORGETTING GOD. 1. It is a very common sin. Thousands never think of Him except in times of trouble. 2. It is an inexcusable sin. They are dependent upon Him. He is constantly revealing Himself to them. (1) In nature. Physical sequences have a living agent behind them; link after link of causation, but held and moved by a living hand. Law has no life. Natural agitations are the rustling of God's garments as He works. (2) In events. They are the tramp of the Everlasting. History is full of the interpositions of the Supreme. (3) In Christ. Here, God became as one of us, that we might know Him. (4) By His Spirit. Men's souls are disturbed by His presence within them. 3. It is a sin of God's children (Jer. xi. 31). We should live to Him every waking hour. Nothing should be too trifling about which to talk to Him. II. TO FORGET GOD IS RUINOUS. Our life-paths fade away like the rush without mire and the flag without water. 1. The path of inner progress. Men feel that without God they make no moral advancement. True manliness withers; they become moral skeletons. Truth, moral vitality, courage for the right, honour, integrity, all fade away from them, and they are like a withered rush. No one is self-adequate. God is the fountain of life. The highest archangel would cry, as he looked towards the Life-giver of the universe, "All my springs are in Thee." The forces of death within us surely conquer, unless they are subdued by the incomings of God's life. 2. The path of outward actualities. The way of life yields little true joy if God be forgotten. There may be worldly success without it. A man may get rich or high-positioned, but he fails to gain the highest satisfactions. 3. The path of posthumous influence. The way of life is impressionable. We all leave footprints upon it. The footprints of the good are more lasting than the evil. Evil is everywhere to be rooted up. It is a fact that the influence of the good is more permanent than the evil. Compare the influence of Alexander and Socrates, Nero and Paul, Queen Mary and Knox, Voltaire and Wesley, &c. The good parent and the wicked one. The name of the wicked shall rot. Think of the folly of forgetting Him. Why should you do this, and die? The withering of a flower may awaken a sigh; the fading away of an oak a tear; but what sorrow should there be over a man fading away into a demon! (*W. Osborne Lilley.*) *Forgetfulness of God:*—1. The hypocrite is a forgetter of God. 2. Forgetfulness of God (howsoever it seems no great matter, yet) is exceeding sinful, a wickedness of the highest stature. Forgetfulness of God is therefore a great wickedness, because God hath done so many things to be remembered by. 3. Forgetfulness of God is a mother sin, or the cause of all other sins. First, a forgetfulness that there is a God. Secondly, a forgetfulness who, or what manner of God He is. Thou thoughtest that I was such an one as thyself (Psa. l.). Thirdly, to forget God, is to forget what God requires; this forgetfulness of these three sorts is productive of any, of every sin. 4. They that forget God shall quickly wither, how great and flourishing soever they are. (*J. Caryl.*) **The hypocrite's hope shall perish.**—*The sin of hypocrisy:*—A common objection against religion is the existence of hypocrisy. The infidel uses it, the scoffer employs it, and the indifferent, who admit the obligation of religion, yet object to its restraint, always fall back upon the prevalence of hypocrisy. Nothing can be more absurd than for the people to cry down religion because of hypocrisy; it is like a man denying the existence of a subject because he saw a shadow, or asserting that because he had received or seen a few counterfeit sovereigns, there was not a piece of pure gold in the mint. The way of the hypocrite is such as Bildad describes; a brief season of profession, terminating in the extinction of what seemed spiritual life, when all his self-confidence proves to offer no better security than the flimsy web or house of the spider. The rush and flag are succulent plants, and can only live in miry or marshy spots; withdraw from them the moisture on which they grow, and you destroy them. So the hypocrite has no abiding principle of life in him,

nor any aptness to derive benefit from those deep or heaven-sent sources which impart nourishment to the believer; some flood of excitement bears him up, some unwholesomeness in the soil enables him to look flourishing. The hypocrite is like the rush or the flag in his material; cut one of these and you will find but pith, or an arrangement of empty cells, you will not find the substance of the oak. Again he springs up all at once from the ground; the smooth stem of the rush, or the broad, waving leaf of the flag will represent the hypocrite's profession. There is a peculiarity in the common rush; you never can find one green at the top, get it fresh and flourishing as you will, it has begun to wither. Find the hypocrite ever so promising, there will be something to tell you, if you look narrowly, that his religious life has death in it already. I. THE ORIGIN OF HYPOCRISY, or the assumption of a character which does not belong to us. In the first instance it comes from low notions of God, arising out of our deceived understanding. Hypocrisy argues a sense of obligation on the part of the hypocrite. He knows his responsibility, but having no clear notion of the purity and all-seeing eye of God, he puts on a form of religion while destitute of the power; he thinks that God is like himself, and therefore that he can deceive Him. These persons are without a relish for that state of mind which religion requires, the new heart, the right spirit, the single eye, the death unto sin, the life unto righteousness. Man must have a religion, so a religion he assumes. II. THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF HYPOCRISY. How can we avoid setting down as a hypocrite the man who, devoid of Christ in his heart, attends religious services? One characteristic is self-deception. A man begins by dissembling with God; he proceeds to deceive his fellows; at length he palms the cheat upon himself. Nothing is so irksome even to the sincere Christian as the duty of self-examination. Where self-love is predominant, it is easy to believe that the man will, in the first place, shut his eyes to his faults: a false standard of holiness being set up, he will soon find others worse than himself; this will comfort him; he will substitute single acts for habits, or momentary feelings for abiding and governing principles of conduct. III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF HYPOCRISY. The scoffer laughs at what he considers a satisfactory proof that there is no such thing as true religion. The careless or indolent content themselves with their present neutral (as they suppose it) condition, and think it better not to go any further in their profession. The child of God trembles and feels cast down. Yet there is good brought out of all this by God. The best method of avoiding the sin of hypocrisy is to have this constantly in our minds, that we have to deal with a God who is about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways, one on whom there can be no deception practised. Let us then seek to have that oneness of spirit by which only we can serve Him. In our religion let the heart agree with the head, the hands, and the feet. (*C. O. Pratt, M.A.*) *The hypocrite—his character, hope, and end*:—These words are supposed to be a quotation from one of the fathers. We can see that the quotation may begin at verse 11, but it is not easy to see where it ends. I. THE CHARACTER OF THE HYPOCRITE. All hypocrites belong to the class of those who forget God. In outward appearance, to the eye of man, they appear to remember God. Their outward services; their regular observance of everything that is external in religion; the words which they use; the subjects on which they converse—all appear to mark them out as those who remember God. But, in all this, as the very word hypocrite indicates, they are but acting a part. There is no reality in their services; no correspondence between their outward lives and the state of their heart; the two are altogether at variance. They are anxious for the praise of men; and so they are careful to adapt their outward lives—that which is seen of men—to a religious standard. They care not for the praise of God; and so they neglect their hearts, and withhold them from Him to whom they are due. All is show; there is no fruit. We meet with solemn examples of this character in the Scriptures. It is the motive; it is the power of godliness; it is Jesus dwelling in the heart; it is walking as in the presence of God,—it is this that constitutes the difference between the true Christian and the hypocrite; between him who serves God in truth, and him who serves in appearance. Then let us seek truthfulness of character and reality. II. THE HOPE OF THE HYPOCRITE. The Christian's hope is laid up in heaven. It is an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast. The hypocrite's hope fastens itself on some vain thing in the present life, some worldly gain, the praise of man, or some pecuniary benefit. And there is no single character in which there is so little hope of any real and saving change as in that of the hypocrite,

But what is the issue and end of the hypocrite's hope, and of himself? The hypocrite, being destitute of the grace of God, cannot grow, but must wither away. Without the grace of God we are but as some succulent plant, when the moistened mire and water are withdrawn from its roots. It needs not to be cut down by the hand of man, but withers speedily in consequence of the lack of moisture. We may, however, explain the "mire" and the "water," not of inward grace, but rather of outward prosperity; and then the meaning will be this—It is only in circumstances of outward prosperity that the hypocrite can appear to flourish. Let these be changed—let sifting trials come, as they will come, to try the heart, and he is as a rush or flag from which the "mire" and "water" are removed; he suddenly disappears, his hope vanishes, and he himself is lost. Another illustration is used. The hypocrite's hope is compared to a "spider's web." Beautifully formed as such a web is—a masterpiece of ingenuity and arrangement—it is easily swept away. A gust of wind, or the hand of man may carry it away in a moment. The poor spider may cling for safety to his house or web, woven out of its own body, but it cannot shelter him (ver. 15). What a vivid picture of the hypocrite's trust! His confidence of success rises high, when suddenly the hand of God sweeps away the spider's web, and the poor deceiver falls, clinging to its ruins. . . . Our subject has led us to speak of the thorough hypocrite, but we ought to remember that there are many degrees of this sin short of downright hypocrisy. Simplicity and transparency of character—one of the most beautiful graces of the Christian character—may be wanting. (*George Wagner.*) *The hope of the hypocrite:*—It is thought that this passage is a quotation introduced by Bildad from a fragmentary poem of more ancient date. Desirous of fortifying his own sentiments by the authority of the ancients, he introduces into the heart of his argument a stray passage which had been carried down through successive generations. The moral of this fragment is that the "hypocrite's hope shall perish." This is presented under three images. 1. That of the bulrush growing in a marshy soil. Rush and flag may represent any plant which demands a marshy soil, and imbibes a large quantity of water. When the hypocrite is compared to a rush which cannot live without mire, and the flag that cannot grow without water, we are instructed as to the weakness and unsubstantial nature of his confidence; and when it is added that "while yet it is in greenness, it withereth before any other herb," we are reminded of the brevity and precariousness of his profession. Take the reed out of the water, and plant it in any other soil, and you will see it hang down its head and perish utterly. You have no need to tear it up by the roots, or to cut it down as by a reaping-hook. All that you have to do is draw off the watery substance on which it depends for nourishment, and which it copiously imbibes. Thus too it is with the profession and confidence of the hypocrite. To prove the worthlessness of his hope, it is enough that you abstract from him the enjoyments of his past existence—the mire and moisture from which he derived his fair show of appearances in the flesh. But for the favourable condition in which he happened to be placed, he would have never appeared religious at all, and that being changed, his declension is rapid and inevitable. "The hypocrite's hope shall perish." He is himself frail as a reed, and that which he leans upon is "unstable as water." Has then the hypocrite hope? Yes, for such is the deceitfulness of the human heart, that it can even cry peace when there is no peace. Thinking the Deity to be altogether such an one as himself, he has accustomed himself to call evil good and good evil. As the man is, so is the god that he creates for himself. And hence it is that even the hypocrite has a hope. But it is a hope which must perish. 2. That of the spider's web, swept away in a moment by the breath of the storm. The web of the spider is carefully and ingeniously constructed; but nothing is more easily brushed aside. The insect trusts to it indeed, but in a moment of time, he and it are carried away together. The hypocrite, too, has reared for himself what he supposes will be a comfortable habitation against the storm and rain. Not more slender is the thread spun by the spider than is his fancied security. Let trial or calamity come, and it will avail him nothing. 3. A plant that has no depth of earth for its roots, but which seeks even among a heap of stones for wherewithal to maintain itself. The metaphor is drawn from an object with which the observers of nature are familiar. When the roots have only a slender hold of a heap of stones, they are easily loosened, and the tree falls prostrate. Such is the attachment of the hypocrite to the place of his self-confidence. Into every crevice of his fancied merits does he push the

fibres of hope. On the hard rock of an unconverted heart he flourishes awhile. Learn—(1) Human nature is very much the same in all ages. (2) It concerns us all to endeavour after that well-grounded hope which will stand against every storm, and give composure to us in our latter end. Hope is the grand engine that moves the world. How desirous we ought to be that our hope of heaven should be well grounded and sure. For this purpose be much in secret prayer; and study to be more conformed unto Him who is the author of your hope. (*J. L. Adamson.*) *The hope of the hypocrite delusive*:—I. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE HYPOCRITE? All hypocrites may be comprehended under these two sorts. 1. The gross dissembler, who knowingly, and against his conscience, pursues some sinful course, endeavouring only to conceal it from the eyes of men. Such an one as Gehazi, or Judas. 2. The formal, refined hypocrite who deceives his own heart. He makes some advances into the practice of holiness; but not being sound at the heart, not being thoroughly divided from his sin, he takes that for grace which is not sincerity, and therefore much less grace; and being thus deceived, he misses of the power of godliness, and embraces only the form (Matt. vii. 26, 27). Both these hypocrites agree in this, that they are deceivers. One deceives the world, the other deceives himself. II. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE HYPOCRITE'S HOPE? Those persuasions that a man has of the goodness and safety of his spiritual condition, whereby he strongly persuades himself that he is now in a state of grace, and consequently shall hereafter attain to a state of glory. This hope is not in the same proportion in all hypocrites. Distinguish in it these two degrees. 1. A probable opinion. This is but the lowest degree of assent. 2. A peremptory persuasion. This is its higher pitch and perfection. It seems seldom to be entertained but where hypocrisy is in conjunction with gross ignorance, or judicial searedness. Proposition—I. A HYPOCRITE MAY PROCEED SO FAR AS TO OBTAIN A HOPE AND EXPECTATION OF A FUTURE BLESSEDNESS. 1. Hypocrites have and do obtain such hopes. Evinced by two arguments. From the nature and constitution of man's mind, which is vehement and restless in its pursuit after some suitable good. It is natural for man, both in his desires and designs, to build chiefly upon the future. Man naturally looks forward. Every man carries on some particular design, upon the event of which he builds his satisfaction; and the spring that moves these designs is hope. Hopes of the future are the causes of present action. It follows that the hypocrite has his hope, for he has his course and his way, according to which he acts, and without hope there can be no action. The other argument, proving that hypocrites have their hopes, shall be taken from that peace and comfort that even hypocrites enjoy; which are the certain effects, and therefore the infallible signs of some hope abiding in the mind. Assuredly, if it were not for hope, the heart of the merriest and most secure hypocrite in the world would break. 2. By what ways and means the hypocrite comes first to attain this hope. By misapprehending God. By his misunderstanding of sin. By mistakes about the spiritual rigour and strictness of the Gospel. By his mistakes about repentance, faith, and conversion. 3. By what ways and means the hypocrite preserves and continues this false hope. Those methods by which he first gets it, have in them also a natural fitness to continue, cherish, and foment it. Three ways more. Especially—(1) By keeping up a course of external obedience, and abstaining from gross and scandalous sins. (2) By comparing himself with others, who are openly vicious, and apparently worse than himself. There is no way more effectual for a man to argue himself into a delusion. (3) By forbearing to make a strict and impartial trial of his estate. No wonder if the hypocrite discerns not his condition, when he never turns his eyes inwards by a thorough, faithful examination. The foulest soul may think itself fair and beautiful till it comes to view its deformity in the glass of God's Word. Proposition—II. THE HYPOCRITE'S FAIREST AND MOST PROMISING EXPECTATION OF A FUTURE HAPPINESS WILL IN THE END VANISH INTO MISERABLE DISAPPOINTMENT. 1. Prove this proposition. From clear testimony of Scripture. A spider's web may represent a hypocrite's hope in the curious subtilty, and the fine artificial composure of it, and in the weakness of it; for it is too fine spun to be strong. From the weakness of the foundation on which the hope is built. 2. Show what are those critical seasons and turns in which more especially the hypocrite's hope will be sure to fail him. (1) The time of some heart-breaking, discouraging judgment from God. (2) At the time of death. III. MAKE SOME USE AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE FOREGOING DISCOURSE. It shall be to display and set before us the transcendent, surpassing misery of the final estate of all

hypocrites, whose peculiar lot it is to hope themselves into damnation, and to perish with those circumstances that shall double and treble the weight of their destruction. In this life the heart of man is not capable of such absolute, entire misery, but that some glimmerings of hope will still dart in upon him, and buoy up his spirits from an utter despondency. But when it shall come to this, that a man must go one way, and his hopes another, so parting as never to meet again, human nature admits not of any further addition to its sorrow; for it is pure, perfect, unmixed misery, without any allay or mitigation. Those appetites and desires, the satisfaction of which brings the greatest delight; the defrauding of them, according to the rule of contraries, brings the greatest and the sharpest misery. Nothing so comfortable as hope crowned with fruition; nothing so tormenting as hope snapped off with disappointment and frustration. The despairing reprobate is happier than the hoping reprobate. Both indeed fall equally low, but he that hopes has the greater fall, because he falls from the higher place. (*R. South, D.D.*)

Ver. 14. **Whose trust shall be a spider's web.**—*The spider and the hypocrite:* —In physics, in morals, in religion, reality has no respect for those who have no regard for truth and fact. Abused nature, undeterred by rank, plies her scourge on all the votaries of sin. Reality does not in moral matters seem to many so honest and severe. Fancy and imagining hold here a completer sway. Men propose to sip the sensual sweet and decline the sensual bitter. In religion, reality might seem to reign without a rival, for here is no dreamland for fancy, but the field of revelation for the activities of mind and heart. Some make religion their mirror, in which they see themselves the end of their whole devotion. Some overact their part in the temple, the more easily to overreach their brethren in the market. Some forge the name of God to the cheque of a sanctified deportment, and present it for golden profits at the bank of Christian confidence. These are the hypocrites who trust that God will not expose them this side the grave; but their hope shall be cut off; "their trust is as a spider's web," which, while very beautiful in its structure, is equally fragile as to its texture, and, though adequate to the builder's purposes, yet, being self-spun, self-built, is destined to be swept away. I. BEAUTIFUL AS TO ITS STRUCTURE. Admirable is the fairy architecture of the spider's web. This tracery of insect art, on hawthorn or holly fence, seen before the sun grows hot, strung with beads of dew, asks no painter's skill, no poet's eulogy; its beauty, like the sun's glory, is its own evidence. Beautiful, too, is the hypocrite's trust, and the religion that trust inspires. The hypocrite's religion satisfies the eye; it is the bright cloud which for the moment passes for the sun itself; it is the sacrifice without spot or blemish in the skin; an argument constraining charity to hope it is pure and right in heart. To men's sight the hypocrite's religion is like the spider's web, beautiful in its structure, but when tried it is found to be—II. VERY FRAGILE IN ITS TEXTURE. This is no disparagement to the web. For such a tiny weaver, it is strong and wonderful. Were man as insignificant as the spider, his paltry trust would be no indignity; being but little lower than the angels, a hypocritical trust merits the comparison. God hangs great weights on small wires; the hypocrite hangs them all upon the semblance of them. There is nothing real but his wickedness, nothing true but his deception. III. IT IS ADEQUATE TO THE OWNER'S PURPOSES, AND SUCCESSFUL IN SECURING THEM. The hypocrite, wanting to fly with the doves to their windows, decks himself with their feathers. All of the true prophet is his hairy garment. His success often equals the completeness of his disguise. Charity hopes that under the leaves there is fruit; that behind the smile there is the loving heart; that the fragrance of profession steals from the true flower of grace within. It is adequate to his purposes, and too often successful in securing them. The spider ensnares his prey; the hypocrite does make a gain of godliness, and a ladder of religion. IV. THEIR TRUST, BEING FALSE, SHALL, WITH ALL THAT RESTS UPON IT, BE UTTERLY SWEPT AWAY. The truth, holiness, and honour of God require it. Hypocrisy! It is a tomb with the lettered porch and golden dome of a temple. It is deception sublimed to a science. The hypocrite takes the precious name of Christ as an angler does a worm, and, thrusting it on the hook of his crooked purposes, angles for suffrages or lucre. But the pious dissembler will exhaust his last resource, and wear out his last disguise. This human spider may take hold with his hands, and pursue his close-couched schemes in the great King's palace, but coming judgment will sweep him and them away. The anger of the Lord will smoke against the hypocrite. No sacrifice can be presented with-

out salt; no service can be accepted without sincerity. (*W. C. Jones.*) *False and true hope* (with Heb. vi. 19):—The world is full of hope of various kinds. Alike in the dreams of childhood, the resolves of youth, the purposes of manhood, and the more chastened anticipations of old age, we may see its power displayed. The faculty of hope is a great motive-force of human action. I. FALSE HOPE IS AS A SPIDER'S WEB. Because—1. Not altogether destitute of beauty. Such webs are often beautiful, especially those kinds which in summer time we see spread upon the hedgerows, or festooned between the garden trees. They attract our admiration as we behold them sparkling in the sunlight. Fair, in external appearance, are the hopes which even the impenitent cherish. The power of hope will often enable a man, who is entirely destitute of the grace of God, to paint the future in roseate hues, to dream dreams of possible excellence, and call up visions of the glory of heaven, which, though unsubstantial as gossamer, are not without their attractive features. 2. Self-derived. It is well known that spiders produce from their own bodies the glutinous fluid with which they form their webs. Even so the hopes in which the wicked indulge are self-produced. They are merely the creations of their own fancy. 3. Exceedingly frail. How slight and strengthless is the spider's web! The fall of a leaf will destroy it, a gust of wind will sweep it away. Significant emblem in this respect of the weakness of false hope! II. TRUE HOPE IS AS THE ANCHOR OF THE SOUL. Because—1. It connects its possessor with an unseen world. When an anchor is cast overboard from a vessel, it drops out of sight, beneath the blue waves, which act as a kind of veil to hide it from view. The sailor sees it not, though he knows and feels that it is there. He perceives that his ship is anchored, though the secrets of the anchoring-ground are concealed from his gaze. Even so the apostle describes the Christian's hope, "as entering into that within the veil." 2. It possesses enduring strength. When once the anchor is embedded in the ground, with what a firm grasp does it hold fast the largest vessel! An emblem this of the strength of true hope! It is both "sure and steadfast," for it rests not upon the broken promises of man, but the unchanging promises of God; it clings not to the sand of human support, but to the rock of Divine strength. 3. It gives the soul calmness and security amid the storms of life. Though the gale may blow fiercely, the ship rides safely in the bay. Held firmly by the friendly anchor, it scarcely moves from its moorings. Even so, the soul that anchors itself in the Divine power and the Divine love abides calm and secure through every tempest of trial. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace," &c. (*George John Allen, B.A.*) *Hope as a spider's web*:—A similitude of great elegance and significance. We may observe a great analogy between the spider's web and that in a double respect. 1. In respect of the curious subtilty and the fine artificial composure of it. The spider in every web shows itself an artist: so the hypocrite spins his hope with a great deal of art, in a thin, fine thread. This and that good duty, this good thought, this opposing of some gross sin, are all interwoven together to the making up a covering for his hypocrisy. And as the spider draws all out of its own bowels, so the hypocrite weaves all his confidence out of his own inventions and imaginations. 2. It resembles it in respect of its weakness—it is too fine spun to be strong. After the spider has used all its art and labour in framing a web, yet how easily is it broken, how quickly is it swept down! So, after the hypocrite has wrought out a hope with much cost, art, and industry, it is yet but a weak, slender, pitiful thing. He does indeed by this get some name, and room amongst professors; he does, as it were, hang his hopes upon the beams of God's house. But when God shall come to cleanse, and, as it were, to sweep His sanctuary, such cobwebs are sure to be fetched down. Thus the hypocrite, like the spider, by all his artifice and labour, only disfigures God's house. A hypocrite in a church is like a cobweb in a palace—all that he is or does, serving only to annoy and misbecome the place and station that he would adorn. (*R. South.*) *The hope of the hypocrite*:—I. THE CHARACTER OF THE HYPOCRITE. He hides wickedness under a cloak of goodness. He derives his honour from his birth; the child of God from his new birth. He serves God with that which costs him nothing. He is only disposed to some virtues. He puts reason in the place of religion. His virtues are only shining vices. He hears the Word without real benefit. He is the "stony ground." Sometimes he trembles under the Word, but he shifts it off. He is a seeming friend, but a secret foe, to the Gospel. If he pray, it is with his tongue, not with his heart. He acts according to his wishes. He is wavering and double-minded. II. THE HOPE OF THE HYPOCRITE.

1. The trust, or hope, of the hypocrite is a spider's web, because he forms it, as it were, out of his own bowels. 2. Because the profession and all the works of the hypocrite are weak and unstable. There is some curiosity in the spider's web, but there is neither strength nor stability. 3. The spider makes her web to catch and ensnare. So the hypocrite ensnares the simple; he makes gain of godliness. 4. The hypocrite, like the spider, thinks himself perfectly safe; when once lodged in his profession he apprehends no danger. 5. In the issue the hope shall perish as does a spider's web. When the house is swept, down go the spiders' webs. (*T. Hannam.*)

Vers. 20-22. **Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man.**—*Moral character determines a man's destiny:*—I. THE REAL CONDITION OF THE GOOD. By the real condition we mean the relation of the soul, not to the circumstantials and temporalities of existence. 1. It is a condition in which they will never be deserted of the eternal. "God will not cast away a perfect man." Whatever may be the alternations in the life of the good, whoever may shun and reject them, the Great One will never forsake them. All men, said Paul, forsook me; notwithstanding, the Lord stood by me. 2. It is a condition in which God will inspire them with happiness. "Till He fill thy mouth with laughing, and thy lips with rejoicing." He not only never deserts them, but He always blesses them. He "fills them with joy and peace in believing." Although Bildad did not regard Job as a good man, but on the contrary considered him to be a great sinner and a great hypocrite, he here assures him that if he were good, his Maker would never desert him, but always be with him to inspire him with joy. Goodness is blessedness. II. THE REAL CONDITION OF THE WICKED. What is the true moral state of the ungodly? It is here given negatively and positively. 1. The negative form. "Neither will He help the evil-doers." They need help; they are involved in difficulties and exposed to dangers. But He will not help them. 2. The positive form. "They that hate Thee shall be clothed with shame, and the dwelling-place of the wicked shall come to nought." The wicked here even hated the godly, but the time comes when they shall be abashed and confounded on account of their enmity. They have frequently here grand "dwelling-places," mansions, and palaces as their homes, but all are temporary. They shall come to nought. (*Homilist.*)

CHAPTER IX.

VERS. 1-4. **Then Job answered and said.**—*Job's answer to Bildad:*—Job was utterly unaware of the circumstances under which he was suffering. If Job had known that he was to be an example, that a great battle was being fought over him, that the worlds were gathered round him to see how he would take the loss of his children, his property, and his health, the circumstances would have been vitiated, and the trial would have been a mere abortion. Under such circumstances Job might have strung himself up to an heroic effort. If everything with us were plain and straightforward, everything would be proportionately easy and proportionately worthless. Trials, persecutions, and tests are meant for the culture of your strength, the perfecting of your patience, the consolidation of your hope and love. God will not explain the causes of our affliction to us, any more than He explained the causes of Job's affliction to the patriarch. But history comes to do what God Himself refrains from doing. What course does Job say he will take? A point of departure is marked in the tenth chapter. Now he speaks to Heaven. He will speak in the bitterness of his soul. That is right. Let us hear what Job's soul has to say. Do not be harsh with men who speak with some measure of indignation in the time of sorrow. We are chafed and vexed by the things which befall our life. Yet even in our very frankness we should strive at least to speak in chastened tones. Job says he will ask for a reason. "Slew me wherefore Thou contendest with me?" Job will also appeal to the Divine conscience, if the expression may be allowed (chap. x. 3). We must have confidence in the goodness of God. Job then pleads himself—his very physiology, his constitution (chap. x. 8-11). What lay so heavily upon Adam and

upon Job, was the limitation of their existence. This life as we see it is not all; it is an alphabet which has to be shaped into a literature, and a literature which is to end in music. The conscious immortality of the soul, as that soul was fashioned in the purpose of God, has kept the race from despair. Job said, if this were all that we see, he would like to be extinguished. He would rather go out of being than live under a sense of injustice. This may well be our conviction, out of the agonies and throes of individual experience, and national convulsions, there shall come a creation fair as the noonday, quiet as the silent but radiant stars! (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Job's idea of God*:—I. He regarded Him as JUST. "I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God?" His language implies the belief that God was so just, that He required man to be just in His sight. Reason asserts this; the Infinite can have no motive to injustice, no outward circumstance to tempt Him to wrong. Conscience affirms this; deep in the centre of our moral being, is the conviction that the Creator is just. The Bible declares this. Job might well ask how can man be just before Him? He says, not by setting up a defence, and pleading with Him; "if he will contend with Him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand." What can a sinner plead before Him? 1. Can he deny the fact of his sinfulness? 2. Can he prove that he sinned from a necessity of his nature? 3. Can he satisfactorily make out that although he has sinned, sin has been an exception in his life, and that the whole term of his existence has been good and of service to the universe? Nothing in this way can he do; no pleading will answer. He must become just before he can appear just before God. II. He regarded Him as WISE. "He is wise in heart." Who doubts the wisdom of God? The whole system of nature, the arrangements of Providence, and the mediation of Christ, all reveal His "manifold wisdom." He is wise, so that—1. You cannot deceive Him by your falsehoods: He knows all about you, sees the inmost depths of your being. 2. You cannot thwart Him by your stratagems. His purposes must stand. III. As STRONG. "Mighty in strength." His power is seen in the creation, sustenance, and government of the universe. The strength of God is absolute, independent, illimitable, undecayable, and always on the side of right and happiness. IV. HE REGARDED HIM AS RETRIBUTIVE. There is a retributive element in the Divine nature—an instinct of justice. Retribution in human governors is policy. The Eternal retributes wrong because of His instinctive repugnance to wrong. Hence the wrong doer cannot succeed. The great principle is, that if a man desires prosperity, he must fall in with the arrangements of God in His providence and grace: and wisdom is seen in studying these arragements, and in yielding to them. (*Homilist.*) **But how should man be just with God.**—*On justification*:—With respect to the relation in which man stands with God, two considerations are essential: the one regarding ourselves, the other regarding our Maker. We are His creatures, and therefore wholly and undividedly His, and owe Him our full service. Our employing any part of ourselves in anything contrary to His wish, is injustice towards Him; and therefore no one who does so can be just with Him in this. But since our wills and thoughts are not in our own power, whatever we do, it is hopeless to endeavour to bring the whole man into the service of God. Such a perfect obedience as we confess we owe as creatures to our Creator, is utterly unattainable. Are we then to lower, not indeed our efforts, but our standard? Will God be satisfied with something less than absolute perfection? Since we are God's creatures, we owe Him a perfect and unsinning obedience in thought, word, and deed. And God cannot be satisfied with less. If His holiness and His justice were not as perfect as His mercy and His love, He would not be perfect, or in other words He would not be God. 1. That man cannot be justified by the law—that is, by his obedience to the law, or the performance of its duties,—is clear from its condition, "This do, and thou shalt live." It makes no abatement for sincerity; it makes no allowance for infirmity. Mercy is inadmissible here; it just asks its due, and holds out the reward upon the payment of it. 2. Neither can he be justified by a mitigated law; that is, by its being lowered till it is within reach. 3. Nor yet can he be absolved by the passing by of his transgressions through the forgetfulness (so to speak) of God; as if He would not be extreme to mark what was done amiss. 4. How then shall man be just with God? It must be in a way that will honour the law. Christ hath "magnified the law, and made it honourable"—(1) By keeping it entire and unbroken; and (2) By enduring its curse, as if He had broken it; becoming "sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (*George Jeans,*

M.A.) *The mode of the sinner's justification before God* :—How is man justified before God? We speak of man as he is now found in the world—fallen, guilty, and polluted. Man was made upright at the first. The first action of his nature, in its several parts, was in harmony with the laws pertaining to each, and so for a short time it continued. When I speak of the laws pertaining to each part, I mean those of matter and of mind, of body, sense, and intellect. God had laid a prohibition upon him, and to the observance of this He had promised His continued favour, and to the non-observance He attached the forfeiture of that favour. The trial here was not whether man would attain to the Divine favour, but whether he should retain it. The danger to be apprehended, for danger is involved in the very notion of a probation, was, that Adam might fall, not that he might not rise, as is the case with us, his descendants. How was Adam kept, as long as he stood in a state of acceptance before God; *i.e.*, how Adam was justified, so far as the term justification can be predicated of him? He continued in the Divine favour as long as he obeyed the law. He was justified by works. There is nothing evil necessarily in the idea of justification by works. Conscience naturally knows of no other mode of justification, and where that is impossible, she gives the offender over to condemnation and despair. Conscience knows of no justification but that of works. When it is possible, the first, the obvious, and the legitimate, the natural mode of securing the Divine favour is by a perfect obedience, in one's own person, to the Divine commands as contained in the moral law. How are Adam's posterity justified? Not in the same way that he was. Their circumstances are so different. He was innocent, they are guilty; he was pure, they are impure; he was strong, they are weak. The Gospel mode of justification cannot be by works. But what is it positively? A knowledge of this subject must embrace two things, namely, what God has done to this end—to make justification possible; and what man does when it is become actual. It has pleased God to save us, not arbitrarily, but vicariously. He has not cancelled our sin, as a man might cancel the obligation of an indebted neighbour, by simply drawing his pen across the record in his ledger. This may do for a creature in relation to his fellows. We are told in Holy Writ that God the Father has given His Son to be a "ransom" for us, a "sacrifice for our sins," a "mediator between Him and us," the "only name under heaven amongst men whereby we can be saved." The Father hath laid in His atoning death the foundation of our hopes, the "elect corner-stone" of our salvation. By the Holy Spirit and through that Son, He hath also granted to mankind, besides an offer of pardon, an offer of assistance, yea, assistance in the very offer. The mediatorship of the Spirit began the moment the Gospel was first preached to fallen Adam. So indeed did the Mediatorship of Christ, *i.e.*, God began immediately to have prospective regard to the scene one day to be enacted upon Calvary. But the mediatorship of the Spirit could not be one moment deferred. In order to render the salvation of men subjectively possible, the Spirit must be actually and immediately given. What then is necessary on the part of man? This may appear to some a dangerous way of viewing the subject. I am not about to establish a claim of merit on the part of man. When a man is justified, as justification takes place on the part of God, there must be something correlative to it on the part of man—man must do something also. This great act of God must find some response in the heart of man. There must needs be, in a fallen, guilty, and polluted creature, emotions which were at first unknown in Paradise. Deep penitence befits him, pungent sorrow, bitter self-reproach, and utter self-loathing. If we look to the honour of God, or the exigencies of His moral government, we come to the same conclusion. As His honour requires that the obedient should continue obedient, so does it require that, having disobeyed, they should repent, and cease to be disobedient: it is, in truth, the same spirit in both cases, only adapted to the adversity of the circumstances. If God should, in mercy, justify the ungodly, it must be in such a manner as shall not conflict with these first and manifest principles; and the Gospel, therefore, must have some contrivance by which men may attain to justification without impairing the Divine government, or degrading the Divine character, or thinking highly of themselves. What then is that contrivance? It is not the way of works. What suits Adam in Paradise cannot suit us, driven out into the wilderness of sin and guilt. We are inquiring, as the correlative to justice and law on the part of God is obedience on the part of man, what is the correlative to mercy and atonement? It cannot be that self-satisfied feeling which belongs to him who has fulfilled the law. His present obedience, however perfect,

could not undo past disobedience. The correlative to the Divine acts of justification cannot be human acts in obedience to law. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." But may not man be justified by obedience to a mitigated law? Is not the Gospel, after all, only the moral law with some abatements designed to bring it down to the level of our infirmity? This is the most plausible and deceptive supposition that could be made. It suits exactly man's natural pride, his fondness for his idols, and has withal an air of mingled mercy and justice. But, however specious, it is utterly unfounded in reason or Scripture. It supposes the law, which we regard as a transcript of the Divine character, to be found faulty, and its requirements in consequence to be cut down to the true level. Neither the violation of the law, nor yet its observance in its original or any mitigated form, can be the ground of our justification before God, in our present state, what way then remains to this infinitely desirable object? Are we not shut up to the way of faith? "Being justified by faith." Nothing that is morally good either precedes justification, or is simultaneously instrumental of it; all real good follows it. By faith we understand a reliance upon Christ as our atoning sacrifice, and the Lord our righteousness, for acceptance before God. It is reliance on another. There is no self-reliance or self-complacence here. This principle consults and provides for every interest involved in a dispensation of mercy to fallen creatures through a Divine Redeemer. It humbles the sinner. It exalts the Saviour. Holiness is promoted. If such then be the nature and tendency of faith, if it be the sole instrument of justification, and if it is only in a state of justification that man can render real and acceptable obedience, how earnest and ceaseless ought to be our prayer, "Lord, increase our faith!" (*W. Sparrow, D.D.*) *Atonement and modern thought*:—What extorted this cry from Job was a crushing consciousness of God's omnipotence. How could I, the impotent creature I am, stand up and assert my innocence before Him? What prompts the exclamation now is something quite different. We have lost even Job's sense of a personal relation to God. The idea of immediate individual responsibility to Him seems in this generation to be suffering eclipse. The prevailing modern teaching outside Christianity makes man his own centre, and urges him from motives of self-interest to seek his own well-being, and the good of the whole as contributory to his own. In the last resort he is a law unto himself. Such moral rules as he finds current in the world are only registered experiences of the lines along which happiness can be secured. They have a certain weight, as ascertained meteorological facts have weight with seamen, but that is all. He is under no obligation in the strict moral sense. The whole is a question of interest. Now we hold that all this is not true to fact. Obligation pressing upon us from without establishes an authority over us; and conscience, recognising obligation, yea, stamping the soul with an instinctive self-judgment, as it fulfils or refuses to fulfil obligations—these go with us wherever we go, into school, college, business, social relations, public duty. If we recognise our obligations, and conscientiously meet them, we secure our highest interests. But that by no means resolves obligation into interest. The two positions are mutually exclusive. If a man from mere self-interest were to do all the things which another man did from a sense of obligation, not a shadow of the peace and righteous approval of the latter would be his. The selfish aim would evacuate the acts of all their ennobling qualities. While the conscientious man would find himself by losing himself, the selfish man would be shut up in a cold isolation, losing himself—having no real hold on any other soul—because his aim all along has been to save and serve himself. But if this is the true view of life, we must accept all that flows from it. Let us trust our moral nature as we do that part of our nature which looks out to the world of sense. If I be really under obligation then I am free. Obligation has no meaning such as we attach to it, unless we pre-suppose freedom. If the moral is highest in me, if every faculty and interest of right is subject to its sway, then in simple allegiance to facts I must infer that the highest order of this world is a moral order. But once grant that, and you are in the region of personality at once. The moment you feel yourself under duty you know yourself a person, free, moral, self-conscious. You are face to face with a Divine Moral Governor, in whom all your lower moral obligations find their last rest, since He established them; and who, as your author and sustainer, has a right to the total surrender of your whole being. The supreme meaning of life for you is, meeting your obligations to your God. Being made by a God of holiness, we must suppose that we have been called into existence

as a means of exemplifying and glorifying the right. The right is supreme over every merely personal interest of our own. We exist for the right. The man can be justified with himself only as he pleases God. With the consciousness of disobedience comes guilt, fear, estrangement. When this unfortunate case ensues, as it has ensued in the case of all, the first point is settling this question of right as between man and God. Before anything and everything else in religion, before sanctification, before even we consider in detail how our life is to be brought into union with God, comes the great question of our meeting and fulfilling the claims of God's law. Atonement is our first and most pressing concern. The Bible commits itself to three statements about you. Take the last first. By the works of the law, or by your own actions, you cannot be counted a perfectly just man in God's sight. Secondly, you cannot clear yourself of guilt for this result. Thirdly, you see the Bible occupies ground of its own, and you must judge it on its own ground. . . . Now consider the chief difficulty exercising men's minds at this hour. We live in a practical rather than in a theoretical age. We say—How can a mere arrangement, such as the atonement, rectify my relations with God, separate me from sin, and secure my actual conformity to God's will? Taking the Gospel way as it stands, I go on to show what a real root and branch all-round redemption and restoration it confers. Where men err is that they leave out of view the great personality of Christ. They forget that the redemption is in Him. (*John Smith, M.A.*) *The demand of human nature for the atonement*:—1. Our subject is the atonement, and facts in human nature which demand it. Religion can account for all its principles and doctrines by an appeal to the facts of our being. The doctrine of reconciliation with God through the atoning death of Jesus is confessedly the chief and, in some respects, the most obscure doctrine of the Christian religion. Nevertheless, belief in its general features is essential to any honest acceptance of the Gospel. Without discussing obscurities, I wish, in aid of faith, simply to point out how true it is to all the facts of human nature. 2. "How should man be just with God?" It is not a question that is raised by recent ethical culture or by the progress of man in moral development, as some have thought. It is as old as the human soul, as ancient as the sense of sin, as universal as humanity, and is heard in all the religions. Beneath the burning skies of primeval Arabia this mighty problem is debated by an Arab sheik and his three friends. First—(1) Bildad, the Shuhite, states the incontrovertible premise from which the discussion starts—a premise grounded in universal consciousness, and axiomatic in its truth: "Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will He help the evil-doer." That is to say, God makes an everlasting distinction between and a difference in His treatment of righteous and unrighteous men. (2) Then up speaks Job: "I know it is so of a truth. But how should man be just with God? If he will contend with Him, he cannot answer Him one of a thousand!" "There is none that doeth good; no, not one." (3) Despondently, Job continues: "If God will not withdraw His anger, the proud helpers do stoop under Him. How much less shall I answer Him, and choose out my words to reason with Him?" That is to say, all our repentances and righteousnesses, upon which we so much rely, are, for the nakedness of our need, but as filthy rags. The cry for mercy, instead of justice, must be our only plea. (4) Then Job continues again: "I am afraid of all my sorrows. I know Thou wilt not hold me innocent." "All my sorrows." There is the remorse, the hell that is in me, the sense of justice unsatisfied, "I am afraid of them!" (5) Then Job resumes once more: "Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that he might lay his hand upon both!" Ah, the blessed Christ, the Mediator, our Daysman, laying one hand on Justice and the other on our guilty heads, our Atonement, making God and man to be at one in peace—He had not come! "Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that He might lay His hand upon both!" Do you see now why Abraham and Job and all the ancient kings and prophets longed to see the day of Christ, and how hard it was for them to die without the sight? "We have no daysman!" Oh, the abysmal depth of longing in that word, "We have no daysman," and "How should man be just with God?" And then, for all we are told, that desert colloquy stopped there, in utter sadness and gloom. Oh, if some one of us had only been there, and had been able to smite out and drop into the abyss the years that intervened between Job's day and Christ's! Or, if we could have led John the Apostle up to that company of Job and his three friends, and could have bidden John speak up, with clear tone, on their debate, and had him say to those

ancient Arabs, as he said to us: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. And He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world!" But Paul says it again, in his exact, positive way, and insists upon it. "To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus!" And then they are satisfied. And now Job, and Bildad, and Zophar, and Elihu spring to their feet upon the desert sands, and with John and Paul lift their eyes and hands heavenward, and cry with one voice: "Unto Him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood—to Him be glory and dominion, and honour, and power, for ever and ever. Amen." 3. I affirm, as a matter of Christian experience, that all the necessary features and implications of the orthodox doctrine of the atonement are true to the facts of human nature. When I say the orthodox view, I mean that view in the highest form of its statement, the substitutional view, namely, that Christ's death becomes an actual satisfaction to justice, to that sense of justice which exists in our own bosoms and in the bosoms of all intelligent creatures, and which, in the nature of things, must be a duplication of the sense of justice within the bosom of God Himself; that Christ's sufferings and death become an actual satisfaction to justice for our sins that are past, when we accept it as such by faith. And the proof that it is a satisfaction, the evidence that it does take away the sense of demerit, the feeling that we owe something to justice, is that we are conscious it does. The philosophers have sometimes voted consciousness down and out by large majorities, but it refuses to stay down and out. It comes back and asserts itself. "A man just knows it, sir," as Dr. Johnson said, "and that is all there is about the matter." All that we Christians can do, all that we need to do, is to have the experience of it, and then stand still, and magnificently and imperiously declare that it does, for we feel it to be so. Men may tell us that it ought not to be so; we will rejoin that it is so. They may say that our sense of right and wrong is very imperfectly developed, or we could not derive peace from the thought that an innocent Being has suffered in our stead. Against our experience the world can make no answer. We aver that man feels his sin needs propitiation, and that, if he will, he may find that the death of Christ meets that need. 4. Let us go outside distinctively Christian experience, and note some facts in human nature which show its trend toward the atonement in Jesus. (1) We aver that repentance and reformation alone will not satisfy the sense of right in man. Twenty-five years ago a friend of mine, a boy, under circumstances of great temptation, stole, and then had to lie to conceal the theft. He did not afterward have courage to confess and restore. The opportunity to own his sin and to make restitution soon passed away for ever. Within a few years, he has assured me that the memory of that early, only theft yet lies heavily upon his soul, and that he can never feel at ease until that matter is somehow made right. Standing by this blazing fact in experience, I aver that the moral sense demands satisfaction. Repentance is not enough—he has repented. Reformation is not enough—he has never stolen since. Still he cannot answer God nor himself. He is not innocent, and the "proud helpers do stoop under him." Propitiation of his own sense of right was necessary. He and my friend go and stand beside Job in the desert yonder, and say with him, "I am afraid of my sorrows. I know that Thou wilt not hold me innocent." They do not hold themselves innocent. Let me add some more specimens of the innermost feelings of representative men which look in the same direction. Byron was not a man given to superstition or flightiness. In his "Manfred," he is known to have spoken out the facts of his own guilty heart. There he says—

> "There is no power in holy men,
> Nor charms in prayer, nor purifying form
> Of penitence, nor outward look, nor fast,
> Nor agony, nor, greater than them all,
> The innate tortures of that deep despair
> Which is Remorse without the fear of hell,
> But all in all sufficient of itself
> Would make a hell of heaven—can exorcise
> From out the unbounded spirit the quick sense
> Of its own sins, sufferings, and revenge
> Upon itself."

Now, recollect that this is poetry. In poetry we get the deepest philosophy—there the heart speaks. It has no voice but the voice of nature. Byron speaks true to nature when he declares not prayer, nor fast, nor agony, nor remorse, can atone for sin or satisfy the soul. Is there not in the confession of that volcanic spirit a fact which looks toward man's need of Calvary? I take down my Shakespeare and open it at "Macbeth," that awfulest tragedy of our tongue, matchless in literature for its description of the workings of a guilty conscience, to be studied evermore. Lady Macbeth—King Duncan having been murdered—walks in her sleep through her husband's castle at night bearing a taper in her hands. "*Physician:* How came she by that light? *Servant:* Why, it stood by her; she has light by her continually; 'tis her command." As she walks, she rubs her hands. A servant explains: "It is an accustomed action with her to seem thus washing her hands; I have known her to continue in this a quarter of an hour." Then Lady Macbeth speaks: "Yet here's a spot. What! will these hands ne'er be clean? . . . Here's the smell of the blood still; all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand!" Is there not something there which sounds like the echo of Job's words in the desert: "I am afraid of all my sorrows"? Does not Lady Macbeth, walking at night and repenting of her crime and washing her hands in dreams from Duncan's blood, look as if an accusing conscience and the sense of justice unsatisfied could make its own hell? (2) Still further, I aver that the moral sense is never appeased until atonement is somehow made. The atoning stroke must fall somewhere, even though it be upon himself, before a man can be at peace with himself. That is a profoundly instructive, because profoundly true, series of passages in Coleridge's tragedy of "Remorse," which sets out this fact. "The guilty and guilt-smitten Ordonio is stabbed by Alhadra, the wife of the murdered Isadore. As the steel drinks his heart's blood, he utters the one single word, 'Atonement!' His self-accusing spirit, which is wrung with its remorseful recollections, and which the warm and hearty forgiveness of his injured brother has not been able to soothe in the least, actually feels its first gush of relief only as the avenging knife enters, and crime meets penalty." Ordonio, shortly dying, expires saying—

> "I stood in silence, like a slave before her,
> That I might taste the wormwood and the gall,
> And satiate this self-accusing heart
> With bitterer agonies than death can give."

That seems to say to me that nothing will give the soul peace but atonement of some kind. 5. I think, therefore, that if you could bring Job and his three friends, and my acquaintance who stole in his youth, and Byron, and Shakespeare, and Coleridge here to-day, they would see eye to eye, and agree upon some things in the name of facts in human nature. (1) They would agree that repentance alone does not make a man to be at peace. All this company had most bitterly repented. (2) They would agree that reformation was not sufficient. (3) They would agree that the guilty soul's remorse, its "biting back" upon itself, was its own hell, enough for its punishment. (4) They would agree that the mind so sternly demands that atonement be made, somewhere and somehow, that it will sooner offer its own bosom, as Ordonio did, than that its own sense of justice should go unsatisfied. (5) They would probably agree with Socrates, when he says to Plato, as some of you may have said to-day, "Perhaps God may forgive sin, but I do not see how He can, for I do not see how He ought." That is to say, "I do not see how the man who has sinned can ever be at peace." (6) And then I aver that, if the years between could be dropped out and Paul could join that company and say, "Behold the Lamb of God, whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood, to show His righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, that He might Himself be just and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus"—if Paul could say that to them, and that company could accept Christ as their Daysman, transferring by sincere repentance and faith their guilt to Him, and consenting in their minds that He should discharge its penalty by His body and blood, then I aver, in the name of millions of Christians, that they would find peace. And I aver that this feeling of indebtedness to justice, which is alike in the bosom of God and the bosom of man, being satisfied, Job and his friends, and Byron, and Shakespeare, and Coleridge, and all sinful men would spring to their feet and say, with John and Paul and all that other

company of the saved in heaven, "Unto Him that hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Him be glory and dominion and honour and power, for ever and ever. Amen!" Such are a few of the facts in the consciousness of men which a brief survey enables us to notice. The logic of human nature is Christ. No Humboldt, or Cuvier, or Darwin, with keen scientific eye, ever noted such an array of physical facts, all bearing toward one end in the physical world, as we find in the moral realm, all tending toward Jesus. Tertullian claimed that the testimony of the mind was naturally Christian. His claim is just. Men may rail at these facts in consciousness; they may declare that they make God a Moloch, and that the doctrine of the atonement is the bloody invention of gross-minded men, but the facts remain still, and their scientific trend and drift is wholly toward the Blessed Man of Calvary. If any one does not feel so now, he is drugged with sin; he has taken opiates; he is not himself. (*J. C. Jackson, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. **Who hath hardened himself against God, and prospered?**—*Hardened against God*:—This passage intimates—I. THAT APPEALS ARE ADDRESSED BY GOD TO MEN IN ORDER TO BRING THEM INTO ALLEGIANCE TO HIM. The conduct which is imputed to men is susceptible of explanation only as the existence of such appeals is assumed. 1. God has appealed to us by the instrumentality of conscience. Conscience is the testimony of secret judgment in the mind of a man as to the moral quality of his own thoughts and actions. The true dictates of conscience are conformable to the extensive principle of the Divine law; and the judgments of the one are substantially the judgments of the other. 2. By the instrumentality of providence. The events which happen under the superintendence of God in the temporal sphere, and affect the temporal interests of man, are intended always to speak powerfully on his behalf. This fact was recognised by Job, when he uttered the language before us. 3. By the instrumentality of revealed truth. All Scripture is profitable "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction," and for what belongs to righteousness. II. MEN TREAT THE APPEALS OF GOD WITH OBDURATE RESISTANCE. The text takes the case of men who "harden themselves against God," indicating a habit which is heinous in its nature, and which is progressive in its influence. It is emphatically resistance, the surrender of the heart and life to objects against which God has pleaded, and the retention of the heart and life amidst indulgences which God has protested against, and which He has condemned. This resistance is introduced as voluntary. It is also introduced as continued. That continuance augments the guilt. Such resistance becomes more heinous and aggravated in proportion as the calls addressed by God are solemn and weighty. Resistance is also progressive in its influence. In proportion as it is continued in the indulgence, it exercises increasing power and authority over the soul. It becomes more steady, more settled, more confirmed—this being in accordance with what we know of the tendencies of all habits to strengthen and establish themselves. III. OBDURATE RESISTANCE TO THE APPEALS MADE BY GOD EXPOSES TO FEARFUL AND FATAL CONSEQUENCES. No human being placing himself in voluntary and continued opposition against God can escape final punishment and ruin. God will inflict upon those who harden themselves against Him temporal sorrow; and if their resistance be continued till the last, the irremediable loss of their souls. There will be a proportion between punishment and guilt. (*James Parsons.*) *Fatal issue of final impenitence*:—These words imply that there is such a thing as for a man so to harden himself as to contend with God. I. INQUIRE WHEREIN THIS HARDNESS OF HEART CONSISTS. 1. The word signifies a spirit that is obstinate and incorrigible. 2. It is descriptive of a rebellious spirit, which discovers itself under the various dispensations of God, both in a way of mercy and judgment. 3. There is also a judicial hardness to which sinners are liable, in a way of righteous judgment for their iniquities. This is not owing to any defect in the Gospel, or in the dispensations of God towards us; but to the depravity of the human heart, which perverts the means of salvation into those of destruction. II. NOTICE SOME OF THE INSTANCES IN WHICH THIS SIN IS STILL COMMITTED. 1. It appears in indulging hard thoughts of God, of His government and of His holy law; in esteeming Him as a hard master, and in considering sinful propensities as an excuse for sinful actions, though no one thinks of excusing the offence of others against himself on the ground of such a plea. The indulgence of such thoughts lead on to final impenitence. 2. It manifests itself in a rejection or dislike of God's way of salvation. 3. Persisting in an evil course, amidst many convictions and fears, is another instance of this

sort of depravity. Pharaoh knew that he was wrong, and yet he dared to persist. 4. This hardness of heart appears in the resistance that is offered to the hand of God in providence instead of being humbled under it. 5. Presumptuously tempting God, amidst the most affecting means of salvation, is another instance of this hardness of heart. It was thus with Israel in the wilderness. III. THE FATAL ISSUE OF FINAL IMPENITENCE. "Who hath hardened himself against Him, and prospered?" 1. The longer you continue in this state, the more hardened you will become, till at last you will be past feeling (Eph. iv. 19). 2. This also is the way in which God punishes men for their impenitence (Isa. vi. 8). 3. The end of this impenitence and hardness of heart is fearfully described by an apostle, and should warn us of our danger (Rom. ii. 5–9). (*T. Hannam.*) *Man hardening himself against God*:—Every act of sin hardens the heart of man, but the heat of blasphemy at once shows and puts it into the extremity of hardness. Man hardens himself against God four ways especially. 1. Upon presumption of mercy. Many do evil because they hear God is good. They turn His grace into wantonness, and are without all fear of the Lord, because there is mercy so much with the Lord. 2. The patience of God, or His delays of judgment, harden others. Because God is slow to strike, they are swift to sin. 3. Gross ignorance hardens many. (1) Ignorance of themselves. (2) Ignorance of God. He that knows not what he ought to do, cares not much what he doth. None are so venturous as they who know not their danger. 4. Hardness of heart in sinning is contracted from the multitude of those who sin. They think none shall suffer for that which so many do. Man doth not grow hard at once, much less hardest; but when once he begins to harden himself, where he shall make an end he knows not. The first step is, the taking time and leave to meditate upon sin, and roll it up and down in the thoughts. A hard heart lets vain thoughts dwell in it. A holy heart would not let them lodge with it. A second step is, some tastes of pleasure and delight in sin. It proves a sweet morsel under his tongue. The third step is, custom in sinning. It argues great boldness to venture often. By the fourth step of hardness he comes to defend and maintain his sin. 5. The hard heart grows angry and passionate with those who give advice against sin; he is resolved; and a man that is resolved in his way is angry if he be desired to remove out of his way. He that is resolved to sleep, loves not to be awakened. 6. Hard hearts grow too hard for the Word. They are sermon-proof; they can sit under the preacher, and hear from day to day, but nothing touches them. 7. The heart is so hard that the sword of affliction doth not pierce it; the man is judgment-proof. Let God strike him in his person or estate, let God set the world afire about his ears, yet on he goes. He is like the man of whom Solomon speaks (Prov. xxiii. 34), who lies sleeping in a storm upon the top of the mast. 8. The hard heart sits down in the chair of the scorner. He derides the Word, and mocks at the judgments of God. (*J. Caryl.*) *Contenders with God*:—A gentleman came to me in the streets of Liverpool a few years ago, and told me of an incident in my father's ministry, of which he was an eye-witness, many years before. "Your father," he said, "was preaching on a then vacant spot of ground near where St. George's Hall now stands. Directly opposite the place where he was standing, an ungodly publican, finding his business interfered with, came out and endeavoured to interrupt the proceedings, mimicking the preacher's manner and gestures, and using very horrible language. I remember," said the gentleman, "how solemnly your father turned round upon him, and said, 'Take care, my friend, it is not me, but my Master that you are mocking, and remember you cannot mock God with impunity; take care lest you draw down upon your head His just vengeance.' He afterwards announced that he would preach in the same spot the next Sunday afternoon, which he did; and as he gave out his text, you may imagine the feeling of awe that settled down upon the crowd as they saw a hearse draw up to the door of the public-house, to carry away the corpse of that very man who one short week before had been defying God, and insulting His messenger." (*W. Hay M. H. Aitken, M.A.*)

Vers. 5–9. **Which removeth the mountains.** — *God in nature*:—I. Its almightiness is OVERWHELMINGLY GRAND in its manifestations. "Removeth the mountains," &c. The whole passage impresses one with the unbounded energy of God. 1. His almightiness should impress all with a sense of their utter insignificance. 2. His almightiness should impress the sinner with his impious hardihood. II. ITS ALMIGHTINESS IS CO-EXTENSIVE WITH THE UNIVERSE.

Job here touches every part of material nature—the earth, the sea, the heavens—and sees God working in all. 1. His universal agency explains all material phenomena. 2. His universal agency binds men practically to recognise Him in every part of nature. He is the Force of all forces, the Pulse of all life, the Spirit of all forms. (*Homilist.*) *Religious interest in nature*:—There are some who feel no interest in nature, others feel a mere commercial interest in it, others feel an artistic or scientific interest in it, but how few feel a religious interest in it—regard it as the product, the mirror, the organ, of the Infinite Mind. If I fear an artist, I care not for his pictures; if I fear an author, I feel no interest in his work. If men loved, instead of feared God, how beautiful nature would appear to them. The painting and poem of a father, how interesting to his child! (*R. Venting.*)

Vers. 10–24. **Which doeth great things past finding out.**—*Job's idea of what God is to mankind*:—He regards the Eternal as—I. INSCRUTABLE. 1. In His works. "Which doeth great things past finding out." How great are His works! great in their nature, minuteness, magnitude, variety, number. Ask the chemist, the astronomer, the entomologist, the physiologist, and the anatomist; and the more accurate and comprehensive their knowledge of the Divine workmanship is, the more ready will they be to acknowledge that "His works are past finding out, and wonders without number." 2. He is inscrutable in His essence. "He goeth by me, and I see Him not; He passeth on also, and I perceive Him not." I see His works, but I cannot detect the essence of the Worker. II. As IRRESPONSIBLE. "Behold He taketh away, and who can hinder Him? Who will say unto Him, What doest Thou?" III. As RESISTLESS. "If God will not withdraw His anger, the proud helpers do stoop under Him." 1. God is an offendable Being. He is not an impassive existent, sitting at the head of the universe, utterly indifferent to the moral character of His creatures. 2. The proud have "helpers" and abettors. Were the whole universe to arm itself against Him, its opposition would be infinitely less than the opposition of the smallest insect to the eagle or the lion. IV. As INEXORABLE. 1. As uninfluenced by man. (1) Uninfluenced by his appeals. The appeal of vindication has no power with Him. "How much less shall I answer Him, and choose out any words to reason with Him? Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer." The appeal of prayer. "But I would make supplication to my Judge. If I had called, and He had answered me; yet would not I believe that He had hearkened unto my voice." A most melancholy mental mood is this! The patriarch represents Him as—(2) Uninfluenced by his sufferings. "For He breaketh me with a tempest, and multiplieth my wounds without cause. He will not suffer me to take my breath, but filleth me with bitterness." 2. As unapproached by human argument. 3. As too holy to encourage any one to have confidence in his own virtues. Were the patriarch even a "perfect" man, he feels that to plead his virtues before a God so holy would not only be utterly useless, but impious and pernicious. (1) It would involve self-condemnation. No condemnation is so terrible as the condemnation of a man's moral self. (2) It would prove self-ignorance. "Yet would I not know my soul." Truly, a man who would dare to prove his merits before God would demonstrate thereby an utter ignorance of his own insignificance and moral character. (3) It would secure self-contempt. "I would despise my life." This would be the issue of such conduct. The Almighty is here represented—4. As utterly regardless of the moral distinctions of society. "This is one thing, therefore I said it. He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked," &c. (vers. 22–24). Here Job hits the main point now in discussion between him and his friends. Their position was that God dealt with men here according to their moral characters, and that Job suffered because he was wicked. The patriarch again refutes it, and asserts the broad fact that the perfect and wicked are treated alike. This is not the scene of retribution, it is the domain of discipline. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 11. **So He goeth by me.**—*God passing by*:—These mighty saints of old may have had fewer books to read than we have in our day, but they had one glorious book, the volume of nature, whose ever-open pages, written within and without by the finger of God, were spread out before their wondering eyes. And they read carefully and devoutly the great truths about God these pages were always teaching them. God was passing by them in the grand panorama of His works which their eyes beheld. They dwelt chiefly in tents. They lived much in the open air, under the blue sky of those beautiful Eastern lands. They lived

a simple, primitive life, with few wants and few cares. They had far more time than we have for holy thought and heavenly meditation on things spiritual and eternal. Many a sacred tradition may have floated down the quiet stream of time—of the revelation of God made to man, of His will and purpose concerning the race that had so sadly gone astray from Him. They knew that God had not finally abandoned the world and consigned it to utter destruction. They followed their flocks and herds all day in the wild, trackless desert, or in the fertile plain. They lived much of the time alone—and men who are much alone with God become terribly in earnest. They are away from man and all his little ways, and hold communion with God through His works. Men like Moses and Elijah and John the Baptist may be separated from their fellow-men; but they are near to, and enjoy wondrous communings with the infinite and eternal God. God is passing by them in a thousand ways. They watch with eager eye every variation in the clouds and in the stars. They could see the glorious play of the forked lightning as it gleamed, in a thousand fantastic forms, on the bosom of the storm-cloud, resting on the distant mountain-tops. In the storm God was passing by—that same God whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting. They knew, it may be, little of the laws of electricity or of sound; but they could hear in the thunder, as it rolled from rock to rock, or shook the earth from pole to pole, the very voice of God (Psa. xxix. 3–8). These mighty saints may have had no formulated system of theology, where God was mapped out with all His perfections, with all the nicety and precision of a mathematical figure; but to them He was the omnipresent God. They saw some rays of His glorious presence reflected from every cloud. They heard His voice in every passing breeze. God was passing by then. God—the same God—is passing by us now. Whatever changes have come or yet may come to His universe, He Himself is unchangeable. In the glorious panorama of the heavens God is passing by us. In the noiseless tread of the seasons God is passing by. Spring and summer, seed-time and harvest, autumn and winter, as they quietly come and quietly go, all tell the same story, "God is passing by." In the regular succession of day and night, in every rising and setting sun, in every waxing and waning moon, God is near us and passing by us. In every national blessing and every national chastisement God is passing by. When the streams of earthly comforts flow full and strong around our life, and equally when these streams run low or dry, God is passing by us. When war, with all its accompanying desolations, its misery and agony and woe, is sweeping over a country, God is passing by. And no less surely is He passing by for us in our days of peace and our nights of quiet. God is ever near us, though we see Him not. In every beat of our pulse, in every throb of our heart, in every movement of our brain, God is there. He is about our bed and around our path. Above us, behind and before, we are flooded with the omnipresence of Deity as with the noonday sunshine. But because we see Him not with the bodily eye we forget that He is there. He passeth on also, but we perceive Him not. (*James Carmichael, D.D.*) *Man's ignorance of God*:—1. That God is invisible in His essence, and incomprehensible in many of His actions. Man's eye cannot see Him. Man's understanding cannot comprehend what He doth. 2. As the Lord in His nature cannot be seen at all; so (such is the weakness of man, that) we cannot see Him fully in His Word or works. Thus we see men, but we seldom see God in the great transactions and motions of kingdoms. And we see Him least of all in the course of spiritual things, in His working upon our hearts. God works wonders in us, and we perceive Him not. 3. Man is not fit to sit as a judge upon the works and dealings of God. Shall we judge God in what He doth, when we cannot apprehend what He doth? A judge must have the full cognisance of the matter before him, how else can he pass sentence about it? 4. It should be matter of great humiliation to us, that we see so little of God. (*J. Caryl.*) *Present though invisible*:—We are reminded of this profound spiritual truth by reading the following account of an occurrence which illustrates an impressive scientific fact touching the invisible. Photographs of the invisible are what M. Zenger calls two pictures which he took about midnight of 17th August from a window looking out upon the Lake of Geneva. They gave faint yet distinct images of the lake and of Mont Blanc, which could not be seen in the darkness. Mr. Bertrand remarks that invisibility is a relative term, the significance of which depends on the power of the observer's eye. The photographs were taken with a light of very small intensity, and did not represent an invisible object. So sky-photographs, taken in observatories,

show stars which cannot be discerned by the most piercing vision. (*Homiletic Review.*)

Ver. 12. **Behold, He taketh away.**—*The conduct to which adverse dispensations should lead*:—Job was a sufferer. Of his property he was deprived; of his children he was bereaved; in his own person he was sorely afflicted. It would not have been strange had Job given way to murmuring and repining. Unsupported and uncomforted from above, what else can be expected from man when in deep distress, but the expression of uneasiness and fretful discontent? Some, indeed, attempt to bear up under adversity by hard-hearted callousness, and others by a prideful aversion to complain. Job felt what he endured, and he acknowledged what he endured, but his feeling and acknowledgment indicated calm submission. I. THE DOCTRINE TAUGHT—THE AGENCY OF GOD. His agency in providence. Not to be classed with chance or accident. It would be a mistake to represent God as exercising no providential superintendence, no control, no management, no rule. Some hold that God's agency is general, not particular, not concerned with details. But great and little are not to God what they are to us. What it was no degradation to God to create, it can be no degradation to God to superintend. A particular agency on His part is the only intelligible notion of God's agency in providence. The manner in which God's agency, in the various dispensations of providence, is regarded respectively by the believer and by the unbeliever, constitutes one of the most marked distinctions between the characters of these two classes of person. II. THE LESSONS WHICH THIS DOCTRINE TEACHES. 1. Privation and loss are the doing of Him who neither does nor can do us any wrong. God is never arbitrary, never capricious, never unjust. He is essentially righteous. In no sense can He do that which is unrighteous. He cannot do it from ignorance, or from design. 2. Privation and loss are the doing of Him, all whose doings in reference to us are in accordance with what He Himself is—wise and gracious. Not only is He wise, but all-wise; actually, absolutely, yea, necessarily all-wise. His understanding is infinite. He is gracious. His nature is love. What a proof of this did He afford in devising a plan by which sinners might be rescued from the penal consequences of sin. 3. Privation and loss are the doing of Him who is able, and as willing as He is able, to educe, in our experience, good from evil. Out of the strait in which we are involved there may be no seeming way of escape. But is it irremediable by Him whose arm is full of might, who is equal to our support and deliverance, whatever be our condition? This subject calls for thankfulness; it should produce resignation; it should lead us to prepare for changes. (*A. Jack, D.D.*) **Who will say unto Him, What doest Thou?**—*The Divine dispensations not to be questioned*:—In the cup of life there are many bitter ingredients. From the day we are born, till the day we die, there is an invariable mixture of joy and sorrow. The world is full of uncertainties. Its best satisfactions are neither substantial nor permanent. . . . Religion is not satisfied with directing our attention to second causes. It leads us above them to the First Cause of all things. It conducts us to God; and presents Him to us under the mild aspect of a Father, always mindful of our happiness; and who has given us so many proofs of this in nature, providence, and grace, as to merit our entire confidence and unreserved submission. There is much in the present state of things to perplex the understanding, as well as to wound the heart. I find in the revelation which religion has made to me another and better world, where my perplexities will be resolved, and my troubles cease. In times of sorrow, philosophy has no effectual help for us. Various and contradictory maxims may be urged upon us, and to all we must reply, with the ancient sufferer, "Miserable comforters are ye all." But it is not in vain to direct our thoughts to God; to make an oblation of our wills to Him. There is too much disposition in mankind to disregard the providence of God; to overlook His agency in the occurrences of life. What would become of us if our life were an unmingled portion of good; if our day were never darkened with the clouds of adversity? Afflictions are intended as the instruments of good to us. Afflictions, rightly improved, are real blessings. (*C. Lowell.*) *Submission to Divine sovereignty*:—Job was afflicted not more for his own benefit than for the benefit of others. His discourses with his friends gave him a good opportunity of justifying the sovereignty of God, in the dispensations of His providence. The friends insisted that God treated every man according to his real character, in His providential conduct towards him; but Job maintained

that God acted as a sovereign, without any design of distinguishing His friends from His enemies, by outward mercies and afflictions. In the preceding verses, he gives a striking description of Divine sovereignty. I. IT IS THE NATURAL TENDENCY OF AFFLICTIONS TO MAKE THE FRIENDS OF GOD REALISE AND SUBMIT TO HIS SOVEREIGNTY. Afflictions always display the sovereignty of God. Whenever God afflicts His children, He gives a practical and sensible evidence that He has a right to dispose of them contrary to their views, their desires, and most tender feelings. Of all afflictions, those which are called bereavements, give the clearest display of Divine sovereignty. II. SUCH A REALISING SENSE OF THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IN AFFLICTIONS, HAS A NATURAL TENDENCY TO EXCITE TRUE SUBMISSION IN EVERY PIOUS HEART. 1. While they realise the nature of His sovereignty, they cannot help seeing the true ground or reason of submission. 2. God designs thus to bring His children to submission. 3. It has so often produced this desirable effect in their hearts. Apply the subject. (1) If all afflictions are designed and adapted to bring men to a cordial submission to Divine sovereignty, then all true submission must be in its own nature absolute and unreserved. (2) We may assume that we shall have to submit to the Divine sovereignty in the world to come. (3) The doctrine of unconditional submission to God ought to be plainly taught and inculcated. (4) If afflictions are designed and suited to make men realise Divine sovereignty, then they always try their hearts, whether they are friendly or unfriendly to God. (5) The afflictions that bring men to submission must do them good. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *Divine providence* :—These words speak of three solemn and weighty truths. I. THE LORD'S SOVEREIGN AGENCY. We see this in families, we see it in provinces, we see it in whole nations. We perceive prosperity or adversity—peace or discord—joy or misery—coming both to individuals and to communities without their knowledge, and often without their concurrence. The human race are subject to other influences besides their own. From the Bible we learn that the smallest, as well as the weightiest affairs, are under Christ's supervision and control. Nothing arises in this our world by chance or by accident. The same sovereign agency is seen in the issues of life. The keys of the invisible world are committed to Christ's sole custody. All second causes work out the sovereign will of the Great First Cause. It is He who fixes the precise moment for the removal of men by death from their busy occupations. II. HIS IRRESISTIBLE MIGHT. This is the groundwork of the patriarch's argument in the passage before us. Who can hinder Him? Shall the man of wisdom? Shall a parent's love avert the threatening blow? Shall the tears of a wife? Shall the regrets of an admiring nation? III. HIS UNSEARCHABLE WISDOM. The Almighty doeth all things well. From all eternity the Lord has had certain purposes to be accomplished. In some matters the wisdom of the Lord's dealing is so palpable that we are compelled to acquiesce. At other seasons we are all in the dark. Then it is our privilege to exercise faith in the fatherly care and unfailing love of our Almighty Redeemer. (*C. Clayton, M.A.*)

Ver. 16. **Yet would I not believe that He had hearkened unto my voice.**—*Pre-requisites to belief* :—It is hard to believe in that, some faint earnest of which we do not find in our own souls. A man cannot believe facts which are in the very teeth of his instinctive affinities and dispositions. The head hunters of Borneo would necessarily treat as fables the thousand and one humane institutions which are the products of Christian civilisation. A race of colour-blind barbarians, if such a race existed, would ridicule the idea of finding out the elements of which distant stars are fashioned by observing the bands and lines of colours disclosed by the spectroscope. There must be the beginning of vision in us if we are to receive the fairy tales of the microscopist and the astronomer. God can be made known to us only in these aspects in which we desire, however faintly, to be like Him. (*T. G. Selby.*)

Vers. 20, 21. **If I justify myself.**—*The folly of self-justification* :—One of Rev. Murray M'Cheyne's elders was in deep darkness and distress for a few weeks, but one Sunday after the pastor's faithful preaching he found his way to the Lord. At the close of the service, he told Mr. M'Cheyne, who knew of his spiritual concern, that he had found the Lord. When he was asked to explain how this happy change had come about, he said, "I have been making a great mistake. I have always been coming to the Lord as something better than I was, and going to the wrong door to ask admittance; but this afternoon I went round to the sinner's

door, and for the first time cried, like the publican, 'Lord, be merciful to me a sinner'; and, oh, sir, I received such a welcome from the Saviour!" Are any of our readers like the self-righteous Pharisee? Such have no room for the Saviour; for the Lord "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." **If I say I am perfect.**—*Our exact worth:*—A bright little fellow was on the scales, and being anxious to outweigh his playmate, he puffed out his cheeks and swelled up like a small frog. But the playmate was the wiser boy. "Oho!" he cried in scorn, "that doesn't do any good; you can only weigh what you are!" How true that is of us bigger children, who try to impress ourselves upon our neighbours and friends, and even upon ourselves, and—yes, sometimes upon God Almighty, by the virtues we would like to have! It doesn't do any good. You may impose upon your neighbour's judgment, and get him to say you are a fine fellow—noble, generous, brave, faithful, loving; but if it is not true, you are a sham. "You can only weigh what you are." *Not quite perfect:*—A London publisher once made up his mind to publish a book without a single typographical error. He had the proofs corrected by his own readers until they assured him that they were faultless. Then he sent proofs to the universities and to many other publishing houses, offering a prize of several pounds for every typographical mistake found. A few were discovered, and the book was published. It was considered a perfect specimen of the printer's art. Six or eight months after publication the publisher received a letter calling his attention to an error in a certain line on a certain page. Then came another and another letter, until before the year was out half a dozen mistakes were found. St. Paul says that Christians are epistles read and known of all men; and it certainly does not require as much scrutiny as this to discover that we are not free from faults. We must look forward to the new edition of us that will be brought out in another world, revised and amended by the Author. (*Quiver.*) *A blow at self-righteousness:*—Ever since man became a sinner he has been self-righteous. When he had a righteousness of his own he never gloried of it, but ever since he has lost it, he has pretended to be the possessor of it. I. THE PLEA OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS CONTRADICTS ITSELF. "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me." For the very plea itself is a piece of high and arrogant presumption. God hath said it let Jew and Gentile stop his mouth, and let all the world stand guilty before God. We have it on inspired authority, that "there is none righteous, no, not one." Besides, dost thou not see, thou vain and foolish creature, that thou hast been guilty of pride in the very language thou hast used? Who but a proud man would stand up and commend himself? But further, the plea of self-righteousness is self-contradictory upon another ground; for all that a self-righteous man pleads for, is comparative righteousness. "Why," saith he, "I am no worse than my neighbours, in fact a great deal better; I do not drink." Just so, but then all that you claim is that you are righteous as compared with others. Do you not see that this is a very vain and fatal plea, because you do in fact admit that you are not perfectly righteous;—that there is some sin in you, only you claim there is not so much in you as in another? Suppose now for a moment that a command is issued to the beasts of the forest that they should become sheep. It is quite in vain for the bear to come forward and plead that he was not so venomous a creature as the serpent; equally absurd would it be for the wolf to say that though stealthy, and cunning, and gaunt, and grim, yet he was not so great a grumbler nor so ugly a creature as the bear; and the lion might plead that he had not the craftiness of the fox. A holy God cannot look even upon the least degree of iniquity. But further, the plea of the self-conceited man is, that he has done his best, and can claim a partial righteousness. It is true, if you touch him in a tender place he acknowledges that his boyhood and his youth were stained with sin. A perfect righteousness you must have, or else you shall never be admitted to that wedding feast. II. THE MAN WHO USES THIS PLEA CONDEMNS THE PLEA HIMSELF. Not only does the plea cut its own throat, but the man himself is aware when he uses it that it is an evil, and false, and vain refuge. Now this is a matter of conscience, and if I speak not what you have felt, then you can say I am mistaken. Men know that they are guilty. The conscience of the proudest man, when it is allowed to speak, tells him that he deserves the wrath of God. III. THE PLEA IS ITSELF EVIDENCE AGAINST THE PLEADER. There is an unregenerated man here, who says, "Am I blind also?" I answer in the words of Jesus, "But now ye say we see, therefore your sin remaineth." You have proved by your plea, in the first place, that you have never been enlightened

of the Holy Spirit, but that you remain in a state of ignorance. A deaf man may declare that there is no such thing as music. A man who has never seen the stars, is very likely to say that there are no stars. But what does he prove? Does he prove that there are no stars? He only proves his own folly and his own ignorance. That man who can say half a word about his own righteousness has never been enlightened of God the Holy Spirit. But then again, inasmuch as you say that you are not guilty this proves that you are impenitent. Now the impenitent can never come where God is. Further than this, the self-righteous man, the moment that he says he has done anything which can recommend him to God, proves that he is not a believer. Now, salvation is for believers, and for believers only. The thirsty are welcome; but those who think they are good, are welcome neither to Sinai nor to Calvary. Ah! soul, I know not who thou art; but if thou hast any righteousness of thine own, thou art a graceless soul. IV. IT WILL RUIN THE PLEADER FOR EVER. Let me show you two suicides. There is a man who has sharpened a dagger, and seeking out his opportunity he stabs himself to the heart. Who shall blame any man for his death? He slew himself; his blood be on his own head. Here is another: he is very sick and ill; he can scarcely crawl about the streets. A physician waits upon him; he tells him, "Sir, your disease is deadly; you must die; but I know a remedy which will certainly heal you. There it is; I freely give it to you. All I ask of you is, that you will freely take it." "Sir," says the man, "you insult me; I am as well as ever I was in my life; I am not sick." Who slew this man? His blood be on his own head; he is as base a suicide as the other. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 25, 26. **Now my days are swifter than a post . . . as the swift ships.**—*Illustrations of life*:—I. THE TEXT TEACHES US THE BREVITY OF HUMAN LIFE. "My days are swifter than a post." They are as swift-footed messengers, as couriers, as the medium of communication from one province to another. They are "swifter than the swift ships"; than the "eagle hastening to his prey." There are illustrations from earth, and sea, and sky. We often speak of the brevity of life; it is only now and then we are really impressed with the fact. Our days are brief as the preface to a new and undying life. Our days are brief as the period for the culture of our whole nature. How great a portion of the present life is necessary as the introduction to the remainder. Our physical nature requires growth and development. How slowly our mental faculties open themselves. The culture of our spiritual nature seems to demand a longer period than the present life, for it is the education of a nature that dies not; that will take with it all the training of earth. Our days are brief, when we think of the solemn realities with which they have to do. Our days are brief, because our destiny depends on them. On these days that pass so quickly, all the future hangs; these days give a colouring to a whole eternity. II. THE TEXT TEACHES US THE UNSATISFACTORY NATURE OF LIFE. "They see no good." "What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue." 1. Our days bear with them the freshness and joyousness of life. Our days rob us of the freshness and beauty of youth, and as they pass they carry with them all that we deemed most precious—friends, kindred, joys, hopes. 2. Life is unsatisfactory, because of the fragmentary and unfinished character of its work. God's providence is in strong contrast with man's. 3. If the present be all, life must be most unsatisfactory, for we can see no good. III. OUR TEXT SUGGESTS TO US THE IMPORTANCE OF LIFE. Our days are as a post. 1. They carry with them the records and impressions of our minds. Thoughts for good or for evil must live—must live to be a blessing or a curse. 2. Our days carry with them the treasures of our hearts. What treasures the swift ships convey from one land to another; how they enrich one country with the wealth of others. Our days carry the wealth, the priceless affections of our nature. (*H. J. Bevis.*) *The fleetness of life*:—I. As a PROPHETIC fact. Can it be that this short life is the end of our existence? 1. We quit this life with unwrought powers. The tree grows on until it exhausts its latent powers, and animals die not (unless they are destroyed) until they are worn out. But man has to quit this life just as some of his powers are beginning to bud, and others without measure undeveloped and unquickened. 2. We quit this life with unfulfilled plans. II. As a TERRIFIC fact. To whom is it terrible? To all whose hearts are centred in this world. 1. That their wealth relatively becomes less valuable to them every day. 2. That eternity becomes relatively more awful to them every day. III. As a CHEERING fact. To whom is it cheering? To those who, though they are in the world are not of the world, those who are

born into the Divine kingdom of Christly virtues and imperishable hopes. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 27–35. **If I say, I will forget my complaint.**—*Concerning Job's sufferings:*—I. AS TOO GREAT TO RENDER ANY EFFORTS OF SELF-CONSOLATION EFFECTIVE. Three things are suggested. 1. A valuable power of mind. The power to alleviate sufferings. "If I say, I will forget my complaint." Herein is the implied power. All have it. It is a remedial force that kind heaven has put within us. If he cannot quench the flame, he can cool it; if he cannot roll off the load, he by his own thoughts can make it comparatively light. He can go into a circle of ideas so engrossing and delectable as to experience transports of rapture in the dungeon or in the flames. What is pain but a mental sensation? And wherever that mental sensation may burn, its fires can be quenched in the river of noble thoughts and lofty aspirations. 2. A natural tendency of mind. What is it? The exertion of this mitigating power within us under suffering; an effort to "forget" the "complaint," to "leave off" the "heaviness," to "comfort." Who under suffering does not essay this? 3. A sad defect in mind. "I am afraid of all my sorrows; I know that Thou wilt not hold me innocent." Why did his mental efforts at self-consolation fail? Simply because he had not the inner sense of innocence. Though he always maintained that he was innocent of the sin of hypocrisy with which his friends charged him, he always felt that before the Holy he was guilty, and herein was the failure of his mind to mitigate his pain. He regards his sufferings—II. AS TOO DESERVED TO JUSTIFY ANY HOPE OF RELIEF. 1. He feels that no self-cleansing would serve him before God. "If I be wicked,"—or, as it should be, I am wicked,—"why then labour I in vain? If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt Thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." 2. He feels that there is no one to act as umpire between him and his Maker. "Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both." 3. He feels that his afflictions were directly from God, and until they were removed there was no hope for him. "Let Him take His rod away from me, and let not His fear terrify me; then would I speak, and not fear Him: but it is not so with me." (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 30–32. **If I wash myself with snow-water.**—*An estimate of the morality that is without godliness:*—In the eyes of the pure God, the man who has made the most copious application in his power of snow-water to the visible conduct, may still be an object of abhorrence; and that if God enter into judgment with him, He will make him appear as one plunged in the ditch, his righteousness as filthy rags, and himself as an unclean thing. There are a thousand things which, in popular and understood language, man can do. It is quite the general sentiment, that he can abstain from stealing, and lying, and calumny—that he can give of his substance to the poor, and attend church, and pray, and read his Bible, and keep up the worship of God in his family. But, as an instance of distinction between what he can do, and what he cannot do, let us make the undoubted assertion that he can eat wormwood, and just put the question, if he can also relish wormwood. That is a different affair. I may command the performance; but have no such command over my organs of sense, as to command a liking or a taste for the performance. The illustration is homely; but it is enough for our purpose if it be effective. I may accomplish the doing of what God bids; but have no pleasure in God himself. The forcible constraining of the hand may make out many a visible act of obedience; but the relish of the heart may refuse to go along with it. The outer man may be all in a bustle about the commandments of God; while to the inner man God is an offence and a weariness. His neighbours may look at him; and all that their eye can reach may be as clean as snow-water can make it. But the eye of God reaches a great deal farther. He is the discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; and he may see the foulness of spiritual idolatry in every one of its receptacles. The poor man has no more conquered his rebellious affections than he has conquered his distaste for wormwood. He may fear God; he may listen to God; and, in outward deed, may obey God. But he does not, and he will not, love God; and while he drags a heavy load of tasks, and duties, and observances after him, he lives in the hourly violation of the first and greatest of the commandments. Would any parent among you count it enough that you had obtained a service like this from one of your children? Would you be satisfied with the obedience of his hand, while you knew that the affections of his heart

were totally away from you? The service may be done; but all that can minister satisfaction in the principle of the service, may be withheld from it; and though the very last item of the bidden performance is rendered, this will neither mend the deformity of the unnatural child, nor soothe the feelings of the afflicted and the mortified father. God is the Father of spirits; and the willing subjection of the spirit is that which He requires of us—"My son, give Me thy heart"; and if the heart be withheld, God says of all our visible performances, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me?" The heart is His requirement; and full indeed is the title which He prefers to it. He put life into us; and it is He who hath drawn a circle of enjoyments, and friendships, and interests, around us. Everything that we take delight in, is ministered to us out of His hand. He plies us every moment with His kindness; and when at length the gift stole the heart of man away from the Giver, so that he became a lover of his own pleasure rather than a lover of God, even then would He not leave us to perish in the guilt of our rebellion. Man made himself an alien, but God was not willing to abandon him; and, rather than lose him for ever, did He devise a way of access by which to woo and to welcome him back again. The way of our recovery is indeed a way that His heart was set upon; and to prove it, He sent His own Eternal Son into the world, who unrobed Him of all His glories, and made Himself of no reputation. If, after all this, the antipathy of nature to God still cleave to us—if, under the power of this antipathy, the service we yield be the cold and unwilling service of constraint—if, with many of the visible outworks of obedience, there be also the strugglings of a reluctant heart to take away from this obedience all its cheerfulness, is not God defrauded of His offering? (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*) *Washed to greater foulness*:—The similitudes of grief are here piled up in heaps, with what an old author has spoken of as the "rhetoric of sorrow." Physical sufferings had produced a stain on Job's mind, and he sought relief by expressing his anguish. Like some solitary prisoner in the gloomy keep of an old castle, he graves on the walls pictures of the abject despondencies which haunt him. I. At the outset we observe that QUICKENED SOULS ARE CONSCIOUS OF GUILT. They know it; they feel it; and they blush to find that they are without excuse for it. All men are sinners: to most men, however, sin appears to be a fashion of the times, a necessity of nature, a folly of youth, or an infirmity of age, which a slight apology will suffice to remove. Not till men are quickened by Divine grace do they truly know that they are sinners. How is this? Some diseases are so insidious that the sufferers fancy that they are getting better, while in very truth they are hastening to the grave. After such manner does sin deceive the sons of men: they think they are saved when they are still unrenewed. How is this, you ask again? Few give themselves the trouble to think about these matters at all. Ours is an age in which men's thoughts are keen upon politics and merchandise, practical science, and economic inventions. To natural ignorance we may attribute much of the ordinary indifference of men to their own sinfulness. They live in a benighted age. In vain you boast the enlightenment of this nineteenth century: the nineteenth century is not one whit more enlightened as to the depravity of human nature than the first century. Men are as ignorant of the plague of their own hearts to-day as they were when Paul addressed them. Hardly a glimmer of the humbling truth of our natural depravity dawns on the dull apprehension of the worldly-wise, though souls taught from above know it and are appalled by it. In divers ways the discovery comes to those whom the Lord ordains to save. Sometimes a preacher sent of God lets in the dreadful light. Many men, like the false prophet Mokanna, hide their deformity. You may walk through a dark cellar without discerning by the eye that anything noisome is there concealed. Let the shutters be thrown open! Bid the light of day stream in! You soon perceive frogs upon the cold clammy pavement, filthy cobwebs hanging on the walls in long festoons, foul vermin creeping about everywhere. Startled, alarmed, horrified, who would not wish to flee away, and find a healthier atmosphere? The rays of the sun are, however, but a faint image of that light Divine shed by the Holy Spirit, which penetrates the thickest shades of human folly and infatuation, and exposes the treachery of the inmost heart. II. We pass on to notice that it often happens that AWAKENED SOULS USE MANY INEFFECTUAL MEANS TO OBTAIN CLEANSING. Job describes himself as washing in snow-water, and making his hands never so clean. His expressions remind me of my own labour in vain. By how many experiments I tried to purify my own soul! See a squirrel in a cage; the poor thing is working away, trying to

mount, yet he never rises one inch higher. In like case is the sinner who seeks to save himself by his own good works or by any other means: he toils without result. It is astonishing what pains men will take in this useless drudgery. In seeking to obtain absolution of their sins, to establish a righteousness of their own, and to secure peace of mind, men tax their ingenuity to the utmost. Job talks of washing himself "with snow-water." The imagery is, no doubt, meant to be instructive. Why is snow-water selected? 1. The reason probably was, first, because it was hard to get. Far easier, generally, to procure water from the running brooks than from melted snow. Men set a high value on that which is difficult to procure. Forms of worship which are expensive and difficult are greatly affected by many, as snow-water was thought in Job's day to be a bath for kings; but, after all, it is an idle fashion, likely to mislead. 2. Besides, snow-water enjoyed a reputation for purity. If you would have a natural filtered water gather the newly-fallen snow and melt it. Specimens yet remain among us of piety more than possible to men, religiousness above the range of mortals; which piety is, however, not of God's grace, and consequently is a vain show. Though we should use the purest ceremonies, multiply the best of good works, and add thereto the costliest of gifts, yet we should be unable to make ourselves clean before God. You may wash yourself till you deny the existence of a spot, and yet you may be unclean. 3. Once again, this snow-water is probably extolled because it descends from the clouds of heaven, instead of bubbling up from the clods of earth. Religiousness which can colour itself with an appearance of the supernatural is very taking with many. If I "make my hands never so clean," is an expression peculiarly racy in the original. The Hebrew word has an allusion to soap or nitre. Such was the ordinary and obvious method any one would take to whiten his hands when they were grimy. Tradition tells that certain stains of blood cleave to the floor. The idea is that human blood, shed in murder, can never be scrubbed or scraped off the boards. Thus is it most certainly with the dye of sin. The blood of souls is in thy skirts, is the terrible language of Jeremiah (ch. ii. 34). These worthless experiments to cleanse yourselves would be ended once for all if you would have regard to the great truth of the Gospel: "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." III. But AS SURE AS EVER QUICKENED SOULS TRY TO GET PURITY IN THE WRONG WAY, GOD WILL THRUST THEM DOWN INTO THE DITCH. This is a terrible predicament. I find, on looking at the passage closely, that it means "head over ears in the ditch." Often it happens with those who try to get better by their own good works, that their conscience is awakened by the effort, and they are more conscious of sin than ever. The word here rendered "ditch" is elsewhere translated "corruption." So in the sixteenth Psalm: "Neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." Language cannot paint abasement, reproach, or ignominy in stronger terms. "Thou shalt plunge me in the ditch." Is it not as though God Himself would undertake the business of causing His people to know that by their vain ablutions they were making themselves yet more vile in His eyes? May we not regard this as the discipline of our Heavenly Father's love, albeit when passing through the trial we do not perceive it to be so? "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." Perhaps the experience I am trying to describe will come to you through the preaching of the Word. Frequently our great Lord leaves a poor wayward soul to eat the fruits of its own ways, and this is the severest form of plunging in the ditch. While striving after righteousness in a wrong way, the man stumbles into the very sin against which he struggled. His empty conceit might not have been dislodged from its secret lurking-place in his depraved nature without some such perilous downfall. Thus do we, in our different spheres, fly from this to that, and from that to the other. Some hope to cleanse away sin by a supreme effort of self-denial, or of miraculous faith. Let us not play at purification, nor vainly hope to satisfy conscience with that which renders no satisfaction to God. Persons of sensitive disposition, and sedentary habits, are prone to seek a righteousness of inward feeling. Oh, that it could turn from feeling to faith; and look steadily out of inward sensation to the work finished once for all by the Lord Jesus! IV. By such severe training THE AWAKENED ONE IS LED TO LOOK ALONE TO GOD FOR SALVATION, and to find the salvation he looks for. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 33. **Neither is there any daysman.**—*The daysman:*—At this point of the poem we are seeing Job at his worst. He has become desperate under his

accumulated miseries. In this chapter Job answers Bildad. He admits that God is just; but from His infinite justice, holiness, and power, he concludes that the best man has no hope of being approved by Him. His protest he clothes in the figure of a legal trial. God comes into court, first as plaintiff, then as defendant; first asserting His rights, snatching away that which He has a mind to claim, then answering the citation of the man who challenges His justice. In either case man's cause is hopeless. If the subject of His power calls Him to account, He appears at the bar, only to crush the appellant, and, with His infinite wisdom, to find flaws in his plea. As we study, certain deep-lying instincts begin to take shape in cravings for something which the theology of the day does not supply. The sufferer begins to feel rather than see that the problem of his affliction needs for its solution the additional factor which was supplied long after in the person and work of Jesus Christ,—a mediator between God and man. As he sees it, plaintiff and defendant have no common ground. God is a being different in nature and condition from himself. If now there were a human side to God. If there were only some daysman, some arbiter or mediator, who could lay his hand upon us both, understand both natures and both sets of circumstances,—then all would be well. This desire of Job is to be studied, not as a mere individual, but as a human experience. Job's craving for a mediator is the craving of humanity. The soul was made for God. Christ meets an existing need. Manhood was made for Christ. With Christ goes this fact of mediation. There is a place for mediation in man's relations to God. There is a craving for mediation in the human heart to which Job here gives voice. One needs but a moderate acquaintance with the history of religion to see how this instinctive longing for someone or something to stand between man and God has asserted itself in the institutions of worship. This demand for a mediator is backed and urged by two great inter-linked facts — sin and suffering. Job's question here is, How shall man be just with God? He urges that man as he is cannot be just with God as He is. Let him be as good as he may, his goodness is impurity itself beside the infinite perfection of the Almighty. God cannot listen to any plea of man based on his own righteousness. . . . Again, this craving for a mediator is awakened by human experience of suffering; a fact which is intertwined with the fact of sin. We need, our poor humanity needs, such a daysman, partaker of both natures, the Divine and the human, to show us suffering on its heavenly as well as on its earthly side, and to flood its earthly side with heavenly light by the revelation. In Christ we have the human experience of sorrow and its Divine interpretation. Job's longing therefore is literally and fully met. Despise not this Mediator. Seek His intervention. (*Marvin R. Vincent, D.D.*)

The daysman:—This passage is one whose difficulty does not arise from crudities of translation, but rather from the subtle sequences of passion-moved thought. It consists of a lament over the absence of an umpire, or daysman, between God and the sin-stricken soul, and a vehement longing for such a one. In the notion of an umpire, there are three general thoughts apparent at the outset. There is a deep-seated opposition between the two parties concerned: this is only to be removed by vindicating the right; and the result aimed at is reconciliation. How far does such arbitration differ from mediation? It is mediation, with the additional element of an agreement entered into between the opposing parties. A daysman is a mediator who has been appointed or agreed on by both. Let us see how these general thoughts are applicable to this cry of Job. I. HE IS LABOURING UNDER A SENSE OF HOPELESS SIN. This is not less true because it is not persistent through the Book of Job, but intermittent; sometimes lightly felt, at other times crushing. It is on that account only a truer exhibition of human character. Here the feverish sense of it is at its strongest. 1. He is "plunged in the ditch," in the mire, in the "sewer"; so that his "clothes abhor him." The mire is his covering: he is all sin! 2. In this state he is self-condemned. He cannot "answer God," he cannot come into judgment with Him! That is probably the true meaning of these words, and not the common explanation, that he is afraid to answer God. God is not a man; He is not to be answered. He is Himself the judge; He must be right. That was not always Job's spirit, it is true; but that is his spirit in the present passage. 3. Then again, he cannot put away his pollution. He cannot make himself pure. "If I wash myself in snow-water, and make my hands never so clean ('cleanse them with lye'), yet shalt Thou plunge me in the ditch." Struggling to get free only shows one's utter helplessness. 4. And why does he feel so helpless? What is it that reveals his sin to him? It is the character of God! God's holiness! God's law! He had not known sin but for that law. God's

requirement, God's inspection of the soul after it has done its best, seems to "plunge it into the ditch." II. IT IS THIS SENSE OF HOPELESS SIN THAT HAS TAUGHT JOB THE NEED OF A MEDIATOR. 1. As yet he can find none. His words do not go the length of asserting that there is not a daysman between God and any man; they are confined to his own need at the present moment—"Betwixt us!" For him there is none, and that is his overwhelming trouble. 2. But there is a need. He longs (more than one of the Hebrew words bring out the longing) for an umpire who should mediate between him and God. 3. This mediator must be able to "lay his hand upon us both." Not surely in the poor and irreverent sense (for it is both), that by a restraining hand of power he might control the action of the Almighty. The meaning is surely the simple one, that the umpire must be one who can reach both parties. 4. On the one hand we must do justice to God's holiness. In the mediation that must be sacred. It must issue from the trial not less glorious than before. 5. And on the other hand, the mediator must confess and deal with the sin of man. He must neither conceal nor excuse it; but, admitting, and rightly measuring the fact, he must be able to deal with it so as to satisfy God and to save man. III. THE RESULTS OF SUCH MEDIATION ARE INDICATED. Generally there is reconciliation, the removal of that state of enmity existing between the sinner and his God. 1. Specifically, there is pardon. "Let God take His rod away from me!" God's punishment, whatever form it may assume, shall pass wholly away. "Thy sins be forgiven thee!" That would come from such a "daysman." 2. Next there is peace. "Let not His fear terrify me!" May I look up to God, the Omnipotent and the holy God, and say, I am not afraid; for I have been reconciled unto Him! The mediator has laid a hand upon both, has reached God's holiness, and has reached my sin. 3. Then fear passes, and trust comes. "Then would I speak, and not fear Him." There can be no communion with God till the daysman has cast out the fear which has torment. Till then I can neither speak to Him nor hear Him. IV. WE HAVE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT THE ANTITHESIS OF THIS LONGING CRY OF JOB. "The law (says Paul, Gal. iii. 19, 20) was ordained in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is one." And who is the other party? It is sinful man. And "Jesus is the Mediator of the new covenant" (Heb. xii. 24), "laying a hand on both," mediating between two who have been long and sorely at variance; the "daysman betwixt us" and God, who "pleads as a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbour" (Job xvi. 21). The need then of a mediator, as a spiritual necessity of the sinner who has come to look down into his own heart and to compare it with God's holiness, is one of the strange teachings of the Book of Job. (*J. Elder Cumming, D.D.*) *The need of a daysman*:—There are two attributes of God—His might and His righteousness. The one a natural and the other a moral attribute. One manifested in creation, the other dimly discernible in the moral nature, that is, the conscience of man, and yet greatly needing a revelation to bring it home to man's heart with awful reality and power. Job's thoughts were evidently occupied in this chapter with both these attributes. But if we are asked with which he is most occupied, we must answer, not with the highest, not with the righteousness so much as with the power of God. These verses seem to show a two-fold feeling in Job's mind, corresponding to the two attributes—the righteousness and the power of God; but the predominating feeling was that of the irresistible power of God. Job longed for something to bridge over the terrible chasm between the Creator and himself, and not for some *thing* only, but some living person, some "daysman, who should lay his hand upon them both." Taken critically and historically, the word "daysman" seems to signify an "umpire." If Job felt "the power of God" more than His righteousness, and his own weakness more than his guilt, this is precisely what he would want. He could not, he felt, contend with God himself; could not stand on a level with the Creator in this great controversy. He felt, therefore, his need of an umpire. But what is the difference between a "daysman" so explained and a mediator? The difference is not great, but such as it is, it corresponds to the difference between feeling the "power" and the "righteousness" of God. The feeling of wanting a mediator is the higher. A consciousness of guilt and inward corruption is a higher feeling than that of weakness; and the longing for a "Mediator" a higher longing than that for a "daysman." (*George Wagner.*) *A Mediator between God and man*:—When no man could redeem his neighbour from the grave—God Himself found a ransom. When not one of the beings whom He had formed could offer an adequate expiation—did the Lord of hosts awaken the sword of vengeance against

His fellow. When there was no messenger among the angels who surrounded His throne, that could both proclaim and purchase peace for a guilty world—did God manifest in the flesh, descend in shrouded majesty amongst our earthly tabernacles, and pour out His soul unto the death for us, and purchase the Church by His own blood, and bursting away from the grave which could not hold Him, ascend to the throne of His appointed Mediatorship; and now He, the first and the last, who was dead and is alive, and maketh intercession for transgressors, "is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God through Him"; and, standing in the breach between a holy God and the sinners who have offended Him, does He make reconciliation, and lay His hand upon them both. But it is not enough that the Mediator be appointed by God—He must be accepted by man. And to incite our acceptance does He hold forth every kind and constraining argument. He casts abroad over the whole face of the world one wide and universal assurance of welcome. "Whosoever cometh unto Me shall not be cast out." "Come unto Me, all ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Where sin hath abounded, grace hath much more abounded." "Whatsoever ye ask in My name ye shall receive." The path of access to Christ is open and free of every obstacle, which kept fearful and guilty man at an impracticable distance from the jealous and unpacified Lawgiver. He hath put aside the obstacle, and now stands in its place. Let us only go in the way of the Gospel, and we shall find nothing between us and God but the Author and Finisher of the Gospel—who, on the one hand, beckons to Him the approach of man with every token of truth and of tenderness; and on the other hand advocates our cause with God, and fills His mouth with arguments, and pleads that very atonement which was devised in love by the Father, and with the incense of which He was well pleased, and claims, as the fruit of the travail of His soul, all who put their trust in Him; and thus, laying His hand upon God, turns Him altogether from the fierceness of His indignation. But Jesus Christ is something more than the agent of our justification—He is the Agent of our sanctification also. Standing between us and God, He receives from Him of that Spirit which is called "the promise of the Father"; and He pours it forth in free and generous dispensation on those who believe in Him. Without this Spirit there may, in a few of the goodlier specimens of our race, be within us the play of what is kindly in constitutional feeling, and upon us the exhibition of what is seemly in a constitutional virtue; and man thus standing over us in judgment, may pass his verdict of approbation; and all that is visible in our doings may be pure as by the operation of snow-water. But the utter irreligiousness of our nature will remain as entire and as obstinate as ever. The alienation of our desires from God will persist with unsubdued vigour in our bosoms; and sin, in the very essence of its elementary principle, will still lord it over the inner man with all the power of its original ascendency—till the deep, and the searching, and the prevailing influence of the love of God be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. This is the work of the great Mediator. This is the might and the mystery of that regeneration, without which we shall never see the kingdom of God. This is the office of Him to whom all power is committed, both in heaven and in earth—who, reigning in heaven, and uniting its mercy with its righteousness, causes them to flow upon earth in one stream of celestial influence; and reigning on earth, and working mightily in the hearts of its people, makes them meet for the society of heaven—thereby completing the wonderful work of our redemption, by which on the one hand He brings the eye of a holy God to look approvingly on the sinner, and on the other hand makes the sinner fit for the fellowship, and altogether prepared for the enjoyment of God. Such are the great elements of a sinner's religion. But if you turn from the prescribed use of them, the wrath of God abideth on you. If you kiss not the Son while He is in the way, you provoke His anger; and when once it begins to burn, they only are blessed who have put their trust in Him. If, on the fancied sufficiency of a righteousness that is without godliness, you neglect the great salvation, you will not escape the severities of that day when the Being with whom you have to do shall enter with you into judgment; and it is only by fleeing to the Mediator, as you would from a coming storm, that peace is made between you and God, and that, sanctified by the faith which is in Jesus, you are made to abound in such fruits of righteousness as shall be to praise and glory at the last and the solemn reckoning. (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*) *The daysman*:—How is this daysman, Jesus Christ, constituted to hold this office? Job knew what were his real wants; he did not know how these wants were to be supplied, and yet he gives us in the context the whole constitution of the office of a

daysman. In the depth of his woe, in the valley of his degradation, while he sat in dust and ashes, he sighed forth, "If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt Thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me. For He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer Him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both." Mark this context. Here the patriarch gives utterance to a full recognition of his guilt, of his consciousness of the wrath that had descended from heaven upon him, of the impossibility of his making himself just with God. He dwells in the ditch of corruption, and is self-abhorred; and God, whom he has offended, "is not a man" that he should answer Him, that they should come face to face, that they should reason together. "He is not a man as I am." He looked upon God as the heathen looked upon Him,—as a God of Majesty, a God of holiness, a God of sublimity and of glory, inaccessible to man. God is not a man, that I should come near Him, said Job, and I have none to introduce me to Him. That was his misery—"God is not a man," that I should speak to Him, and I have none to stand between myself and God to present my prayer to Him. Hopeless, hapless, wretched patriarch! What he wanted was a daysman betwixt the two to lay his hand upon them both. I have come here to tell you that that daysman is Christ—"the man Christ Jesus." And what saith He? "Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead; I also am formed out of the clay." That is my plea, and that is my glory, that God has become a man as I am, and I now can answer Him. I now can come to Him face to face; I now can fill my mouth with arguments; I now can come, and by His own invitation reason with Him. He is "formed out of the clay"; thus is He the one between God and man; and He lays His hand upon us both. This is Jesus; therefore is He constituted a Mediator between God and man; and this He has attained by His atoning sacrifice. Atonement!—what is the meaning of that word? We pronounce it as one word; but it is really three words, "at-*one*-ment"; and that is its meaning. By reason of our sin, there are two parties opposed the one to the other; there is no element of union, but every element of antagonism to part and keep us asunder. Christ is the atoning sacrifice, and His atonement is a complete satisfaction. This is because Christ, our daysman, is both God and man, both natures in one person. To be a mediator it is necessary to have power and influence with both parties. Christ, as our daysman, has power with God, for He Himself is God; and to obtain influence with man He became a man, and bare our sorrows and endured our griefs: He became as one of us, "sin only excepted." Behold the sympathy of Jesus!—a participator in our sufferings, a sharer in our sorrows, and acquainted with our grief. It is true the majesty of God was unapproachable; no man could approach unto it; the spotless glory of that Presence was too dazzling for mortal sight to behold; His holiness was too pure to come into any contact with sin; the height of that glory was beyond what man had any power to attain unto. Then God in Christ came down to us. Oh, what grace! And whereas the Majesty of the Godhead was too august, He left it there upon His Father's throne, and He wrapped Himself for a time in the familiar mantle of our humanity; He became a man as we are. Inasmuch as man could not approach unto God, Christ brought the Godhead to the level of our humanity, that He might raise the human race from death and sin to the enjoyment of the life of righteousness. This is the true dignity of man, that Christ has dignified him and elevated him to His Father's glory. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me upon My throne, even as I also have overcome, and am set down upon My Father's throne." This is the Daysman who lays His hand upon us both. Does not that span the gulf? You know a bridge, to be of use and service, must rest its springing arch upon one bank and upon the other. To stop midway spoils the bridge. The ladder that is lifted up must touch the place on which you stand and the place where you would be. So is Christ the daysman. He lays His hand upon both parties. With one hand He lays hold upon God, for He Himself is God, and with the other He stoops until He lays hold upon sinful man, for He Himself is man; and thus laying His hand upon both parties, He brings both to one—He effects an at-*one*-ment, and "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." Oh, blessed meeting! happy reconciliation! where mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace kissed each other! Again: a mediator for sin must suffer, and by his sufferings he must satisfy. Here, again, the necessity for this daysman to be both God and man. If He had been God only, He could not suffer, and if He had been man only, with all His sufferings He could not satisfy. He is God and He is man. As a man He

suffers, and as a God He satisfies. Brethren, what think ye of this? He is the daysman betwixt us. And now we are able to contemplate God, not as the angry lawgiver only, but, through Christ, as "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and of great kindness." Now we are in our Christian liberty, and in the adoption of sons enabled to look upon God, not as robed in thunder, not as though He were girt in indignation, not as clothed in dazzling light, that no man can approach unto, but I can look upon Him as a man like as I am, touched with the feeling of my infirmities—"in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." I see in Him not a master, but a brother; not an enemy, but a friend; not an angry judge, but a sympathising advocate, pleading for me. And what is His plea? Our innocence? Nay, nay, He knows we are sinners; He admits our sin, He admits it all; He offers not one single word of apology or extenuation for our fault; but He pleads His own righteousness, He pleads His own sufferings in our stead, and His death in our behalf. He is the substitute, and as such He is the daysman betwixt God and man. He lays His hand upon us both. (*Robert Maguire, M.A.*) *The sinner's daysman:*—All that a sinner needs he may find in the Saviour. I. THE SINNER NEEDS A "DAYSMAN." Nothing but a sense of sin will ever lead a man in reality to seek a Saviour. 1. Mark the situation in which the sinner stands before his God—a condemned criminal. 2. The sinner cannot plead his own cause. 3. There are none around to befriend his cause. II. A "DAYSMAN" IS PROVIDED. The Gospel is called the "ministry of reconciliation." It bears this name because it points to Jesus as the sinner's "daysman." He is fitted for the character He sustains, and He effectually discharges the office. III. THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR SEEKING AN INTEREST IN THIS "DAYSMAN." He is not our "daysman" unless we have sought Him. We must come to Him, and it must be by faith. The interest in Him surely should be sought at once. (*G. Hadley.*) *The great arbitration case:*—The patriarch Job, when reasoning with the Lord concerning his great affliction, felt himself to be at a disadvantage and declined the controversy, saying, "He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer Him, and we should come together in judgment." Yet feeling that his friends were cruelly mis-stating his case, he still desired to spread it before the Lord, but wished for a mediator, a middleman, to act as umpire and decide the case. But what Job desired to have, the Lord has provided for us in the person of His own dear Son, Jesus Christ. There is an old quarrel between the thrice holy God and His sinful subjects, the sons of Adam. I. First of all, let me describe what are THE ESSENTIALS OF AN UMPIRE, AN ARBITRATOR, OR A DAYSMAN. 1. The first essential is, that both parties should be agreed to accept him. Let me come to thee, thou sinner, against whom God has laid His suit, and put the matter to thee. God has accepted Christ Jesus to be His umpire in His dispute. He appointed Him to the office, and chose Him for it before He laid the foundations of the world. He is God's fellow, equal with the Most High, and can put His hand upon the Eternal Father without fear because He is dearly beloved of that Father's heart. But He is also a man like thyself, sinner. He once suffered, hungered, thirsted, and knew the meaning of poverty and pain. Now, what thinkest thou? God has accepted Him; canst thou agree with God in this matter, and agree to take Christ to be thy daysman too? Art thou willing that He should take this case into His hands and arbitrate between thee and God? for if God accepteth Him, and thou accept Him too, then He has one of the first qualifications for being a daysman. 2. But, in the next place, both parties must be fully agreed to leave the case entirely in the arbitrator's hands. If the arbitrator does not possess the power of settling the case, then pleading before him is only making an opportunity for wrangling, without any chance of coming to a peaceful settlement. Now God has committed "all power" into the hands of His Son. Jesus Christ is the plenipotentiary of God, and has been invested with full ambassadorial powers. If the case be settled by Him, the Father is agreed. Now, sinner, does grace move thy heart to do the same? Wilt thou agree to put thy case into the hands of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man? Wilt thou abide by His decision? 3. Further, let us say, that to make a good arbitrator or umpire, it is essential that he be a fit person. If the case were between a king and a beggar, it would not seem exactly right that another king should be the arbitrator, nor another beggar; but if there could be found a person who combined the two, who was both prince and beggar, then such a man could be selected by both. Our Lord Jesus Christ precisely meets the case. There is a very great disparity between the plaintiff and the defendant, for how great is the gulf which exists between the eternal God and poor

fallen man! How is this to be bridged? Why, by none except by one who is God and who at the same time can become man. Now the only being who can do this is Jesus Christ. He can put His hand on thee, stooping down to all thine infirmity and thy sorrow, and He can put His other hand upon the Eternal Majesty, and claim to be co-equal with God and co-eternal with the Father. Dost thou not see, then, His fitness? There cannot surely be a better skilled or more judicious daysman than our blessed Redeemer. 4. Yet there is one more essential of an umpire, and that is, that he should be a person desirous to bring the case to a happy settlement. In the great case which is pending between God and the sinner, the Lord Jesus Christ has a sincere anxiety both for His Father's glory and for the sinner's welfare, and that there should be peace between the two contending parties. It is the life and aim of Jesus Christ to make peace. He delighteth not in the death of sinners, and He knows no joy greater than that of receiving prodigals to His bosom, and of bringing lost sheep back again to the fold. Thou seest then, sinner, how the case is. God has evidently chosen the most fitting arbitrator. That arbitrator is willing to undertake the case, and thou mayest well repose all confidence in Him: but if thou shalt live and die without accepting Him as thine arbitrator, then, the case going against thee, thou wilt have none to blame but thyself. II. And now I shall want, by your leave, to TAKE YOU INTO THE COURT WHERE THE TRIAL IS GOING ON, AND SHOW YOU THE LEGAL PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE GREAT DAYSMAN. "The man, Christ Jesus," who is "God over all, blessed for ever," opens His court by laying down the principles upon which He intends to deliver judgment, and those principles I will now try to explain and expound. They are twofold—first, strict justice; and secondly, fervent love. The arbitrator has determined that let the case go as it may there shall be full justice done, justice to the very extreme, whether it be for or against the defendant. He intends to take the law in its sternest and severest aspect, and to judge according to its strictest letter. He will not be guilty of partiality on either side. But the arbitrator also says that He will judge according to the second rule, that of fervent love. He loves His Father, and therefore He will decide on nothing that may attaint His honour or disgrace His crown. He so loves God, the Eternal One, that He will suffer heaven and earth to pass away sooner than there shall be one blot upon the character of the Most High. On the other hand, He so loves the poor defendant, man, that He will be willing to do anything rather than inflict penalty upon him unless justice shall absolutely require it. He loves man with so large a love that nothing will delight Him more than to decide in his favour, and He will be but too glad if He can be the means of happily establishing peace between the two. Let justice and love unite if they can. Having thus laid down the principles of judgment, the arbitrator next calls upon the plaintiff to state His case. Let us listen while the great Creator speaks. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children." The Eternal God charges us, and let me confess at once most justly and most truly charges us, with having broken all His commandments—some of them in act, some of them in word, all of them in heart, and thought, and imagination. He charges upon us, that against light and knowledge we have chosen the evil and forsaken the good. All this, calmly and dispassionately, according to the great Book of the law, is laid to our charge before the Daysman. No exaggeration of sin is brought against us. The plaintiff's case having thus been stated, the defendant is called upon by the Daysman for his; and I think I hear Him as He begins. First of all, the trembling defendant sinner pleads—"I confess to the indictment, but I say I could not help it. I have sinned, it is true, but my nature was such that I could not well do otherwise; I must lay all the blame of it to my own heart; my heart was deceitful and my nature was evil." The Daysman at once rules that this is no excuse whatever, but an aggravation, for inasmuch as it is conceded that the man's heart itself is enmity against God, this is an admission of yet greater malice and blacker rebellion. Then the defendant pleads in the next place that albeit he acknowledges the facts alleged against him, yet he is no worse than other offenders, and that there are many in the world who have sinned more grievously than he has done. The sinner urges further, that though he has offended, and offended very greatly and grievously, yet he has done a great many good things. It is true he did not love God, but he always went to chapel. The defendant has no end of pleas, for the sinner has a thousand excuses; and finding that nothing else will do, he begins to appeal to the mercy of the plaintiff, and says that for

the future he will do better. He confesses that he is in debt, but he will run up no more bills at that shop. What is the poor defendant to do now? He is fairly beaten this time. He falls down on his knees, and with many tears and lamentations he cries, "I see how the case stands; I have nothing to plead, but I appeal to the mercy of the plaintiff; I confess that I have broken His commandments; I acknowledge that I deserve His wrath; but I have heard that He is merciful, and I plead for free and full forgiveness." And now comes another scene. The plaintiff seeing the sinner on his knees, with his eyes full of tears, makes this reply, "I am willing at all times to deal kindly and according to loving-kindness with all My creatures; but will the arbitrator for a moment suggest that I should damage and ruin My own perfections of truth and holiness; that I should belie My own word; that I should imperil My own throne; that I should make the purity of immaculate justice to be suspected, and should bring down the glory of My unsullied holiness, because this creature has offended Me, and now craves for mercy? I cannot, I will not spare the guilty; he has offended, and he must die! 'As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but would rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live.' Still, this 'would rather' must not be supreme. I am gracious and would spare the sinner, but I am just, and must not unsay My own words. I swore with an oath, 'The soul that sinneth shall die.' I have laid it down as a matter of firm decree, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' This sinner is righteously cursed, and he must inevitably die; and yet I love him." The arbitrator bows and says, "Even so; justice demands that the offender should die, and I would not have Thee unjust." The arbitrator, therefore, after pausing awhile, puts it thus: "I am anxious that these two should be brought together; I love them both: I cannot, on the one hand, recommend that My Father should stain His honour; I cannot, on the other hand, endure that this sinner should be cast eternally into hell; I will decide the case, and it shall be thus: I will pay My Father's justice all it craves; I pledge Myself that in the fulness of time I will suffer in My own proper person all that the weeping, trembling sinner ought to have suffered. My Father, wilt Thou stand to this?" The Eternal God accepts the awful sacrifice! Yes, sinner, and He did more than say it, for when the fulness of time came—you know the story. Here, then, is the arbitration. Christ Himself suffers; and now I have to put the query, "Hast thou accepted Christ?" III. Let us now look at THE DAYSMAN'S SUCCESS. 1. For every soul who has received Christ, Christ has made a full atonement which God the Father has accepted; and His success in this matter is to be rejoiced in, first of all, because the suit has been settled conclusively. We have known cases go to arbitration, and yet the parties have quarrelled afterwards; they have said that the arbitrator did not rule justly, or something of the kind, and so the whole point has been raised again. But, O beloved, the case between a saved soul and God is settled once and for ever. There is no more conscience of sin left in the believer. 2. Again, the case has been settled on the best principles, because, you see, neither party can possibly quarrel with the decision. The sinner cannot, for it is all mercy to him: even eternal justice cannot, for it has had its due. 3. Again, the case has been so settled, that both parties are well content. You never hear a saved soul murmur at the substitution of the Lord Jesus. 4. And through this Daysman both parties have come to be united in the strongest, closest, dearest, and fondest bond of union. This law-suit has ended in such a way that the plaintiff and the defendant are friends for life, nay, friends through death, and friends in eternity. What a wonderful thing is that union between God and the sinner! We have all been thinking a great deal lately about the Atlantic cable. It is a very interesting attempt to join two worlds together. That poor cable, you know, has had to be sunk into the depths of the sea, in the hope of establishing a union between the two worlds, and now we are disappointed again. But oh! what an infinitely greater wonder has been accomplished. Christ Jesus saw the two worlds divided, and the great Atlantic of human guilt rolled between. He sank down deep into the woes of man till all God's waves and billows had gone over Him, that He might be, as it were, the great telegraphic communication between God and the apostate race, between the Most Holy One and poor sinners. Let me say to you, sinner, there was no failure in the laying down of that blessed cable. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

CHAPTER X.

VER. 1. **My soul is weary of my life.** — *On the causes of men's being weary of life* :—A sentiment which surely, if any situation can justify it, was allowable in the case of Job. Let us examine in what circumstances this feeling may be deemed excusable; in what it is to be held sinful; and under what restrictions we may, on any occasion, be permitted to say, "My soul is weary of my life." I. AS THE SENTIMENT OF A DISCONTENTED MAN. With whom it is the effusion of spleen, vexation, and dissatisfaction with life, arising from causes neither laudable nor justifiable. 1. This weariness of life is often found among the idle. They have so many vacant hours, and are so much at a loss how to fill up their time, that their spirits utterly sink. The idle are doomed to suffer the natural punishment of their inactivity and folly. 2. Among the luxurious and dissipated, such complaints are still more frequent. They have run the whole race of pleasure, but they have run it with such inconsiderate speed that it terminates in weariness and vexation of spirit. Satiated, weary of themselves, the complaint bursts forth of odious life and a miserable world. Their weariness is no other than the judgment of God overtaking them for their vices and follies. Their complaints of misery are entitled to no compassion. They are the authors of their own misery. 3. Then there are those who have embittered life to themselves by the consciousness of criminal deeds. There is no wonder that such persons should lose their relish for life. To the complaints of such persons no remedy can be furnished, except what arises from the bitterness of sincere and deep repentance. II. AS THE SENTIMENT OF THOSE IN SITUATIONS OF DISTRESS. These are so variously multiplied in the world, and are often so oppressive, that assuredly it is not uncommon to hear the afflicted complain that they are weary of life. Their complaints, if not always allowable, yet certainly are more excusable than those which flow from the sources of dissatisfaction already mentioned. They are sufferers, not so much through their own misconduct, as through the appointment of Providence; and therefore to persons in this situation it may seem more needful to offer consolation than to give admonition. However, as the evils which produce this impatience of life are of different sorts, a distinction must be made as to the situations which can most excuse it. 1. The exclamation may be occasioned by deep and overwhelming grief. As of bereavement. 2. Or by great reverses of worldly fortune. To persons under such calamities, sympathy is due. 3. Continuance of long and severe disease. In this case Job's complaint may assuredly be forgiven more than in any other. III. AS THE SENTIMENT OF THOSE WHO ARE TIRED OF THE VANITY OF THE WORLD. Tired of its insipid enjoyments, and its perpetually revolving circle of trifles and follies. They feel themselves made for something greater and nobler. In this view the sentiment of the text may sometimes be that of a devout man. But, however sincere, their devotion is not altogether of a rational and chastened kind. Let us beware of all such imaginary refinements as produce a total disrelish of our present condition. They are for the most part grafted on disappointed pursuits, or on a melancholy and splenetic turn of mind. This life may not compare with the life to come, but such as it is, it is the gift of God. One great cause of men's becoming weary of life is grounded on the mistaken views of it which they have formed, and the false hopes which they have entertained from it. They have expected a scene of enjoyment, and when they meet with disappointments and distresses, they complain of life as if it had cheated and betrayed them. God ordained no such possession for man on earth as continued pleasure. For the wisest purposes He designed our state to be chequered with pleasure and pain. As such let us receive it, and make the best of what is doomed to be our lot. (*Hugh Blair, D.D.*) *Weariness of life, and its remedies* :—There is a love of life which depends not upon ourselves at all, and which we cannot help feeling at all times. It is the pure instinct of our mortal nature. And life is well worthy of our estimation and care. And yet there is such a thing as weariness of life. Men may be ready to say, "My soul is weary of my life." I. FROM THEIR OWN SINFUL ABUSE OF LIFE AND ITS BLESSINGS. Mankind usually expect too much from the present life. Some try to find this unwarranted enjoyment in earthly things, by carrying every gratification to excess, by giving themselves wholly to the love of present pleasures. They of course experience disappointment in this vain and sinful pursuit, as God intended they should do. They become weary of themselves

and weary of life; and all this purely owing to their own folly in perverting their way, and abusing the good gifts of God. Others desire only lawful gratifications, and seek them in an orderly manner. They propose even to themselves to be useful in life. They plan very wisely, and proceed very commendably in all respects but one, and that one is, that they are merely looking to the creature, and leaving God, in great measure, out of view. They seek their happiness more in the enjoyment of His gifts, than in making it their aim to please the gracious Bestower of them all. These also are disappointed. Their schemes misgive; or, if they succeed, they themselves do not find in them anything like satisfaction to their immortal nature. They begin to blame this world, to blame their fellow-creatures, and to become weary even of life. So did Solomon, Ahab, and Haman. This weariness of life would not be blamable if it was seen to have the good effect of checking men's immoderate expectations from present enjoyments. But it does not usually serve such salutary purposes. This weariness is one of man's own creating. Men try to make the animal part of their nature supply the wants also of their spiritual part. II. FROM THEIR SORROWS IN LIFE, AND FROM THEIR LOSS OR WANT OF ITS BLESSINGS. When the objects of our care and affection are suffering distress, or are taken away from us, we must sorrow severely, and we are not forbidden to do so. But we are cautioned against being "overcome of much sorrow," and there is danger of indulging even excusable griefs, till we become ready to say, "My soul is weary of my life." Then "we" show that we are forgetting the use of these afflictions and sorrows, and we defeat the very end of these sorrows. The furnace of affliction is the refining of our souls. III. FROM THEIR INABILITY TO ENJOY THE BLESSINGS OF LIFE. Bodily pains, diseased and decaying health, not only cause distress to our natural feelings, they also disable us from discharging those duties in which we might find relief from many griefs and troubles of mind. In extreme agonies of pain, life cannot be felt as anything else than a burden. Many, though free from excessive bodily tortures, are nevertheless made to possess "months of vanity," and have "wearisome nights." To bear such trials without being weary of life is no easy duty. But it never can become anyone to express weariness of that life which God, in His wisdom, sees meet to prolong. The continued sufferer may have much to do, and much to learn. Be not weary of life while you are in the way of acquiring greater meetness for heaven. IV. FROM SPIRITUAL DESIRES OF A BETTER LIFE, AND ITS BETTER BLESSINGS. There is a weariness of life that flows from a powerful feeling of religion itself, which we are too much inclined to excuse, or even desirous to indulge. It is found in emotional young persons under first serious impressions; and in those who are occasionally visited with high satisfactions of a spiritual nature; and in those oppressed with the power of an evil nature, and witnessing much of the wickedness of the world. They are defeated in the good which they wished to accomplish, and they are distressed by the prevalence in their own hearts of the evil which they wished to overcome. They are ready to say with the Psalmist, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! then would I flee away, and be at rest." But it is unwarrantable to prefer heaven to earth, merely for the sake of your own ease and gratification. To do so is more a token of selfishness than sanctification of spirit. (*J. Brewster.*) *Great music uncomplaining:*—In a charming essay on music, a recent writer has gathered up a great deal in one telling sentence. He speaks of the various moods of the world's masterpieces of music—the romance, the sorrow, the aspiration, the joy, the sublimity expressed in them, and he adds that there is only one mood for ever unrepresented, for, "Great music never complains." At first, this seems too sweeping. We remember so many minor keys, so many tragic chords, in the best music. But, as we think over it longer, it becomes truer and truer. Great music has its minor keys, its pathetic passages, its longing, yearning notes; but they always lead on to aspiration, to hope, or to resignation and peace. Mere complaint is not in them. The reason, after all, is simple. Complaint is selfish, and high music, like any other great art, forgets self in larger things. The complaining note has no possible place in noble harmonies, even though they be sad. So, if we want to make music out of our lives, we must learn to omit complaint. Some young people think it rather fine and noble to be discontented, to complain of narrow surroundings, to dwell on the minor notes. But it is well to remember that the one thing to avoid in singing is a whine in the voice; and whining is perilously close to any form of pathos. "Great music never complains." That is a good motto to hang up on the wall of one's mind, over our keyboard of feeling, so to speak. The harmonies

of our lives will be braver and sweeter the more we follow this thought. Without it, fret and discord will come, and mar the music that might be, and that is meant to be. (*Christian Age.*)

Ver. 2. **Do not condemn me.**—*The cry of penitence:*—I. THIS IS THE LANGUAGE OF A SINCERE PENITENT. It expresses a dread of condemnation, and a fear of future punishment. This impression is awakened by—1. The recollection of past sins. 2. By a sense of present suffering. II. IT IMPLIES THAT THERE ARE SOME PERSONS WHOM GOD WILL CERTAINLY CONDEMN. The sentence to "depart" will be pronounced by the righteous Judge, and it will be addressed especially to three classes of individuals. To the prayerless, the self-righteous, and those who live in the habitual practice of sin. III. IT DIRECTS US TO THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS FINAL SENTENCE MAY BE AVERTED. 1. You must justify the character and conduct of God. 2. Make humble and sincere acknowledgment of your sinfulness. 3. Cheerfully acquiesce in the method of Divine mercy. IV. IT SUGGESTS SOME IMPORTANT MOTIVES TO PRODUCE IN OUR MINDS TRUE AND EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE. 1. The first class of motives is addressed to our fears. 2. From the strivings of the Spirit. 3. From the glorious dispensation under which we live. (*Essex Congregational Remembrancer.*) **Shew me wherefore Thou contendest with me.**—*The sweet uses of adversity:*—It needs but a short sight for us to discover that if God contendeth with man, it must be a contention of mercy. There must be a design of love in this. Address—I. THE CHILD OF GOD. Sometimes to question God is wicked. But this is a question that may be asked. 1. My first answer on God's part is this: it may be that God is contending with thee, that He may show His own power in upholding thee. He loves to hear His saints tried, that the whole world may see that there is none like them on the face of the earth. What noble work is this, that while God is casting down His child with one hand, He should be holding him up with the other. This is why God contends with thee; to glorify Himself by showing to angels, to men, to devils, how He can put such strength into poor, puny man, that he can contend with his Maker, and become a prevailing prince like Israel, who as a prince had power with God and prevailed. 2. The Lord is doing this to develop thy graces. There are some of thy graces that would never be discovered if it were not for thy trials. Thy faith never looks so grand in summer weather as it does in winter. Love is too often like a glow-worm, that showeth but little light, except it be in the midst of surrounding darkness. Hope itself is like a star, not to be seen in the sunshine of prosperity, and only to be discovered in the night of adversity. It is real growth that is the result of these trials. God may take away your comforts and your privileges, to make you the better Christians. 3. It may be that the Lord contends with thee because thou hast some secret sin which is doing thee sore damage. Trials often discover sins—sins which we should never have found out if it had not been for them. The houses in Russia are very greatly infested with rats and mice. Perhaps a stranger would scarcely notice them at first, but the time when you discover them is when the house is on fire—then they pour out in multitudes. And so doth God sometimes burn up our comforts to make our hidden sins run out; and then He enables us to knock them on the head, and get rid of them. That may be the reason of your trial, to put an end to some long-fostered sin; or to prevent some future sin. 4. We must have fellowship with Christ in His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death. Hast thou never thought that none can be like the Man of Sorrow, unless they have sorrows too? Think not that thou canst be like the thorn-crowned head, and yet never feel the thorn. God is chiselling you—you are but a rough block—He is making you into the image of Christ; and that sharp chisel is taking away much which prevents your being like Him. Sweet is the affliction which gives us fellowship with Christ. 5. It may be that the Lord contendeth with thee to humble thee. We are all too proud. We shall have many blows before we are brought down to the right mark; and it is because we are so continually getting up, that God is so continually putting us down again. II. ADDRESS THE SEEKING SINNER. Who may be wondering that he has found no peace or comfort. Perhaps—1. God is contending with you for awhile, because as yet you are not thoroughly awakened. Christ will not heal your wound until He has probed it to its very core. 2. God may be contending with you to try your earnestness. 3. Perhaps you are harbouring some sin. 4. Perhaps you do not thoroughly understand the plan of salvation. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The design*

of God in affliction :—Good men who have excelled in a particular virtue have sometimes lamentably failed in its exercise—*e.g.*, Moses, Peter, Job. The text refers to a season of heavy affliction. The spirit of Job was oppressed; his mind was harassed; it was full of confusion; and we wonder not that his language betrays the perplexity which he felt. I. A GOOD MAN HAS CONVERSE WITH GOD. In all circumstances, whether of ease or pain, of health or sickness, he thinks of his God, and highly estimates communion with Him. In affliction we speak to ourselves; we speak to our friends; but our best employment is converse with God. In our approaches to Him, He permits us to utter whatever interests our minds, to express the inmost feelings of our hearts. II. A GOOD MAN DEPRECATES AN EVIL. "Do not condemn me." Job refers probably to the sentiment of his friends. They mistook his character. Job says to God, "Do not Thou condemn me." No doubt Job had low views of himself in the sight of God. This applies to ourselves. Do we merit condemnation from God? What shall we plead in arrest of judgment? Nothing less than the mediation of Christ. III. A GOOD MAN SOLICITS A FAVOUR. "Shew me wherefore Thou contendest with me." "Afflictest" is a better word here than "contendest." It is a warrantable request, a prayer full of propriety. Affliction is from God, and He has some design in it, which it is important for us to ascertain. Affliction is sent to convince of sin; to prevent sin; as a test of principles; to promote holiness; to advance our usefulness. What then do you know of converse with God, and how is the privilege improved? (*T. Kidd.*)

Vers. 3–17. **Is it good unto Thee that Thou shouldest oppress?**—*Job's mistaken views of his sufferings* :—I. AS INCONSISTENT WITH ALL HIS IDEAS OF HIS MAKER. 1. As inconsistent with His goodness. "Is it good unto Thee that Thou shouldest oppress, that Thou shouldest despise the work of Thine hands?" I thought Thee benevolent and merciful, but in my suffering I feel Thee to be malign. There is a strong tendency in all men under suffering to regard the Almighty as anything but good. 2. With His justice. "And shine upon the counsel of the wicked." Job saw wicked men around him, strong and hale in body, buoyant in animal spirits, and prosperous in worldly affairs, whilst he who was in his deepest heart in sympathy with right, and the God of right, was reduced to the utmost distress. He failed to see justice in this. 3. With His greatness. "Hast Thou eyes of flesh," &c. I cannot reconcile the sufferings with which Thou dost afflict an insignificant creature like me with Thine omniscience and eternity. II. AS AN UNRIGHTEOUS DISPLAY OF ARBITRARY POWER. "Thou knowest that I am not wicked," &c. Job does not regard himself as absolutely holy. The Omniscient One knew he was not guilty of that hypocrisy with which his friends had charged him. Where, then, is the righteousness of his afflictions? III. AS CONTRARY TO WHAT THE DIVINE ORGANISATION AND PRESERVATION OF HIS EXISTENCE LED HIM TO EXPECT. In the eighth and two following verses he ascribes the formation of his body to God. He ascribes his sustentation as well. He seemed astonished that the God who thus produced and supported him should thus mar his beauty, destroy his health, and overwhelm him with misery. This is, in truth, a perplexity to us as well as to Job. IV. AS BAFFLING ALL ATTEMPTS TO UNDERSTAND. "And these things Thou hast hid in Thine heart." If there is a reason, it is in Thy heart shut up and hid from me, and I cannot reach it. The more he thought, the more was Job embarrassed with the mysteries of his being. Conclusion—1. The greatness of man's capability for suffering. To what inexpressible wretchedness and agony was Job now reduced, both in soul and in body. 2. The absoluteness of God's power over us. We are in His hands, all of us. 3. The value of Christianity as an interpreter of suffering. Job's great "confusion" in his suffering seemed to arise from the idea that unless a man was a great sinner there was no reason for great suffering. Afflictions to good men are disciplinary, not punitive. (*Homilist.*) **That Thou shouldest despise the work of Thine hands.**—*Man is the work of God* :—Job alludes to artificers who, having made an excellent piece, will not destroy or break it in pieces; they are very tender of their work, yea, they are apt to boast and grow proud of it. Man was the masterpiece of the whole visible creation. The Lord needs not to be ashamed of, neither doth He despise any part of His work, much less this, which is the best and noblest part of it. As the body, so the soul of man is the work of God's hand. His power and wisdom wrought it, and work mightily in it. In regard of bodily substance, the most inferior creatures claim kindred of man, and he may be compared to the beast that perisheth; but

in regard of the soul, man transcends them all, and may challenge a nearness, if not an equality with the angels. Take three cautions. 1. Be not proud of what ye are, all is the work of God. How beautiful or comely, how wise or holy soever ye are, it is not of yourselves. 2. Despise not what others are or have; though they are not such exact pieces, though they have not s ch excellent endowments as yourselves, yet they are what the hand of God hath wrought them, and they have what the hand of God hath wrought in them. 3. Depise not what yourselves are; to do so is a sin, and a sin very common. Men are ashamed to be seen as God hath made them; few are ashamed to be seen what the devil hath made them. Many are troubled at small defects of the outward man. They who come after God to mend His work, lest they should be despised, will but make themselves more despicable. (*Joseph Caryl.*)

Ver. 8. **Thine hands have made me.**—*Creation, the pledge of God's guardianship*:—Though Job reached a wrong conclusion, he was arguing on a right principle. The patriarch's argument is this—As we are the creatures, the workmanship of Almighty God, we may expect Him to take care of us, and that as God, any opposite conduct may justly excite surprise, and be thought at variance with the acknowledged fact that the Divine hands have "made us and fashioned us together round about." This argument is susceptible of being wrought out into many and instructive shapes. The remembrance of our creation should animate us to expect supplies of grace and instruction. To the benevolence and goodness of God must be referred the production of the multiplied tribes of living things. God caused life to pervade immensity because, as He Himself is everywhere, He would that everywhere there should be objects of His bounty, beings with capacity and provision for enjoyment. Every creature may trace its origin to the benevolence of God, and therefore every creature might infer, from its having been formed, that its Maker was ready to satisfy its wants, yea, to fulfil its desires, so far as those desires might be lawfully entertained. What is creation to me, but a register of the carefulness of the Almighty in providing for my happiness during my sojourn here below? Shall I think it unlikely that God would take measures for my good in reference to that eternity on which I must enter at death? Job seems to reason that, in place of destroying him, God who had made might have been expected to save him. It is an argument from what had been done for him in his natural capacity, to what might have been looked for in his spiritual capacity. And Job's reason is every way accurate. (*Henry Melvill, B.D.*)

Vers. 12–16. **Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit.**—*Acknowledgment of and appeal to God*:—Job addresses God as his Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor; he seems to ask, why, knowing his frailty, He laid upon him such burdens as those which he was called upon to bear. He appears to have felt some difficulty in reconciling the past mercies of God with His present afflicting dispensations. Yet, amidst all, he acknowledges that his Creator doubtless had wise, though to him unknown, reasons for His dispensations. "These things," said he, "Thou hast hid in Thine heart." They were planned in Thine infinitely wise, holy, and beneficent, though unsearchable counsels. "I know this is with Thee." To me, indeed, it is a source of trouble and perplexity; but to Thee it is plain. And then, as though glancing at the righteousness of God's law, on the one hand, and, on the other, at the sinfulness of mankind generally, and in particular at his own personal transgressions, with a sense of the imperfection of his best obedience, he adds, "If I be wicked, woe unto me; and if I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head. I am full of confusion; therefore see mine affliction, for it increaseth." I. First, then, we have JOB'S ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF HIS INFINITE OBLIGATIONS TO GOD. "Thou hast granted me life and favour, and Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." 1. The blessing of creation. "Thou hast granted me life." He does not attribute his existence to chance, or necessity; but speaks of it expressly as a grant from the Almighty; a grant bestowed for the most wise, benevolent, and momentous purposes. Practical atheism is at all times too common, even among many who profess and call themselves Christians. How few, comparatively, are accustomed, like Job, constantly to refer their being to God; with a deep impression of what they owe to Him; with a practical conviction that they are not their own; and with a due sense of their obligation to live to His glory. Yet it is certain that an habitual feeling of reverence towards God as our Creator, though not the whole of religion, is a necessary and indispensable part of

it. The Gospel of Christ, in pointing out to us other truths, essential to be known by us as fallen and guilty creatures, does not overlook, but on the contrary uniformly takes for granted and displays this first natural and unalterable bond of union between the Creator and His creatures. The grant of life was the first benefit we were capable of enjoying, and it opened the way to all that followed. 2. But to the benefit of creation Job adds that of preservation. "Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." The same Almighty hand that formed and animated the human frame, sustains it amidst the perils to which it is every moment exposed. We do not live by chance, any more than we were at first formed by chance. One moment's absence of that Divine visitation which preserves our spirit, would suffice to plunge us back—we know not whither; all our capacities for happiness, all our hopes for this world, and those brighter expectations which, as Christians, we cherish beyond the grave, would be utterly extinguished. This powerful and unceasing visitation of the Creator preserves all things in their appointed rank and order; and to it we are indebted for our continued capacity for partaking of the blessings to which our creation introduced us. 3. To sum up the whole, Job adds the mention of that Divine "favour" without which our creation and preservation had been but the commencement and prolongation of misery. How thickly, how interminably do His benefits cluster around us! By night and by day, in infancy and in manhood, in childhood and old age, in our personal and social relations, in our families and in the world, in sickness not less than in health, in adversity not less than in prosperity, He pours into our cup blessings infinitely beyond our deservings. And here opens before us the most wonderful of all proofs of His favour. Here beams upon us the stupendous revelation of the redemption that is in Christ. Here we behold why even the sinner, to whom, as a sinner, no Divine approbation can be exhibited, is yet spared and crowned with so many benefits, in order that he may turn to the God whom he had forsaken, seek the mercy which he had despised, and be won by the long-suffering which he had perhaps profanely made a motive for a continuance in his sins. Whether we consider the awful magnitude of our guilt, or the costly nature of the sacrifice made to atone for it, or the freeness and amplitude of the pardon bestowed upon us; we shall see that this was indeed the climax of Divine favour; to which our creation and preservation were but preparative; and the issue of which, to all who humbly avail themselves of it, will be an eternity of happiness in the world to come. II. CONSIDER THE JUDICIAL RELATION IN WHICH HE DESCRIBES HIMSELF AS STANDING TOWARDS HIM, AND HIS CONSCIOUS GUILT AND CONFUSION AT THE PROSPECT. We might have supposed that his expressive description of God's past mercies would have been succeeded by the warmest language of hope and confidence. And thus would it have been, had no obstacle interposed. The angels in heaven, in reviewing the benefits conferred upon them by their beneficent Creator, blend with their emotions of love and gratitude no symptoms of apprehension or alarm. They are not "full of confusion," while they survey the mercies of Him who "granted them existence and favour, and whose visitation preserves their spirit." The past manifestations of God's overflowing bounty are to them a pledge for the present; and the present for the future. But not so with man, when duly conscious of the ungrateful return which he has made for the bounties of his Almighty Benefactor. For every relationship involves certain duties; and most of all, the relationship of a creature to his Creator. The very bond of this relationship, on the side of man, was perfect love, confidence, and obedience. He had a law given him to obey, and he was bound by every tie to obey it. A creature, if guiltless, would not tremble for the consequences of his own conduct under such a law; but what are the actual circumstances of man? Job seems to exhibit them, in the text, under a threefold view. Supposing, first, a case which may be considered as the ordinary average of human character, "If I sin"; next, a case of peculiar atrocity, "If I be wicked"; thirdly, a case of unusual moral rectitude, "If I be righteous"—and in all these he shows the condition in which we stand before God. 1. "If I sin, Thou markest me, and Thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity." No extraordinary degree of profligacy seems to be here supposed; nothing more is stated than what we all acknowledge to be applicable to ourselves; for who is he that sinneth not? Yet how stands our condition under this aspect? First we learn that God "marks us"; His omniscient eye is upon all our ways. "Thou wilt not acquit me." How fearful the condition of a creature thus exposed by his own sinful conduct to the just wrath of his Creator! Well might Job exclaim, "I am full of confusion." For who shall

stand before God when He is displeased? Who shall stay His hand when it is stretched out to inflict punishment? 2. "If I be wicked, woe unto me." The degree of guilt marked by this expression seems to be more flagrant than that implied in the former. The conclusion in this case is therefore most clear; for if every sin is marked, if no iniquity is followed by acquittal, then woe indeed to the hardened, the deliberate transgressor! 3. "If I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head." Job cannot here refer to perfect and unerring holiness of heart and conduct—for to such a degree of sanctity no human being can lay claim; if he could, he might justly lift up his head; but he doubtless speaks comparatively, taking man at his best estate; selecting the most moral, the most upright; then, in this most favourable case, showing the utter incompetence of man to stand justified in the sight of his Creator. So imperfect are our best actions, so mixed are our purest motives, that, far from challenging the rewards of merit, we must acknowledge ourselves, on an impartial survey, to deserve the punishment of our aggravated disobedience. At best we are unprofitable servants. "To us belongeth shame and confusion of face." The friends of Job thought that he wished to try this experiment; that he justified himself before God; but his affliction had taught him a lesson more suitable to his frail and fallen condition: so that, instead of lifting up his head, his language was, "Whom, though I were righteous, I would not answer; but I would make supplication to my Judge"; or, in the corresponding sentiment of the text, "See Thou mine affliction, for it increaseth." III. CONSIDER HIS HUMBLE APPEAL TO GOD TO HAVE COMPASSION UPON HIM. He claims no merit; he proffers no gift. He had acknowledged God's mercies to him; and confessed his inability to stand before His justice. What, then, is his hope of escape? It is in substance the language of the publican, and of every true penitent in every age, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." His affliction was increasing; nothing but despair lay before him; but in his extremity he applies, where none ever rightly applied in vain, to the infinite Source of mercy and compassion. "See Thou mine affliction." How excellent is the example which he here sets before us! In every exigency of life, or when weighed down with the burden of our sins before God, let us betake ourselves to Him who will compassionate our weakness, assuage our sorrows, and forgive our transgressions. Happy is it for us that He is not a God afar off, but is at all times, as it were, within reach of our humble petitions. Let us thus approach Him with the language of Job; with fervent acknowledgments of His goodness, and of our own ingratitude; of His infinite justice, and our own unrighteousness; with self-condemnation on the one hand, and a humble trust in His mercy in Christ Jesus on the other—and then will He look with pity upon our affliction, then will He pardon all our iniquities. For no sooner had Job practically acquired this just view of himself and of God; no sooner had he said, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes"; than it is added, "The Lord turned the captivity of Job." And thus will He continue to be gracious to every sincere penitent, through the infinite merits of His beloved Son. (*Christian Observer.*) *The Divine visitation*:—This is the grateful acknowledgment of Job amidst his accumulated trials. There were sentiments of gratitude intermingled with the expressions of grief. The use which Job made of the Divine protection was to plead with God for a continuance of His mercy, and to pray for the vindication of his own integrity. I. It is by the visitation of the Lord that OUR NATURAL LIVES AND TEMPORAL BLESSINGS ARE PRESERVED TO US. The continuance of all things is of God, to whom belong the issues from death. By His providence our various circumstances are appointed to us. II. To the visitation of God WE OWE ALL OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE. By the Holy Spirit the immortal soul is enlightened, regenerated, and preserved unto the heavenly kingdom. These gracious visitations act upon our inner nature in various ways, and through a diversified instrumentality. Afflictions, means of grace, are Divine visitations. God's judgments and mercies are efficient only as He by His Spirit and blessing shall make them so. III. THE USE TO MAKE OF THIS DOCTRINE. 1. It is a doctrine full of godly consolation and encouragement. Our salvation does not depend on our own unaided powers. 2. The subject has a dark as well as a bright side. It is of alarming import to the careless. If He withdraw His grace, what will become of their resolutions? Be it yours then to "know the day of visitation." (*Anon.*) *Living by the visitation of God*:—You have all heard the phrase, generally used by juries at a coroner's inquest, when a man has died suddenly, "Died by the visitation of God." No doubt

some do thus die; but I want you to live by the visitation of God. That is a very different thing, and that is the only way in which we truly can live, by God's visiting us from day to day, so preserving our spirit from the dangers that surround us. Live, then, by the visitation of God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Three blessings of the heavenly charter*:—It is well sometimes to sit down, and take a grateful review of all that God has done for us, and with us, from our first day until now. We must not be like hogs under the oak, that eat the acorns, but never thank the tree, or the Lord who made it to grow. Here is poor Job, covered with sore boils, sitting on a dunghill, scraping himself with a bit of a broken pot, with his children dead, his property destroyed, and even his wife not giving him a word of comfort, and his friends acting in a most unfriendly manner. Now it is that he talks to his God, and says, "Thou hast granted me life and favour, and Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." You are very ill; think of the time when you were well. You are poor; remember when you washed your feet in milk, and your steps with butter, and had more than heart could wish. Only begin to praise God, and you will find that he who praises God for mercy will never be long without a mercy for which to praise Him. I. The first blessing of this heavenly charter is LIFE: "Thou hast granted me life." 1. Well, I think that we ought to thank God that we have lived at all. I know the pessimist version of the psalm of life is that, "'Tis something better not to be." Perhaps it would have been something better if that gentleman had not been, better, I should think, for his wife and family if they had not had to live with such a miserable creature. But the most of us thank God for our being, as well as for our well-being. We count it something not to be stones, or plants, or "dumb, driven cattle." We are thankful to be intelligent beings, with powers of thought, and capable of mental and spiritual enjoyment. 2. But we also thank God that we have lived on in spite of many perils. 3. I am addressing some from whom our text asks for gratitude because they are alive notwithstanding constitutional weakness. Perhaps from a child you were always feeble. 4. Now think of the sin which might have provoked God to make an end of such a guilty life. "Thou hast granted me life." But if we can say this in a higher sense, "Thou hast granted me life," spiritual life, how much greater should our gratitude be! I could not even feel the guilt of sin, I was so dead; but Thou hast granted me life to repent. II. The second blessing of this heavenly charter is DIVINE FAVOUR: "Thou hast granted me life and favour." Have you ever thought of the many favours that God has bestowed upon you, even upon some of you who as yet have never tasted of His grace? 1. What a favour it is to many to be sound in body! 2. I cannot help reminding you here of the great favour of God in the matter of soundness of mind. 3. I speak to many here to whom God has also given a comfortable lot in life. 4. Some here, too, some few, at any rate, have been favoured with much prosperity. 5. And I may say to-night that, in this congregation, God has given you the favour of hearing the Gospel; no mean favour, let me remind you. 6. Still, putting all these things together, they do not come up to this last point, that many of us have received the favours of saving grace: "Thou hast granted me life and favour." III. The last blessing of the charter, upon which I shall be a little longer, is DIVINE VISITATION: "Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." Does God ever come to man? Does He not? Yes; but it is a great wonder: "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? And the son of man that Thou visitest him?" 1. He visited you, first, with an arousement and conviction of sin. 2. After that first experience, there came visitations of enlightenment and conversion. 3. Perhaps since then you have had visitations of another kind. You have had chastisement, or you have had affliction in the house. God's visitations are sometimes very unwelcome. 4. But then, we have had other visitations, visitations of revival and restoration. Do you not sometimes get very dull and dead? 5. The best of all is, when the Lord visits us, and never goes away; but stays with us always, so that we walk in the light of His countenance, and go from strength to strength, singing always, "Thy visitation never ended, daily continued, preserves my spirit." (*Ibid.*) *A song and a solace*:—You see that Job is appealing to the pity of God, and this is the form of his argument: "Thou art my Creator; be my Preserver. Thou hast made me; do not break me. Thou art dealing very hardly with me, I am almost destroyed beneath the pressure of Thy hand; yet remember that I am Thine own creature. Weak and frail as I am, I am the creation of Thy hand; therefore, despise not Thine own work. Whatever I am, with the exception of my sin, Thou hast made me what I am; 'tis Thou who hast brought me into my present

condition; consider, then, O God, what a poor, frail thing I am, and stay Thy hand, and do not utterly crush my spirit." This is a wise prayer, a right and proper argument for a creature to use with the Creator; and when Job goes further still, and, in the language of our text, addresses God not only as his Creator, but as his Benefactor, and mentions the great blessings that he had received from God, his argument still holds good: "Do not, Lord, change Thy method of dealing with me; Thou hast given me life, Thou hast shown me special favour, Thou hast hitherto preserved me; cast me not away from Thy presence, dismiss me not from Thy service, let not Thy tender mercies fail, but do unto me now and in days to come according as Thou hast done unto me in the days that are past." I. First, then, let us use the former part of our text as a SONG FOR BRIGHT DAYS: "Thou hast granted me life and favour, and Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." Whatever we have received that is good, has come to us from God as a matter of pure favour. Now, then, ye joyful ones, unite with me while we first bless God for granting us life. To a Christian man, life is a blessing; in itself, considered alone, it is a blessing; but to the ungodly man it may turn out to be a curse, for it would have been better for that man if he had never been born. But to a godly man like Job, it is a great mercy even to have an existence. I find that, in the Hebrew, this word "life" is in the plural: "Thou hast granted me lives"; and blessed be God, we who believe in Jesus have not only this natural life, which we share in common with all men, but the Holy Spirit has begotten in the hearts of believers a new life infinitely higher than mere natural life, a life which makes us akin to Christ, joint-heirs with Him of the eternal inheritance which He is keeping for us in heaven. Let us praise God, then, for life, and especially for this higher life if it is ours. What a joy it is to live in this respect! Next, we have to praise God for granting us favour. I should be quite unable to tell you to the full all that is wrapped up in that word "favour." Favour from God! It is a great word in the original, a word big with meaning, for it means the love of God. God loves immeasurably. The force and extent of true love never can be calculated; it is a passion that cannot be measured by degrees as the temperature can be recorded on the thermometer; it is something that exceedeth and overfloweth all measurement, for a man giveth all his heart when he truly loveth. So is it with God; He setteth no bound to His love. We might rightly paraphrase Job's words, and say, "Thou hast granted me life and love." Oh, what wondrous words to put together, life and love! Life without God's love is death; but put God's love with it, and then what a song we ought to send up to His throne if we feel that He has given us both spiritual life and infinite love. The word "favour," however, means not only love; but, as we ordinarily use it, it means some special form of grace and goodness. If, at this hour, any one of you is a child of God, it is because God has done more for you than He has done for others. If there be a difference between you and others, somebody made that difference; and whoever made it ought to be honoured and praised for it. By the word "favour" is also meant grace in all the shapes which it assumes, so Job's words might be rendered, "Thou hast granted me life and grace." Now let us dwell, for a minute or two, on the third blessing of this Divine grant: "and Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." There is a wonderful range of meaning in those words, but Job no doubt first refers to the providence of God by which He makes, as it were, a visitation of all the world, and especially of His own people. Some of us have had very special providential deliverances; we will not mention them to-night, because they are too many. It has been well said, "He that watches providence shall never be without a providence to watch." Oh, but that is only the beginning of the meaning of Job's words, "Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." God hath visited those of us who are His people in other ways besides the watching of His providence. Let me mention some of them. He has visited some of us with correction, and we do not like that form of visitation. There are some, whom God will yet permit to be rich, who would not have been capable of managing so much money to the Lord's honour and glory if they had not for a while had to live on short commons. The very thing we regret most in providence will probably be that in which we shall rejoice most in eternity. There are other visitations, however, such as the visitations of consolation. Oh, how sweet those are to the soul when in trouble! Once more, how sweet are the visitations of God in communion! II. A SOLACE FOR DARK NIGHTS: "And these things hast Thou hid in Thine heart: I know that this is with Thee." There is another interpretation of this verse, quite different from the one that I am going to give you, but I do not think that Job ever could have meant

what some people think he did. I believe that, when he said, "These things"—that is, life, favour, and God's gracious visitation,—"These things hast Thou hid in Thine heart: I know that this is with Thee," that he meant, first, that God remembers what He has done, and will not lose His pains. "'Thou hast granted me life and favour'; Lord, Thou hast not forgotten that; Thou hast hidden that in Thine heart, Thou remomberest it well. Since Thou hast done this for me, and Thou dost remember that Thou hast done it, therefore Thou wilt continue Thy mercy to me, and not lose all the grace and goodness which Thou hast already bestowed upon me." Even if you have forgotten all that God has done for you, God has not forgotten it. Many children forget all the kindness and love of their mother, but the mother remembers all that she did for her children in the days of their helplessness, and she loves them all the more because of what she did for them. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." But, next, I think that the words, "And these things hast Thou hid in Thine heart: I know that this is with Thee," have this meaning, that God sometimes hides His favour and love in His heart, yet they are there still. At times, it may be that you get no glimpse of His face, or that you see no smile upon it. The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; therefore, O tried child of God, learn what Job here teaches us, that these things are still hidden in the heart of God, and that eternal love holdeth fast to the objects of its choice. "I know that this is with Thee," said Job, so the last thing I want you to learn from his words is that God would have His people strong in faith to know this truth. Job says, "I know that this is with Thee." I speak to many persons who say that they are Christians, and who perhaps are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and one of their clearest evidences is that they are very happy. True religion makes people happy, it is a perennial fountain of delight. But do not set too much store by your emotions of delight, because they may be taken from you, and then where will your evidences be? God's people sometimes walk in darkness, and see no light. There are times when the best and brightest of saints have no joy. If your religion should not, for a time, yield you any joy, cling to it all the same. You see, God does not give you faith in order that you may merely run about in the meadows with it all among the fair spring flowers. I will tell you for what purpose He gives you faith; it is that you may put on your snow-shoes, and go out in the cold wintry blasts and glide along over the ice and the snow. Only have faith in Him, and say, "My God, Thy will towards me to give me life, and favour, and preservation, may be hiddeu, but it is still in Thine heart, 'I know that this is with Thee.'" Now I must leave these things with you. You who know and love the Lord will seek a renewal of His visitations to-night; and as for you who do not know Him, oh, how I wish that you did! (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 18–22. **Oh that I had given up the ghost!**—*The effects of Job's sufferings*:—The patriarch had already in the previous verses expressed to the Almighty that his sufferings were—(1) Too great to render any efforts at self-consolation effective, (2) Too deserved to justify any hope of relief, (3) Too overwhelming to check the expression of his complaint, and now as (4) Too crushing to give to existence anything but an intolerable curse. His sufferings, judging from his language here, had destroyed within him for a time three of the primary instincts of the soul. I. A SENSE OF DUTY. Sense of obligation to the Supreme is an instinct as universal as man, as deep as life itself; but the patriarch, in wishing that he had never been, or that his first breath had been extinguished, had lost all feeling in relation to the wonderful mercies which his Creator had conferred upon him during the past years of his existence. What were those mercies? 1. Great material wealth. 2. Great domestic enjoyment. 3. Immense social influence. II. A LOVE OF LIFE. Seldom do we find, even amongst the most miserable of men, one who struggles not to perpetuate his existence. But this instinct Job now seems to have lost, if not its existence, its power. Existence has become so intolerable that he wishes he had never had it, and yearns for annihilation. Two thoughts are here suggested. 1. There may be something worse for man than annihilation. 2. This annihilation is beyond the reach of creatures. III. HOPE OF A HEREAFTER. Hope for future good is another of the strongest instincts of our nature. "Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts." Indeed it is one of those powers within us that, like a mainspring, keeps every wheel in action. Man never is but always to be blest. Job seems to have lost this now. Hence his description of the future. "Before

I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness, and the shadow of death; a land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness." He saw a future, but what was it? 1. Darkness. A starless, moonless midnight, a vast immeasurable abyss—"the land of darkness." His hereafter was black, not a ray of light streamed from the firmament. 2. Confusion. "Without any order." Small and great, young and old, all together in black chaos. Conclusion—1. That great suffering in this world in the case of individuals does not mean great sin. 2. The power of the devil over man. 3. The value of the Gospel. This man had no clear revelation of a blessed future. Hence one scarcely wonders at his frequent and impassioned complaints. How different our life to his! (*Homilist.*) *A good man's distempers:*—This passage teaches—1. Saints' highest fits of passion will not last, but mercy will reclaim them, and give them a cool of that fever. 2. As the fevers and distempers of saints may come to a very great height, so, ordinarily, that height or excess of them proves the step next to their cool. 3. Humble, sober prayer is a notable evidence and mean in calming distempered spirits; it is as the shower to allay that poisonous wind. 4. As man's life is but uncertain and short, so the thoughts of this should make men employ their time well, and to be very needy and pressing after God, and proofs of Him. 5. Such as are excited with much trouble, and have their exercises blessed to them, will be sober, and esteem much of little ease, to get leave to breathe, or to comfort and refresh themselves a little, with a sight of God, or of His grace in them, and not their own passions which they ought to abhor. 6. The least ease, breathing, or comfort, under trouble, cannot be had but of God's indulgence. 7. It is the duty of men to acquaint themselves with death beforehand; and especially in times of trouble they should study it in its true colours. 8. Death and the grave in themselves, and when Christ's victory over them is not studied, and men are hurried away to them in a tempest of trouble, are very terrible, and an ugly sight, as bringing an irreparable loss as to any restitution in this life. 9. The consideration of the ugliness of death and the grave, doth call upon all to provide somewhat before they lie down in that cold bed, wherein they will continue so long, and somewhat that may light them through that dark passage. (*George Hutcheson.*)

Ver. 22. **And the shadow of death, without any order.**—*Death without order:*—While Job was under the bereaving hand of God, his thoughts were naturally turned upon the frailty of man, the shortness of life, and the gloomy scenes of mortality. The truth stated here is this—God discovers no order in calling men out of the world by death. I. GOD DISCOVERS NO ORDER IN SENDING DEATH AMONG MANKIND. Job believed that there is perfect order in the Divine Mind, respecting death, as well as every other event. In relation to God death is perfectly regular; but this regularity He has seen proper to conceal from the view of man. Though God has passed a sentence of mortality upon all mankind, yet He never discovers any order in the execution of it. 1. He sends death without any apparent respect to age. 2. Without any regard to men's bodily strength or weakness. 3. Without any apparent respect to the place of their dying. 4. There is no order apparent in the means of death. 5. God pays no visible regard to the characters of men, in calling them off the stage of life. 6. God appears to pay no regard to the circumstances of men, in putting an end to their days. 7. Nor does He appear to consult the feelings of men. II. WHY DOES GOD SEND DEATH THROUGH THE WORLD WITHOUT ANY DISCERNIBLE ORDER? 1. To make men sensible that He can do what He pleases, without their aid or instrumentality. 2. To make them know that He can dispose of them according to the counsel of His own will. 3. To convince man that he can do nothing without Him. 4. By concealing the order of death, God teaches mankind the propriety and importance of being constantly prepared for it. Learn—If death is coming to all men, and coming without any order, then it equally concerns all to live a holy and religious life. And since God discovers no order in death, it becomes the bereaved and afflicted to submit to His holy and absolute sovereignty. This subject admonishes all to prepare without delay for their great and last change. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*)

CHAPTER XI.

VERS. 1-6. **Then answered Zophar the Naamathite.**—*The attitude of Job's friends* :—In this chapter Zophar gives his first speech, and it is sharper toned than those which went before. The three friends have now all spoken. Your sympathies perhaps are not wholly on their side. Yet do not let us misjudge them, or assail them with the invectives which Christian writers hurled against them for centuries. Do not say, as has been said by the great Gregory, that these three men are types of God's worst enemies, or that they scarcely speak a word of good, except what they have learned from Job. Is it not rather true that their words, taken by themselves, are far more devout, far more fit for the lips of pious, we may even say, of Christian men, than those of Job? Do they not represent that large number of good and God-fearing men and women, who do not feel moved or disturbed by the perplexities of life; and who resent as shallow, or as mischievous, the doubts to which those perplexities give rise in the minds of others, of the much afflicted, or the perplexed, or of persons reared in another school than their own, or touched by influences which have never reached themselves? So Job's friends try in their own way to "justify the ways of God to man"—a noble endeavour, and in doing this, they have already said much which is not only true, but also most valuable. They have pleaded on their behalf the teaching, if I may so speak, of their Church, the teaching handed down from antiquity, and the experiences of God's people. They have a firm belief, not only in God's power, but in His unerring righteousness. They hold also the precious truth that He is a God who will forgive the sinner, and take back to His favour him who bears rightly the teaching of affliction. Surely, so far, a very grand and simple creed. We shall watch their language narrowly, and we shall still find in it much to admire, much with which to sympathise, much to treasure and use as a storehouse of Christian thought. We shall see also where and how it is that they misapplied the most precious of truths, and the most edifying of doctrines; turned wholesome food to poison; pressed upon their friend half-truths, which are sometimes the worst of untruths. We shall note also no less that want of true sympathy, of the faculty of entering into the feelings of men unlike themselves, and of the power of facing new views or new truths, which has so often in the history of the Church marred the character and impaired the usefulness of some of God's truest servants. We shall see them, lastly, in the true spirit of the controversialist, grow more and more embittered by the persistency in error, as they hold it, of him who opposes them. . . . The true subject of this sacred drama is unveiling itself before our eyes. Has he who serves God a right to claim exemption from pain and suffering? Is such pain a mark of God's displeasure, or may it be something exceedingly different? Must God's children in their hour of trial have their thoughts turned to the judgment that fell on Sodom and Gomorrah, or shall they fix them on "the agony and bloody sweat" of Him whose coming in the flesh we so soon commemorate? (*Dean Bradley.*) *Questionable reproving and necessary teaching* :—I. QUESTIONABLE REPROOF. Reproof is often an urgent duty. It is the hardest act of friendship, for whilst there are but few men who do not at times merit reprehension, there are fewer still who will graciously receive, or even patiently endure a reproving word, and "Considering," as John Foster has it, "how many difficulties a friend has to surmount before he can bring himself to reprove me, I ought to be much obliged to him for his chiding words." The reproof which Zophar, in the first four verses, addressed to Job suggests two remarks. 1. The charges he brings against Job, if true, justly deserve reproof. What does he charge him with? (1) Loquacity. "Should not the multitude of words be answered? and should not a man full of talk be justified?" As the tree with the most luxuriant leafage is generally least fruitful, so the man "full of talk" is, as a rule, most empty. It is ever true that in the "multitude of words there wanteth not sin," and "every man should be swift to hear and slow" to speak. He charges him (2) With falsehood. "Should thy lies make men hold their peace?" For "lies," in the margin we have "devices." Zophar means to say that much of what Job said was not according to truth, not fact, but the ungrounded inventions or fancies of his own mind. He charges him (3) With irreverence. "And when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed?" (4) With hypocrisy. "But thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in mine eyes." 2. The charges, if true, could

not justify the spirit and style of the reproof. Considering the high character and the trying circumstances of Job, and the professions of Zophar as his friend, there is a heartlessness and an insolence in his reproof most reprehensible and revolting. There is no real religion in rudeness; there is no Divine inspiration in insolence. Reproof, to be of any worth, should not merely be deserved, but should be given in a right spirit, a spirit of meekness, tenderness, and love. "Reprehension is not an act of butchery, but an act of surgery," says Seeker. There are those who confound bluntness with honesty, insolence with straightforwardness. The true reprover is of a different metal, and his words fall, not like the rushing hailstorm, but like the gentle dew. II. NECESSARY TEACHING. These words suggest that kind of teaching which is essential to the well-being of every man. 1. It is intercourse with the mind of God. "Oh that God would speak, and open His lips against thee." The great need of the soul is direct communication with God. All teachers are utterly worthless unless they bring God in contact with the soul of the student. If this globe is to be warmed into life the sun must do it. 2. It is instruction in the wisdom of God. "And that He would show thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is!" God's wisdom is profound; it has its "secrets." God's wisdom is "double," it is many folded; fold within fold, without end. 3. It is faith in the forbearing love of God. "Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth." (*Homilist.*) *Multitudinous words*:—I have always a suspicion of sonorous sentences. The full shell sounds little, but shows by that little what is within. A bladder swells out more with wind than with oil. (*J. Landor.*)

Ver. 7. **Canst thou by searching find out God?**—*The unsearchableness of God*:—You are not to suppose that your God is to be utterly unknown, and that because your faculties cannot pierce the inmost recesses of His being, therefore you are discharged from the duty of thinking about Him at all. Your faculties were given you for use, and the highest exercise of which they are capable is thought on God. 1. The duty of searching into Divine things is one recognised and acted out by very few. Let your own observations convince you of this. It is only by a knowledge of God's character that we can hope to keep His law. 2. The proper objects of the search. Such as God's mind about you. God in His dispensations and His ways. This is practical; and it is far more profitable to spend our energies on such considerations as these, than on speculations which are too deep for us, at least while we are on this side the grave, and in the flesh. To know God's mind about Himself, I invite even the man that would study the character of the Most High, and would "know the Lord." 3. What measure of success in such study may we expect? Success will not be limited to improvement. It will bring consolation. (*P. B. Power, M.A.*) *God incomprehensible by His creatures*:—That there is a first and supreme cause, who is the Creator and Governor of the universe, is a plain and obvious truth which forces itself upon every attentive mind; so that many have argued the existence of God, from the unanimous consent of all nations to this great and fundamental truth. But though we may easily conceive of the existence of the Deity, yet His nature and perfections surpass the comprehension of all minds but His own. I. GOD IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE IN RESPECT TO THE GROUND OF HIS EXISTENCE. God owes His existence to Himself, yet we are obliged to suppose there is some ground or reason of His existing, rather than not existing. We cannot conceive of any existence which has no ground or foundation. The ground or reason of God's existence must be wholly within Himself. What that something in Himself is, is above the comprehension of all created beings. II. GOD IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE IN RESPECT TO MANY OF HIS PERFECTIONS. 1. Eternity. God is eternal. He never had a beginning. We can conceive of a future, but not of a past eternity. That a being should always exist without any beginning is what men will never be able to fathom, either in this world, or that which is to come. 2. Omnipresence. The immensity of the Divine presence transcends the highest conceptions of created beings. God is equally present with each of His creatures, and with all His creatures at one and the same instant. 3. Power. God can do everything. His power can meet with no resistance or obstruction. Who can stay His hand? The effects of Divine power are astonishing. 4. Knowledge. That knowledge takes in all objects within the compass of possibility. Such knowledge is wonderful; it is high; we cannot attain unto it. 5. The moral perfections of God in extent and degree surpass our limited views. III. GOD IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE IN HIS

GREAT DESIGNS. None of the creatures of God can look into His mind and see all His views and intentions as they lie there. His counsels will of necessity remain incomprehensible, until His Word or providence shall reveal them to His intelligent creatures. IV. HE IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE IN HIS WORKS. Their nature, number, and magnitude stretch beyond the largest views of creatures. No man knows how second causes produce their effects; nor how the material system holds together and hangs upon nothing. V. HE IS UNSEARCHABLE IN HIS PROVIDENCE. Whatever God has done, He always intended to do; but we do not know at present all the reasons of His conduct, nor all the consequences that will flow from it. Respecting future events, God has drawn over them an impenetrable veil. Improve and apply the subject. 1. In a very important sense God is truly infinite. To be incomprehensible is the same as to be infinite. 2. The incomprehensible nature of the Supreme Being does by no means preclude our having clear and just conceptions of His true character. 3. If God be incomprehensible by His creatures, we have no reason to deny our need of a Divine revelation. 4. If God is incomprehensible in His nature and perfections, then it is no objection against the Divinity of the Bible that it contains some incomprehensible mysteries. 5. Then it is very unreasonable to disbelieve anything which He has been pleased to reveal concerning Himself, merely because we cannot comprehend it. 6. Ministers ought to make it their great object in preaching, to unfold the character and perfections of the Deity. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *The incomprehensibleness of God*:—Job, in the foregoing chapter, carried the justification of his integrity so far that he seemed to entrench somewhat rudely on the justice of providence. Zophar, therefore, to repress this insolence, and vindicate the Divine honour, lays before him the incomprehensibleness and majesty of God. I. ASSERT AND ILLUSTRATE THE DOCTRINE OF THE TEXT. That God is incomprehensible. If in the Godhead we gaze and pry too boldly into eternal generation and procession, and the ineffable unity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, it will but dazzle and confound our weak faculties. All the attributes of God are infinite in their perfection, and whosoever goes about to fathom what is infinite, is guilty of the folly of that countryman, in the poem, who sitting on the bank-side, expects to see the stream run quite away, and leave its channel dry; but that runs on, and will do so to all ages. We cannot comprehend the whole extent of God's moral attributes. Though God were so far discoverable by the light of reason, as served to render the idolatry and wickedness of the pagan world inexcusable (Rom. i.), yet God being infinite, and His perfections a vast abyss, there are therefore mysteries in the Godhead which human reason cannot penetrate, heights which we cannot soar. II. REFLECTIONS UPON THIS PROPOSITION. Use it—1. To let out the tumour of self-conceit. 2. To justify our belief of mysteries. 3. To vindicate the doctrine of providence. The incomprehensibleness of God solves all the difficulties that clog the doctrine of providence. (*Richard Lucas, D.D.*) *God incomprehensible*:—That there is a God is almost the universal belief of mankind. There are few absolute atheists. Zophar reproves Job for pretending to a perfect knowledge of God. The charge implies that God is incomprehensible. We cannot perfectly understand His works, His ways, His Word, or His attributes—such as His eternity, power, wisdom, and knowledge, holiness, justice, goodness. Practical lessons—1. We should learn to be humble. 2. Infer how base a thing is idolatry, or image-worship. 3. If God is incomprehensibly glorious, how should we admire and adore Him! 4. Let us calmly submit to all His dispensations in providence. 5. Seeing that the nature of God is so wonderfully glorious, let us study to know Him. 6. Learn the reasonableness of faith. 7. This subject should render the heavenly state exceedingly desirable; for in that state "we shall know even as we are known." (*G. Burder.*) *The incomprehensibleness of God*:—This term or attribute is a relative term, and speaks a relation between an object and a faculty, between God and a created understanding. God knows Himself, but He is incomprehensible to His creatures. Give the proof of the doctrine—I. BY WAY OF INSTANCE OR INDUCTION OF PARTICULARS. 1. Instances on the part of the object. The nature of God, the excellency and perfection of God, the works and ways of God, are above our thoughts and apprehensions. We can only understand God's perfections as He communicates them, and not as He possesses them. We must not frame notions of them contrary to what they are in the creature, nor must we limit them by what they are in the creature. The ways of God's providence are not to be traced. We take a part from the whole, and consider it by itself, without relation to the whole series of His dis-

pensations. 2. Instances on the part of the subject, or the persons capable of knowing God in any measure. The perfect knowledge of God is above a finite creature's understanding. Wicked men are full of false apprehensions of God. And good men have some false apprehensions. The angels do not arrive at perfect knowledge of Him. II. BY WAY OF CONVICTION. If the creature be unsearchable, is not the Creator much more unsearchable. He possesses all the perfections which He communicates, and many which cannot be communicated to a creature. III. THE CLEAR REASON OF IT. Which is this—the disproportion between the faculty and the object; the finiteness of our understandings, and the infiniteness of the Divine nature and perfections. Apply this doctrine—1. It calls for our admiration, and veneration, and reverence. 2. It calls for humility and modesty. 3. It calls for the highest degree of our affection. (*J. Tillotson, D.D.*) *Doctrine of Trinity not a contradiction to reason*:—The doctrine of the Trinity is not at all more incomprehensible than others to which no opposition is offered. A man can comprehend the Trinity as well as he can the eternity of God, or the omnipresence of God. 1. Certain considerations from which you will infer the presumption of expecting that the nature of God should be either discernible or demonstrable by reason. If we would but observe how little way our reason can make when labouring amongst things with which we are every day conversant, we should be prepared to expect that when applied to the nature of the Deity, it would be found altogether incompetent to the unravelling and comprehending of it. We are to ourselves a mystery. There is a presumption which outweighs language in expecting that we can apprehend what is God, and how He subsists. A revelation from God may be expected to contain much which must overmatch all but the faith of mankind. We are continually in the habit of admitting things on the testimony of experience, which without such experience we should reject as incredible. We may assert this in respect to many of those operations of nature which are going on daily and hourly around us, *e.g.*, husbandry. We do not, in regard of the things of this lower creation, measure what we believe by what we can demonstrate. Where then is the justice and the reasonableness of our carrying up to the highest investigations of God a rule which, if applied to the facts or phenomena of nature, would make us doubt the one half, and disbelieve the other? If we reject one property of God, because incomprehensible, we must, if consistent, reject almost every other. This is not sufficiently observed. It is customary to fasten on the mystery of the Trinity as the great incomprehensible in God, and to speak of it as tasking our reason in a measure far higher than the rest. We admit that whilst the whole of a revelation may be above our reason, there may be parts which seem contrary to it; and if there exists a repugnance between reason and revelation, we do right in withholding our assent. If it could be shown that the received doctrine of the Trinity did violence to the conclusions of reason, there would be good ground for rejecting that doctrine and regarding the Bible as wrongly interpreted. 2. There is no repugnance to reason in the doctrine of the Trinity. It is above reason, but not contrary to reason. The sense in which God is three, is not the sense in which God is one. The doctrine stated with simplicity, the doctrine that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are so distinct as not to be one with the other, and so united as to be one God, carries nothing on its front to convict it of absurdity. There is no contradiction in three being one, unless it be said that the three are one in the same respect. We are not now endeavouring to establish the fact that Scripture teaches the doctrine of the Trinity; we only show that there is nothing in the doctrine which reason can prove impossible. The testimonies of Scripture to the Divinity of Father, Son, and Spirit, are numerous and explicit; the declarations that there is only one God rival these in amount and clearness. You will be told that this doctrine is a speculative thing; that even if it is true, it is not fundamental; and that, whatsoever place it may fill in scholastic theology, it is of little or no worth in practical Christianity. Remember one truth. If the doctrine of the Trinity be a false doctrine, your Redeemer, Jesus Christ, was nothing more than a man. The Divinity of Christ stands or falls with the Trinity or Unity. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Feelings after God*:—When the Creator formed man He placed within him a religious sentiment, a sense of a superior existence, and this being the nature of the subjective mind, the outer realm became at once peopled with supernatural creatures. The religious feeling in the soul, in the first years of its strivings, saw gods in every storm, and in every ray of sunshine, and in all the shadows of the night. Paul says God so made the rational world, that they

should "seek the Lord, if haply they may feel after Him, and find Him." All the mythological and theological phenomena of the past are manifestations of this feeling after the true God. Christ stands the nearest of all alleged divinities to any historical fact. There have been claims to Divine honours set up by others. Christ stands farthest from myth, and nearest to reality. Think of the less questionable elements in this historic fact. 1. It was a great gain to our race that at last the search for an Incarnation came up to a real, visible being. Man had gone about as far as he could upon a theology of legend and absurdity. There was no valuable religious faith in the world at the time of the Advent. The Roman Empire had all forms of greatness except religious faith. Mankind will always exchange legend for history. The development of reason works against myth and in favour of the actual. Examine further the quality of this Christ idea. It was the first incarnation lying within the field of evidence. How far was this Christ an incarnation of the Divine? 2. It should soften our judgment that we do not know the nature of Deity. There is every reason for supposing that man was created in the intellectual likeness of God, and hence for God to become manifest in Christ was only a filling to the full of a cup partly filled in the creation of man. Man himself held a part of the Divine image. Christ held it all. The picture of Jesus Christ is the best picture conceivable of a mingling of the earthly and the heavenly. The whole scene is above life and below the infinite. It was God brought down, and man lifted up. (*David Swing.*) *How can I know there is a God?*—A knowledge of God is necessary. It is important to have strong faith in God. I. I KNOW THERE IS A GOD, BECAUSE HE HAS REVEALED HIMSELF TO MEN. In all ages God has spoken to men, and given them a knowledge of Himself. All along the ages God was constantly speaking to men, and revealing Himself to His people. As large numbers of these men gave their lives as witnesses for God's revelation, I believe their testimony, and am aided in searching to know God for myself. II. BECAUSE HE HAS REVEALED HIMSELF TO ME. In three ways—1. In His Holy Word. 2. In the world in which I live. 3. In my own heart, and soul, and life. III. BECAUSE HE MADE THE WORLD. It could not have made itself. IV. BECAUSE I CAN SEE HIS WISDOM IN THE HARMONY AND DESIGN WHICH EXIST IN THE WORLD. Wherever you see design, you may be sure there has been a designer. Things do not happen by chance. V. I AM CONFIRMED IN MY KNOWLEDGE OF GOD WHEN I LEARN THAT MEN EVERYWHERE HAVE BELIEVED IN GOD. Go wherever you will, you will find men who believe in God. Rather than be without God, men will make one. The universal failure of man has not been to have no God, but to have too many. (*Charles Leach, D.D.*) *Searching after God*:—I. This is a RIGHTEOUS occupation. 1. It agrees with the profoundest instincts of our souls. "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." It is the hunger of the river for the ocean—every particle heaves towards it, and rests not until it finds it. 2. It is stimulated by the manifestations of nature. His footprints are everywhere, and they invite us to pursue His march. 3. It is encouraged by the declarations of the Bible. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him whilst He is near." 4. It is aided by the manifestations of Christ. "Christ is the brightness of His Father's glory," &c. II. This is a USEFUL occupation. 1. There is no occupation so spirit-quickening. The idea of God to the soul is what the sunbeam is to nature. No other idea has such a life-giving power. 2. There is no occupation so spirit-humbling. 3. There is no occupation so spirit-ennobling. When the soul feels itself before God, the majesty of kings, and the splendour of empires are but childish toys. III. This is an ENDLESS occupation. "Canst thou by searching find out God?" Never fully. The finite can never comprehend the Infinite. 1. This endless work agrees with the inexhaustible powers of our nature. Searching after anything less than the Infinite would never bring out into full and vigorous action the immeasurable potentialities within us. 2. This endless work agrees with the instinct of mystery within us. The soul wants mystery. Without mystery there is no inquisitiveness, no wonder, no adoration, no self-abnegation. (*Homilist.*) *The Divine nature incomprehensible*:—Mankind supremely desire knowledge. In the pursuit of it every encouragement should be given. Yet there is a sort of knowledge which some busy and unsatisfied tempers are too inquisitive after. It is out of this arrogant deceit that they take upon them to be so well acquainted with the Divine nature, and to fathom all the deep things of God. As the term God must imply in it every perfection that is conceivable of a power infinitely superior to us, the very idea of such a Being must be sufficient to make us stand in awe and keep

our distance. What ought effectually to deter and discourage too bold researches into the Divine nature is—I. THAT IT SEEMS TO BE A SIN TO ATTEMPT TO FIND IT OUT. Our lust after knowledge should be put under restraint. It was a forbidden curiosity that ruined the first members of our race. Certain it is that we are under limitations; and it must be very unadvised to pretend to find out God to perfection. And—II. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO ACCOMPLISH IT. Neither prophets nor apostles were capable of comprehending all knowledge: at least they were not thought fit to be entrusted with more important discoveries. Some things angels even might not look into. Will reason supply the deficiency? The immensity of the Divine nature, and the weakness of human capacities, will be perpetual discouragements to such a rash experiment. It is true that the eternal power and Godhead of the Creator are so easily deducible from the things that are made, that those are pronounced without excuse that do not discern them, and act agreeably to their conviction. But what is man that he should with so much impatience covet to know the hidden things of God before the time? Secret things belong unto God. Highly then does it concern us to check that petulant and wanton desire of prying into things which God hath industriously concealed from us. We may know quite enough to make us religious here, and happy hereafter. It is not unreasonable to believe that it will be one of the beatitudes of good men to have their understandings enlarged at the great day of the manifestation of all things. Let no one fancy he is injured, or that God's ways are not equal, in not suffering us at present to see Him as He is; since He never intended that this life should be a state of perfection in any kind. Let us be thankful that God has graciously revealed to us the way of salvation, and not be dissatisfied that He hath not given us to understand all mysteries and all knowledge. (*James Roe, M.A.*) *The incomprehensibleness of the Divine nature and perfection:*—1. We can apprehend that God is a being of all possible perfection. He is the first, or self-existent being. What has no cause for its existence, we naturally think can have no bounds. 2. We cannot find God out to perfection. Were He less perfect, the attempt might not be so utterly impossible. That we cannot perfectly know God may be argued from the narrowness of our faculties, and from the great disadvantages for knowing God which we lie under in the present state. Moreover God is infinite, and all created understandings are but finite. We cannot fathom infinite perfection with the short line of our reason; or soar to boundless heights with our feeble wing; or stretch our thoughts till they are commensurate to the Divine immensity. Consider some particular perfections—eternity, immensity, omniscience, and omnipotence. Consider the moral attributes of God: His holiness, goodness, justice, truth. Practical reflections—1. Let us adore this incomprehensible Being. It is the grandeur, the infinity of His perfections which makes Him a proper object of adoration. 2. Whenever we are thinking or speaking of God, let us carry this in our minds, that He is incomprehensible. This will influence us to think and speak honourably of Him. 3. This will help us to form a more raised conception of the happiness of the heavenly state. (*H. Groves.*) *The incomprehensibleness of God:*—I. AS TO THE CREATION. That work of God is perfect, with regard to the ends for which it was designed. But our wisdom is not sufficient always to trace out the Divine. 1. We cannot perfectly understand the production and disposal of things at the beginning. Creation is of two kinds: out of nothing, and out of pre-existent matter. Of creation out of nothing, it is not possible that we should form the least conception. Of creation out of pre-existent matter we can have some idea, but only an inadequate one. 2. We cannot perfectly understand the causes of things in the stated course of nature. A thousand questions might be started, about which the wisest philosophers can only offer their conjectures. The way of God is too deep and winding for us to find out. We have no reason to boast of our knowledge of the works of God, since what we know not is much more considerable than what we know. 3. We cannot perfectly understand the reasons and ends for which all things are what they are, and their exact adjustment and correspondence to these ends. The general and ultimate end of all things is the glory of God. And we can perceive that things are admirably fitted to answer this end. Yet we do not clearly understand in what manner each thing contributes to this purpose. We should be cautioned against censuring any of the works of God in our thoughts, because we are not able to tell what good they answer. II. AS TO PROVIDENCE. We can easily demonstrate that there is a providence, and this, in all its dispensations, consonant to the perfections of God, but we can by no means fathom all the depths

of it. Some instances may be given in which the unsearchableness of the ways of providence appears. Such as—1. God's manner of dealing with the race of mankind, especially in suffering it to be in a state so full of sin and confusion, of imperfection and misery. 2. The providence of God, as exercised over His Church, is beyond our deciphering. Why is the Church so small; and why has it been so overrun with errors and corruptions? 3. The providence of God in weighing out the fates of kingdoms, nations, and families. Baffled as we are in our attempts to solve a thousand perplexing difficulties which present themselves to our minds, we should inquire with modesty, judge with caution, and always remember that God is not bound to give us any account of His matters. 4. The providence of God in relation to particular persons will be for ever inexplicable. Some reasons why the ways of providence are inscrutable may be given. We have not a thorough insight into the nature of man. God governs man according to the nature He has given. The ends of providence are unknown to us, or known very imperfectly; therefore they appear to us so perplexed and intricate. 5. Only a small part of providence comes under our notice and observation. How then can we know the beauty of the whole? The subject teaches the greatest resignation both of mind and heart. (*Ibid.*) *Difficulties concerning God's providence:*—Zophar reproved Job as if he had replied against God in order to justify himself. The argument upon which Zophar proceeds is this, That after all our inquiries concerning the nature or attributes of God, and the reasons of His conduct, we are still to seek, and shall never be able perfectly to comprehend or account for them. But we may upon a modest and pious search have a true notion of God's attributes, and justify His providential dispensation. Difficulties—I. IN RELATION TO THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES. By our strongest efforts we cannot know what the essential properties are of a Being infinitely perfect. By the attributes of God, we are to understand the several apprehensions we have of Him according to the different lights wherein our minds are capable of beholding Him, or the different subjects upon which He is pleased to operate. 1. With respect to God's power. That power is a perfection will not be disputed. How shall we form to ourselves any perfect idea of infinite power? Especially if we consider Omnipotence as operating on mere privation, and raising almost an infinite variety of beings out of nothing. And if creation implies only the disposing of existing things into a beautiful and useful order, this equally gives us a sublime idea of power. 2. With respect to God's eternity. Who can distinctly apprehend how one single and permanent act of duration should extend to all periods of time, without succession of time? But how the eternity of God should be one single and permanent act of duration, present to all past as well as future time, is a difficulty sufficient to turn the edge of the finest wit, and the force of the strongest head. 3. With respect to the immensity of God. That a single individual substance, without extension or parts, should spread itself into and over all parts; that it should fill all places, and be circumscribed to no place, and yet be intimately present in every place; are truths discoverable by reason and confirmed by revelation. To say that God is present only by His knowledge does not solve the difficulty of conceiving His ubiquity. Where God is present in any attribute, He is essentially present. 4. With respect to the omniscience of God. God does not only foreknow what He has effectually decreed shall come to pass, but what is of a casual and contingent nature, and depends on the good or ill use man will make of his liberty. So that we must suppose in God a certain and determinate knowledge of events, which yet are of arbitrary and uncertain determination in their causes. The best answer is, that God is present to all time, and to all the events which happen in time. Futurity in respect to Him is only a term we are forced to make use of, from the defects of our finite capacity. The difficulty, however, of His predictions remains. We have more clear and distinct ideas of the moral perfections of His nature, than of His incommunicable properties. II. IN RELATION TO THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE. 1. How far is God's wisdom affected or impeached by the sufferings of good men? One of the principal designs of God is to promote the interests of religion. The sufferings of good men appear to obstruct such a design, as they seem to lessen the force of those arguments which we draw from the temporal rewards of religion; and as circumstances of distress are commonly supposed to sour and embitter the spirits of men. The promises made to the Jews ran all along upon temporal blessings and enjoyments. But the principal motives to our Christian obedience are taken from the happiness and rewards of a life after this. Religion does, however, entitle men to the temporal advantages

of life, but the Christian promises relate principally to the inward peace and tranquillity of mind which naturally flow from a religious conduct; or to the inward consolations wherewith God is sometimes pleased more eminently to reward piety in this life. The necessary supports of life are assured. To lay too great a stress on the temporal rewards of religion seems of ill consequence to religion on two accounts. As it tends to confirm people in the opinion that the happiness of human life consists in the abundance of things that a man possesses. And men are hereby tempted to suspect the truth of religion itself, or to make false and uncharitable judgments on persons truly religious. Such judgments the friends made of suffering Job. 2. Prejudices against the goodness of God. The notion we have of goodness is, that it disposes to good and beneficent actions. But pain and sickness, &c., are things naturally evil. Such things seem inconsistent with the nature of God. But God may have special ends in view in afflicting, and He may be treating men as a parent treats his child. 3. Prejudices concerning the justice of God. But the best of men are conscious to themselves of many sins and defects which might justly have provoked God to inflict what they suffer upon them. And this life is not properly a state of rewards and punishments, but of trial and discipline. So the afflictions of good men are parts of the training work of Divine goodness and mercy. Seek then to have the best and largest thoughts of the Divine perfections you possibly can. Frequently reflect on the moral perfections of the Divine nature. Since we cannot by searching find out the Almighty to perfection, nor even discover all the particular reasons of His providence in this world, let us labour for eternity. There our minds will not only be united to God in perfect vision, but our hearts in perfect love. (*R. Fiddes.*)

God searchable and yet unsearchable:—Job sometimes spake a language difficult to be interpreted by his friends, and easy to be mistaken by his enemies. The men who came to comfort him made no allowance for the anguish that his flesh suffered, and hence they took undue advantage of every self-justifying word that fell from his lips, to humble him with reproaches, and to declare him guilty of some heinous sins in the sight of God, of which the world knew nothing. These so-called friends mistook chastening for punishment. There is something singularly ungenerous in the way that Zophar delivers his thought here. He makes assertions without proofs, and states fallacies, which he calls truths. His heart was overflowing with rancour. As if he would strip this holy man of all the brightness of hope, he proposes two questions to him which, although to a certain extent true in themselves, were, in Job's case, most unsympathising and comfortless. I. ALL THE NATURAL SEARCHING IN THE WORLD CANNOT FIND OUT GOD. Man's reason is not equal to the work of apprehending the spiritual. We are compelled to rest conjecturally upon visible impressions; we can go no further. Supposing we are intelligent enough to set every faculty to this searching work, the result would be the same. The world by wisdom never yet knew God; common earthly intelligences move in every other direction than towards heaven. Philosophy deals with things on the earth, under the earth, and above the earth; but not one tittle of that which relates to God forms any part of it. The high-class moralists of the most civilised heathen states have no standing at all in their religious creeds. In them you perceive at once the utmost length that an unenlightened understanding can go. II. THERE IS A SEARCHING WHICH CAN FIND OUT GOD, YET NOT UNTO PERFECTION. "Search the Scriptures." For thousands of years there was a dispensation in which terror prevailed over hope, and a hard bondage over spiritual liberty. It was deeply covered with a veil which hid the wonderful workings of God, as a pardoning and a reconciled Father in Christ Jesus. But when the mind has become acquainted with Scripture facts, what is its real gain? It knows more, but does it ascend higher? By such searching no man profitably finds out God. Notwithstanding all that the best searching achieves, in the way of experimental knowledge, not the holiest saint that ever searched the most, is able to find out the Almighty in His perfection. III. IN WHAT MANNER ARE WE TO GLORIFY GOD IN THE DISCOVERY OF HIS REDEMPTIVE CHARACTER? Our desires must be longing and panting after fuller flowings in of His love. It is in the heart that we are the most sensible of the tender relationship which He bears to us. (*F. G. Crossman.*) *The unsearchableness of God*:—It is scarcely a paradox to say that God is at once the most known Being in the whole universe, and yet the most unknown. Our subject is the inevitable limits which are placed to the human intelligence; not only in relation to all Divine subjects, but extending, more or less, to every department of human inquiry.

The claim to unlimited knowledge is never put forth by the true philosopher. 1. We find evidence of the unsearchableness of God in His own Being and perfections. Hence all the humiliating failures of the ancients in their endeavours to find out God. In the economy of nature and providence. In those providential aspects which more immediately concern our own happiness. Practical lessons. 1. We should be prepared for some corresponding difficulties in the written word. 2. We should show great diffidence and caution in interpreting the disclosures which God has been pleased to make of Himself, whether in nature or revelation. 3. We should cherish a feeling of thankfulness for the knowledge we already possess. (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *The incomprehensible character of God*:—I. OF WHAT WE CANNOT FIND OUT. These are things both in providence, nature, and grace. What wonder that there is a mystery in the Trinity, that the mode of the Deity's existence is too high for earthly thought? The inability which we may feel to understand the reason of a fact, does not in the slightest degree interfere with the fact being credible. A great moral lesson is taught us. The propensity of man is to self-exaltation. He overvalues his own righteousness, his own wisdom, his own power. There is both a wisdom and an utility in the fact that we cannot by searching find out the Almighty to perfection. There are truths which, as facts, we must receive, though the reasons of them we may be inadequate to apprehend. Still we must remember, that nothing like a blind unreflecting credulity is imposed upon us. II. WHAT WE MAY REACH TO. Though we cannot in the abstract comprehend how the three in their essence are but One, yet what Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are to us we may know, together with the unity of their will and purpose, so as to exhibit to us most clearly our consolation and salvation. 1. The Father is displayed in this unapproachable Godhead, the Former and Maintainer of all created things. 2. Whereas the Father in shewing mercy must not obliterate justice, it is in His Son, the eternal wisdom of God, that these two, apparently so opposite, are brought into union. 3. Though we cannot comprehend how the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, yet the necessity of the new birth is plain enough; and the might of the Spirit to effect it is sufficiently described. Thus, while we cannot find out the Almighty to perfection, we have enough of His dealings exhibited to guide our conduct. And remember that it is necessary to search into truth, not speculatively, but experimentally and practically. (*John Ayre, M.A.*) *The soul's way to God*:—We hope for the reconciliation of science and faith. At present the struggle continues in undiminished intensity. A strict philosophical justification of faith is hard to find, and the intellect of man is always failing in the attempt to show the reasonableness of religious emotion. But whether religion can be logically justified or not, it lives. The questioning and the believing instinct, the faculty of criticism, and the faculty of faith, are equally ineradicable, and yet, apparently, essentially irreconcileable. Are we driven to the sad alternative of believing without any justification of reason, or of suffering reason to lead us into the grey twilight of unbelief? Both these tendencies of human thought and feeling are represented in the Old Testament. The moral difficulty of the universe is that which weighed upon the Jew. There were those who broke their minds against problems of providence, and could not comprehend how the good should be afflicted, and tho bad be suffered to erect himself in pride of place, and one fate to befall all the children of men. Among the Greeks the speculative instinct was strong, and the religious instinct feeble, and there we find theories of the universe in plenty, physical and theological, theistic, pantheistic, atheistic. Something is to be learned from the constant inability of philosophy to arrive at a consistent and satisfactory theory of the universe. The long outcome of philosophical speculation is not simply the rejection of the religious theory of the universe, it is the rejection of all theories upon a subject which is too vast and too complicated for human thought. When the materialistic philosophy of our day bids us confine ourselves to phenomena, it does not deny the existence of that which it proclaims itself unable to comprehend. There is a point where physics and metaphysics touch, and when that is reached, men are involved in mysteries not less blinding than those of religion itself. The nature of God is not the only unintelligible thing in the world. If we are told that through physical science is no path to God, it is of the greatest importance to show that physical science, pressed with her own ultimate problems, cannot help admissions which make room for, and even point to, the thought of Him. If philosophy shrinks from the affirmations of theism, and will own no more than a possibility, what can be more necessary than to point out that the philosophic

method is not the one by which God can be surely approached? We have been accustomed to speak of God as the Eternal, the Omnipresent, the Omnipotent, the Absolute, the Infinite. These are wide words, and, taken at their widest essentially unintelligible to us, for the very reason that their opposites accurately describe the limitations of our own nature. Still, we put into them as much meaning as we can, and make of them the most that the extent of our knowledge and the force of our imagination will permit. (*C. Beard, B.A.*) *The incomprehensibility of God*:—The nature of God is the foundation of all true religion, and the will of God is the rule of all acceptable worship. Therefore the knowledge of God is of the greatest importance. To know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, is eternal life. The mysteriousness of the Divine nature and government is no reason why we should neglect what may be known concerning Him. Give one the spirit of adoption and self-renunciation, and he cannot be frightened from the presence of his Maker either by the lustre or the darkness round about His throne. The doctrine of this text is, that there is in the nature and ways of God much that is incomprehensible to us. 1. The adorable first person of the Trinity, the Father, is and must ever be beyond the grasp of our senses and faculties. It is generally agreed that the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Ghost, is, and ever will be, beyond the direct and immediate notice of all creatures. He is far beyond the grasp of both our bodily and mental faculties. The brightest manifestation of the Godhead is in the incarnation of the Son of God. We may behold His glory, as of the only-begotten of the Father, but we can go no further. This manifestation is for all practical purposes sufficient. But even in Christ divinity shone forth under great obscuration. Whatever eludes all our senses and faculties is to us necessarily clad with mysteriousness. Whatever is concealed from every perceptive power excludes the possibility of original knowledge. In such a case learning without instruction is impossible. 2. The incomprehensibility of God's nature and ways is often asserted in His Word. Nowhere is the incomprehensibility of God spoken of in Scripture as cause of sorrow to the pious. Our inability to find out the Almighty to perfection is not merely moral, but natural. The same would have been true if man had not sinned. 3. So very wonderful are the perfections of God, compared with the attributes of the most exalted creature, that His nature and ways must always be mysterious, just in proportion to our knowledge of their extent. How should man, as compared with God, have knowledge either extensive or absolute? God's plans are founded on the most perfect knowledge of all things. Man's information is very imperfect both in scope and degree. The moral character of God presents greater wonders than His natural attributes. His moral character—holiness, justice, goodness, truth, faithfulness—is presented in the person and work of Jesus Christ. 4. God has shown Himself to be incomprehensible in His works of creation. Out of nothing God made all things, our bodies and our souls, all we are, all we see, all that is within us, above us, beneath us, around us. Most of our knowledge of God is negative. Our positive knowledge of Him is very limited. There will ever be topless heights of Divine knowledge, to which we shall have to look up with inquiring awe. 5. In God's government and providence are several things which must ever make them incomprehensible to us. How noiseless are most of His doings. But when He chooses He can make our ears to tingle. God hides His works and ways from man by commonly removing results far from human view. God's ways respecting means are very remarkable. He, apparently, often works without means. Perceiving no causes in operation, we expect no effects. God also employs such instruments as greatly confound us. We often tremble to see God pursuing a course which, to our short sight, seems quite contrary to the end to be gained. Lessons—1. The Christian lives and walks by faith, not by sight. 2. As the object of God in all His dealings with His people is His own glory and their eternal good, so they ought heartily to concur in these ends, and labour to promote them. God's glory is more important than the lives of all His creatures. 3. Let us put a watch upon our hearts and lips, lest we should think or say more about God's nature and ways than befits our ignorance and our selfishness. 4. Note how excellent are Divine things. "Divinity is the haven and Sabbath of all man's contemplations." Every honest effort to spread the knowledge of God is praiseworthy. (*W. S. Plumer, D.D.*) *Man can never apprehend first causes*:—All our knowledge is limited, and we can never apprehend the first causes of any phenomena. The force of crystallisation, the force of gravitation and chemical affinity remain in themselves just as incomprehensible as adaptation and inheritance or will and consciousness

(*Haeckel, History of Creation.*) *Man's imperfect knowledge of God* :—If I never saw that creature which contains not something unsearchable; nor the worm so small, but that it affordeth questions to puzzle the greatest philosopher, no wonder, then, if mine eyes fail when I would look at God, my tongue fail me in speaking of Him, and my heart in conceiving. As long as the Athenian inscription doth as well suit with my sacrifices, "To the unknown God," and while I cannot contain the smallest rivulet, it is little I can contain of this immense ocean. We shall never be capable of clearly knowing, till we are capable of fully enjoying; nay, nor till we do actually enjoy Him. What strange conceivings hath a man, born blind, of the sun and its light, or a man born deaf of the nature of sounds and music; so do we yet want that sense by which God must be clearly known. I stand and look upon a heap of ants, and see them all, with one view, very busy to little purpose. They know not me, my being, nature, or thoughts, though I am their fellow-creature, how little, then, must we know of the great Creator, though He with one view continually beholds us all. Yet a knowledge we have, though imperfect, and such as must be done away. A glimpse the saints behold, though but in a glass, which makes us capable of some poor, general, dark apprehensions of what we shall behold in glory. (*R. Baxter.*) *Nature's testimony of God insufficient* :—All nature is incapable of discovering God in a full manner as He may be known. Nature, like Zaccheus, is of too low a stature to see God in the length and breadth, height and depth of His perfections. The key of man's reason answers not to all the wards in the lock of those mysteries. The world at best is but a shadow of God, and therefore cannot discover Him in His magnificent and royal virtues, no more than a shadow can discover the outward beauty, the excellent mien, and the inward endowments of the person whose shadow it is.

Vers. 13–15. **If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands towards Him.**—*The way to happiness* :—I purpose to show you that happiness is within your reach, and to point out the means by which it may be infallibly attained. 1. Prepare your hearts, or rightly dispose and order your hearts especially with reference to subsequent acts and exercises. If we would be truly happy, we must seek happiness within. 1. A prepared heart is thoughtful and considerate. The careless and trifling never attain peace of mind. A prepared heart is a penitent and humble heart. Sin is the great hindrance to human happiness; and the removal of it is therefore absolutely necessary. 2. A prepared mind is a decided mind. The mind thinks with reference to decision; otherwise thinking is a vain employ, a mere mocking of intelligence. If a man decides under that preparedness which serious thoughtfulness, prayer, and the aid of God concur to supply, it will determine to make the cultivation and salvation of the soul the great end of life. 2. Stretch out the hand towards God. This denotes the act and habit of prayer. The expression "stretching forth the hand" is strikingly descriptive of true and prevalent prayer. It was an action over a sacrifice, and it marked man's submission to the rites which God had appointed his trust in them, and his appeal to God upon their presentation. It was an action which acknowledged God as the source of supply and help. It was the action of desire. It was an action of waiting upon God. 3. Personal reformation. "If iniquity be in thine hand put it far away." Those who sin are not generally the men who pray; but some do. They pray both in public and in secret, and yet do not renounce all evil. The most perverse attempt that man has ever made, is to reconcile religion with the practice of sin. This will appear if you consider the only principles upon which such an attempt can be made. It may suppose that God loves religious services for their own sake. Or that God can be deceived by a show of outward piety, if outward morality be superadded, or that men may sin because grace abounds. Or that the end of religion is to save men from punishment. If, then, you have practised iniquity, renounce it entirely, and renounce it for ever. If it be shut up secretly "in thine heart," let it not remain there any longer. Conscience is privy to it, and will smite you for it in your seasons of calm reflection. If the price of iniquity is in your hand, divest yourself of the evil thing. Make restitution to the men you have injured. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." When iniquity is put away then comes true peace. The blessing of God is given, and conscience approves of the act. The consciousness of integrity and uprightness is a source of the purest enjoyment. 4. The fourth direction relates to a godly family discipline. In ancient times the heads of families were the priests. Nor did parents cease, in a very important sense,

to be the priests in their families after the establishment of the Levitical priesthood. In this respect no change has taken place under the Christian dispensation. The office of the head of the family is to instruct his household in the truths of God's law and Gospel. Our ancestors understood this duty. Together with religious concern, there is to be the actual putting away of evil from your families. From a proper course of family discipline and order God's blessing will not be withheld. "For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be steadfast and shalt not fear." "Thy face" shall be "lifted up" in holy confidence towards God; and it shall be undefiled by a spot of guilty shame towards men. (*R. Watson.*) *Heart and hands:*—Zophar tells Job of his faults, and of God's secret knowledge of him, and winds up with the words of the text, which, while they are altogether inappropriate and undeserved in Job's case, are in principle grandly true, in form sweetly beautiful, and may well provide us with pleasant food. "If thou shalt prepare thy heart, and stretch out thine hands toward Him." That is the attitude of supplication, and doubtless has here the idea of prayer. But it has much more than that. It means that the heart and the hands are to go together, are to move in unison; that the hands must do what the heart prompts, and that as the heart is prepared to take in God, the hands are to be at the control of God. The prepared heart receives Christ as guest, and the willing hands are told off to wait upon Him all the time. The stretching of the hands here means also a habit of desire. It includes willing obedience. It is the attitude of one who is willing, waiting, and even eager to be of service. This consecration of the heart, and this dedication of the hands, will lead to the due fulfilment of the next verse, "If iniquity be in thine hands, put it far away." That is to say, all the misdoings of the past are to be sorrowed over, repented of, and put away. Heart and hands are alike to be clean, and a new leaf is to be turned over in the volume of life, no more to be blotted by guilt, or inscribed with the writing of self-condemning sin. Adapt the meaning of Zophar to our day, and it comes to this, no wickedness is to be permitted to dwell under any roof we can call our own. We are to turn it out, and keep it out of our homes, let it have no place by our hearthstones, no shelter in kitchen or parlour. True religious principle will not turn and trifle, will not dally with wrong-doing. "For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot." A manly religion, a godly fidelity will enable a man to look all the world in the face. "Thou shalt not fear." Only true religion can so endow a man. "Perfect love casteth out fear." "Thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away." The good man's life is like a river, ever flowing, through various scenery of mingled barrenness and beauty. The rough, barren, sad, sorrowful, through which it passes, will never, never be reproduced. (*Good Company.*) *The two-fold development of godliness:*—I. GODLINESS DEVELOPED IN THE SPIRITUAL ACTIVITY OF A MAN'S LIFE. The activity which Zophar recommends has a three-fold direction—1. Towards his own heart. "If thou prepare thine heart." 2. Towards the great God. "And stretch out thine hands towards Him." 3. Towards moral evil. "If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away." II. GODLINESS DEVELOPED IN THE SPIRITUAL BLESSEDNESS OF A MAN'S LIFE. Zophar specifies several advantages attending the course he recommended. 1. Cheerfulness of aspect. 2. Steadfastness of mind. 3. Fearlessness of soul. 4. A deliverance from all suffering. 5. Uncloudedness of being. (*Homilist.*) *Change of heart:*—New mental level produces new perspective. There is a form of decision in which, in consequence of some outer experience or some inexplicable inward change, we suddenly pass from the easy and careless to the sober and strenuous mood, or possibly the other way. The whole scale of values of our motives and impulses then undergoes a change like that which a change of the observer's level produces on a view. The most sobering possible agents are objects of grief and fear. When one of these affects us, all "light fantastic" notions lose their motive power, all solemn ones find theirs multiplied manifold. The consequence is an instant abandonment of the more trivial projects with which we had been dallying, and an instant practical acceptance of the more grim and earnest alternative which till then could not extort our mind's consent. All those "changes of heart," "awakenings of conscience," &c., which make new men of so many of us, may be classed under this head. The character abruptly rises to another "level," and deliberation comes to an immediate end. (*Prof. James, Psychology.*)

Ver. 10. **Thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away.**—*Comfort from the future*:—Job's misery was extreme, and it seemed as if he could never forget it. He never did forget the fact of it, but he did forget the pain of it. Nothing better can happen to our misery than that it should be forgotten in the sense referred to in our text; for then, evidently, it will be clean gone from us. It will be as it is when even the scent of the liquor has gone out of the cask, even when the flavour of the bitter drug lingers no longer in the medicine glass, but has altogether disappeared. If you look carefully at the connection of our text, I do not doubt that you will experience this blessed forgetfulness. When we are in pain of body, and depression of spirit, we imagine that we never shall forget such misery as we are enduring. And yet, by and by, God turns towards us the palm of His hand, and we see that it is full of mercy, we are restored to health, or uplifted from depression of spirit, and we wonder that we ever made so much of our former suffering or depression. We remember it no more, except as a thing that has passed and gone, to be recollected with gratitude. I. I am not going to limit the application of the text to Job and his friends, for it has also a message for many of us at the present time; and I shall take it, first, WITH REFERENCE TO THE COMMON TROUBLES OF LIFE WHICH AFFECT BELIEVING MEN AND WOMEN. These troubles of life happen to us all more or less. They come to one in one shape, and perhaps he thinks that he is the only man who has any real misery; yet they also come to others, though possibly in another form. The Lord of the pilgrims was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"; and His disciples must expect to fare even as their Master fared while here below; it is enough for the servant if he be as his lord. You, who are just now enduring misery, should seek to be comforted under it. Perhaps you will ask me, "Where can we get any comfort?" Well, if you cannot draw any from your present experience, seek to gather some from the past. You have been miserable before, but you have been delivered and helped. There has come to you a most substantial benefit from everything which you have been called to endure. Let us gather consolation also from the future. If, as the apostle truly says, "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous," recollect how he goes on to say, "Nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." "Thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away." How will that be? 1. Well, first, by the lapse of time. Time is a wonderful healer. 2. Ay, but there is something better than the lapse of years, and that is when, during a considerable time, you are left without trial. That is a sharp pain you are now enduring; but what if you should have years of health afterwards? Remember how Job forgot his misery when, in a short time, he had double as much of all that he possessed as he had before. There is wonderfully smooth sailing on ahead for some of you when you are once over this little stretch of broken water. 3. And besides the lapse of time, and an interval of rest and calm, it may be—it probably is the fact with God's people—that He has in store for you some great mercies. When the Lord turns your captivity, you will be like them that dream; and you know what happens to men who dream. They wake up; their dream is all gone, they have completely forgotten it. So will it be with your sorrow. Be of good courage in these dark, dull times, for, mayhap this text is God's message to thy soul, "Thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away." It has been so with many, many, many believers in the past. What do you think of Joseph sold for a slave, Joseph falsely accused, Joseph shut up in prison? But when Joseph found out that all that trial was the way to make him ruler over all the land of Egypt, and that he might be the means of saving other nations from famine, and blessing his father's house, I do not wonder that he called his elder son "Manasseh." What does that name mean? "Forgetfulness"—"for God," said he, "hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house." II. I should be greatly rejoiced if, in the second place, I might speak A CHEERING WORD TO POOR SOULS UNDER DISTRESS ON ACCOUNT OF SIN. 1. Well, now, I exhort you, first of all, to look to Christ, and lean on Christ. Trust in His atoning sacrifice, for there alone can a troubled soul find rest. There was never a man yet who, with all his heart, did seek the Lord Jesus Christ, but sooner or later found Him; and if you have been long in seeking, I lay it to the fact that you have not sought with a prepared heart, a thoroughly earnest heart, or else you would have found Him. But, perhaps, taking Zophar's next expression, you have not stretched out your hands toward the Lord, giving yourself up to Him like a man who holds up his hands to show that he surrenders. Further, you may

and you shall forget your misery, provided you fulfil one more condition mentioned by Zophar, and that is, that you are not harbouring any sin: "If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles." "Oh!" you say, "but how am I to do it?" Christ will help you. Trust Him to help you. Oh, do see that you let not wickedness dwell in your tabernacles, you who are the people of God, and you who wish to be His, if you would have Zophar's words to Job fulfilled in your experience, "Then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be stedfast, and shalt not fear: because thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away." III. Now let me tell you HOW SWEETLY GOD CAN MAKE A SINNER FORGET HIS MISERY. 1. The moment a sinner believes in Jesus Christ with true heart and repentant spirit, God makes him forget his misery, first, by giving him a full pardon. 2. Next, he rejoices in all the blessings that God gives with His grace. IV. THIS TEXT WILL COME TRUE TO THE SICKENING, DECLINING, SOON-DEPARTING BELIEVER. If thou hast believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and if thou art resting alone upon Him, recollect that, in a very short time, "thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away." In a very, very, very short time, your suffering and sadness will all be over. I suppose the expression, "waters that pass away," signifies those rivers which are common in the East, and which we meet with so abundantly in the south of France. They are rivers with very broad channels, but I have often looked in vain for a single drop of water in them. "Then," perhaps you ask, "what is the use of such rivers?" Well, at certain times, the mountain torrents come rushing down, bearing great rocks, and stones, and trees before them, and then, after they have surged along the river-bed for several days, they altogether disappear in the sea. Such will all the sorrows of life and the sorrows even of death soon be to you, and to me also. They will all have passed away, and all will be over with us here. And then, you know, those waters that have passed away will never come back again. Thank God, we shall recollect our sorrows in heaven only to praise God for the grace that sustained us under them; but we shall not remember them as a person does who has cut his finger, and who still bears the scar in his flesh. We shall not recollect them as one does who has been wounded, and who carries the bullet somewhere about him. In heaven, you shall not have a trace of earth's sorrow; you shall not have, in your glorified body, or in your perfectly sanctified soul and spirit, any trace of any spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 17. **Thou shalt shine forth.**—*Shining for Jesus:*—A beautiful parable showing how we can live for Christ, by shining for Him, speaks from every lawn covered with hoar-frost in winter. When the sun shines out the frost melts into great dewdrops, and each of these hanging from its blade of grass, is a miniature sun reflecting his bright rays to all around. Thus should every Christian shine for Jesus, and reflect Him to a godless world. When a breeze passes over the dewdrops, and they wave to and fro, then bright-coloured rays are seen—red, blue, and yellow tints shine forth, making them look like sparkling jewels. In the same way the winds of adversity passing over the Christian, enable him to show faith, meekness, patience, and other graces. In joy and sorrow let us shine for Jesus, and reflect Him like the dewdrops in the sunshine. *Secret of a radiant personality:*—Here is one of the secrets of an illuminated life. Associations will have their influence upon us. There is one kind of a diamond which, after it has been exposed for some minutes to the light of the sun, will when taken into a dark room, emit light for a long time. The human heart is like that in many respects. The man who associates with God, whose heart and soul rises in communion with all pure spirits, will gather the heavenly light, and it will shine forth from him in all walks of life. In one of the old palaces the spaces between the windows of one of the rooms are hung with radiant mirrors, and by this skilful device the walls are made just as luminous as the windows through which the sunshine streams. Every square inch of surface reflects the light. Our natures may be like that. If we are completely surrendered and consecrated to God, in perfect fellowship with Jesus, with all selfishness cast out, the whole realm of the soul will be ablaze with moral illumination, which will make the personality radiant and glorious. The bright-coloured soil of volcanic Sicily produces flowers of more beautiful tint than any other part of the world. So a spiritual soil that is bright with the radiance of love, hope, and faith will produce deeds of brighter tint and sweeter fragrance than any other heart soil. (*R. Venting.*)

Ver. 18. **And thou shalt be secure.**—*The practical advantages of religion:*—These words represent to us the comfortable state of that man who has God for his protector and friend; the security and safety which there is in His favour. "He shall be secure, because there is hope"; *i.e.*, whatever may be the present portion of his lot, he needs not to be anxious about the future; he may be easy concerning that, because he has such comfortable ground of expectation from it. If he enjoys the blessings of life, he may enjoy them securely; he has great reason to expect their continuance, and that the providence of God will protect him from all pernicious and fatal accidents. Zophar made this mistake in his reasoning; what was with great reason to be expected from the general course of God's providence, he made an invariable rule of judging and censuring in each single instance. Suppose—1. That the recompenses of vice and virtue were dubious; that the sanctions of the Gospel were not so ascertained as to exclude all scruple and distrust concerning them: even upon this supposal, religion would be much the safest side of the question. When we are considering the danger or the safety which respectively belongs to vice or virtue, in order to a just representation of the matter, we must take into our account the risks and prospects of both sides; what it is which the man of religion and the man of no religion do respectively venture, and what on each side is the propounded recompense. As to religion, the risks, if any, are small and inconsiderable; and its prospects vast and very promising. The risks are ordinarily small in themselves, and always small on comparison. Godliness has the promise of this life. In comparison with its prospects the risks of religion were always inconsiderable. A very encouraging prospect deserves a proportionable venture. So men think, and so they act in the common commerce and dealings of the world. They do not insist upon downright demonstration for the certainty of their success in what they aim at. If the appearances be fair, there is no man who stands debating for more evidence, or refuses reasonable and promising conditions. We desire no more in the business of religion; nay, we need not so much. If religion promises for the general a pleasant and easy passage through this life, and always a state of infinite and endless bliss and glory beyond it; if it promises this, upon reasons as firm and unexceptionable, as the nature of the case, and of such proofs will admit; if with all this vast encouragement, it requires, for the main, no other sacrifice than of such indulgences as would be injurious either to ourselves or others, what account can be given of that monstrous indifference wherewith the notice of so great a gain is commonly entertained? What are the prospects and risks of vice and irreligion? The prospects are inconsiderable, the risks are dangerous and fatal. The promises of vice fall miserably short in the performance. Vice may promise pleasure, but it will pay in pain. The prospects of sin with regard to this life are dark and gloomy; and with regard to the next they are infinitely worse. The risk of the sinner who resolves to persist in his wicked courses, is no less than to encounter the wrath of God, and to arm Divine justice against his own soul. 2. In the favourable circumstances of life and fortune, the good man is best qualified for enjoying them with the least alloy, the least apprehension of a change for the worse. To the righteous it is no abatement of their present felicities that they must exchange them one day for others which shall be brighter and more perfect. They are sure that "when this mortal shall put on immortality," that immortality will be blessed and triumphant. That comfortable hope will balance a good deal against those natural fears of death and dissolution, which otherwise were enough to jar the most harmonious conjunction of the world's blessings. The wicked, even upon their own principles, are entirely destitute of this cordial preservative. The more pleasing life is, the more melancholy (one would think) should be the thought of parting with it. 3. So great is the difference between the case of the good man and the wicked, that, whereas the latter can scarce bear up amid all the affluences of a prosperous fortune, the former has the support of the brightest hopes. The severest pinches of adversity are improved by a religious disposition into occasions of weaning us from the world, and of turning us to God; of strengthening our faith, and of elevating our hope, and of enlarging our spirits towards the Father of them. He who has all his happiness and all his prospects on this side the grave, is miserably disappointed when these are defeated. 4. What mightily heightens the good man's security, both in the misfortunes and felicities of his present state, is the assurance he has of favour with the great Governor of the world, and the Supreme Disposer of all events. We see, therefore, that whatever circumstance or station of life

may be allotted us, religion is necessary to carry us through it with satisfaction and comfort. (*N. Marshall, D.D.*) *The believer's security*:—Faith is the Christian's foundation, and hope his anchor, and death is his harbour, and Christ is his pilot, and heaven is his country; and all the evils of poverty, or affronts of tribunals and evil judges, of fears and sad apprehensions, are but like the loud winds blowing from the night-point—they make a noise, but drive faster to the harbour. And if we do not leave the ship and jump into the sea; quit the interest of religion, and run to the securities of the world; cut our cables and dissolve our hopes; grow impatient; hug a wave and die in its embrace—we are safe at sea, safer in the storm which God sends us, than in a calm when befriended by the world. (*Jeremy Taylor.*)

Ver. 20. **But the eyes of the wicked shall fail . . . and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost.**—*The doom of the wicked*:—1. Here is the loss of energy. "The eyes of the wicked shall fail." The soul's eyes gone, and the spiritual universe is midnight. 2. Here is the loss of safety. "They shall not escape." All efforts directed to safety utterly fruitless. 3. Here is the loss of hope. "Their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost." The idea is that the loss of hope is like death, the separation of the soul from the body. What the soul is to the body, the dominant hope is to the soul, the inspirer of its energies and the spring of its being. The loss of the dominant hope is like death in two respects. (1) In respect to its painfulness. The loss of the dominant hope is like death—(2) In respect to its ruinousness. When hope takes her exit from the soul all beauty departs, all pleasures end, all usefulness is gone. (*Homilist.*) *Delusive hopes of ungodly men*:—Like many a sick man that I have known in the beginning of a consumption, or some grievous disease, they hope there is no danger in it; or they hope it will go away of itself, and it is but some cold; or they hope that such and such medicine will cure it, till they are past hope, and then they must give up these hopes and their lives together, whether they will or no. Just so do poor wretches by their souls. They know that all is not well with them, but they hope God is merciful, that He will not condemn them; or they hope to be converted sometime hereafter; or they hope that less ado may serve their turn, and that their good wishes and prayers may save their souls; and thus in these hopes they hold on, till they find themselves to be past remedy, and their hopes and they be dead together. There is scarcely a greater hindrance of conversion than these false, deceiving hopes of sinners. (*R. Baxter.*)

CHAPTER XII.

VERS. 1–5. **But I have understanding as well as you.**—*The effect of the friends' speeches upon Job*:—The whole world, Job feels, is against him, and he is left forlorn and solitary, unpitied in his misery, unguided in his perplexity. And he may well feel so. All the religious thought of his day, all the traditions of the past, all the wisdom of the patriarchal Church, if I may use, as I surely may, the expression, is on one side. He, that solitary sufferer and doubter, is on the other. And this is not all, or the worst. His own habits of thought, his own training, are arrayed against him. He had been nursed, it is abundantly clear, in the same creed as those who feel forced to play the part of his spiritual advisers. The new and terrible experience of this crushing affliction, of this appalling visitation, falling upon one who had passed his life in the devout service of God, strikes at the very foundation of the faith on which that life, so peaceful, so pious, and so blessed, as it has been put before us in the prologue to the tragedy, has been based and built up. All seems against him; his friends, his God, his pains and anguish, his own tumultuous thoughts; all but one voice within, which will not be silenced or coerced. How easy for him, had he been reared in a heathen creed, to say, "My past life must have been a delusion; my conscience has borne me false witness. I did justice, I loved mercy, I walked humbly with my God. But I must in some way, I know not how, have offended a capricious and arbitrary, but an all-powerful and remorseless Being. I will allow with you that that life was all vitiated by some act of omission or of commission of which I know nothing.

Him therefore who has sent His furies to plague me, I will now try to propitiate." But no! Job will not come before his God, a God of righteousness, holiness, and truth, with a lie on his lips. And so he now stands stubbornly at bay, and in this and the following two chapters he bursts forth afresh with a strain of scorn and upbraiding that dies away into despair, as he turns from his human tormentors, once his friends, to the God who seems, like them, to have become his foe, but to whom he clings with an indomitable tenacity. (*Dean Bradley.*) *Independency of thought in religion* :—Now in these verses Job asserts his moral manhood, he rises from the pressure of his sufferings and the loads of sophistry and implied calumny which his friends had laid upon his spirit, speaks out with the heart of a true man. We have an illustration of independency of thought in religion, and this shall be our subject. A man though crushed in every respect, like Job, should not surrender this. I. FROM THE CAPACITY OF THE SOUL. 1. Man has a capacity to form conceptions of the cardinal principles of religion. He can think of God, the soul, duty, moral obligation, Christ, immortality, &c. 2. Man has a capacity to realise the practical force of these conceptions. He can turn them into emotions to fire his soul; he can embody them as principles in his life. II. FROM THE DESPOTISM OF CORRUPT RELIGION. Corrupt religion, whether Pagan or Christian, Papal or Protestant, always seeks to crush this independency in the individual soul. III. FROM THE NECESSARY MEANS OF PERSONAL RELIGION. Religion in the soul begins in individual thinking. IV. FROM THE CONDITIONS OF MORAL USEFULNESS. Every man is bound to be spiritually useful, but he cannot be so without knowledge, and knowledge implies independent study and conviction. V. FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THE BIBLE. The very existence of the Bible implies our power and obligation in this matter. VI. FROM THE TRANSACTIONS OF THE JUDGMENT. In the great day of God men will have to give an account of their thoughts and words as well as deeds. Let us, therefore, have the spirit of Job, and when amongst bigots who seek to impose their views on us and override our jdgument, let us say, "No doubt ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you; but I have understanding as well as you." (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 4. **I am as one mocked of his neighbour, who calleth upon God, and He answereth.**—*The man who gets answers may mock him who gets none* :—The antecedent to "who" seems to be uncertain. It may be Job; it may be the neighbour about whom Job speaks. They who have had experience of God's tenderness to help them and hear their prayers, should be very tender to others, when they call to them, and seek their help. Learn—1. It is the privilege of the saints, when men fail and reject them, to make God their refuge and their recourse to heaven. 2. The repulses which we meet with in the world, should drive us nearer to God. 3. Prayer and seeking unto God are not in vain or fruitless. 4. As it is sinful, so it is extremely dangerous to mock those who have the ear of God, or acceptance with God in prayer. (*Joseph Caryl.*)

Ver. 7. **But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee.**—*An appeal to the living creatures* :—Rosenmüller supposes that this appeal to the inferior creation should be regarded as connected with verse 3, and that the intermediate verses are parenthetic. Zophar had spoken with considerable parade of the wisdom of God. He professed to have exalted views of the Most High. In reply to this, Job says that the views which Zophar had expressed were the most commonplace imaginable. He need not pretend to be acquainted with the more exalted works of God, or appeal to them as if his knowledge corresponded with them. Even the lower creation—the brutes, the earth, the fishes—could teach him knowledge which he had not now. Even from their nature, properties and modes of life, higher views might be obtained than Zophar had. Others suppose the meaning is that in the distribution of happiness, God is so far from observing moral relations that even among the lower animals, the rapacious and the violent are prospered, and the gentle and innocent are the victims. Lions, wolves, and panthers are prospered—the lamb, the kid, the gazelle are the victims. The object of Job is that rewards and punishments are not distributed according to character. This is seen all over the world, and not only among men, but even in the brute creation. Everywhere the strong prey upon the weak; the fierce upon the tame; the violent upon the timid. Yet God does not come forth to destroy the lion and the hyena, or to deliver the lamb and the gazelle from their grasp.

Like robbers, lions, panthers, and wolves prowl upon the earth; and the eagle and the vulture from the air pounce upon the defenceless; and the great robbers of the deep prey upon the feeble, and still are prospered. What a striking illustration of the course of events among men, and of the relative condition of the righteous and the wicked. (*Albert Barnes.*) *Religious lessons taught to man:*— 1. The great lesson which the animal creation, regarded simply as the creature and subject of God, is fitted to teach us, is a lesson of the wisdom and power and constant beneficence of God. Job reminds the friends that what they had been laying down to him in so pompous a manner constituted only the mere elements of natural religion, and that a man had only to look around him and observe and ponder the phenomena of the visible universe, to be abundantly convinced that God, the maker of all things, was also the upholder of all things, and the supreme disposer of all events. Job sends us to the animal creation that we may gather from it instances of the greatness of the Creator's hand, and the constancy of the Creator's providence. Himself invisible, God is revealed in all the work of His hands, and it needs but the observing eye and the candid judgment to satisfy every one of His being and His perfections. God reveals Himself no less in the lapse of events than in the arrangements of creation. There is no nation, there is no household, but has in the record of its own experience abundant manifestations of His constant, and wise, and gracious superintendence of the affairs of earth. In the lesson which is thus taught to us concerning God, the animal creation bears its part. Not one of the creatures but is "fearfully and wonderfully made"; not one of them but is wisely and mercifully provided for. For every one of them there is a place, and to this each is adapted with transcendent skill and beneficence. Even the lower animals may be our teachers and speak to us of God. 2. The way in which the creatures spend their life, and use the powers which God has given them. In many respects they are examples to us, and by the propriety of their conduct rebuke the folly and wickedness of ours. The beasts, &c., will teach us the following things as characteristic of their manner of life. (1) They constantly and unceasingly fulfil the end of their being. (2) They are seen always to live according to their nature. (3) They teach us to seek happiness according to our nature and capacity, and with a prudent foresight to avoid occasions of disaster and sorrow. Man stands rebuked by "the brutes that perish." (*W. Lindsay Alexander, D.D.*) *Does God treat men here according to character?*—I. THE EXPERIENCE OF HUMAN LIFE. The fact that Job here refers to—the prosperity of wicked men, may be regarded—1. As one of the most common facts of human experience. All men in all lands and ages have observed it, and still observe it. It is capable of easy explanation: the conditions of worldly prosperity are such that sometimes the wicked man can attend to them in a more efficient way than the righteous. As a rule, the more greed, cunning, tact, activity, and the less conscience and modesty a man has, the more likely he is to succeed in the scramble for wealth. 2. One of the most perplexing facts in human experience. What thoughtful man in passing through life has not asked a hundred times, "Wherefore do the wicked prosper?" and has not felt, with Asaph, stumbling into infidelity as he saw the prosperity of the wicked? 3. One of the most predictive facts in human experience. This fact points to retribution. II. THE HISTORY OF INFERIOR LIFE. "But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee," &c. Solomon sends us to the ant; Agur to the coney, the locust, the spider; Isaiah to the ox and the ass; Jeremiah to the stork, the turtle-dove, the crane, the swallow; and the Heavenly Teacher Himself to the fowls of the air. Job's argument is that the same lack of interference on God's part in the free operations of men in this life, in punishing the wicked and rewarding the good, you see around you in all the lower stages of life. Look to the beasts of the field. Does the Governor of the world interfere to crush the lion, the tiger, the panther, or the wolf from devouring the feebler creation of His hands? Does He come to the rescue of the shrieking, suffering victims? Behold the "fowls of the air." See the eagle, the vulture, the hawk pouncing down on the dove, the thrush, the blackbird, or the robin. Does He interfere to arrest their flight, or curb their savage instincts? "Speak to the earth." See the noxious weeds choking the flowers, stealing away life from the fruit-trees, does He send a blast to wither the pernicious herb? Not He. Turn to the "fishes of the sea." Does He prevent the whale, the shark, and other monsters from devouring the smaller tenants of the deep? No; He allows all these creatures to develop their instincts and their propensities. It is even so with man. He allows man full scope here

to work out what is in him, to get what he can. III. THE MAXIMS OF PHILOSOPHIC LIFE. "Doth not the ear try His words? and the mouth taste His meat? With the ancient is wisdom, and in length of days is understanding." There is something like a syllogism in this verse. 1. That the more the mind exercises itself upon moral questions, the more capable it is to pronounce a correct judgment. Just as the gourmand gets a nicer appreciation of the qualities of wines and viands as he exercises his palate, so the mind gets a clearer conception of things the more it makes them the subject of reflection. 2. That the ancients did greatly exercise their minds on these subjects, and therefore their judgment is to be taken, and it confirms Job's conclusions. (*Homilist.*) *Our duty to the creatures* :—In order to enforce the moral and religious duty which we all owe to the inferior creatures, consider—I. THE NATURE OF OUR AUTHORITY OVER THEM. 1. It arises out of that capacity of reason which places us above them. And as reason is our great distinction and prerogative, it is that alone which is to influence us in the exercise of the power which it has entrusted to our hands. As these creatures are endowed with a capacity to enjoy pleasure, and as abundant provision is made for the gratification of their several senses, reason teaches us to conclude that the Creator wills their happiness, and that our nobler faculties are to be employed, not in counteracting, but in furthering His benevolent purpose. Whatever unnecessarily deprives them of any portion of their enjoyment, violates the authority of reason, and deposes the sovereign of the lower world from that throne which he converts into an engine of tyranny and oppression. 2. This, likewise, is constituted authority. Man has received the creatures by an original grant from the hands of their Maker. In virtue of this all-comprehensive endowment, the investiture of property is added to the natural authority of reason, so that we have an unquestionable right to make all the tribes of being subservient to our interest. But our authority is limited—it is the authority of men over dependents, not of demons over their victims. We are not at liberty to use the creatures as we please. Where necessity ends, inhumanity begins. The meanest reptile on earth has its inalienable rights, and it is at our peril that we immolate them on the altar of our hard-hearted selfishness. The persecuted, injured, suffering children in nature's universal family are not forgotten by their beneficent Parent, nor will their wrongs remain unredressed. II. THEIR CLAIMS UPON OUR HUMANITY AND KINDNESS. The creatures who are beneath us ought not only to be protected from ill-treatment, but they are entitled to humane and benevolent consideration, as parts of the great family specially committed to our guardianship. Many, who would shrink from the imputation of cruelty, by a constitutional indifference to the wants and sufferings of the beings around them, are really chargeable with all the wretchedness which it is in their power to prevent and alleviate. A wise and considerate humanity in its direct operation is most beneficial to universal happiness; and in its indirect influence as an example, fails not to deter many an incipient offender from the premeditated act of cruelty, while it gently diffuses its own benignant spirit through the circle in which it unostentatiously moves, protecting, saving, blessing all. And nothing tends to our felicity so much as cherished feeling of enlightened benevolence. Many reasons may be assigned why the inferior creatures ought to excite in us such a spirit. 1. They are the creatures of God. 2. They have the same origin with ourselves. 3. They are the care of Divine providence. 4. Their claims arise out of the lessons they teach. 5. They confer on us innumerable benefits of another kind. Of the general usefulness of the creatures we have the most palpable evidence every day. 6. Remember their susceptibility to pain. And we may add—7. That these creatures owe all their natural sufferings to the fall of man; and to him therefore they have a right to look for sympathy. (*J. Styles, D.D.*)

Ver. 8. **Speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee.**—*The teaching of the earth* :—To the attentive ear all the earth is eloquent; to the reflecting mind all nature is symbolical. Each object has a voice which reaches the inner ear, and speaks lessons of wise and solemn import. The stream murmurs unceasingly its secrets; Sibylline breeze in mountain glens and in lonely forests sighs forth its oracles. The face of nature is everywhere written over with Divine characters which he who runs may read. But beside the more obvious lessons which lie as it were on the surface of the earth, and which suggest themselves to us often when least disposed for inquiry or reflection, there are more recondite lessons which she teaches to those who make her structure and arrangements their special study, and who penetrate

to her secret arcana. She has loud tones for the careless and superficial, and low suggestive whispers to those who hear with an instructed and attentive mind. And those who read her great volume, admiring with the poet and lover of nature the richly-coloured and elaborate frontispieces and illustrations, but not arrested by these—passing on, leaf after leaf, to the quiet and sober chapters of the interior—will find in these internal details revelations of the deepest interest. As we step over the threshold, and penetrate into the inner chambers of nature's temple, we may leave behind us the beauty of the gardens and ornamented parterres; but we shall find new objects to compensate us: cartoons more wonderful than those of Raphael adorning the walls; friezes grander than those of the Parthenon; sculptures more awe-inspiring than those which have been disinterred from the temples of Karnak and Assyria. In descending into the crust of the earth, we lose sight of the rich robe of vegetation which adorns the surface, the beauties of tree and flower, forest, hill, and river, and the ever-changing splendours of the sky; but we shall observe enough to make up for it all in the extraordinary relics of ancient worlds, strewn around us and beneath our feet. This lesson which the earth teaches, it may be said, is a very sombre and depressing one. True in one sense; but it is also very salutary. Besides, there is consolation mingled with it. The teaching of the earth does not leave man humbled and prostrated. While it casts down his haughty and unwarrantable pretensions, it also enkindles aspirations of the noblest kind. While it shows to him the shortness of his pedigree, it also reveals to him the greatness of his destiny. It declares most distinctly, that the present creation exceeds all the prior creations of which the different strata of the earth bear testimony, and that the human race occupies the foremost place among terrestrial creatures. It teaches unmistakably that there has been a gradual course of preparation for the present epoch—that "all the time-worlds of the past are satellites of the human period." There are a thousand evidences of this in the nature and arrangement of the earth's materials, so clear and obvious that it is impossible to misunderstand them. The nature of the soil on the surface; the value, abundance, and accessibility of the metals and minerals beneath; the arrangement of the various strata of rock into mountain and valley, river and ocean-bed: all these circumstances, which have had a powerful influence in determining the settlement, the history, and the character of the human race, were not fortuitous—left to the wild, passionate caprices of nature—but have been subjected to law and compelled to subserve the interests of humanity. The carboniferous strata themselves, their geographical range, and the mode in which they have been made accessible and workable by volcanic eruptions, clearly evince a controlling power—a designing purpose wisely and benevolently preparing for man's comfortable and useful occupancy of the earth. Some object that the teaching of the earth is delusive and uncertain. This opinion is fostered by the varied, and, in many cases, conflicting readings and interpretations of the geological record. Theories have been formed which more advanced knowledge has demonstrated to be false and untenable; and these hasty conclusions have tended in some measure to throw discredit upon the whole study, by giving it a vague appearance. It was to have been expected beforehand that a science, offering such great temptations to speculation, so fresh and young and buoyant, with such boundless fields for roaming before her, would have been excited to some extent by the vagaries of fancy, and that individuals on the slenderest data would build up the most elaborate structures. But geology, upon the whole, has been less encumbered with these than perhaps any other science; and the researches of its students have been conducted in a singularly calm and philosophical spirit. Every step has been deliberately taken; every acquisition made to its domains has been carefully surveyed; and hence, we are at this moment in possession of a mass of observations which, considering the very recent origin of the science, is truly astonishing, and which is entitled to the utmost confidence. Furthermore, the teaching of the earth is not irreligious—is not calculated to undermine our faith in the inspiration of the Bible, and to nurture infidel propensities. This objection has been frequently brought against it, and urged with vehemence and rancour; and a feeling of repulsion, a strong and unreasonable prejudice, has in consequence been raised against it in the minds of many pious and estimable individuals. They look upon the science with dread, and place the study of it in the same category with that of the blasphemous dogmas of the Rational School. I believe that a careful study of the leading works, and accumulated facts of geology, by any candid, unbiassed mind, will result in the conviction that nothing connected with

the progress of science has ever yet truly infringed the integrity of revelation. (*Hugh Macmillan, D.D.*) *The Gospel of nature*:—And what on Job's lips was irony and taunt stands for something totally different to many of you. You have come from the great cities where you know the world, but not the earth, and you wish that here earth and sea would teach you some secret of mental renewal and physical recuperation. And the more devout among you will wish that you might speak to the earth and it might teach you of the great and eternal God. Such teaching would be in harmony with many of the passages in the Old Testament. It is true that, except in the Song of Songs, with its vineyards a-blossom and a-bud, with its gardens astir with fragrance, and with its streams that flow from Lebanon, the Old Testament reveals little feeling for scenery as scenery. But right through all its books there is an evident appreciation of earth and sea and mountains and stars, as revealing the greatness of the Creator. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork." "He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap." "The sea is His and He made it." From such sayings as these you can learn how good men stood amazed in the midst of creation, and strained reverent eyes towards the High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity. There are those on both sides who speak as though religion and science are set in eternal antagonism, and too often the laboratory is regarded as the natural enemy of the temple. But as a matter of fact, science is really a side chapel in the great cathedral of humanity, upbuilt by the reverence and worship of the world. The most capable man of science is the man who is best endowed with capacity for thinking God's thoughts after Him. And the more we learn of the wonders of creation, the greater the marvel of Him who created and sustains. Hence it comes to pass that whatever the scientist may say, science itself makes for an intensifying of religion. It would seem, then, that if we speak to the earth it can teach us something about religion. The shimmering sea, the bold black rocks, the sun flooding headland and sands with a searching splendour can tell us of the greatness and power of Him who conceived, created, and sustains the marvel of their appearing. Nature is the garment of God. So far, then, the beginnings of a religion. But man is so made that he wants more than the garment of the Divine. The robe is magnificent, but what of the heart that beats beneath? After Solomon was dead there grew up a legend that his regal garments shrouded a heart of fire. Do the fires that glow at the earth centre represent the heart of God, or where may we turn for our revelation? A religion begins when men learn something, anything, about God. But a Gospel only begins when men learn about His heart. And there is no original Gospel of nature. But to begin with, all that the earth shows you is a God of power and wisdom. Now, the important thing in a revelation of God is not simply that you know Him, but the character of the God that you know. It were better, perhaps, for men not to be aware of a God who is less than righteousness and love. And the only God that nature shows you is a personification of energy and wisdom. Further, much that might seem informing in nature concerning God would be absolutely misleading. There is one side of the world process that Tennyson speaks of as "Nature red in tooth and claw." By that he means that one part of the animal creation lives on the other. The tiger rends the fawn, and the pike will feed on the smaller fish. Is God, then, callous to cruelty? We cannot believe that He is. Yet it is something beyond nature that teaches us to trust there is some hidden meaning in all this that at present we do not see. But, mind you, we dare to hope this because we know something of the heart of God. We do not learn it from nature. Not all the cold heights of the snow-crowned Alps, and not all the deeps of the big blue sea could have taught us this. They could give us the beginnings of a religion. But heart cries to heart, and your heart wants to know about the heart of the Eternal. It is knowledge of the heart of God that makes a Gospel. And you must turn elsewhere for that. And to where shall you turn? Where, indeed, save to the Christ? True Christianity is an exposition of a Personality, and the Personality of Christ was an expression of the heart of God. Therefore, it is to Him that you must look when you are in search of a Gospel. And once you have found a Gospel in Christ, then you may find a Gospel in nature. And how? Job says, "Speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee." We have seen that he was right in so far as we ask the earth to teach us of the wisdom and power of God. But it has no original message beyond that. It is echo and not originality that enables it to speak forth a Gospel. In the matter of the higher phases of religion, nature

gives to you essentially what you first give her. She intensifies, glorifies, clarifies what you know already of the heart of God, but she cannot originate a Gospel. For proof of the fact that you only get from nature in the spiritual sphere what you first give to her, you have only to think of her varying interpretation in the minds of different men. Take, for example, say Wordsworth and Matthew Arnold. Arnold was a Stoic, born out of due time, and so he found in nature what was first shown him in his shadowed heart. He tells us himself how he looked out on the beach at Dover when the night was calm, and the full, spacious tide was flooded with moonlight. Most of us at such an hour would have gazed, subdued to tranquillity. But Arnold heard the shifting pebbles grating on the shore, and the tremulous cadence of the waves brought for him

The eternal note of sadness in.

And where Wordsworth would have felt that the goodness of God was rimming a world with the glory of a heavenly light, he only thought with Sophocles of the turbid ebb and flow of human misery. And to him the outgoing tide represented the receding of the sea of faith, and he only heard—

Its melancholy long-withdrawing roar,
Retreating to the breath
Of the night wind, down the vast edge drear
And naked shingles of the world.

That is to say, he heard bodied forth in the sounding sea the sombre intuitions and dismal forebodings of his own soul. Now, Wordsworth, with all his austerity of demeanour, was an optimist, and his most sombre moods are touched with a quiet gladness. He believed in a gentle God, and he had high hopes for man, and nature yielded him a Gospel that was one with his beliefs. So, when he looked out on the fields, it was his faith

. . . That every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

This meant that he enjoyed the air. And because in his own soul there glowed "the light that never was on sea or land," therefore, when he stood on some headland, and saw the sun rise, he knew a visitation from the living God, and was wrapt into a still communion and ecstasy of thanksgiving. Nature gave back to him, intensified and clarified, the Gospel he first gave to her. And the supreme message of this sermon this morning is a deduction from what I have just said. You are on holiday, and detached from the workaday world, and hence you have leisure for spiritual culture. I would, therefore, have you realise the facts of your religion, and call the sleeping spiritualities of your soul to life. I would bid you recall all you have ever known and hoped of the love of God, all you have ever felt of the imperativeness of the good life. And with these ideas consciously in your mind look out on nature for that which shall symbolise them, and so make them more clear and more beautiful to your soul. See in the white foam of some spreading wave an emblem of that purity that is so earnestly to be desired. See in the anemone that clings to the rock a suggestion of the tenacity with which you should hold to the bed-rock of moral principle that is your spiritual safety; and realise that as each tide leaves the anemone the more developed for its engulfing, so, though faithfulness to principle means a whelming beneath waves of trouble, yet shall you grow the more spiritually strong what time the waters of affliction compass you round about. If you go into the country, and walk through the fields white to harvest, think of Him who walked as you two thousand years ago. And as you realise that their beauty is the sacrifice of the earth that men may live, remember Him who died in the very summer of His manhood, that life everlasting might be ours. "O loving God, if Thou art so lovely in Thy creatures, how lovely must Thou be in Thyself." It is to the reverent soul and the devout mind that nature yields a Gospel. (*J. G. Stevenson.*) *After the holiday:*—St. Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. xiv. 10) says, "There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and no kind is without signification." He means, I suppose, that God has many ways of teaching men. It may be that there is a teacher for every faculty—for every avenue into the soul. A teacher for the ear—"holy men spake as they

were moved by the Holy Ghost." A teacher for the eye—for we are bidden by the Great Teacher to lift up our eyes and look on the fields, the flowers, the birds, the corn. In this age of much printing and many books, we too often think that we are learning only when we are reading. A man is regarded as a student who is always poring over books. But there were great students before there were books. Books are only transcripts of things, or if they are not they ought to be—records of what their authors saw or heard, or felt or imagined; and their value is in proportion to their fidelity to the sights, sounds, feelings, imaginations which proceeded. So that highly as we should value books, there are things more valuable—teachers greater than books. The earth is a greater, more reliable, more inspiring teacher than any books about her. The greatest learn of the earth itself. Sir Isaac Newton learnt of the earth more than of books. Charles Darwin spent his days in contact with nature far more than in his library. And the Great Teacher, Jesus Christ, felt this. I think He was a greater student of things than of books. And whilst He pointed men to the law and the prophets, He also pointed them to the earth as their teacher. His word "consider," in such passages as "Consider the lilies of the field," "Consider the ravens," implies careful observation and reflection. As most of you know, I have been among the mountains, and these have chiefly been my teachers. 1. Now, how has all this beauty come into being? By delicate and gentle methods, such as the artist's when he paints a picture? No, the very reverse of this has been the case. All this glory of form and colour is the result of the mightiest forces—forces which seemed to be only destructive—which no one would have thought tended to beauty; but they have. The glory of the mountains is the result of a mighty struggle. They are not the children of peace, but of a sword. And is it not so in life? The beauty of holiness—how is that wrought, by peaceful, quiet means, by "the rest and be thankful" method? No, by a similar strife. Just as God moulds these great mountains by forces that seem only destructive, so He moulds human life by means that seem cruel, but are not—by difficulty, by adversity, by loss, by sorrow, by things from which we shrink. But if these were taken out of life, how poor a set of beings we should be. The struggle which made the mountains was of long duration. Geology used to regard the earth as thrown into its present form by great and sudden upheavals. It is now generally admitted that the method was far slower and more gradual. And is it not so with the glory of character? That is not the child of one sharp, sudden, decisive struggle, though such may have contributed to its formation, but of long-continued strife against evil and long-continued pursuit of good. It is by the patient continuance in well-doing that the prize of eternal life is won. We cry, Are we never to rest on our arms—never to repose in our tents—never utter the victor's shout? Were it so the glory would be gone from life. Life would become dull and commonplace. The glory of life is in the conflict! 2. The mountains tell us not to judge by appearance. Few things are more deceptive in appearance than mountains. They belong to a land of illusion. You look at a great mountain like Mont Blanc, and to climb it seems only like a morning's walk across the snow. Some of the peaks near it which are far lower—some by thousands of feet—look as high or even higher. It is not till you bring the telescope to your aid that you realise the vastness of its height. The earth teaches no lesson more strongly than this, "Judge not by appearance." Appearances nearly always mislead. Is it not so in the human realm? Here appearances conceal quite as often as they reveal. I once had a very sharp lesson on this point. I was at a conversazione, and noticed a man whose head and face were guiltless of the smallest scrap of hair. You know the look this gives. I said to a friend near me, "Who is that idiot?" He replied, "Professor ——, the great authority on international law." I have never forgotten that incident. Since then I have remembered that the jewel may be in the leaden rather than the golden casket. 3. The earth teaches us that there are things beyond description. Beyond description in words, beyond description even in painting. Leslie Stephen, one of the most renowned of Alpine climbers, in a recent book says, "He has seen, and tried for years to tell, how he is impressed by his beloved scenery, and annoyed by his own bungling whenever he has tried to get beyond arithmetical statements of hard geographical facts." With an envious sort of feeling he tells how Tennyson, who had never been higher than 7000 feet, was able to accomplish, through the genius of the poet, what he, with his far larger knowledge of the Alps, had never been able to do. He

refers to a four-line stanza, which describes Monte Rosa as seen from the roof of Milan Cathedral, as really describing mountain glory. Here are the lines—

How faintly flushed, how phantom-fair
Was Monte Rosa hanging there;
A thousand shadowy-pencilled valleys,
And snowy dales in golden air.

That is lovely, but even that would give no idea, to one who had never seen, of the surpassing glory of that great mountain. Here lies the preacher's difficulty. He has to speak of that which is beyond language to express. Even the apostles felt this difficulty, and so they spoke of a "peace which passeth understanding," of "a joy unspeakable and full of glory"; of "the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." But what eye cannot see, or ear hear, or the heart conceive, God reveals by His Spirit. (*W. G. Horder.*) *The discipline of life*:—Speak to the earth, and it will teach thee of God; of order; of man; of thyself. It cannot teach thee more. Consult the higher Teacher. Two kinds of agency enter into the discipline of life. There are first the elements that constitute the matter of life itself. These elements are such as make the inward and outward history of the individual being: parentage, education, examples, tendencies and temperaments. The matter which makes the history of life continues always to be an influence of life. The course of our studies, the activity of our business, the nature of our opinions, and of our friendships, the force of our affections, our health and sickness, our success or failure, our poverty or wealth, or ideas of poverty and wealth—all, in fact, that makes the sum of our being, physical, social, moral, and spiritual. The second kind of agency is that which we exercise of ourselves, and upon ourselves. A man is thus both the object and the agent of his own discipline. This kind of discipline cannot be too early begun, it cannot be too late continued. It may be too long deferred. It is by this agency of ourselves that we turn all things to account, that we make them our true property. But what is this discipline to act on? What is any education to act on, but on the human being, on the soul and its manifestations, on thought, on feeling, on habit, on conduct? It requires some discipline to think, in the true sense, at all. Whenever a real thought is born, it first meets with resistance, but when accepted, soon becomes a tradition. Feeling not under the guidance of thought is but blind impulse, and habits growing out of such impulse, even if blameless, become only mechanical routine. What is life for? The end of discipline is to make life that for which it is given. By deciding what that is, we determine at once the purpose of life, and the direction of its culture—moral and spiritual. Life, then, is for action, for work; for action and for work in the order of duty and of goodness. (*Henry Giles.*) *The harvest*:—Each season has its appropriate moral. Each lays upon us its own solemn obligation and duty. From a general and even a cursory sketch of the outward world, every one must confess that the Almighty Maker of all things is a being of infinite benevolence and goodness. In connection with this fact of His benevolence, we must also feel our own constant dependence upon His bounty. There is incessant illustration of Divine providence. We cannot but view the constant reproduction of sustenance for mankind as a strong argument for Christian cheerfulness. But the facts of the harvest teach us, both in reference to our temporal affairs, and the more important concerns that relate to our everlasting salvation—where God operates, man must co-operate. "Speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee." As we watch the anxious husbandman placing his corn-seed into the ground, let every soul that is anxious for the spiritual improvement of those around it take courage. "In due time he shall reap, if he faint not." Let our thoughts pass from the present life, which we spend here on earth as a shadow, unto that day, which cannot be far from any, when we ourselves shall be, in our bodies, sown for the great harvest of the assembled universe. That sowing cannot be contemplated by any one without sensations of the profoundest awe and interest. (*Thomas Jackson, M.A.*) *Whispers of the spring*:—The argument of the patriarch is based on the fact that the hand of God is to be traced everywhere in nature and in human life. The words of the text are a striking expression of the truth that—I. THE EARTH IS A MATERIAL SYMBOL OF SPIRITUAL IDEAS. This thought has ever been dear to spiritual minds. They have loved to trace in visible nature suggestions regarding the invisible. It was pre-eminently characteristic of the Hebrews that they associated God with all natural pheno-

mena. When Christ came He added intensity to the idea by connecting God with all natural life in its most commonplace as in its grandest manifestations. So the idea took possession of the Christian Church that nature and Scripture are but two pages of one revelation. II. IT IS FOR US TO INTERPRET ITS SYMBOLISM AND FIND ITS HIDDEN MEANINGS. Restrict attention to lessons suggested by the returning spring. What whisperings of hope, of trust, of joy may the inner ear catch as we speak to the earth in this season of its re-creation. 1. Speak, and it will teach thee of its Author. We see everywhere the operation of a marvellous power. Everywhere life and beauty are manifesting themselves. You may find secondary causes to explain the phenomena, but at last you are driven to the necessity of recognising one great first cause. 2. Speak to the earth, and it will teach thee of God's superabounding care for the lowliest forms of life. The lowliest forms are shaped with the same care, and adorned with the same profusion that belong to the mightiest creations of God. 3. Speak to the earth, and it will teach thee that God means our human life to be bright and joyous. God recognises our innate sense of beauty, the imagination, the heart, with its chambers of imagery, and He makes appeal to this sense in the loveliness with which this spring season adorns the earth. Be not afraid of joy and brightness in life; they are no foes of a true spirituality. 4. Speak to the earth, and it will teach thee lessons of hopefulness. (1) It whispers a message of hope for the mourner. What is this springtide but nature's resurrection morning? (2) Spring whispers a message of hope for all who have been defeated in life's conflict. We see a hint in this season that a new start in life is possible. (3) It whispers a message of hope for all who seek the world's improvement. He who labours for the spiritual and moral advancement of his fellows must needs have faith and patience. III. SPEAK THEN TO THE EARTH. 1. Hold frequent communion with nature. Such a habit expands the mind and refines the feelings. 2. Bring to the study of nature a spiritual heart. The "dry light of reason" is not enough if you would hear the subtlest whispers of nature's voice. 3. Connect, as Christ did, all nature with God. He is the centre and all-pervading Spirit. Without the Divine idea nature is a harp from which the strings have been taken, a riddle to which there is no answer, a mystery without possibility of solution. (*James Legge, M.A.*) *Man and nature*:—In this age of bustle and toil, when the time set apart for quiet meditation and real recreation is so limited, we feel the more indebted to nature for the comforting cheer she brings us. One of the saddest things about our modern civilisation is that so many thousands of our fellow-creatures have so little opportunity for obtaining instruction and pleasure from the sights and sounds of nature. The world of nature is in a very real sense our other self. When we stretch out our hands we feel her; we open our eyes and behold her; and her voices fill our ears. Our flesh is made of her dust; our nerves quiver with her energy; our blood is red with the life drawn from her bosom. In us is the principle of life, but in the surrounding world of nature are the conditions of that life. "Speak to the earth and it shall teach thee." With how many voices does she speak to us! The world of nature is like its God, entire wherever we see a touch of His finger, whole in every one of its parts. In our own thoughts we detect irregularity, uncertainty, and imperfection; but in nature all is regular, blameless, and perfect. We can never sufficiently admire the perfection and harmony of nature's works; even the lowest and smallest organisms, or the most delicate parts of these, like the fertilising parts of plants, are carried out with an infinite care and untiring labour, as if this particular part of nature were the only part, and that upon it she had been free to expend all her art and all her power. She never tires, never bungles her work. Not once or twice has she produced her masterpieces of workmanship, but myriads of times. And the same ideal perfection is to be found everywhere—perfection infinitely repeated. The abundance of natural beauty invites our most serious contemplation and presses itself upon our consideration. Disclosing itself to our view it will, almost without fail, deliver us from the care and anxiety of the moment. It will lift us out of present selfishness or foreboding fears and place us in a state of quiet rest. This is why a man who is tormented by passion or deep sorrow is revived and restored and sent on his way stronger in hope and abler for the duties of the day and hour by contact with nature. Nature is meant to minister to us, to contribute to our inward help and healing. There is as much Divine purpose in the coming of the seasons as in the recurrence of our daily duties, burdens, and temptations. God made the earth for the nurture of our spirits as well as for the support of our bodies. Can we with the eye of sense

look at the heavens above us, and with the eye of faith pierce the external blue, and believe that the God who lives in the universe is a Being who has ears, but heareth not; who has eyes, but seeth not; who has a heart, but knows nothing of the wants and the needs of that broken heart of ours? This earth has not been framed by a mere utilitarian on the principle of feeding and clothing so many million consumers, but with regard also to soul, to provide the inner eye-scenes of beauty and sublimity, to train our spirits to thought above dead matter by the spiritual forms with which matter is clothed, to lift us up from the dull content of animal existence to thoughts of illimitable freedom and range. We do not go to nature as constantly, intelligently, and earnestly as we should do. We do not resort to her as a teacher sent from God, as a great revealer of Divine truth. And yet we may hear the Divine voice in nature if we open our ears to her message. That voice was for ever in the ears of the Psalmist; he heard God's voice in the hurricane and in the calm. And the reason why we to-day do not hear God speaking to us in nature is that we allow the murmur of the world to stifle the whisper of heaven. To hold silent communings with the silent God in nature we must leave the bustle of the world behind us. We have come to regard mere bustle as so essential an element of human life that a love of solitude is taken as a mark of eccentricity. Too much solitude undoubtedly brings too great a self-consciousness. The hurry and worry of modern life causes shallow thought, unstable purpose, and wasted energy. The antidote is that silence and meditation, that communion with nature and our own heart, without which no great purpose is carried out and no great work is conceived or done. Nature's pictures ought to awaken into active life all that is really beautiful in the sense of man. "Speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee." If we cannot paint her glories or print them upon the speaking pages of a book, we can at least feel these glories and they should tend to our moral and spiritual elevation. There seems to be a distinct need in our time for something of the freshness of natural religion to be infused into our life. To shake ourselves free from artificial restrictions and restraints to which we ordinarily may be content to be subjected, to relax all conventional swathings, and to go forth in childlike liberty and ease and eagerness, is to learn the secret of nature. "Live more simply and purely in all things" is the message of nature; have intenser faith, be open-hearted, keep the soul in a quiet, receptive attitude. In no haste herself, she checks the hurry and fury of our habits and ensures a lofty calmness. The eagle is said to escape atmospheric tumult by rising into an upper calm that is always accessible. And, thanks to nature, there are blest arcadian retreats, easy of access, to all who care to seek for them, where pictures of wondrous beauty may be impressed upon the mind which for many a day will form a pleasant and profitable recollection to the beholder. The great thing is to be sincere and loving, ever thinking of nature as a revelation of God. Science is apt to give us a strained view of the world and to make us see only a chain of antecedents and sequences; it is apt to kill the finer and sweeter aspects of nature; on the other hand, the constant groping in the dust and grime of the market, and the incessant pursuit of pleasure are liable to paralyse all noble impulses and aspirations and make us think that the world is only for ignoble use and comfort. We must learn to look with Christ's eyes at the earth on which we dwell and to see in it the revelation of the life and movement of the living God. (*A. M. Sime.*)

Vers. 9, 10. **Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?**—*God and nature:*—If one could possibly laugh the laugh of the scornful, surely there is temptation enough in the teachings of a modern science, and in the attempt to build up before us a self-created world without God. But we are not endowed with such a scornful spirit. Modern science is too wonderful, and its discoveries too fascinating for us to laugh at it. We never dream of suggesting that a vast edifice crammed with machinery and automatic looms, which can produce webs of finest texture and perfect design, could possibly have evolved itself from some primary simple structure. And why should we commit such an outrage on our common reason, as to suggest that this world, unaided by any outside hand, could have made itself? But if we add to this evolutionary theory, the teaching that God may have endowed the materials and life of the world with an inner spirit of development and adaptation, it would become, at least, reasonable. No one who is familiar with the types of life on the earth, and their remarkable history, can fail to perceive that there is in all forms, even in the lowly fungus and the blade of grass, a certain power of choice and adaptation,

But whence came that power of choice and adaptation? No combination of chemical elements could make it. None other could impart it than the hand of a Person. We can observe, too, a wonderful linking together of all the forms of life from the lowly creature to the highest man, though there are more blanks in the chain than the links which have been discovered. Yet, how is it possible for one species to pass on to a higher stage without some external directing power? I. THE CHRISTIAN SEES NATURE AS A SCIENTIST. As the Christian studies a flower he marks the secret intelligence which directs every part of it. The embryo in the seed knows which part of it must descend to the earth, and which part must be raised up to the heavens. The leaves place themselves at proper intervals, and follow out their cyclical order. The plant creeps or climbs or shoots upwards with an intelligent adaptation, and the flowers mix their colours and exhale their odours to allure the passing bee. A Christian watches all this intelligence in a flower, and with deeper reason than ever he can add, "God is the maker of that flower." The Christian, as he delights in spelling out the arithmetical principles on which the chemical elements unite, asks who taught them the laws of their combinations. Or as he takes his stand on the great orbit, and marvels as he sees planet after planet come up in sublime order, and roll on majestically in its marked and bounded path, he repeats with deeper conception his belief in the greatness and power of the Almighty. He can read, too, the records of the rocks, the story of the fire and water, of the grinding and building up of the earth's crust, of life that existed long before the advent of man. As a scientist he can do all this, but to him it is all the work of God, who is infinite in His power and duration, who works His great works by these methods, and in these marvellous ways which science discovers and unfolds. II. THE CHRISTIAN SEES NATURE AS A POET. A flower is not a clever piece of machinery of subtle forces and delicate laws. Beautiful must have been the hands, and beautiful the thoughts of Him who could, out of gross earth, cause the primrose to make its petals or the wild briar its tinted flowers. The Christian looks at the flower, and to him it is a poem written by the hand of God. Even uncouth flowers and hideous creatures become transformed when looked at in this light, and suggest far-reaching thoughts of that wisdom which makes things useful as well as beautiful. It is delightful to have the poet's eye, and thus to look on God's nature. The spiked blade of grass, the curving stalk of corn, the uplifted bole of the pine, the waving autumn field, and the moving life of the spring, are the visible lines and measures of a great Divine poem. The crawling worm, the soaring bird, the chirp of the sparrow, and the melody of the lark, the cows in the field, and the snake in the grass, all repeat and increase the lines—

> Earth's crammed with heaven,
> And every common bush afire with God.

III. THE CHRISTIAN SEES NATURE AS A PANTHEIST. As scientific men, we open up our senses to impressions from the outer world. As they come in by this way, they spell out God, the Creator, the Architect, Infinite and Omnipotent. As we open other and deeper sensibilities, and the charm, the grace, the tenderness, the strength and life of nature flow in, they write out in measured form God the Ever Glorious and Wondrous. (*J. D. Watters, M.A.*) *The hand of the Lord*:—Nothing can be disposed of without the good pleasure and providence of God, who hath the life and breath of all creatures, men as well as others, in His hand. Learn—1. A providence is not seen and adored in dispensations which do not please us. When we do not distinctly see and adore providence in ordinary, we meet with intricate and thorny questions about it. 2. Though men, in their sins, presume to debate and question the matter of God's providence, yet they will not get it shifted nor denied. 3. When men turn atheists, and fall a questioning the providence of God, they ought to be sharply dealt with and refuted. It is the common interest of saints not to let the providence of God be denied in the faith whereof they are so often comforted in darkness. And zeal for God should cause them to abhor any thoughts prejudicial to His glory. 4. As God hath a dominion over all His creatures, particularly over living things, and man in special, so the study of this dominion will help to open our eyes to see Him and His providence, and to clear His providence in every particular. 5. As God's dominion over every living thing, so, particularly, His dominion over man is to be studied and improved. Therefore it is particularly instanced here that the breath of all mankind is in His hand. 6. God's dominion over man reacheth even to his

life, and no less. The study of this invites us to stand in awe of God. To trust Him in difficulties. To look upon ourselves, not as made for ourselves, but to be subservient to His dominion. When we thus submit to and acknowledge His absolute dominion, we should be without anxiety, as knowing in whose hand we and o r concernments are, and should leave it on Him to give a good account of everything He doeth, and believe that His actings will be like the worker, who is God, and our God, though we cannot discern it for the present. (*George Hutcheson.*) *Everywhere, and yet forgotten* :—There is much temper here, but there is very much also of good common sense. Job wished to show that the fact of the presence of God in all things was so clearly discernible that men need not borrow the eagle's wing to mount to heaven, nor need they enter into the bowels of Leviathan to find a chariot wherein to enter the depths of the sea. I. THE PRESENT HAND OF GOD UPON EVERYTHING. 1. This is one of the doctrines which men believe, but are constantly forgetting. 2. This is a fact of universal force. 3. A truth worthy of perpetual remembrance. II. OUR ABSOLUTE DEPENDENCE UPON A PRESENT GOD AT THIS VERY MOMENT. 1. Our life is entirely dependent upon God. 2. So are our comforts. 3. So is the power to enjoy those comforts. If this be true concerning temporals, how doubly true is it with regard to spiritual things. There is no Christian grace which has in it a particle of self-existence. III. LESSONS FROM THIS SUBJECT. Child of God, see where thou art. Thou art completely in the hand of God. Thou art absolutely and entirely, and in every respect, placed at the will and disposal of Him who is thy God. Art thou grieved because of this? Does this doctrine trouble thee? Let your conversation be as becometh this doctrine. Speak of what thou wilt do, and of what will happen, always in respect to the fact that man proposes, but God disposes. To the sinner we say, Man, you are in the hand of God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Divine domination* :—I. A SENSE OF OUR OWN EXTREME INSIGNIFICANCE. II. A CONSCIOUSNESS OF OUR ABSOLUTE DEPENDENCE. If we are in God's hands, He can do with us as He will. III. A MIGHTY INFLUENCE IN LIFE AND BEHAVIOUR. It impresses us with a feeling of—1. Intense humility. 2. Great thankfulness. 3. Earnest effort. Effort to develop our moral nature. IV. A READINESS TO ACQUIESCE IN ALL THE DISPENSATIONS OF SO GREAT A BEING. (*J. J. S. Bird.*)

Vers. 13-35. **Behold, He breaketh down.**—*Job's maxims* :—Perhaps Job uses this lofty language concerning God for two reasons. 1. To show that he could speak as grandly of the Eternal as his friends had spoken. 2. To show that he had as correct and extensive a view of God's agency as they had. He gives them here at least six different ideas of God's agency. I. That it is ACTIVE BOTH IN THE MENTAL AND THE MORAL WORLD. II. That it is DESTRUCTIVE AS WELL AS RESTORATIVE. "Behold, He breaketh down, and it cannot be built again." III. That it EXTENDS TO INDIVIDUALS AS WELL AS TO COMMUNITIES. "He shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening." IV. That it is ABSOLUTELY SOVEREIGN AND RESISTLESS. V. THAT IT OPERATES IN THE UNSEEN, AS WELL AS IN THE VISIBLE. "He discovereth deep things out of darkness," &c. VI. THAT IT IN NO CASE APPEARS TO RECOGNISE MORAL DISTINCTIONS AMONG MEN. Not a word does Job here say about the righteous and the wicked in relation to God's agency. His object being to show that God did not treat man on the ground of moral character. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 20. **Taketh away the understanding of the aged.**—*Insanity* :—The text is part of an address in which Job enumerates a variety of events in which, more or less prominently, the interference of Divine providence was to be traced. I. THE PECULIAR DISPENSATION WHICH THE TEXT BRINGS BEFORE US. Job is not stating here a general rule of the Divine procedure, but only alluding to an event of occasional occurrence. 1. The nature of the calamity referred to. It deals with the mind. The operations of the mind are deranged and disabled. This is the heaviest calamity to which human nature is subject. We cannot conceive of a more pitiable object than a man bereft of understanding. 2. The subject of the calamity. "The aged." Not exclusively. It often overtakes persons in the meridian of life. 3. The author of the calamity. In some cases the individual himself, by evil propensities. Sometimes the loss of understanding is occasioned by the conduct of others. The Divine interference must be recognised as permitting the calamity, but in the text it is treated as the occasion of it. It may be a part of that plan which God has formed, in unerring wisdom and

infinite love, as best calculated to secure the attainment of His benevolent designs. II. SOME PROBABLE REASONS FOR WHICH SUCH DISPENSATIONS MAY OCCUR. The understanding may sometimes be taken away—1. As a just penalty for a perverted and injurious use of the intellectual faculties. Scripture teaches that we may often calculate on the loss of a privilege as the just penalty of its abuse; nor can human reason question the propriety of this. 2. To exhibit, in the most striking manner, human frailty, and the entire dependence of all upon God Himself. We can scarcely conceive of any case which so forcibly impresses us with these truths. 3. As a means of important instruction and salutary discipline to those more immediately connected with the sufferers. 4. To show the danger of procrastination on the subject of personal religion. How many persons are satisfying themselves in a present neglect of the soul and eternity, under a determination to regard these points more seriously in advancing years! But they cannot be sure of the continued exercise of those mental faculties, the continuance of which would be essential to carrying their salutary resolutions into effect. (*Essex Congregational Remembrancer.*)

CHAPTER XIII.

VERS. 3, 4. **Surely I would speak to the Almighty.**—*Man speaking to God:*—There is a great deal of human speaking that has to do with God. Most speak about God, many speak against God, and some speak to God. Of these there are two classes—Those who occasionally speak to Him under the pressure of trial; those who regularly speak to Him as the rule of their life. These last are the true Christlike men. I. SPEAKING TO GOD SHOWS THE HIGHEST PRACTICAL RECOGNITION OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE. It indicates—1. A heart-belief in the fact of the Divine existence. 2. A heart-belief in the personality of the Divine existence. What rational soul would speak to a vain impersonality? Man may justly infer the personality of God from his own personality. 3. A heart-belief in the nearness of the Divine existence. It feels that He is present. 4. A heart-belief in the impressibility of the Divine existence. It has no question about the Divine susceptibility. II. SPEAKING TO GOD SHOWS THE TRUEST RELIEF OF OUR SOCIAL NATURE. Social relief consists principally in the free and full communication to others of all the thoughts and emotions that must affect the heart. Before a man will fully unbosom his soul to another, he must be certified of three things—1. That the other feels the deepest interest in him. Who has such an interest in us as God? 2. That the other will make full allowance for the infirmities of his nature. Who is so acquainted with our infirmities as God? 3. That the other will be disposed and able to assist in our trials. Who can question the willingness and capability of God? III. SPEAKING TO GOD SHOWS THE MOST EFFECTIVE METHOD OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE. 1. The effort of speaking to God is most quickening to the soul. 2. The effort of speaking to God is most humbling to a soul. 3. The effort of speaking to God is most spiritualising to the soul. It breaks the spell of the world upon us; it frees us from secular associations; it detaches us from earth; and it makes us feel that there is nothing real but spirit, nothing great but God, and nothing worthy of man but assimilation to and fellowship with the Infinite. IV. SPEAKING TO GOD SHOWS THE HIGHEST HONOUR OF A CREATED SPIRIT. The act implies a great capacity. What can show the greatness of the human soul so much as this exalted communion? (*Homilist.*) **But ye are forgers of lies.**—*Lies easily forged:*—Lying is so easy that it is within the capacity of every one. It is proverbially easy. "It is as easy as lying," says Hamlet, when speaking of something not difficult. You can do it as you work or as you walk. You can do it as you sit in your easy-chair. You can do it without any help, even in extreme debility. You lie, and it does not blister your tongue or give you a headache. It is not attended with any wear and tear of constitution. It does not throw you into a consumption—not even into a perspiration. It is the cheapest of sins. It requires no outlay of money to gratify this propensity. There is no tax to pay. The poorest can afford it, and the rich do not despise it because it is cheap. Neither does it cost any expenditure of time. After the hesitancy of the first few lies you can make them with the greatest ease. You soon get to extemporise them without

the trouble of forethought. The facilities for committing this sin are greater than for any other. You may indulge in it anywhere. You cannot very well steal on a common, or swear in a drawing-room, or get drunk in a workhouse; but in what place or at what time can you not lie? You have to sneak, and skulk, and look over your shoulders, and peep, and listen, before you can commit many sins; but this can be practised in open day, and in the market-place. You can look a man in the face and do it. You can rub your hands and smile and be very pleasant whilst doing it. (*J. Teasdale.*)

Ver. 7. **Will ye speak wickedly for God, and talk deceitfully for Him?**—*Special religious pleaders*:—Job finds them guilty of speaking falsely as special pleaders for God, in two respects. They insist that he has offended God, but they cannot point to one sin which he has committed. On the other hand, they affirm positively that God will restore prosperity if confession is made. But in this, too, they play the part of advocates without warrant. They show great presumption in daring to pledge the Almighty to a course in accordance with their idea of justice. The issue might be what they predict; it might not. They are venturing on ground to which their knowledge does not extend. They think their presumption justified because it is for religion's sake. Job administers a sound rebuke, and it extends to our own time. Special pleaders for God's sovereignty and unconditional right, and for His illimitable good nature, alike have warning here. What justification have men in affirming that God will work out His problems in detail according to their views? He has given to us the power to apprehend the great principles of His working. There are certainties of our consciousness, facts of the world and of revelation, from which we can argue. Where these confirm we may dogmatise, and the dogma will strike home. But no piety, no desire to vindicate the Almighty, or to convict and convert the sinner, can justify any man in passing beyond the certainty which God has given him to that unknown which lies far above human ken. (*R. A. Watson, D.D.*)

Ver. 15. **Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.**—*A misinterpreted verse, and a misapprehended God*:—How often have these words been the vehicle of a sublime faith in the hour of supreme crisis! It is always matter of regret when one has to take away a cherished treasure from believing hearts. Now this verse, properly translated and rightly understood, means something quite different from what it has ordinarily been considered to mean. You will find in the Revised Version a rendering differing from the accepted one—"Though He slay me, yet will I wait for Him," it reads. So that instead of being the utterance of a resigned soul, submissively accepting chastisement, it is rather the utterance of a soul that, conscious of its own integrity, is prepared to face the worst that Providence can inflict, and resolved to vindicate itself against any suggestion of ill desert. "Behold, He will slay me. Let Him. Let Him do His worst. I wait for Him in the calm assurance of the purity of my motives and the probity of my life. I await His next stroke. I know that I have done nothing to deserve this punishment, and am prepared to maintain my innocence to His face. I will accept the blow, because I can do no other, but I will assert my blamelessness." It is a lesson, not in the blind submissiveness of a perfect trust, but in the unconquerable boldness of conscious rectitude. There is nothing cringing or abject in this language. And this is in harmony with the whole tenor of the context, which is in a strain of self-vindication throughout. But, in order to understand the real sentiment underlying this exclamation, we must have a correct conception of the theory of the Divine action in the world common to that age. Job is thinking of Jehovah as the men of his time thought of Him, as the God who punished evil in this world, and whose chastisements were universally regarded as the evidence of moral transgression on the part of the sufferer. It is a false theory of Providence and of Divine judgment against which the patriarch so vehemently protests. He has the sense of punishment without the consciousness of transgression, and this creates his difficulty. "If my sufferings are to be regarded as punishment, I demand to know wherein I have transgressed." It is the attitude of a man who writhes under the stigma of false accusation, and who is prepared to vindicate his reputation before any tribunal. The struggle represented for us with so much dramatic power and vividness in this poem is Job's struggle for reconciliation between the God of the theologians of his day

and the God of his own heart. And is not this a modern as well as an ancient struggle? Does not our heart often rise within us to resent and repel the representations of Deity that the current theology gives? Job had to answer to himself, Which of these two Gods is the true one? If the God of the theological imagination were the true God, he was prepared to hold his own before Him. This Divine despot, as the stronger, might visit him with His castigations, but in his conscious integrity, Job would not blench. "Behold, He will slay me; I will wait for Him. I will maintain my cause before Him." Now, is this a right or a wrong attitude in presence of the Eternal Righteousness? Is there blasphemy in a man's maintaining his conscious innocence before God? As there was a conventional God in Job's day, a God who was a figment of the human fancy, dressed up in the judicial terrors of an oriental despot, so is there a conventional God in our own day, the God of Calvinistic theologians, in whose presence men are taught that nothing becomes them but servile submission and abject self-vilification. But is that view compatible, after all, with what the Scripture tells us, that man is created in the very image, breathing the very breath of God? We have been taught to imagine that we are honouring God when we try to make ourselves out as bad as bad can be. What are the strange phenomena produced by this conventional conception? Why, that you will hear holy men in prayer, men of inflexible rectitude and spotless character, describing themselves to God in terms that would libel a libertine. This was Bildad's theology. By a strange logic he fancied he was glorifying God by disparaging God's handiwork. He declares (chap. xxv. 5) that the very stars are not pure in God's sight though God made them, and then falls into what I may call the vermicular strain of self-depreciation. "How much less man, that is a worm, and the son of man who is a worm?" We have to judge theologies by our own innate sense of right and justice; and any theology which requires us to defame ourselves, and say of ourselves evil things not endorsed by our own healthy consciousness, is a degrading theology, one dishonouring alike to man and to God his Maker. Job's inward sense of substantial rectitude, both in intention and in conduct, revolted against this God of his contemporaries who was always requiring him to put himself in the wrong whether he felt so or not. And Job obeyed a true instinct in taking up that attitude. God does not want us to tell Him lies about ourselves in our prayers and hymns. But I will venture to say that any attitude that is not truly manly is not truly Christian or religious. "Stand upon thy feet," said the angel to the seer. The fact is, the conscience of good or evil is the God within us, and supreme. What my conscience convicts me of, let me confess to; but let me confess nothing wherein my conscience does not condemn me, out of deference to an artificial deity. Let us dare to follow our own thoughts of God, interpreting His relation and providence towards us through our own best instincts and aspirations. This is what Jesus taught us to do. He revealed and exemplified a manly and man-making faith, as far removed as possible from that slavish spirit which is so characteristic of much pietistic teaching. Christ said, Find the best in yourselves and take that for the reflection of God. Reason from that up to God, He says. "How much more shall your heavenly Father!" Bildad and the theologians of his school transferred to their conception of Deity all their own pettinesses and foibles, and consequently conceived of Him as a being greedy of the adulation of His creatures, jealous of a monopoly of their homage. One who could not bear that anybody should be praised but Himself, and who was pleased when they unmanned themselves and wriggled like worms at His feet. To think thus of God is at once to degrade Him and ourselves. Let us not be afraid of our own better thoughts of God, assured that He must be better than even our best thoughts. I say Job was the victim of a false theology. When he was left to his own healthier instincts he took another tone. In the early chapters of this book he is represented to us as one of the sublimest heroes of faith. Under a succession of the most appalling and overwhelming calamities that stripped him of possessions and bereaved him of almost all that he loved in the world, he rises to that supreme resignation to the Divine will which found expression in perhaps the noblest utterance that ever broke from a crushed heart, "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." It is difficult to believe that it is the same man who rose to this sublime degree of submission who now adopts the semi-defiant tone of the words of my text—"Behold, He will slay me. I will wait for Him; I will maintain my cause before Him." The fact is that while it is the same man, it is not the same God. The God of the

earlier chapters is the God of his own unsophisticated heart. In Him he could trust as doing "all things well." But the God of this later part of the story is the God of perverse human invention; not the Creator of all things, but one created by the imaginations of men who fashioned an enlarged image of themselves and called that "God." Job would not have wronged God if he had not had the wrong God presented to him. It was his would-be monitors who had thought that God "was altogether such an one as themselves," who were guilty of this crime. And again, had Job himself been a Christian, had he possessed the ethical sense, and judged himself by the ethical standards that the teaching of Jesus created, he would not have adopted this attitude of proud self-vindication. For then, though his outward life might have been exemplary, and his social obligations scrupulously fulfilled, he would have understood that righteousness is a matter of the thoughts and motives, as well as of the outward behaviour. Judging himself by the moral standards of his time, he felt himself immaculate. It is pleasant to know from the last chapter, that before the drama closes Job comes to truer thoughts of God and a more spiritual knowledge of himself. He perceives that his heart, in its blind revolt, has been fighting a travesty of God and not the real God. Then, so soon as he sees God as He is, and himself as he is, his tone changes again. The accent of revolt is exchanged for that of adoring recognition, and the note of defiance sinks into a strain of penitential confession. "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (*J. Halsey.*) *A trustful resolution*:—Such was the determinate resolution of the venerable and pious Job. In the history of this good man three things are evident. 1. That all things are under the Divine control. 2. Piety and integrity do not exempt from trials. 3. All things eventually work together for good to them that love God. I. THE SITUATION IN WHICH JOB WAS PLACED. 1. A great change had taken place in his worldly concerns. The day of adversity had come upon him. 2. But still Job's case was not yet hopeless nor comfortless. There was still the same kind Providence which could bless his future life. There were his children. News comes that they are all killed. 3. Where now shall we look for any comfort for Job? Well, he has his health. But now this is taken away. 4. There was one person from whom Job might expect comfort and sympathy—his wife. Yet the most trying temptation Job ever had came from his wife. 5. Still Job had many friends. But those who came to help him proved "miserable comforters." Every earthly prop had given way. II. JOB'S DETERMINATION. 1. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." 2. Job might confidently trust in the Lord, because he had not brought his sufferings upon himself by his own neglect or imprudence. 3. Job's trust or faith was of the right kind. Trust in God implies that the depending person has an experimental knowledge of His power, wisdom, and goodness. Trust in God includes prayer, patience, and a reconciliation to the Divine will. Remarks—1. What a wonderful example of patience and resignation we have in Job. 2. What decision of character and manly firmness are exemplified in the conduct of this good man. 3. How well it was for Job that he trusted and patiently waited to see the salvation of God. (*B. Bailey.*) *Perfect trust in extreme trial*:—To most persons there is some affliction which they account the extreme of trouble. The estimate of particular troubles changes, however, with circumstances. I. JOB'S MEANING. Trust in God is built on acquaintance with God. It is an intelligent act or habit of the soul. It is a fruit of religious knowledge. It is begotten of belief in the representations which are given of God, and of faith in the promises of God. It is a fruit of reconciliation with God. It involves, in the degree of its power and life, the quiet assurance that God will be all that He promises to be, and will do all that He engages to do; and that, in giving and withholding, He will do that which is perfectly kind and right. The development of trust in God depends entirely upon circumstances. In danger, it appears as courage and quietness from fear; in difficulties, as resolution and as power of will; in sorrow, as submission; in labour, as continuance and perseverance; and in extremity, it shows itself as calmness. II. IS JOB'S STRONG CONFIDENCE JUSTIFIABLE? We may not think all Job thought, or speak always as Job spoke; yet we may safely copy this patient man. 1. God does not afflict willingly. 2. God has not exhausted Himself by any former deliverance. 3. In all that affects His saints, God takes a living and loving interest. 4. Circumstances can never become mysterious, or complicated, or unmanageable to God. We must in our thoughts attach mysteriousness only to our impressions: we must not transfer it to God.

5. God has in time past slain His saints, and yet delivered them. III. THE EXAMPLE JOB EXHIBITS. Job teaches us that it is well sometimes to imagine the heaviest possible affliction happening to us. This is distinct from the habitual imagination of evil, which we should avoid, and which we deprecate. Job teaches us that the perfect work of patience is the working of patience to the uttermost—that is, down to the lowest depths of depression, and up to the highest pitch of anguish. He teaches that the extreme of trial should call forth the perfection of trust. Our principles are most wanted in extremity. Job shows that the spirit of trust is the spirit of endurance. We may also learn that to arm ourselves against trial, we must increase our confidence. True trust respects all events, and all Divine dispensations. All—not a particular class, but the whole. All that happens to us is part of God's grand design and of God's great plan respecting us. Let me commend to you Job's style of speech. To say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." will involve an effort, but there is no active manifestation of true godliness without exertion. Even faith is a fight. It is one of the simplest things in spiritual life to trust, but often that which involves a desperate struggle. Ignorance of God's intentions may sometimes say to us, "distrust Him"; and unbelief may suggest, "distrust Him"; and fear may whisper, "distrust Him"; but, in spite of all your foes, say to yourself, "I will trust Him." The day will come when such confidence in God, as that which you are now required to exercise, will no longer be needed. In that day God will do nothing painful to you. He will not move in a mysterious way, even to you, and you will chiefly be possessed by a spirit of love; but until that day dawns, God asks you to trust Him. (*Samuel Martin.*) *Absolute faith:*—Faith, like all Christian graces, is a thing of growth, and therefore capable of degree. I. FAITH IS DIRECT KNOWLEDGE. It is a kind of intuition. 1. It does not depend, like scientific knowledge, on the testimony of the senses. 2. It does not rest, like judicial decisions, on the truthfulness of witnesses, and the consistency of evidence. 3. It is not founded, like mathematical convictions, on logical demonstration. 4. Intellect combines these together to reveal the soul to itself. 5. Faith thus perceives the wants of the soul, and the fitness of revealed truth to satisfy them. II. FAITH ACTS ON A PERSON. Its object is God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. 1. A person is more complex than any proposition, and offers to the soul an immense number of points of contact. It is an undeveloped universe. 2. A person is a profounder reality than a doctrine. Character is more steadfast than a theory. 3. God is the universe, and can sympathise with every soul. God in Christ is a universe of mercy to the sinner. III. IT CONCERNS THE WEIGHTIEST DESTINIES OF THE SOUL, AND IS ATTESTED BY CONSCIENCE. 1. It does not tolerate indifference. 2. It arouses the faculties to their utmost. 3. It comes in contact with revealed holiness. The soul cannot rest in evil. It requires truth and justice. Without these it is a lever without a fulcrum. 1. Faith gives rest without indifference. 2. It provides happiness without delusion. (*J. Peters.*) *Faith's ultimatum:*—This is one of the supreme sayings of Scripture. It rises, like an Alpine summit, clear above all ordinary heights of speech, it pierces the clouds, and glistens in the light of God. If I were required to quote a selection of the sublimest utterances of the human mind, I should mention this among the first, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Methinks I might almost say to the man who thus spoke what our Lord said to Simon Peter when he had declared Him to be the Son of the Highest, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee." Such tenacious holding, such immovable confidence, such unstaggering reliance, are not products of mere nature, but rare flowers of rich almighty grace. It is well worthy of observation that in these words Job answered both the accusations of Satan and the charges of his friends. Though I do not know that Job was aware that the devil had said, "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast Thou not set a hedge about him and all that he hath?" yet he answered that base suggestion in the ablest possible manner, for he did in effect say, "Though God should pull down my hedge, and lay me bare as the wilderness itself, yet will I cling to Him in firmest faith." The arch-fiend had also dared to say that Job had held out under his first trials because they were not sufficiently personal. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life. But put forth Thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse Thee to Thy face." In the brave words before us Job most effectually silences that slander by, in effect, saying, "Though my trial be no longer the slaying of my children, but of myself, yet will I trust in Him,"

He thus in one sentence replies to the two slanders of Satan; thus unconsciously doth truth overthrow her enemies, defeating the secret malice of falsehood by the simplicity of sincerity. Job's friends also had insinuated that he was a hypocrite. They inquired of him, "Who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?" They thought themselves quite safe in inferring that Job must have been a deceiver, or he would not have been so specially punished. To this accusation Job's grand declaration of his unstaggering faith was the best answer possible, for none but a sincere soul could thus speak. Will a hypocrite trust in God when He slays him? Will a deceiver cling to God when He is smiting him? Assuredly not. Thus were the three miserable comforters answered if they had been wise enough to see it. Our text exhibits a child of God under the severest pressure, and shows us the difference between him and a man of the world. A man of the world under the same conditions as Job would have been driven to despair, and in that desperation would have become morosely sullen, or defiantly rebellious! Here you see what in a child of God takes the place of desperation. When others despair, he trusts in God. When he has nowhere else to look, he turns to his Heavenly Father; and when for a time, even in looking to God, he meets with no conscious comfort, he waits in the patience of hope, calmly expecting aid, and resolving that even if it did not come he will cling to God with all the energy of his soul. Here all the man's courage comes to the front, not, as in the case of the ungodly, obstinately to rebel, but bravely to confide. The child of God is courageous, for he knows how to trust. His heart says, "Ay, Lord, it is bad with me now, and it is growing worse, but should the worst come to the worst, still will I cling to Thee, and never let Thee go." In what better way can the believer reveal his loyalty to his Lord? He evidently follows his Master, not in fair weather only, but in the foulest and roughest ways. He loves his Lord, not only when He smiles upon him, but when He frowns. His love is not purchased by the largesses of his Lord's golden hand, for it is not destroyed by the smitings of His heavy rod. Though my Lord put on His sternest looks, though from fierce looks He should go to cutting words, and though from terrible words He should proceed to cruel blows, which seem to beat the very life out of my soul, yea, though He take down the sword and threaten to execute me therewith, yet is my heart steadfastly set upon one resolve, namely, to bear witness that He is infinitely good and just. I have not a word to say against Him, nor a thought to think against Him, much less would I wander from Him; but still, though He slay me, I would trust in Him. What is my text but an Old Testament version of the New Testament, "Quis separabit"—Who shall separate? Job does but anticipate Paul's question. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation," &c. Was not the same spirit in both Job and Paul? Is He also in us? If so, we are men indeed, and our speech is with power, and to us this declaration is no idle boast, no foolish bravado, though it would be ridiculous, indeed, if there were not a gracious heart behind it to make it good. It is the conquering shout of an all-surrendering faith, which gives up all but God. I want that we may all have its spirit this morning, that whether we suffer Job's trial or not we may at any rate have Job's close adherence to the Lord, his faithful confidence in the Most High. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Peace, and joy, and chastisement:*—This sentiment is founded on the belief that God is our sole strength and refuge; that if good is in any way in store for us, it lies with God; if it is attainable, it is attained by coming to God. Inquirers seeking the truth, prodigals repentant, saints rejoicing in the light, saints walking in darkness—all of them have one word on their lips, one creed in their hearts. "Trust ye in the Lord for ever." There is another case, in which it is equally our wisdom and duty to stay ourselves upon God; that of our being actually under punishment for our sins. Men may be conscious that they have incurred God's displeasure, and conscious that they are suffering it; and then their duty is still to trust in God, to acquiesce, or rather to concur in His chastisements. Scripture affords us some remarkable instances of persons glorifying, or called on to glorify God when under His hand. See Joshua's exhortation to Achan. The address of Jonah to God from the fish's belly. It should not be difficult to realise the state of mind described in the text, and yet some find difficulty in conceiving how Christians can have hope without certainty, sorrow and pain without gloom, suspense with calmness and confidence. I proceed then to describe this state of mind. Suppose a good man, who is conscious of some deliberate sin or sins in time past, some course of sin, or in later life has detected himself

in some secret and subtle sin, what will be his state when the conviction of his sin, whatever it is, breaks upon him? Will he think himself utterly out of God's favour? He will not despair. Will he take up the notion that God has forgiven him? He has two feelings at once—one of present enjoyment, and another of undefined apprehension, and on looking on to the day of judgment, hope and fear both rise within him. (*J. H. Newman, B.D.*) *Trustfulness*:—Job endured, as seeing Him who is invisible; he had that faith which has realised to itself the conviction that, somehow or other, all things are working together for good to them that love God, and which calmly submits itself without anxiety to whatever God sees fit to lay upon it. Faith comprehends trustfulness. It is the larger term of the two. None of us can have lived any length of time in the world without having, as part of our appointed trial, been visited with pain and sickness, with the loss of friends, and with more or less of temporal misfortune. How these chastisements have been borne by us, has depended upon how far we have taught ourselves to look upon them as a precious legacy from Christ our Saviour, as a portion of His Cross, as a token of His love. Looking back upon what, at the time, you considered the great misfortunes of your life, can you not now see the gracious designs with which they were sent? In this is there not a powerful argument in favour of trustfulness, and a most satisfactory evidence that "in quietness and confidence" will be our strength? In proportion as we have the Spirit of Christ, will be our desire to be made like unto Him in all things; and this resemblance can never be attained without a following of Him in the path of suffering, and a submission and trustfulness like His as we pass along it. There is, however, the danger of our endeavouring, by any movement of impatience, to lighten the burden which our Heavenly Father has laid on us; of taking matters, as it were, into our own hands, and so thwarting or making of none effect the merciful designs of providence towards us. We must take care that our passiveness and silence are the result of Christian principles. There is a silence which arises from sullenness, and a passiveness which comes from apathy or despair. Trials are sent us in order that when we feel their acuteness, we may raise our thoughts to Him who alone can lighten them, and bless them to us. We ought to feel that it is sin to doubt the gracious purposes of God towards us, or to receive them in any other than a thankful spirit. How mercifully we are dealt with we shall be the more ready to acknowledge, the more we reflect upon the manner of God's visitations towards us. But it is not in personal and domestic trials only that this spirit of trustfulness will be our safeguard and support. In all those perplexities which arise from our own position in the Church, and the Church's position in the world, and which would otherwise bewilder us, our trustfulness will come to our refuge. And there never was greater need of a trustful spirit among Churchmen than at the present time. (*F. E. Paget, M.A.*) *Fortitude under trial*:—Trust in God is one of the easiest of all things to express, and one of the hardest to practise. There is no grace more necessary, and when attained there is no grace more blessed and comforting. But if blessed when attained, it is difficult of attainment. It is no spontaneous growth of the natural mind, but implies a work of grace which the Holy Ghost can alone accomplish. It requires a deep realisation of the Divine presence, of the Divine wisdom, and of the Divine love. On our side there must be an active effort, and an utter renunciation of all trust on that effort, that simple looking out of ourselves which it is indeed most difficult to reconcile with the active instincts of the mind. I. IT IS AMID SORROW AND TRIAL THAT TRUST CAN ALONE BE EXERCISED. No time here on earth is free from temptation and danger, and therefore no time here on earth can we cease to rely upon God. The very meaning of trust implies doubt within and danger without, the man who trusts. If we already knew everything, where would be faith? If we already possessed everything, where would be hope? II. THIS SURE CONFIDENCE IS NOT THE ATTRIBUTE OF ANY TRUST WHICH WE MAY PLACE IN ANY OBJECT. It is, indeed, the nature of trust to operate in times of difficulty; but yet the success with which it can do this depends ever upon the nature of that which is trusted—the foundation on which the house of trust is built. There are two arguments which single out God as the alone object of our trust. There meet in God all the attributes which deserve confidence. And they do not meet in any other; they are not to be found, even singly, in any other. III. OUR TRIALS OUGHT TO MAKE OUR CONFIDENCE MORE DEEP AND CONSTANT. Has He not warned us beforehand of their existence? He has explained the very cause and reason why they are permitted—

reasons to which the conscience and the experience of every believer will most deeply assent. Then let us pray for grace to hold fast our hope steadfast unto the end. (*Edward Garbett, M.A.*) *Joy out of suffering* :—The joy of the world ends in sorrow; sorrow with Christ and in Christ, yea, and for our sins, for Christ's sake, ends in joy. We have many of us felt how the world's joy ends in sorrow. We must not, would not, choose our suffering. "Any pang but this," is too often the wounded spirit's cry; "any trouble but this." And its cry may bear witness to itself, that its merciful Physician knows well where its disease lies, how it is to be probed to the quick, how to be healthfully healed. Job refutes Satan's lie. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." He holds not back his very self. He gives up freely all which he is—his very I. "Though He slay me." Oh, glorious faith of older saints, and hope of the resurrection, and love stronger than death, and blessed bareness of the soul, which for God would part with all but God, knowing that in God it will find all! yea, which would give its very self, trusting Him who took itself from itself, that it should find again (as all the redeemed will find) itself a better self in God. Till we attain, by His mercy, to Himself, and death itself is past, there is often need, amid the many manifold forms of death, wherewith we are encompassed, for that holy steadfastness of the patriarch's trust. The first trials by which God would win us back to Himself are often not the severest. These outward griefs are often but the "beginning of sorrows." Deeper and more difficult far are those sorrows wherewith God afflicts the very soul herself. A bitter thing indeed it is to have to turn to God with a cold, decayed heart; "an evil thing and bitter" to have destroyed ourselves. Merciful and very good are all the scourges of the All-Good and All-Merciful. The deeper, the more merciful; the more inward, the more cleansing. The more they enter into the very soul, the more they open it for the healing presence of God. The less self lives, the more Christ liveth in it. Manifold are these clouds whereby God hides, for the time, the brightness of His presence, and He seemeth, as it were, to threaten again to bring a destroying flood over our earthliness. Yet one character they have in common, that the soul can hardly believe itself in a state of grace. Hard indeed is it for hope to live when faith seems dead, and love grown cold. Faint not, thou weary soul, but trust! If thou canst not hope, act as thou wouldst if thou didst hope. If thou canst see nothing before thee but hell, shut thine eyes and cast thyself blindly into the infinite abyss of God's mercy. And the everlasting arms will, though thou know it not, receive thee and upbear thee. (*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*) *Trusting God* :—I never have delivered a discourse on trust in God but that some one has thanked me for it. Confidence in Him is a constant necessity, but there are always some in special need. To fail of this possession is like a captain's putting to sea without fresh water, or like a mother who should think of sending a son to college without a Bible in his trunk. There are sudden surprises in life, when trouble comes like a cyclone. All we can do is to coil the rope about the belaying pin and wait. Fair-weather faith is abundant, cheap and worthless. It is easy to trust God when the larder is full and the dividends large. Indeed, there is then danger of self-content and self-conceit. But we want a faith that will hold in the teeth of the tempest. The disciples did not doubt Christ's power when peace rested on the lake, but when the storm came they cried to Him, "Master, save! we perish!" That courage is worthless which blusters in the tent and retreats at the cannon's mouth. That amiability which is seen where there is no provocation, or that temperance which is maintained where no temptations assail, is of little merit. The trust spoken of in the text is a childlike faith. We can learn much from the trustfulness of a child. It feels its weakness, and puts confidence in the parent. If he betray it, he destroys the child's confidence. Absence of faith in God is infidelity. Unbelief is dry rot to the character. A little child is not anxious as to whether there will be food for the table, or a pillow for its tired head; he leaves it all to his parent. Much of the worry which nowadays results in softening of the brain and paralysis, is only borrowed trouble. Why take thought for the morrow? Our fears strangle our faith. The soul is nightmared. We grow choleric, and complain of God's treatment of us. We forget what is left to us. Some of you have camped out this summer, and learned how much you have at home is not absolutely needful. I said to a noble Christian merchant, who, by no fault of his, had suddenly become bankrupt, "Your decks have been swept clean by the gale, but did it touch anything in the hold?" The thought, he said, was a comfort to him. I was in a home of sorrow to-day, where

the grief was peculiarly tender and sore, but there was the hope of heaven when the beloved went home. God sometimes strips us that we may be freer to run the race to heaven. The nobleness of this trust is to feel that Christ is left, though superfluous things are taken. The Bible is left, the Holy Spirit and heaven remain. No loss is comparable to the loss of Christ from the soul, yet men do not hang crape on the door, or even have a sleepless night at that loss. But anxiety for this is wholesome. To be forced to say with the poet—

"A believing heart has gone from me,"

is worse than to have a house burned, or a child die. Again, the childlike faith shown in the text is perfectly unsuspecting. See that beggar's babe clinging to the mother's rags that hardly cover it. Why should we, when in darkened paths, hesitate to trust our Heavenly Parent implicitly? He has pledged us all things, and doubt is an insult to Him. I stood on the heights of Abraham a few weeks ago, and recalled the victory of Wolfe, with thrilling emotion, but did not forget those steps, one by one, through dark, narrow, and precipitous paths, that led that gallant general to victory. You have your heights of Abraham to scale ere triumph crowns you. Each one has his trials. There is a skeleton in each closet, a crook in each lot. Character grows under these stages of discipline. Trust Him day by day. Live, as it were, from hand to mouth. Do present duty with present ability. Trust in God for victory, and be content with one step at a time. (*Theodore L. Cuyler, D.D.*) *Unconditional trust in God*:—The measure of our being is the measure of our strength. He only is really strong who is strong in the Lord. He only who is strong in the Lord rises superior to circumstances. He whose soul is in his circumstances is weak in exact proportion as his heart is set upon surroundings. He who gives himself to the world gets nothing to self—to soul—in return. He who gives himself to God, though he may receive no objective blessing, gets God in return—finds a nobler self—saves by losing. Neither worldly splendour, nor state of our bodily health, affords any criterion to the state of our soul. We are prone to think adverse things are necessarily punitive. But the trials of Christians are disciplinary. I. JOB'S WORDS ARE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL. They afford insight into the state of Job's heart, and they tell us what he had been. Trials not only show character; they reveal history. When we see a man standing morally erect in circumstances the most dire that ever fell to the lot of mortal, we cannot doubt that we have insight into his history. Job had trusted in God, had lived near to Him in the past, and so he is strong, and rises above circumstances in the adverse present. Character is not formed by one effort of will, no, nor by ten, fifty, or five hundred. II. THESE WORDS ARE EDUCATIONAL. They teach us that the child of God lives by faith. There are people who assume, perhaps they really experience a species of trust in God so long as all goes well with them. When the possessions of the self-complacent man are lost, we look in vain for evidences of contentment, thankfulness, philosophic bearing. The child of God does not regard his relationship to God as simply commercial. The professor only may calculate upon the advantage which, in a worldly sense, his religion is likely to bring. The child of God has no such thoughts. Christianity is commercial in the sense that to get we must give; yet it is not commercial, as we understand the word, for he who gives most of self to Christ, thinks least about what he receives in return. The child of God bases his trust upon the last contingency. Like a crane, a waggon, or a barge, some men can bear only a certain strain. The truth is that the pruning-knife is never welcome, and we always think its edge would have been less keen had that been taken which is left, and that left which is taken. But Job could base his trust upon the very last contingency. III. THESE WORDS ARE PROPHETICAL. 1. With respect to this life. What a man is at any time is an index to what he will be. Our daily procedure goes upon the supposition that our present character indicates our future. The present indicates the future if we continue in the same track. 2. With respect to a future life. There is a slaying which is not slaying. The child of God shall never die. (*J. S. Swan.*) *Trust without calculation*:—The friends of Job have their counterparts in every age of the world. Whenever men are in trouble, there are those who undertake the task of comforting, without any qualifications for it. They lack sympathy. When it is expected that they will minister comfort, they bring forth all the stock sentiments which those who are not in trouble squander upon those who are: the respectable commonplaces which, like ready-made garments, do not in reality fit any, because they are

meant to fit all. No wise man will needlessly proffer himself as a comforter. The more wise he is, the more profoundly he will shrink from intruding upon the sanctity of an afflicted soul. The difference between Job and his friends is exactly this, that he had gone down to first principles, and they had not. You can trace beneath all his utterances a something which enables him to withstand all their poor, superficial talk. What that something was is set forth in the text. It was a trust in God, *i.e.*, God's character, which not even the most crushing stroke of Divine power could destroy. You will never understand the meaning of faith unless you remember that it is identical with trust. If we would understand how trust at last reaches an uncalculating perfection, consider how trust builds itself up in regard to an earthly benefactor or father. It begins with kind acts. Some one does something very generous and disinterested towards us. The child becomes aware of the ever-present care and self-denying goodness of the parent. One act, observe, does not usually furnish a rational ground of trust. Only when that act of kindness is followed by others does settled trust arise. Hence trust is, in fact, confidence in the character of another. The child, after long experience of the father's love, acquires such faith in the parent's character that it can trust even when he acts with seeming unkindness. There are cases in which even one action would command the homage of our hearts. It is by one transcendent act of love that Christ has fixed for ever His claim. He has given Himself for us. However we reach it, this trust is for the man an all-powerful factor ever after. Once it is placed beyond question that God loves us, then we will not allow any subsequent chastening, any "frowning providence" to shake our faith in His unchanging love. Trust such as this is eminently rational. It rests on evidence. We have proved God worthy of our heart's confidence. The trust which is first built up of benefits received gradually becomes uncalculating. The highest reverence and devotion towards God is disinterested. Self, or what self may win or miss, fades out of view. The words are felt to be exaggerated in expressing the joyful and absolute self-forgetfulness of him who is dwelling in the presence of Infinite Perfection. . . . A heart at one with God, knowing no will but His, perfect in its trust, carries within it peace and heavenly-mindedness wherever it may abide in this wide universe; while a heart distrustful of God, swept by gusts of passion and self-will, lacking the one feeling which alone gives stability, can find heaven nowhere. Remember that faith may be genuine even when it is feeble. Small hope for you and me if it were not so. But to the faith which I have been describing all faith must approximate: so far as faith falls short of it, it is imperfect; and if we do not aim at the highest, we shall be only too likely to remain without faith in any degree. (*J. A. Jacob, M.A.*) *The triumph of faith*:—Faith is the reliance of the heart on God. On the one hand, it is not any mere operation of the understanding. On the other hand, it is not any assurance about our state before God. There are, perhaps, two chief ways in which we may arrive at the assurance that we are children of God. The one is looking to Christ; the other is the examination of Scripture, to see what are the marks of God's children. When faith is true, there are many degrees and stages in it. We may have a faith which can just touch the hem of Christ's garment, and that is all that it can do; and if it does this it is healing, because it is true. But there is a wide difference of degree between this infancy of faith and its manhood. It requires a strong faith to look beyond and above a frowning providence, and to trust in God in the dark. It is the Word of God, and not the dispensations of providence, which is the basis on which faith rears her column, the soil into which she sinks her roots; and resting on this she can say with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." But it is very important to distinguish between two things which many, and especially young Christians, often confound together, that is, faith and feeling. Changeful as we are in every way, there is no part of us so subject to change as our feelings—warm one day, and even hot, how cold and chilled they are the next. If we walk, not by feeling but by faith, then, when all around us and all within us is dark, we shall still cling to God's faithful Word; we shall feel that it is we who change, and not God. (*George Wagner.*) *The perfect faith*:—When a soul is able to declare that, even under the smiting, ay, even under the slaying of God, it is able still to trust in Him, every one feels that soul has reached a very true and deep, sometimes it must seem a rare faith in Him. Yet men must have attained this before they can be in any complete or worthy way believers in God. Merely to trust Him when He is manifestly kind to them, is surely not enough. The words of the

text might be said almost in desperation. It is a question whether a faith thus desperate is faith at all. There is something far more cordial about these words of Job. They anticipate possible disappointment and pain; but they discern a hope beyond them. Their hope lies in the character of God. Whatever His special treatment of the soul may be, the soul knows Him in His character. Behind its perception of God's conduct, as an illumination and as a retreat, always lies its knowledge of God's character. The relations of character and conduct to each other are always interesting. Conduct is the mouthpiece of character. What a man is declares itself through what he does. Each is a poor weak thing without the other. Conduct without character is thin and unsatisfying. Conduct is the trumpet at the lips of character. Character without conduct is like the lips without the trumpet, whose whispers die upon themselves, and do not stir the world. Conduct without character is like the trumpet hung up in the wind, which whistles through it, and means nothing. It is through conduct I first know what character is. By and by I come to know character by itself; and in turn it becomes the interpreter of other conduct. To know a nature is an exercise of your faculties different from what it would be to know facts. It involves deeper powers in you, and is a completer action of your life. When a confidence in character exists, see what a circuit you have made. You began with the observation of conduct which you could understand; through that you entered into knowledge of personal character; from knowledge of character you came back to conduct, and accepted actions which you could not understand. You have made this loop, and at the turn of the loop stands character. It is through character that you have passed from the observation of conduct which is perfectly intelligible into the acceptance of conduct which you cannot understand, but of which you only know who and what the man was who did it. The same is true about every one of the higher associations of mankind. It is true about the association of man with nature. Man watches nature at first suspiciously, seeing what she does, is ready for any sudden freak, or whim, or mood; but by and by he comes to know of nature's uniformity. He understands that she is self-consistent. Same is true about any institution to which at last man gives the direction of his life. We want to carry all this over to our thought of God, and see how it supplies a key to the great utterance of faith in the text. It is from God's treatment of any man that man learns God. What God does to him, that is what first of all he knows of God. If this were all, then the moment God's conduct went against a man's judgment, he must disown God. But suppose that the man, behind and through the treatment that God has given him, has seen the character of God. He sees God is just and loving. He goes up along the conduct to the character. Through God's conduct man knows God's character, and then through God's character God's conduct is interpreted. Everywhere the beings who most strongly and justly laid claim to our confidence pass by and by beyond the testing of their actions, and commend themselves to us, and command our faith in them by what we know they are. Such a faith in the character of God must shape and influence our lives. (*Phillips Brooks.*)

Ver. 16. **For an hypocrite shall not come before Him.** — *The several sorts of hypocrisy:* — Job's friends urged that because God had grievously afflicted him, he must needs have been a very wicked man. Job in reply maintains his innocency. He insists that God afflicts for other reasons, in His own good pleasure. He is sure that God cannot expect from him a false confession, or that his proceedings should be justified by any wrong supposition. God will, in the end, distinguish His faithful servant from the hypocrite. The word "hypocrite" is here used in opposition to such a sincere person as can maintain his own ways before God. 1. The greatest and highest degree of hypocrisy is when men, with a formed design and deliberate intention, endeavour under a pretence of religion and an appearance of serving God, to carry on worldly and corrupt ends. Such were the Scribes and Pharisees, whom our Saviour denounced. The apostles describe the same kind of hypocrisy in the characters of the worst men who were in following ages to arise in the Church (2 Tim. iii. 2; Tit. i. 16; 1 Tim. iv. 2; Tit. i. 11, iii. 10; 2 Pet. ii. 1). This then is the highest degree of hypocrisy, and the word is now generally used in this worst sense. 2. There are those who do not absolutely mean to cast off all religion, nor dare in their own hearts totally to despise it; but yet willingly content themselves with the formal part of it, and by zealously observing certain outward rites and ceremonies, think to atone

for great defects of sobriety, righteousness, and truth. Of the same species of hypocrisy are they guilty in all ages who make the advancement of religion and the increase of the kingdom of Christ to consist chiefly in the external, temporal, or worldly prosperity of those who are called by His name. 3. A lower degree of hypocrisy is the behaviour of those who have indeed right notions of religion, but content themselves with vain resolutions of future repentance, and for the present live securely in the practice of sin. Against this hypocrisy, this deceitfulness of sin, our Saviour warns us (Matt. xxiv. 42). 4. The lowest degree of hypocrisy is that of those who not only have right notions of religion and a due sense of the indispensable necessity of repentance and reformation hereafter, but even at present have some imperfect resolutions of immediate obedience, and even actual but yet ineffectual endeavours after it (Rom. vii. 19; comp. Matt. xiii. 5, 20). It is no better than a secret hypocrisy to account ourselves righteous for not being guilty of other faults, while the false heart indulges itself in any one known, habitual sin, and speaks peace to itself by attending only to one part of its own character. The use of what has been said is that from hence every man may learn not to judge his neighbour, who to his own master standeth or falleth, but to examine seriously the state of his own heart. Which, whosoever does, carefully and impartially, and with the true spirit of a Christian, will find little reason to be censorious upon others. (*S. Clarke, D.D.*)

Ver. 22. **Then call Thou, and I will answer.**—*The echo:*—There are places where, if you speak with a loud voice, your words will come back to you after a short interval with the utmost distinctness. This repetition is called an echo. The ancients thought this mysterious being was an Oread, or mountain nymph, born of the air and earth, who loved a beautiful youth, and because her affection was not returned, she pined away until nothing was heard but her voice, and even then she could not speak until she was spoken to. In the text are two kinds of echo. God calling to man, and man answering; and then man speaking to God, and God answering. I. GOD CALLING AND MAN ANSWERING. It is God who always begins first in every good thing. Our religion tells us distinctly that it was not man who first called upon God, but God who first called upon man. God sought man to do him good, even when he had sinned and deserved to be punished. And that is what He has always done since. God has not been silent. He has spoken out, not by the dull, unchanging signals of nature that do the telegraph work of the world, but in human language, in human thoughts and words. God addresses you personally in the Holy Scriptures. Will you be silent to Him? Will no response, no echo come from your heart to His voice? II. MAN CALLING AND GOD ANSWERING. David once said, "Be not silent unto me, O Lord." He had prayed, but he had got no answer. But God was all the time preparing to give him the answer that he needed. In the natural world you cannot have an echo everywhere. Sometimes in nature an echo is made more or less indistinct according to the state of the weather. An echo in nature repeats your very words exactly. Some echoes refuse to send back a whole sentence, and only repeat the last word of it. God's response is an answer to your whole prayer. He often does for you exceeding abundantly above all that you can ask or think. Is not it wonderful that by a breath you can call up such marvellous responses? "He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble." (*Hugh Macmillan, D.D.*)

Ver. 23. **How many are mine iniquities and sins?**—*Struggles of conscience:*—In Luther's day the precise evil under which men laboured was this: they believed in being self-righteous, and so they supposed that they must have good works before they might trust in Christ. In our day the evil takes another shape. Men have aimed at being self-righteous in quite a singular fashion; they think they must feel worse, and have a deeper conviction of sin before they may trust in Christ. It is really the same evil, from the same old germ of self-righteousness, but it has taken another and more crafty shape. It is with this deadly evil I want to grapple. In the Puritanic age there was a great deal of experimental preaching. Some of it was unhealthy, because it took for its standard what the Christian felt and not what the Saviour said; the inference from a believer's experience, rather than the message which goes before belief. We always get wrong when we say one Christian's experience is to be estimated by what another has felt. I. BY WAY OF CONSOLATION. The better a man is the more anxious he is to know

the worst of his case. Bad men do not want to know their badness. It should comfort you to know that the prayer of the text has been constantly offered by the most advanced of saints. You never prayed like this years ago when you were a careless sinner. It is indeed very probable you do already feel your guilt, and what you are asking for have in measure realised. II. BY WAY OF INSTRUCTION. It sometimes happens that God answers this prayer by allowing a man to fall into more and more gross sin, or by opening the eyes of the soul, not so much by providence as by the mysterious agency of the Holy Spirit. I advise you to particularise your sins; to hear a personal ministry, seek a preacher who deals with you as a man alone by yourself; seek to study much the law of God. III. BY WAY OF DISCRIMINATION. Take care to discriminate between the work of the Spirit and the work of the devil. It is the work of the Spirit to make a man feel that he is a sinner, but it never was His work to make a man feel that Christ would forget him. Satan always works by trying to counterfeit the work of the Spirit. Take care not to make a righteousness out of your feelings. Anything which keeps from Christ is sin. IV. BY WAY OF EXHORTATION. 1. It is a very great sin not to feel your guilt, and not to mourn over it, but then it is one of the sins that Jesus Christ atoned for on the tree. It is only Jesus who can give you that heart which you seek. Christ can soften the heart, and a man can never soften it himself. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *How many are my sins?*—The meaning of a question is often determined by its reason, spirit, tone. At this stage of the controversy between Job and his would-be friends, Job turns his speech from them to God. Smarting under their reproofs, in perplexity dark and deep about the ways of God, Job turns to Him with mournful complaint. The faith that breaks forth in majestic tone—"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him"—again seems to be mixed with gloomy doubts; bitterness and melancholy mark his utterances. He says to God, "How many are my iniquities and my sins?" We know the end of the story. Job was proved right in the main. With what motive, and in what spirit shall we ask this question? Is it a wise question to ask? If God were to answer it, literally, directly, and immediately, would we not be utterly overwhelmed in despair? God answered Job's question in a way very different from what he expected. God so revealed Himself to the patriarch that he exclaimed, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." God will deal very tenderly with a soul sincerely asking the question of the text. No man will have any arithmetical answer. But a sincere seeker desiring to know his state as a sinner will come to know enough. Sin has reference to its standard; to its action; and to its effects. All true religion has its deep foundation in the knowledge and conviction of sin. It strikes its strong roots down through the feelings into the conscience. (*Donald Smith Brunton.*)

Ver. 25. **Wilt Thou break a leaf driven to and fro?**—*A pitiful plea:*—Poor Job! Who could have been brought lower? In his deep distress he turns to God, and finding no other plea so near at hand he makes a plea of his own distress. He compares himself to the weakest thing he could think of. He draws an argument out of his weakness. It is a common figure he uses, that of a leaf driven to and fro. To this Job likens himself—a helpless, hopeless, worthless, weak, despised, perishing thing. And he appeals to God. "Out of pity upon my utter weakness and nothingness, turn away Thy hand, and break not a leaf that is driven to and fro." The apprehension is so startling, the appeal is so forcible, that the argument may be employed in a great many ways. How often have the sick used it, when they have been brought to so low an ebb with physical pain that life itself seemed worthless. Not less applicable the plea to those who are plunged into the depths of poverty. So too with those who are in trouble through bereavement. Perhaps it is even more harassing in cases of mental distress, for, after all, the sharpest pangs we feel are not those of the body, nor those of the estate, but those of the mind. When the iron enters into the soul, the rust thereof is poison. Many a child of God may have used this plea, or may yet use it. I. THE PLEA IS SUCH AS ARISES FROM INWARD CONSCIOUSNESS. What plea is more powerful to ourselves than that which we draw from ourselves? In this case Job was quite certain about his own weakness. How could he doubt that? I trust many of us have been brought into such a humble frame of mind as to feel that, in a certain sense, this is true of us. What a great blessing it is to be made to know our weakness! But while it is a confession of weakness, the plea is also an acknowledgment of God's power to push that

weakness to a direful conclusion. II. THIS IS ALSO A VERY PITIFUL PLEA. Though there is weakness, yet there is also power, for weakness is, for the most part, a prevalent plea with those who are strong and good. The plea gathers force when the weakness is confessed. How a confession of weakness touches your heart when it comes from your child! III. THIS PLEA IS RIGHTLY ADDRESSED. It is addressed to God. It can be used to each person of the Blessed Trinity in Unity. "Oh, the depths of Thy loving-kindness! Is it possible that Thou canst cast away a poor, broken-hearted trembler, a poor, fearing, doubting one, who would fain be saved, but who trembles lest he should be cast away?" IV. THE PLEA IS BACKED UP BY MANY CASES OF SUCCESS. Give one illustration. The case of Hannah, the mother of Samuel; or the case of King Manasseh. Or our Lord's dealing with sinful women. V. THE TEXT IS A FAINT PLEA WHICH INVITES FULL SUCCOUR. It meant this. "Instead of breaking it, Thou wilt spare it; Thou wilt gather it up; Thou wilt give it life again." Oh, you who are brought to the very lowest of weakness! use that weakness in pleading with God, and He will return unto you with such a fulness of blessing that you shall receive pardon and favour. VI. WE MAY USE THIS PLEA—MANY OF US WHO HAVE LONG KNOWN THE SAVIOUR. Perhaps our faith has got to be very low. O Lord, wilt Thou destroy my little faith? It is weak and trembling, but it is faith of Thine own giving. Oh, break not the poor leaf that is driven to and fro! It may be your hope is not very bright. You cannot see the golden gates, though they are very near. Well, but your hope shall not be destroyed because it is clouded. Perhaps you are conscious that you have not been so useful lately as you were. Bring your little graces to Christ, as the mothers brought their little children, and ask Him to put His hands upon them and to bless them. Bring your mustard seed to Christ, and ask Him to make it grow into a tree, and He will do it; but never think that He will destroy you, or that He will destroy the work of His hands in you. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *God and human frailty*:—The thin, frail leaf—would God break that? God, the all-powerful, dealing with the feeble life of Job! God, perhaps, would bruise the leaf, but He would not break it. I. A LEAF IS THE FRAILEST AMONG FRAIL THINGS. A leaf is, in many ways, a type of man. Physically, mentally, humanly, morally. We have come into this world with constitutions tainted by sin, surrounded by temptations to evil. II. A LEAF IS THE FITTEST EMBLEM OF MAN'S MORTALITY. Will the eternal God act harshly with the ephemeral man? What is it to "break a leaf"? To treat it as a thing of insignificance, to leave it to the sport of circumstances, to let it be hurried out of sight as a mean and mortal thing. How delicate is man, physically considered; how surrounded is he by the majestic forces of nature! Yet God has plainly said, "I care for this leaf more than for all the works of My hands." Mortal though man is, he enshrines within him an everlasting being. III. A LEAF IS SUBJECT TO A VARIETY OF DANGERS. Blight may settle on it; the tornado might tear it from the parent stem; the rain and the dew may be withheld; the scorching sun may wither; the birds of the heaven may devour it. We look at man, and we say, How subject is he to manifold forms of danger! 1. The hand of trial might break us. The difference between what we can bear and what we cannot may be a very slight degree. God will not lay upon us more than we are able to bear. 2. The hand of temptation may break us. Our reserves are soon used up. There is a kind of omnipresence of temptation. Yet no temptation hath overtaken us, but such as we are able to bear. The resisting power has been given us. 3. The hand of transition might break us. The leaf has to endure the most sudden and severe changes of temperature; but these minister to its strength and life. Think of the changes of human life—from affluence to poverty, from companionship to solitude, from one estate to another. Then comes the great change. But all the changes of our life are ordered by God, and leave us sometimes saddened, but not broken or destroyed. IV. A LEAF IS THE WONDERFUL WORK OF GOD. And a most wonderful work it is. And God made man. From the first His care has been for His lost child, His voice has been to the sons of men, and the great atonement has been a sacrifice for the world. We believe in God's care for every leaf in the great forest of humanity. V. A LEAF IS OFTEN BROKEN BY MAN. God's tender mercies are over all His works. He will not break a leaf. Man will. There are those who come near the secrets of human lives, and could write interesting volumes, if they dared, on broken human leaves. Close with reflections—1. Think of the strength of God. 2. Think of the possibilities of life. 3. Think of the position we occupy.

4. Think of the end that is coming. (*W. M. Statham.*) *A picture and a problem of life:*—I. A PICTURE OF LIFE. It is a "leaf driven to and fro." The words suggest four ideas. 1. Insignificance. "A leaf," not a tree. 2. Frailty. "A leaf." How fragile. The tree strikes its roots into the earth and often grows on for many years. But the leaf is only for a season. From spring to autumn is the period that measures its longest duration. 3. Restlessness. "Driven to and fro." How unsettled is human life! Man is never at rest. 4. Worthlessness. A leaf that has fallen from the stem and tossed by the winds is a worthless thing. On its stem it was a thing of beauty and a thing of service to the tree, but now its value is gone. Job felt that his life was worthless, as worthless as a withered leaf and "dry stubble." II. A PROBLEM OF LIFE. "Wilt Thou break a leaf driven to and fro?" This question may be looked upon in two aspects. 1. As expressing error in sentiment. The idea in the mind of Job seems to have been that God was infinitely too great to notice such a creature as he, that it was unworthy of the Infinite to pay any attention whatever to a creature so insignificant and worthless. Two thoughts expose this error. (1) To God there is nothing great or small. (2) Man, however worthless, is infinitely influential. 2. As capable of receiving a glorious answer. "Wilt Thou break a leaf driven to and fro?" Wilt Thou torment me for ever? Wilt Thou quench my existence? Take this as the question of suffering humanity, and here is the answer, "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost." "I have come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly." (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 26. **Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.**—*The iniquities of youth visited:*—The errors and sins of youth do often entail a very fearful responsibility and very heavy misery upon after life. Youth, which is the season of the first, and sometimes of the most violent temptation, is also unhappily the season of the greatest weakness. Of both temptation and weakness they are usually quite ignorant. The entrance of the path of active life is beset with dangers; and many are led away captive by divers lusts before reason had fairly become seated upon her throne. These things do not pass over the mind like an idle wind. The stream of sin cuts furrows deep and wide into the very substance of man's moral nature, overturns all that is good and lovely, overwhelms the fair blossoms and hopes of an intellectual harvest, and even if it retires, leaves, like the receding tide, but a barren surface, uncomely to the mental eye, and ungenial to all religious culture. Some of the evil consequences of early sin are found in the natural tendency of such a course of life; or, rather, in the effects which the providence of God causes, even in this world, to follow a deviation from His laws of moral government. Those who are grossly licentious in their youth pay part penalty by a premature and painful decay of their bodily faculties. Those who waste early years in mere frivolity become, in after life, men of confined intellectual views, and disinclined to all serious occupation. But temporal inconvenience and distress are not the only evil consequences arising from the iniquities of their youth. While religion does not discourage cheerfulness in youth, remember how awful is the warning which she utters to those who regard little else than mere amusement and present gratification. The habits formed in youth will mainly influence the whole future life. (*J. Chevalier, B.D.*) *The aggravations and sorrows of youthful iniquities:*—Sin is the source of all the sorrows that attend human nature; and its early workings, in the younger parts of life, lay a foundation for bitter reflections and for many sufferings afterwards. God's "writing bitter things against him" seems to be an allusion to the custom of princes or judges, who used to have their decrees or sentences written, to signify their certain establishment. The "iniquities of his youth" were the sins committed in his younger days. His "possessing" these may relate to his distressing reviews of them, and to the grievous rebukes which he apprehended befell him on their account. Doctrine—That the sins of youth are highly provoking to God, and lay a foundation for bitter sorrows afterwards. I. WHY ARE THE SINS OF YOUTH HIGHLY PROVOKING TO GOD? Young people are apt to think themselves excusable for their sins and follies, and to be unconcerned about them. They imagine that the tricks and frolics of youth are very little, if at all displeasing to God, and that He will easily excuse and pardon them. But these thoughts of their hearts are some of their greatest and most dangerous follies. These lay them open to temptation, and harden and embolden them in the ways of sin. Such sins are transgressions, and they proceed from a corrupt

and depraved nature, from evil dispositions of heart against the holy and blessed God, and from a disrelish of Him. Some peculiar circumstances aggravate youthful sins. 1. They are committed against God's remarkable care and kindness towards you, while you are least able to help yourselves. What a kind benefactor has this God been! It must be very provoking in you to sin against such a kind and gracious, such a merciful and bounteous, such a great and good God as this. 2. They are an abuse of the most vigorous active part of your life. "The glory of young men is their strength." If your strength is prostituted to sin, what a provocation that must be to the God who gave it. In youth your minds are most active, and capable of being employed with sprightliness and fervour. 3. They are a waste of that valuable time of life which should be especially employed to lay in a stock for after use and service. The time of youth is the learning and improving time. 4. They strengthen and increase sinful habits within you. They are a confirmation and increase of those depraved dispositions that naturally belong to you as fallen creatures. You hereby consent to them and approve of them. 5. They destroy and pervert the advantage of tender affections. Sins of youth have a malignant influence upon your affections, making them exceeding sensual and vain. How dull and cold your affections become with regard to spiritual things! 6. They have a mischievous influence upon other young people. The evil example and enticements you set before them, are strong temptations to them to throw up all religion, and to run into the same excess of riot with you. 7. You cannot pretend, as some older persons do, that the cares or hurries of the world are your temptations to sin, or to neglects of the service of God, and of your soul's concerns. II. THESE PROVOKING SINS OF YOUTH lay a foundation for bitter sorrows afterwards. 1. In their own nature they tend to the bitterest sorrows. They separate between the holy God and you. They bring sufferings in character, circumstance, health, and lives. 2. They bring dreadful judgments of God in this life. His judgments concur with the natural tendencies of sin. Youthful sinners forfeit the promises of long life and prosperity, and expose themselves to the vengeance of God. 3. It is the fixed appointment of God that you shall either be brought to bitter repentance for your sins of youth in this world, or shall suffer severely for them in the next. If you live and die without sorrowing, after a godly sort, for the sins of youth, and without applying by faith to the blood of Christ for a pardon, you must unavoidably suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. Then be convinced of the need of pardoning and renewing grace. (*John Guyse, D.D.*) *Age lamenting the sins of youth*:—It would be hard, in any country which has been evangelised, to find an individual without some consciousness of sin. As God hath ever revealed Himself as a sin-hating God, He will never cease, by His dealings with man, to demonstrate this until the end of the world. The great mass of sinners certainly do not meet their recompense in this world, but they undoubtedly will in the next. This is not the great dispensation of rewards and punishments. It may be laid down, without fear of contradiction, that the consequences of the sins of the people of God are sure to meet them in this life; not that they may atone by their sufferings here for sins from whose eternal punishment they are delivered by the merits of Christ (for that were absurd to suppose), but in order that they may be better able to understand and enter into the mind of God with respect to sin, in order that they may feel its hatefulness and be purified from the love of it. The words of holy Job, which we have taken in hand to consider, give testimony to this. Job was, in the scriptural sense of the word, a just or justified man, yet we have him the greatest human example on record "of suffering affliction." There is a connection between cause and effect in every part of God's moral government of the world, and there never yet was sorrow where sin had not gone before it; not even the exception which some might feel inclined to make—the Man of Sorrows, Christ the Lord; He was afflicted because He bare our sins in His own body. We say then, with respect to the affliction of Job, that it was by no means an arbitrary or capricious dispensation of Jehovah. There was sin somewhere, or bitter things would never have been written against him. Job's friends were good, though in their method of dealing with Job, mistaken men. Job denies their (personal) accusation, and asserts his innocence. Job's friends were right in connecting sin with sorrow, but they were wrong in accusing Job of hypocrisy and gross dereliction from duty. Job was right in vindicating himself from the particular charges, but he erred in too strongly asserting his general innocence. Job's error we find out from this, that his affliction was not removed until he made a full confession of his unworthiness;

and the error of his friends we see in the atonement which Job was required to make for them. After pleading with God, there seems as if, suddenly, memory poured in a stream of light along the dark forgotten path of years gone by, exposing thoughts, words, and actions which he had supposed were hidden in the irrevocable past. Who can tell the searchings of that conscience, the clearness with which it saw in each stroke of the rod a remembrance of some former disobedience, compelling Job to acknowledge the justice as well as the severity of his punishment. Is it possible that a hoary head found in the way of righteousness should be thus defiled with the dust of repentance for the follies of early life; that the crown of gold which had been given to ripe and righteous age should now be dimmed and tarnished by the memorial of long forsaken transgression? Yes, David was an old man when he prayed to God, "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions." It may be said that men do not sin so much from ignorance of the evil of disobedience, as from the foolish hope that it will be passed over by the Almighty—that it will never meet them again. It is under this delusion the young man acts, who, plunging into a course of transgression, takes no heed to cleanse his way according to God's Word. Fancy the case of one, the prime of whose life has been devoted to sensualism. "His bones are full of the sin of his youth." Sin cannot go unpunished; it may not be visited here on some, but hereafter their doom is certain. God will make us feel most keenly the guilt for which He pardons us; and our transgressions subsequent to our pardon will not be passed over. Think not, therefore, lightly of sin. Think not that yours will never meet you again. (*C. O. Pratt, M.A.*) *The possession of the iniquities of youth in after-life*:—There is something striking in the expression "possessing the iniquities," &c. It is as though the iniquities of youth so adhered and cleaved to a man in riper years that there was no possibility of shaking them off. The sins committed in the spring-time of life tell fearfully on its maturity and its decline. Two general points of view. I. THE WARNING TO THOSE WHO ARE JUST AT THE OUTSET OF LIFE. We must make good the truth, and illustrate the fact, that men possess in after-life the iniquities of their youth. The power of the warning must depend on the demonstration of the truth. How difficult, with reference to the things of the present state of being, it is to make up by after diligence for lost time in youth. If there have been a neglected boyhood, the consequences will propagate themselves to the extreme line of life. The ability changes with the period, and what we do not do at the right time, we want the strength to perform at any subsequent time. The same truth is exemplified with reference to bodily health. The man who has injured his constitution by the excesses of youth, cannot repair the mischief by after-abstinence and self-denial. The seeds of disease which have been sown while the passions were fresh and ungoverned, are not to be eradicated by the severest moral regimen which may be afterwards prescribed and followed. The possession of the iniquities of the youth which we wish most to exhibit is that which affects men when stirred with anxiety for the soul, and desirous to seek and obtain the pardon of sin. The indifference to religion which marks the commencement of a course will become in later life an inveterate and powerful habit. However genuine and effectual the repentance and faith of a late period of life, it is unavoidable that the remembrance of misspent years will embarrass those which you consecrate to God. Even with those who began early, it is a constant source of regret they began not earlier. By lengthening the period of irreligion, and therefore diminishing that of obedience to God, we almost place ourselves amongst the last of the competitors for the kingdom of heaven. II. THE EXPLANATION WHICH THIS FACT AFFORDS OF PROCEEDINGS WHICH MIGHT OTHERWISE SEEM AT VARIANCE WITH GOD'S MORAL GOVERNMENT. Job spoke matter of fact, whether or no he judged rightly in the view he took of his own case. The principle is, that the sins which righteous men have committed during the season of alienation from God, are visited upon them in the season of repentance and faith; so that they are made to possess, in suffering and trouble, those iniquities which have been quite taken away, so far as their eternal penalties are concerned. There is a vast mistake in supposing that the righteous may sin with impunity. We seem warranted in believing that peculiar trouble falls on the righteous, because they are righteous, and because, therefore, God's honour is intimately concerned in their being visited for transgression. If God is to be shown as displeased with the iniquities of His own people, as well as of His enemies, it must be seen in this life. The consequences of sin in God's people must be experienced on this side the grave. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The sins of youth possessed in after-*

life :—Job regarded his calamities as the just demerits of his youthful failures and misdoings. Consider this sentiment—The evil deeds of a man's early history are followed by their natural and legitimate consequences in his after-life. Even as it respects the present state, men cannot sin with impunity. This sentiment is illustrated—I. IN MAN'S PHYSICAL CONSTITUTION. Several species of iniquity are followed at an earlier or later period by consequences seriously felt in our bodily organisation. Many of the prevalent maladies of mankind are not the direct administrations of heaven, but the rightful consequences of actions which are violations at once of physical and moral laws; and if men will be guilty of these violations, God must work a miracle to prevent those results. Afflictive providences may be simply the sorrows which individuals unjust and cruel to themselves draw down upon their own heads. Illustrate by drunkenness, and by the sin of impurity. Than this crime there is none which more directly and surely entails physical suffering and death. Would you wish to avoid those maladies which, while they undermine and ruin the constitution, are the result of men's own follies and crimes? Then avoid the practice of sin now. Devote your bodies and spirits to the service of Christ and the duties of eternity. II. IN MAN'S PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND SOCIAL POSITION. Property and a respectable standing in society are blessings. We may pervert them, and thus use them for evil. We may apply them to their lawful uses, and thus make them the instruments of great and permanent good. Nothing more seriously affects a man's worldly interests and his social standing than the course and conduct of his youth. Illustrate by Hogarth's picture, "The Idle and Industrious Apprentice." Through all time and everywhere these two propositions will hold true. 1. If property and respectability are not possessed at the outset of life, a course of vice in youth will prevent a man ever obtaining them. 2. If possessed at the outset, the same course will certainly deprive him of their possession. Like all rules, these admit of exceptions. By a course of vice, we mean certain species of vice, such as idleness, gambling, lying, pride, dishonesty, immorality. If you yield to vicious habits, your iniquities, like the wind, will carry you away. Providence will frown on your path. God will not interrupt His general administrations to work miracles for your advancement. His blessing will not attend you; and therefore your ways will not prosper. III. IN MAN'S MENTAL AND MORAL HISTORY. The mental powers we possess are among the chief blessings we hold from God. Hence the mind should be the object of careful and incessant culture. Alas! multitudes neglect the culture of the mind for the pursuit of sensual objects, and destroy its capabilities, either wholly or in part, by vice. Mental disorganisation is often the direct result of early crime. Early rioting distorts the imagination and beclouds the intellect. But the most distressing and fearful part of the inheritance remains. Is no possession entailed on man's moral nature? Habits are made by youthful sins. The conduct of youth becomes the character of the man. Mere inattention to religion in youth grows and strengthens into a character fraught with imminent danger. You may not be openly immoral. But if you disregard the claims of the Gospel, you will grow up to maturity practical unbelievers. Growing in piety as you advance in years, you will increase in favour both with God and man. Your path will be one of usefulness, peace, and glory. (*W. Walters.*) *The sins of youth productive of the sorrows of age* :—I. THE SINS OF YOUTH. Disregard of parental authority, forgetfulness of God, refusal of instruction, evil company, sensuality, intemperance, vain amusements, &c. II. THE SINS OF YOUTH ARE HIGHLY PROVOKING TO GOD. 1. They are committed against His tender care and love towards them when they are least able to help themselves. 2. They are an abuse of the most vigorous part of life. Then the body is most active, healthy, and strong; then the mind is clear, and gradually strengthening, and very susceptible; then the talents can be better consecrated to the service of God. But all those rich advantages are prostituted to the service of sin and Satan. 3. It is an awful waste of precious time—that time which should be employed in gaining knowledge, purity, joy, and Christian experience. 4. They are contaminating in their influence. "One sinner destroyeth much good." 5. The sins of youth, if persisted in, will tend to confirm the person in the commission of crime. The tenderness of human passions gradually decreases; warnings, &c., lose their influence; afflictions, jugdments, death itself, at length affect not. III. THE SINS OF YOUTH LAY THE FOUNDATION FOR BITTER REMORSE, AND SOMETIMES FOR SEVERE PUNISHMENT. They often subject the sinner to judicial punishment in this life. The sins of youth affect—1. The body. It is often

wasted by disease which sin has produced. 2. The mind. This frequently suffers more than the body. "The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" (1) A painful retrospect. Scenes of wickedness; language of profanity; actions of impurity; a wicked life, and its influence upon others. (2) Painful and harassing conviction; of infinite love abused, rejected; done despite to the Spirit of grace—trodden under foot the Son of God. (3) Great loss; of holy pleasures; solid joy; loss of salvation to the present time. Eternal life neglected for mere phantoms. (4) Embarrassment, in order to gain happiness when the principal seed-time, and the richest facilities for obtaining spiritual life are gone. How seldom is an aged man brought to repentance! 3. The future. Frequently the prospect is dark and dreadful; a "fearful looking for of judgment," &c. Application—1. Let the young be convinced that they need saving and renewing grace. 2. Let those who now bear the iniquities of their youth apply to the Almighty Saviour. (*Helps for the Pulpit.*) *The man possessing the iniquities of his youth*:—How very different do what Job calls "the iniquities of his youth" appear as regards each one's own early history! One knows of none at all; another knows of some, but thinks very lightly of them; another "possesses his," as Job did, which yet was not in a right way. I. THE INIQUITIES OF YOUTH—WHAT THEY ARE. The world judges by a poor standard, and views things through a perverted medium. 1. Iniquity in youth is of the very same character as iniquity in after-life. Is there not frequent mistake on this point? How common are falsehoods in early life. Some think lightly of profane language in the young. There are several sins very common among the young—swearing, lying, stealing, fornication, &c. This is the fact, the moral law of God is fixed and unchangeable. 2. The unconverted life in youth is a course of "iniquity." This some may think uncharitable; but our question is, How does God view things? How would He have us to view them? Is the case uncommon, of a man decent, decorous, virtuous, but one thing lacking, the heart given to God? There is iniquity, then, in that. For what is iniquity? That which is contrary to what is just and equal in God's judgment. 3. In every one who has been young there has been iniquity. There is iniquity in original sin, and in all sin in youth. II. THE WAYS IN WHICH GOD MAY "MAKE A MAN POSSESS THE INIQUITIES OF HIS YOUTH." 1. In the way of retribution. The indulged love of pleasure and self-gratification in youth deadens the feelings, blunts the affections, and leaves the man a thoroughly selfish, hard-hearted creature. And if the youth be merely moral, without godliness, it often grows into the most confirmed self-righteousness in middle life. 2. In the way of conviction. His method of conviction varies in its process. 3. In the way of conversion. 4. In the way of consolation. 5. In the way of caution. "Go and sin no more" is the language of Christ to every pardoned penitent. 6. In the way of godly education of the young. Some seem to think the consciousness of faults in their own youth should make them silent as to the faults of the young now, and if silent, then inactive in endeavours to correct them. This would be to help perpetuate our own and others' faults. (*John Hambleton, M.A.*) *Possessing the sins of youth*:—Let it be remarked first, that they are the words of a good man. A second preliminary remark which I make is, that the words of our text were spoken by this good man when he was well advanced in life. In the beginning of the book, for example, we are informed that the patriarch had sons and daughters, and from what is said of their eating and drinking in their elder brother's house, it is clear that some of them at least must have come to man's estate. Their father must have been in middle life or beyond it. A third remark is, that these words were uttered by a good man well advanced in life, when he was under the pressure of severe and complicated affliction. Again, these words of our text are addressed to God, and that the language of the verse is of a judicial or forensic character. Job is arguing with God as the judge of the whole earth. He says in effect, "Thou hast pronounced a severe and terrible sentence upon me; Thou hast written bitter things against me; Thou makest me to inherit the sins of my youth; it is obvious to me, from the numerous and terrible and varied afflictions which are befalling me, that even the transgressions of my early years, which I thought had been long ago forgotten and forgiven, are coming upon me, and He who saith, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' is demanding reparation." I. THAT YOUTH IS A SEASON OFTEN MARKED BY FOLLY AND INIQUITY. A consideration of the nature of the case would lead us to conclude that this is what might be expected. If a person were sent to walk in a place where there were many and dangerous pitfalls, many steep and

lofty precipices, many and fierce wild beasts, there would be danger at any time of his being injured or destroyed, but that danger would be immeasurably increased if he were sent to walk in such a place while there was little or no light. In such circumstances it is almost certain that he would sustain injury,—it is highly probable that he would lose his life. Now, analogous to the position of the individual supposed is that of a young person in the world. There are many and dangerous pitfalls, and not a few of these which are in reality the most deadly are carefully concealed. The wealth and the honour and the pleasure of the present life have roads leading from them to great moral precipices, by which has been occasioned the ruin of many souls, and the poverty and disappointment and disease that exist in the world are fraught with danger. The young are like persons who walk in the dark—they have little knowledge or experience of these things; they naturally imagine that "all is gold that glitters." Having been treated with kindness and truthfulness by those with whom they have had to do in infancy, they are induced to put confidence in those with whom they are brought into contact in after-life. The animal and emotional part of their nature is powerful, while the intellectual and moral part of it is weak. Passion is strong while there is comparatively little moral restraint, and the soul is like a ship with its sails spread out to a fresh breeze, while from a deficiency of ballast there is danger every hour of its foundering amidst the waters. Not only might we come to such a conclusion from a consideration of the nature of the case, but the same truth is suggested by the warnings and exhortations of Scripture. Has it not been said, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth," "by what means shall a young man cleanse his way," "exhort young men to be sober-minded"? II. IT IS A VERY COMMON THING FOR MEN TO WISH AND ATTEMPT TO GET RID OF THE FOLLY AND INIQUITY OF THEIR YOUTH. This is done in many ways. 1. How many are there, for example, who attempt to get rid of their sins by excusing them! Have you not heard persons speaking of the folly and sin that have been seen in the conduct of others in their younger years, concluding their remarks by saying, "But these were only the follies and sins of youth. We do not wish or expect to see old heads on young shoulders; we do not wish or expect to see in the young the staid and prudent demeanour of those who are more advanced in life; men must sow their wild oats at some period or other of their lives, and surely it is better far to do it in their early days than afterwards"? Now just as men are disposed to speak and think of the sins of others will they be disposed to think and speak of their own; or if there be a difference, it will be on the side of charity towards themselves. 2. How often do we attempt to palliate our sin and folly when we cannot altogether excuse them! There, for example, is the sensualist. When he thinks and speaks of his past conduct does he not seek consciously or unconsciously to diminish its enormity? Listen to him and observe the fine names which he is accustomed to use, and the convenient coloured roundabout phraseology in which he wraps up and paints his wickedness. He has been a drunkard, that is, he has not been once, but many times in a state in which the powers of mind and body were incapable, through the influence of intoxicating drink, of doing that for which God designed them, he could not think, and talk, and walk like a man; yet he speaks only of "living somewhat freely, of being a little elevated at times, of having occasionally taken a glass too much," and when men speak of him as a drunkard he regards it as a gross insult. 3. Again, how often do we attempt to get rid of our sins by making some kind of atonement for them. They are willing to mortify themselves, and they engage in a course of obedience and worship with an earnest desire to make up by zeal and punctuality now for their lack of service in other days; ignorant of the free spirit of the Gospel of Jesus, they serve God in a spirit of bondage, their consciences meanwhile echoing the terrible declarations of the Scriptures, "By the deeds of the law no flesh living can be justified." "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." III. IT IS A VERY COMMON THING FOR GOD TO SHOW MEN THE FRUITLESSNESS OF ALL SUCH ATTEMPTS AS THOSE OF WHICH WE HAVE BEEN SPEAKING, AND TO MAKE THEM POSSESS THE INIQUITIES OF THEIR YOUTH. There are some philosophers who hold that no thought or feeling which has ever passed through the mind of man is lost, but that it lives, although it may be in some dark recess of memory, and may at any time be brought forth in vividness and power; and there are many facts within the circle of the experience of all of us which suggest the great probability at least of this notion. The thoughts and feelings of man's soul are not like the rays of light—those of to-day

having no connection with or dependence on those of yesterday; but they are like the branches of a tree resting on and nourished by the roots. The roots of a man's life are in the past, and he cannot, even if he would, break away from it. The gentle soul of an aged Christian, filled with the full assurance of hope, will sometimes shudder at the recollection of sinful passion long ago pardoned and subdued, even as the dark blue glassy surface of a tropical sea will sometimes heave from the influence of some remote ocean storm. 1. We observe then, first, that God often recalls our past sins to us by means of the dispensations of providence. When a man feels himself prematurely old, and knows, as he often does, that decay is the fruit of what he himself sowed in other years, how can he fail to read his sin in his punishment? But it is not only when there is a close connection between the sin and suffering that sin is brought to remembrance. There is sometimes in the very nature of the event that which is fitted to suggest scenes and circumstances of our past life. Look, for example, to the case of Jacob. He was deceived by his uncle Laban, and brought by a trick to marry Leah instead of Rachel. The conduct of Laban was a severe affliction to Jacob at the time, and it proved the source of discomfort and domestic strife afterwards; is it not in the highest degree probable that when the patriarch was so deceived and made to smart in this way, he thought of the fact that he himself had been guilty of conduct very like that of his uncle when he went in to his old blind father and said, "I am thy elder son, thy son Esau"? The case of Jacob's sons in the land of Egypt is a very striking illustration of this. "We are verily guilty concerning our brother in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." 2. Again we observe, that God often recalls past sins to us by the preaching of the Gospel. The woman of Samaria said of Jesus, who had preached the Gospel to her, "He told me all things that ever I did." 3. Now why does God thus make a man possess the sins of his youth? Is it not that we may feel our need of the mercy which God has provided for us in the Gospel of His Son? (*J. B. Johnston, D.D.*) *The sins of youth in the groans of age*:—The popular thought is, let age be grave, and youth be gay. I question its rightness for two reasons. 1. Because where there is not godliness there is the strongest reason for the greatest gravity and gloom of spirit. 2. Where this godliness is, there is even stronger reason for joy in age than in youth. Call attention to the solemnity of youthful life. I. YOUTH HAS ITS SINS. 1. Want of knowledge. Youth is a period of ignorance and inexperience. 2. The force of passions. In the first stages of life we are almost entirely the creatures of sense: physical appetite, not moral ideas, rule us; we are influenced by feeling, not faith; the mind is the vassal of matter. 3. Susceptibility to influence. This is a characteristic of youth; the sentiments, language, conduct of others are powerful influences in the formation of its own. Character is formed, in fact, on the principle of imitation. II. THE SINS OF YOUTH DESCEND TO AGE. Job regarded himself as heir to them; they were his heritage, he could not shake them off. Youthful sins are bound by the indissoluble chain of causation to the man's futurity. There are three principles that secure this connection. 1. The law of retribution. 2. The law of habit. 3. The law of memory. III. THEIR EXISTENCE IN AGE IS A BITTER THING. 1. They are bitter things to the body in old age. Every sin has an evil effect on the physical health. 2. They are bitter things to the soul in old age. To the intellect, the heart, and the conscience. IV. THEY ARE A "BITTER THING" IN AGE, EVEN WHERE THE SUFFERER IS A GODLY MAN. Old errors cannot be corrected; old principles cannot be uprooted; old habits cannot be broken in a day. The conclusion of the whole is this,—the importance of beginning religion in youth. The chances are that unless it is commenced in youth, it will never be commenced at all. There are but few conversions in middle life. As we begin we are likely to end. (*Homilist.*) *The iniquities of youth re-possessed*:—I. EXPLAIN THE LANGUAGE OF THE TEXT. 1. "Thou writest bitter things against me." This refers either to the record which God keeps of our offences, or to the punishments which He has decreed against us. Men cannot bear to be reminded of their sins. God keeps a record. There is an avowed and express purpose for which our sins are written down. With every sin God writes a curse. 2. "Thou makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth." The conscience of the sinner himself is also made the depository of his manifold offences. It is an unspeakable mercy, if, by any means, God makes us to possess or remember the iniquities of our youth. But the manner in which He does this is often most painful and distressing. He sends affliction upon men

in such ways that they are often compelled to see the very sin which they have committed in the temporal chastisement which they suffer. Some sins are brought to our recollection—1. By bodily diseases. 2. By the ruin of our worldly circumstances. 3. By our feeling the influence of bad habits. 4. By trouble of conscience and a restless mind. II. APPLY THE SUBJECT TO VARIOUS CHARACTERS. 1. Awaken those who are secure and asleep in a careless and irreligious life. 2. Affectionately warn young people against the temptations to which they are exposed. 3. Speak words of comfort to the humble-minded. (*J. Jowett, M.A.*) *The influence of youthful sin* :—Among the reminiscences of a political leader published by a Boston journal, is one of a national convention of the party to which he belonged. He says that the first day's proceedings developed the fact that the balance of power in the nomination of a candidate for the Presidency would rest with the delegation from a certain State. The delegates met in caucus at night with closed doors. In the discussion that ensued, the name of a prominent man was urged, and was received with favour. Only one of the delegates, a judge of some eminence in the State, knew him personally, and he not intimately. He was asked for his opinion. In reply, he said that he was at college with the prospective candidate, and he would relate one incident of college life. He did so, and it showed that the young man was in those days destitute of moral principle. The delegates were satisfied that, although brilliant, he was a man they could not trust, and they unanimously resolved to cast the votes of the State for his rival. The next day the vote was given, as decided, and the man to whom it was given was nominated and elected. Little did the young college man think, when he committed that escapade, that a score of years later it would be the sole cause of his missing one of the great prizes of earth—that of being the ruler of millions of people. But sin is always loss, and unless it is blotted out by the blood of Christ, it will cause the sinner to lose the greatest prize attainable to a human being in the world beyond the grave—eternal life (Luke xiii. 3).

Ver. 27. **Thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet.**—*Footprints* :—True religion there cannot be without an abiding sense of our responsibilities. We must discover and realise our moral obligations, or we can never meet and discharge them. What is meant by moral responsibility? It implies that God will call man to account for his whole character and conduct, and will render to every man accordingly. To every man time is a state of probation, and eternity a state of retribution. The doctrine of our responsibility lies within us, graven on our very being by the Spirit of God Himself. We are apt to forget the extent of this responsibility. We look upon it as a mere generality. Note, then, we are responsible for our thoughts and our actions. The responsibility extends to every word of our lips, and to every stepping of our feet. As we walk, we write the history of our movements—write them down for ever. Some footprints can outlive ages, as the geologists show us. God will remind you that He put a print into the heel of your foot, that He might bring you into judgment for your movements upon earth. Here is a thought upon a part of our responsibilities we are apt to forget. We cannot move but we carry with us our Christian obligations, and our consequent relationship to the day of judgment necessarily attending those obligations. Every single step has left behind it an eternal footprint which determines in what direction we walk, in what character we move. 1. Wherever we move we carry with us our personal and individual responsibility. In every change of place and contact with man on the travel we act as beings who must give an account to God. Then call to mind the obligations that rest on you. 2. We are all so constituted as to exert a relative influence on each other. There is no member of the human family who does not sustain some relation, either original or acquired, either public or private, either permanent or temporary; nor is there any relation which does not invest the person sustaining it with some degree of interest. Do we think as we ought of this? (*J. C. Phipps Eyre, M.A.*)

Ver. 28. **And he, as a rotten thing, consumeth, as a garment that is moth-eaten.**—*Rotten establishments* :—"A revival of commercial confidence cannot be expected so long as rotten trading establishments continue to deceive the world." The cause of bad trade is that we have neglected personal religion, and have been almost eaten up by a selfish cancer. There would never be either a failure or a panic if all commercial men made the Lord Jesus their secret but active partner in every business transaction. We are apt to consider a defect in our character

to be nothing more than as a spot of rust on a bright fender by the kitchen fire. It is really the fruit of a spiritual dry rot, which while we appear pious and respectable in outside show, is eating away the inner strength of true manhood. When love and benevolence fade it is on account of a rotten thing which consumeth the good actions of a Christian, as a moth consumes a garment. Years ago, our Christian light shone brightly—some of us were the life of religious meetings, the pioneer in saving the lost, the foremost in every good work. Once some of us felt that we had something to live for, but a stupor has come over us, and we have lost all anxiety to fulfil our destiny. Inquire into the private history of those who exhibit feebleness and decay in their Christian life, in the hope that we may discover our evils and obtain a remedy. Consider private prayer. The cause of neglect may be an indulged sin. Look at the motives of your actions. Look into the shop-window of your religion. A word to those who are outwardly respectable, but are inwardly bound by a secret chain to some evil thing. It is of your own will that you are bound to your sin. You might escape, if you would. Have you chained yourself to sin? (*W. Bird.*) *Struggles of conscience*:—I. A LITTLE BY WAY OF CONSOLATION. We desire to comfort you who wish to feel more and more your sins. The best of men have prayed this prayer of the text before you. Remember that you never prayed like this years ago when you were a careless sinner. Then you did not want to know your guilt. Moreover, it is very probable that you do already feel your guilt, and what you are asking for you already have in measure realised. II. A FEW WORDS OF INSTRUCTION. See how God will answer such prayers. Sometimes by allowing a man to fall into more and more gross sin. Or by opening the eyes of the soul; not so much by providence, as by the mysterious agency of the Holy Spirit. How can we get to know our sins and the need of the Saviour? 1. Hear a personal ministry. 2. Study much the law of God. 3. Go to Calvary. III. A FEW SENTENCES BY WAY OF DISCRIMINATION. Discriminate between the work of the Holy Spirit and the work of the devil. It is the work of the Spirit to make thee feel thyself a sinner, but it never was His work to make thee feel that Christ could forget thee. Satan always works by trying to counterfeit the work of the Spirit. Then take care thou dost not try to make a righteousness out of thy feelings. IV. A LAST POINT BY WAY OF EXHORTATION. It is a very great sin not to feel your guilt, and not to mourn over it, but then it is one of the sins that Jesus Christ atoned on the tree. Come to Jesus, because it is He only who can give you that heart for which you seek; and because He can soften thy heart, and thou canst never soften it thyself. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

CHAPTER XIV.

VERS. 1, 2. **Man that is born of a woman is of few days.**—*The brevity and burden of life*:—The knowledge and the conduct of mankind are very frequently at variance. How general is the conviction of the brevity of human life and of the certainty of death! How wise, virtuous, and happy would the human species be were their conduct conformable to this conviction! But how rarely is this the case! Do not the generality live as if their life were never to have an end? 1. Our life is of short duration. Many are snatched away by death while children. A considerable portion of mankind fall a prey to the grave in the liveliest period of their youth! Many are taken off by sudden disease. If a man lives long, how short life appears to him on review of it. 2. Our life is full of trouble. To how many evils and dangers, how many calamities are we not subject from our birth to our death! How often are our joys converted into sorrows! Our life is interwoven with many perils and distresses. Let us never add to their number by a disorderly and criminal conduct. If life then be so short and so insecure, how irrational is it to confine our hopes to these few moments, and to seek the whole of our happiness here on earth! We impose upon ourselves in thinking to build our felicity on the unstable possession and enjoyment of these fugacious objects. We are formed for eternity. Our present condition is only a state of preparation and discipline; it only contains the first act of our life which is never to terminate. The blessed, undecaying life should

be the object of our affections, our views and our exertions; it should be the principal ground of our hopes and our comfort. (*G. J. Zollikofer.*) *The brevity and troubles of human life*:—I. MAN'S DAYS ARE FEW. Time is a word of comparison. Time is a portion of eternity, or unlimited duration. But who can form a just conception of eternity? That which we call time we may attempt to illustrate by observing that when one event has reference to and is connected with another which precedes it, the distance between them is marked, and the portion of duration is designated time. Eternity was, before the sun and moon were made, eternity is now, and eternity will continue to be, when suns and moons shall have finished their course. To aid our meditations on the shortness of time, we may endeavour to contemplate eternity. We may draw a circle, place our finger upon any part of it, then follow by tracing the line, but when shall we reach the termination of that line? Round and round the circle we may move, but we shall come to no end. Such is eternity, it has no limits. Turning from the thought of the vastness of eternity, while contemplating which we cannot but feel our own insignificance, let us see if, in comparison, time be not a very little thing, less than a drop of water compared with the ocean, or a grain of sand with the dimensions of the globe. In the short period of a few years one generation passes away, and another and another succeed. Few are man's days, but long and important is the train of events dependent upon the manner in which they are spent. II. THE DAYS OF MAN ARE FULL OF TROUBLE. The troubles of man commence at a very tender age. In man's daily movements he is liable to many personal dangers. He is brought through distressing scenes. No stage of life is exempt from troubles, from infancy to grey hairs; but although this is a state and condition of sorrow, it need not be one of despair. Trials and troubles are our portion, but there is a state to which we may attain which will far more than compensate for all we may be called to endure here below, and true wisdom consists in securing to ourselves this inestimable blessing. (*Sir Wm. Dunbar.*) *The brevity and burden of life*:—That life is of short continuance and disquieted by many molestations every man knows, and every man feels. But truth does not always operate in proportion to its reception. Truth, possessed without the labour of investigation, like many of the general conveniences of life, loses its estimation by its easiness of access. Many things which are not pleasant may be salutary, and among them is the just estimate of human life, which may be made by all with advantage, though by few, very few, with delight. Since the mind is always of itself shrinking from disagreeable images, it is sometimes necessary to recall them; and it may contribute to the repression of many unreasonable desires, and the prevention of many faults and follies, if we frequently and attentively consider—I. THAT MAN BORN OF A WOMAN IS OF FEW DAYS. The business of life is to work out our salvation; and the days are few in which provision must be made for eternity. Our time is short, and our work is great. We must use all diligence to make our "calling and election sure." But this is the care of only a few. If reason forbids us to fix our hearts upon things which we are not certain of retaining, we violate a prohibition still stronger when we suffer ourselves to place our happiness in that which must certainly be lost; yet such is all that this world affords us. Pleasures and honours must quickly fail us, because life itself must soon be at an end. To him who turns his thoughts late to the duties of religion, the time is not only shorter, but the work is heavier. The more sin has prevailed, with the more difficulty is its dominion resisted. Habits are formed by repeated acts, and therefore old habits are always strongest. How much more dreadful does the danger of delay appear, when it is considered that not only life is every day shorter, and the work of reformation every day greater, but that strength is every day less. It is absolutely less by reason of natural decay. In the feebleness of declining life, resolution is apt to languish. One consideration ought to be deeply impressed upon every sluggish and dilatory lingerer. The penitential sense of sin, and the desire of a new life, when they arise in the mind, are to be received as monitions excited by our merciful Father, as calls which it is our duty to hear and our interest to follow; that to turn our thoughts away from them is a new sin. II. THAT MAN BORN OF A WOMAN IS FULL OF TROUBLE. The immediate effect of the numerous calamities with which human nature is threatened, or afflicted, is to direct our desires to a better state. Of the troubles incident to mankind, every one is best acquainted with his own share. Sin and vexation are still so closely united, that he who traces his troubles to their

source will commonly find that his faults have produced them, and he is then to consider his sufferings as the mild admonitions of his Heavenly Father, by which he is summoned to timely repentance. Trouble may, sometimes, be the consequence of virtue. In times of persecution this has happened. The frequency of misfortunes and universality of misery may properly repress any tendency to discontent or murmuring. We suffer only what is suffered by others, and often by those who are better than ourselves. We may find opportunities of doing good. Many human troubles are such as God has given man the power of alleviating. The power of doing good is not confined to the wealthy. He that has nothing else to give, may often give advice. A wise man may reclaim the vicious and instruct the ignorant, may quiet the throbs of sorrow, or disentangle the perplexities of conscience. He may compose the resentful, encourage the timorous, and animate the hopeless. (*John Taylor, LL.D.*) *The brevity and uncertainty of man's life* :—Man's life is short. 1. Comparatively. Our fathers before the flood lived longer. Compared with the duration of the world. Compared with the years that some irrational creatures live. Eagles and ravens among birds, stags and elephants among beasts. Compared with those many days that most men abide in the grave, in the land of oblivion. Compared with the life to come. 2. Absolutely. It is a great while before he really lives, and he is a long time alive before he knows it, and understands where he is. When he comes to live, the whole work of life has to be dispatched in a short compass. Man is made of discordant elements, which jar and fall out with one another, and thereby procure his dissolution. So that it is no wonder that he drops into the grave so soon. 3. Man's life is thus short by the just judgment of God. By reason of Adam's sin and our own. 4. Man's life is abbreviated by the mercy and favour of God. Apply—(1) Be thoroughly convinced of this truth, and often revolve it in your minds. (2) Complain not of the shortness of life. (3) Make this doctrine serviceable to all holy and religious purposes. Seeing life is so short and uncertain, how absurd a thing is it for a man to behave himself as if he should live for ever! Do not defer repentance. (*J. Edwards.*) *The proper estimate of human life* :—Job's beautiful and impressive description of human life contains no exaggerated picture. It is a just and faithful representation of the condition of man on earth. I. MAN IS OF FEW DAYS. The short duration of human life, and its hasty progress to death and the grave, has in every age been the pathetic complaint of the children of men. If he escape the dangers which threaten his tenderer years, he soon advances to the maturity of his existence, beyond which he cannot expect that his life will be much prolonged. He must fall, as does the ripe fruit from the tree. No emblem of human life can be finer than this used in the text, "as a flower"; "as a shadow." How rapid the succession of events which soon carry man into the decline of life! How frequently is the hopeful youth cut off in the very pride and beauty of life! II. MAN'S DAYS ARE FULL OF TROUBLE. Trouble and distress are our inevitable inheritance on earth. In every period, and under every circumstance of human existence, their influence on happiness is more or less perceptible. Some reflections—1. Since man is of few days and full of trouble, we should sit loose to the world and its enjoyments; we should moderate our desires and pursuits after sublunary objects. 2. Instead of indulging in immoderate sorrow for the loss of relations or friends, we should rejoice that they have escaped from the evils to come. 3. We should rejoice that our abode is not to be always in this world. The present state is but the house of our pilgrimage. 4. We should prepare for the close of life by the exercise of faith, love, and obedience to our Saviour; by the regular discharge of all the duties of piety; by the sincere and unremitting practice of every Christian grace; and by having our conversation at all times becoming the Gospel. (*G. Goldie.*) *On the shortness and troubles of human life* :—I. THE SHORTNESS. When God first built the fabric of a human body, He left it subject to the laws of mortality; it was not intended for a long continuance on this side the grave. The particles of the body are in a continual flux. Subtract from the life of man the time of his two infancies and that which is insensibly passed away in sleep, and the remainder will afford very few intervals for the enjoyment of real and solid satisfaction. Look upon man under all the advantages of its existence, and what are threescore years and ten, or even fourscore? "He cometh up like a flower, and is cut down." An apt resemblance of the transient gaieties and frailties of our state. The impotencies and imperfections of our infancy, the vanities of youth, the anxieties of manhood,

and the infirmities of age, are so closely linked together by one continued chain of sorrow and disquietude, that there is little room for solid and lasting enjoyment. II. THE TROUBLES AND MISERIES THAT ATTEND HUMAN LIFE. These are so interspersed in every state of our duration that there are very few intervals of solid repose and tranquillity of mind. Even the best of us have scarcely time to dress our souls before we must put off our bodies. We no sooner make our appearance on the stage of life, but are commanded by the decays of nature to prepare for another state. There is a visible peculiarity in our disposition which effectually destroys all our enjoyments, and consequently increases our calamities. We are too apt to fret and be discontented under our own condition, and envy that of other men. If successful in obtaining riches and pleasures, we find inconveniencies and miseries attending them. And whilst we are grasping at the shadow, we may be losing the substance. And we are uneasy and querulous under our condition, and know not how to enjoy the present hour. Substantial happiness has no existence on this side the grave. The shortness of life ought to remind us of the duty of making all possible improvements in religion and virtue. (*W. Adey.*) *Job's account of the shortness and troubles of life* :—Never man was better qualified to make just and noble reflections upon the shortness of life and the instability of human affairs than Job was, who had himself waded through such a sea of troubles, and in his passage had encountered many vicissitudes of storms and sunshine, and by turns had felt both the extremes of all the happiness and all the wretchedness that mortal man is heir to. Such a concurrence of misfortunes is not the common lot of many. The words of the text are an epitome of the natural and moral vanity of man, and contain two distinct declarations concerning his state and condition in each respect. I. THAT HE IS A CREATURE OF FEW DAYS. Job's comparison is that man "cometh forth like a flower." He is sent into the world the fairest and noblest part of God's work. Man, like the flower, though his progress is slower, and his duration something longer, yet has periods of growth and declension nearly the same, both in the nature and manner of them. As man may justly be said to be of "few days," so may he be said to "flee like a shadow and continue not," when his duration is compared with other parts of God's works, and even the works of his own hands, which outlast many generations. II. THAT HE IS FULL OF TROUBLE. We must not take our account from the flattering outside of things. Nor can we safely trust the evidence of some of the more merry and thoughtless among us. We must hear the general complaint of all ages, and read the histories of mankind. Consider the desolations of war; the cruelty of tyrants; the miseries of slavery; the shame of religious persecutions. Consider men's private causes of trouble. Consider how many are born into misery and crime. When, therefore, we reflect that this span of life, short as it is, is chequered with so many troubles, that there is nothing in this world which springs up or can be enjoyed without a mixture of sorrow, how insensibly does it incline us to turn our eyes and affections from so gloomy a prospect, and fix them upon that happier country, where afflictions cannot follow us, and where God will wipe away all tears from off our faces for ever and ever. (*Laurence Sterne.*) *Man's state and duty* :—I. MAN'S PRESENT STATE. 1. Its limited duration, expressed by the term "few days." How short life often is! In sleep alone one-third is consumed. The period of infancy must be deducted, and the time lost in indolence, listlessness, and trifling employment, in which much of every passing day is wasted. The varied employments in which men are compelled to labour for the bread that perisheth rarely furnish either pleasure or spiritual improvement. 2. The frailty of man's state. "He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down." The allusion is to man's physical origin and condition. 3. It is full of trouble. It has been remarked that man enters the present life with a cry, strangely prophetic of the troubles through which he must pass on his way to the grave. No stage of life is exempted from trouble. II. MAN'S DUTY. His chief business on earth is—1. To prepare for death. 2. To dread sin. 3. To be humble. 4. To be grateful to the Saviour. (*Peter Samuel.*) *The shortness and misery of life* :—We should hardly imagine this verse to be correct if we were to judge of its truth by the conduct of mankind at large. The text is more awfully true, because men willingly allow their senses to be stupefied by the pleasures, or distracted by the cares of this their fleeting existence. Ever and anon, however, we are startled from our stupor, and awake in some degree to our real position. I. THE SHORTNESS OF LIFE. In the first ages of the world,

the term allotted to man was much longer than it is at present. In the sight of God, the longest life is but, as it were, a handbreadth. Life is compared to a vapour, or fog, which is soon scattered by the rising sun; to a swift ship; to an eagle hastening to its prey. "Lord, teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." II. THE TROUBLES OF LIFE. These come alike to all. All may say, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." Man is "full of trouble." But we must discriminate between the saint and the sinner. When we think and talk of death, we should ever connect it with that which follows. We must stand before the judgment seat of Christ. May you all be found standing with your lamps burning, and with your loins girded, "like men that wait for the coming of their Lord." (*C. Clayton, M.A.*) *The fragility of human life:*—I. THE IMPORTANT IDEAS SUGGESTED. 1. That human life is flattering in its commencement. Man "cometh forth like a flower." Imagery more appropriate could not have been selected. Children are like flowers in the bud, unfolding their beauty as days and months increase; the expansion of the mind, and acquisition of new ideas, fascinate and involuntarily allure the affections of their parents, who watch over them with the tenderest anxiety. The flower is cut down (Psa. ciii. 15, 16; Isa. xl. 6, 7; James i. 10, 11; 1 Pet. i. 24). 2. Disastrous in its continuance. "Full of trouble." 3. Contracted in its span. "Few days." Life, in its longest period, is but a short journey from the cradle to the tomb (Gen. xlvii. 9). Various are the figures employed to illustrate the shortness of human life; it is compared to a "step" (1 Sam. xx. 3), "a post" (Job ix. 25), "a tale that is told" (Psa. xc. 9), "a weaver's shuttle" (Job vii. 6), and a "vapour" (James i. 14). 4. Incessant in its course. "Fleeth as a shadow." Human life is measured by seconds, hours, days, weeks, months, and years. These periodical revolutions roll on in rapid succession. Some suppose it the shadow of the sun-dial; but whether we consider it as the shadow of the evening, which is lost when night comes on; or the shadow on a dial-plate, which is continually moving onward; or the shadow of a bird flying, which stays not; the figure fully represents the life of man, which is passing away, whether we are loitering or active, careless or serious, killing or improving time. 5. Eventful in its issue. Death introduces us into the fixed state of eternity, and puts a final period to all earthly enjoyments and suffering; the soul, dismissed from its clay tabernacle, is introduced into a world of spirits, from whence there is no return. II. IMPROVE THEM BY PRACTICAL INFERENCES. Such being the character of human life, it is the duty and wisdom of piety—1. To enrich the juvenile mind with religious instruction. "Man cometh forth as a flower," therefore let instruction drop as the rain and fall as the dew: no time must be lost. 2. Improve the dispensations of providence. 3. Be diligent. 4. Maintain a noble detachment from the world. 5. Live in a constant readiness for your change. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *Human life troublous and brief:*—Goethe was considered by his compeers a man highly favoured of providence. Yet, what said he, as he drew near his end, and passed in review his departed years? "They have called me a child of fortune, nor have I any wish to complain of the course of my life. Yet it has been nothing but sorrow and labour; and I may truly say that in seventy-five years I have not had four weeks of true comfort. It was the constant rolling of a stone that was always to be lifted anew. When I look back upon my earlier and middle life, and consider how few are left of those that were young with me, I am reminded of a summer visit to a watering-place. On arriving one makes the acquaintance of those who have already been some time there, and leave the week following. This loss is painful. Now one becomes attached to the second generation, with which one lives for a time and becomes intimately connected. But this also passes away, and leaves us solitary with the third, which arrives shortly before our own departure, and with which we have no desire to have much intercourse." **And is cut down.**—Never a day passes but we are presented with objects which ought to make us reflect on our final exit. And serious reflections on this important event would never fail to have a due influence on our conduct here, and, consequently, on our happiness hereafter. But such is the depravity of our nature, that, regardless of the future, wholly engrossed by the present, we are captivated by the vain and empty pleasures which this world affords us. If man were capable of no higher happiness than what arises from the gratification of his carnal appetites, then to vex and torment himself with the thoughts of death would serve no other purpose but to interrupt him in the enjoyment

of his sensual pleasures. But if, on the contrary, man is not only capable of but evidently designed by his Creator for a happiness of the most lasting and durable, as well as the most noble and exalted nature, then it is the greatest madness not to lay to heart and seriously to consider this great event, which is big with the fate of eternity. There is nothing in nature so full of terror as death to the wicked man. But to the righteous man death is divested of all its terrors; the certainty of the mercy of God, and the love of his blessed Redeemer, fill his soul with the most entire resignation, enable him to meet death with the most undaunted courage, and even to look upon it as the end of his sorrow and vexation, and the commencement of pleasures which will last when the whole frame of this universe shall be dissolved. 1. Some particulars that ought to make us reflect on death. Such as the decay of the vegetable world. There seems to be a surprising resemblance between the vegetable and animal systems. The Scriptures make frequent allusions to this resemblance, *e.g.*, the grass. Sleep is another thing which ought to make us mindful of death. Death and sleep are equally common to all men, to the poor, as well as to the rich. We ought never to indulge ourselves in slumber till we have laid our hand on our breast, and in the most serious manner asked ourselves whether we are prepared alike to sleep or die. 2. The decay of our bodies, by sickness or old age, ought to make us reflect on our last change. The life of every man is uncertain; and the life of the aged and infirm much more than that of others; they, therefore, in a peculiar manner, ought to devote their meditations to this subject. 3. The death of others is another circumstance which ought to lead us to reflect on our own. From attending to these circumstances, and improving the feelings described, we may be enabled to appreciate the discoveries and embrace the consolations of the Gospel, which alone can enable us to conquer the fear of death, and to look forward with devout gratitude to that happy state where sorrow and death shall be known no more. (*W. Shiels.*) *Frailty of life*:—Some things last long, and run adown the centuries; but what is your life? Even garments bear some little wear and tear; but what is your life? A delicate texture; no cobweb is a tithe as frail. It will fail before a touch, a breath. Justinian, an Emperor of Rome, died by going into a room which had been newly painted; Adrian, a pope, was strangled by a fly; a consul struck his foot against his own threshold, his foot mortified, so that he died thereby. There are a thousand gates to death; and, though some seem to be narrow wickets, many souls have passed through them. Men have been choked by a grape stone, killed by a tile falling from the roof of a house, poisoned by a drop, carried off by a whiff of foul air. I know not what there is too little to slay the greatest king. It is a marvel that man lives at all. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 3, 4. **Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?**—*On the corruption of human nature*:—The disobedience of our first parents involved their posterity, and entailed a depravity of nature upon their descendants; which depravity, though it is not a sin in us, till the will closes with it, and deliberately consents to it; yet is certainly sinful in itself, and therefore is styled original sin. Adam was formed in the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness; but it is plain that we who are born with strong propensions to vice are not created in righteousness and true holiness. It is clear that we are fallen from our original and primitive state of innocence. Far be it from me to vilify human nature, as if it were totally bad, without any remains or traces of its primitive greatness. But no creature could come originally from God's hand but what was perfect in its kind; no rational creature can be perfect in his kind, in whom there is a strong propension to vice, that is, to what is unreasonable, and a great irregularity of the appetites and affections. There is a latent stock of corruption in us, though sometimes unsuspected by us, which often discovers itself as soon as there are suitable objects to call it forth. We see the wisest of men, in their unguarded hours, betrayed into unaccountable follies. Reason was originally given us to govern the passions in all cases. It does not now regulate and govern them in all cases; it is certain, therefore, that we are in a fallen, disordered state. If men proceed to action while their passions are warm, they do not see things justly, and therefore are apt to act too hastily; if they stay till their passions are cool, they are apt not to act at all. Moreover, we do not love or hate, rejoice or grieve, hope or fear, so far as is consistent with reason, and no further. We love the things of this world beyond the proportion of good which is in them. The love of

virtue and heavenly happiness does not keep pace with the worth of the objects beloved. The truth is that ever since the fall, the body clogs the native energy of the soul, and pins it down to this low, ignoble sphere. Into what can this universal depravation, which prevails everywhere among the sons of men, be resolved, but into an universal cause, the inborn corruption of nature, and an original taint, derived from our first parents? Can it be resolved into education? If mankind were in a state of integrity and primitive uprightness, there could scarce be, one would think, so much evil in the world as there really is. Man was originally formed for the knowledge and worship of God only; yet in all countries men are immersed in idolatry and superstition. Man was formed for loving his neighbour as himself; yet the world is generally inclined to the ill-natured side. Again, we were designed for an exact knowledge of ourselves; and yet we see ourselves through a flattering glass, in the fairest and brightest light. Lastly, we were formed for the attainment of beneficial truth; yet there are not many certain truths, demonstrable from intrinsic evidences, from the abstract nature of the thing; though reason can prove several, by the help of external evidences. Setting revelation aside, mankind would have reason to wish that they did not know so much as they do, or that they knew a great deal more. . . . It is one thing to say that God was, or could be, the author of evil; and another to say that when evil was introduced by man, He did not work a miracle to prevent the natural consequences of it; but suffered it for the sake of bringing a greater good out of it; and that, by redemption, He has advanced man to much superior happiness than he could have had any title to, if he had continued in a state of innocence. This is the scriptural solution of the difficulty. What remains but that we strive to recover that happiness, by our humility and meekness, which our first parents lost by pride? The consideration and sense of unworthiness will dispose a man to accept the offers of salvation by Jesus Christ, and make him endeavour to fulfil the terms of it. (*J. Seed, M.A.*) *Out of nothing comes nothing*:—Job had a deep sense of the need of being clean before God, and indeed he was clean in heart and hand beyond his fellows. But he saw that he could not of himself produce holiness in his own nature, and, therefore, he asked this question, and answered it in the negative without a moment's hesitation. The best of men are as incapable as the worst of men of bringing out from human nature that which is not there. I. MATTERS OF IMPOSSIBILITY IN NATURE. 1. Innocent children from fallen parents. 2. A holy nature from the depraved nature of any one individual. 3. Pure acts from an impure heart. 4. Perfect acts from imperfect men. 5. Heavenly life from nature's moral death. II. SUBJECTS FOR PRACTICAL CONSIDERATION FOR EVERY ONE. 1. That we must be clean to be accepted. 2. That our fallen nature is essentially unclean. 3. That this does not deliver us from our responsibility: we are none the less bound to be clean because our nature inclines us to be unclean; a man who is a rogue to the core of his heart is not thereby delivered from the obligation to be honest. 4. That we cannot do the needful work of cleansing by our own strength. Depravity cannot make itself desirous to be right with God. Corruption cannot make itself fit to speak with God. Unholiness cannot make itself meet to dwell with God. 5. That it will be well for us to look to the Strong for strength, to the Righteous One for righteousness, to the Creating Spirit for new creation. Jehovah brought all things out of nothing, light out of darkness, and order out of confusion; and it is to such a Worker as He that we must look for salvation from our fallen state. III. PROVISIONS TO MEET THE CASE. 1. The fitness of the Gospel for sinners. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." The Gospel contemplates doing that for us which we cannot attempt for ourselves. 2. The cleansing power of the blood. 3. The renewing work of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost would not regenerate us if we could regenerate ourselves. 4. The omnipotence of God in spiritual creation, resurrection, quickening, preservation, and perfecting. Application—Despair of drawing any good out of the dry well of the creature. Have hope for the utmost cleansing, since God has become the worker of it. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 10. **But man dieth . . . and where is he?**—*Am I to live for ever?*—I. THE BELIEF INDICATED THAT MAN'S NATURE IS TWOFOLD. There are two distinct processes ever going on within our frame. We may lose our physical organs, but the soul may think, wish, or purpose, as energetically as ever. The brain is the organ of the mind; but this does not warrant our saying that the brain and the

mind are of the same material, or that they are only different sides of that material thing. If there are manifestations in our constitution which matter cannot give account of, it would be absurd to follow that up by saying that man goes out of life altogether when he dies and wastes away. We should rather believe that as our nature is twofold, that part which is spiritual may survive that which is material. II. A DOUBT EXPRESSED AS TO WHAT BECOMES OF THE MAN WHEN HE DIES. Death tells us nothing. There is no evidence in it of what becomes of the man. Death fails to prove anything as to the survival of the soul. Yet the belief has been general, that those who have passed away are still somewhere. Why should men have believed that the soul still had a place? Every sense was against it. III. THE GROUNDS ON WHICH THE CONVICTION IS BUILT THAT MAN LIVES AFTER DEATH. I go behind the Bible, and look at the action of our own nature. 1. The indestructibility of force or energy. When once a force has begun to be in operation that force continues. It is never blotted out. 2. The incompleteness of man's life here. God is a teacher who sets us a task which we cannot prepare in school. 3. The best affections which distinguish this life speak of continuance beyond this present state. 4. When man dieth, we forecast a judgment for the deeds done in the body. It may be, indeed, it will be, that the judgment shall not be such as we pass upon one another. We look upon the outward appearance, God looks on the heart. We are to be judged. What are we to be judged for? (*D. G. Watt, M.A.*) "*Where is he?*"—The certainty of the general truth referred to in our text, "Man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost." And then we shall take up the concluding inquiry, "And where is he?" Now, the words translated "man" are different. There are two different words to express man in the original. The first properly means a mighty man: the second is Adam, man of the earth; implying that the mighty man dieth and wasteth away,—yea, man because he is of earth giveth up the ghost. It is quite unnecessary to attempt any proof of the solemn truth that man dieth. You all know that you must die. Yet how often does a man's conduct give a denial to his conviction. Hence it is needful for the ministers of the Gospel frequently to bring forward truths which are familiar to our minds, but which on that very account are apt to be little regarded. We are not unwilling to feel that others must die, but we are indisposed to bring the same conclusion home to ourselves; and yet it is the law of our being. "It is appointed unto men once to die." The first breath we draw contains the germ of life and of destruction. The stem of human nature has never yet put forth a flower without a canker at the bud, or a worm at its heart. Why is this? "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." It is of the greatest importance for us all to know that through the infinite merits of our gracious Redeemer the power of death has been broken and subdued, and the sting of death which is sin has been extracted, and thus may death become not an enemy but a welcome friend to introduce us to new, to holy, to immortal life. There are a thousand different ways by which mortals are hurried hence—the lingering disease, the rapid fever, the devouring flames, the devastating tempest. But now our text suggests to us an important inquiry, "And where is he?" You must at once see that this is a question of the last importance to you and to me. We ought to be able to answer it. What has become of him? A short time since he was here in health and vigour, but where is he now? Where shall we seek for information on this interesting point? Shall we turn to some of our modern philosophers? Alas, they will afford but poor comfort! They will probably answer, "Why, he is no more; he is as though he had never been." And do all the boasted discoveries of the present age which refuse to believe in the annihilation of matter, tend to raise our hopes no higher than annihilation for the soul? Shall we ask the Romanist, "Where is he?" We shall be told he is in a state of purgatory, from whence, after having endured a sufficient degree of fiery punishment and after a sufficient number of masses have been said on his behalf, he will be delivered and received into heaven. Truly it may be said of all such, "miserable comforters are ye all." Revelation alone can cherish and support in us a hope of glory hereafter. It replies to our inquiry thus, "The dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it." Accordingly we are exhorted to "fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Now these passages are sufficient to show that the body and soul in man are distinct, the one from the other, and that while the one is in the grave

mingling its dust with the clods of the valley, the other is in eternity, in happiness or misery. We therefore now ask your attention to the Word of God for an answer to the inquiry, "Where is he?" And here we must observe that however different individuals may appear to their fellow-men, yet the Scriptures divide all mankind into two classes only, those who serve God, and those who serve Him not. Hence the reply given to the inquiry will have distinct reference to one or other of these classes. With respect to the question as relating to the righteous, "Where is he?" the Bible comforts us with the cheering answer, that absent from the body he is present with the Lord. "For we know," says the apostle, "that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." In accordance with this representation was our Lord's promise to the penitent thief, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." "Where are the righteous?" In that happy place with the spirits of just men made perfect, waiting for the glorious time when the whole redeemed family shall be gathered in to celebrate the marriage supper of the Lamb. "I go to prepare a place for you," said the Saviour, "and I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am there ye may be also." "So shall we ever be with the Lord." But then there is another class—the wicked, the impenitent. Where is he? The Scriptures afford a sad, though not less faithful answer. They inform us that "the wicked is driven away in his wickedness,"—that "their condemnation slumbereth not." In order that we may bring the subject practically home to ourselves, let me put the question in a slightly altered form. Where are you now? What is your relation to God, and what preparation are you making for the period of death and judgment? We ask those who have never broken off their sins by true repentance and faith in Christ, where are you? Why, you are simply exposed to the vengeance of God's law, which you know you have broken a thousand times. If you die as you have lived, God's enemies—you must be condemned. You know that the Word of God says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "The wages of sin is death." The Judge says, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." But I put the question, next, to those who seem to have got a step in advance,—who have heard the call to repentance, and are striving to forsake those sins which before had dominion over them. Where are you? It is a common deceit of Satan, when he sees that the sinner is really alarmed at his state and begins to cry to God for mercy, to persuade him that his altered life must needs be pleasing to God, and that his good deeds will certainly merit heaven for him. This is a delusion which I believe to be far more common than is supposed. People seem to think that by a moral life they are doing God service, forgetting that repentance is not the condition of our salvation, but faith. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life," said our blessed Lord. "The wrath of God abideth on him." "He that believeth not is condemned already." "Oh, but," says one, "are we not to repent?" Assuredly! Repentance and a life of piety will be sure to be the necessary result of faith in Jesus as our Saviour. But, then, repentance can never undo a single sin you have committed, or pay the penalty of God's broken law. But come with me to a death-bed or two, and we will put the question there, "Where is he?" A death-bed is a detector of the heart. "Men may live fools, but fools they cannot die." No; the scene is then changed. The infidel then drops his mask. The hypocrite who through life has deceived himself and his fellow-creatures, trembles as he draws near the valley of the shadow of death. Now, behold that pale emaciated wretch. That is the notorious infidel Thomas Paine. Where is he? He is dying, a victim of profligacy and of brandy. He is horrorstruck to be left alone for a minute. He dares not let those who are waiting upon him be out of his sight. He exclaims incessantly so as to alarm all in the house, "O Lord, help me. Lord Jesus, help me." He confesses to one who had burned his infidel *Age of Reason*, that he wished that all who had read it had been as wise; and he added, "If ever the devil had an agent on earth, I have been that one." And when the terror of death came over this most unhappy man, he exclaimed, "I think I can say what they make Jesus Christ to have said, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?'" In that state of mind he died, a stranger to penitence, in all the horrors of an accusing conscience. Infidelity has no support for its deluded followers on a death-bed. The apostle when contemplating his end said, "I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better. I have fought the good fight, I have finished

my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me; and not to me only, but unto all them that love His appearing." This blessed experience is as much the inheritance of Christians now as it was in the apostle's time, for there is the same Saviour, and the same sure word of promise on which to rely. The Rev. Holden Stuart when smitten with a sickness unto death, said to his medical attendant, "Doctor, don't be afraid to tell me the truth, for the day of my death will be the happiest day of my life." Some one who had great experience of human nature, once remarked, "Tell me how a man has lived, and I will tell you how he will die." (*W. Windle.*) *Where are the dead?*—Man was originally formed to be a representative of God's moral perfections—His wisdom, goodness, holiness, and truth. By the apostasy of our first parents the scene is changed, and holiness and happiness must now be sought after "in fairer worlds on high." Death is said to be of three kinds—natural, spiritual, eternal. I. A MOST SOLEMN AND HUMILIATING DECLARATION. It cannot be questioned. What lessons may be deduced from it? 1. It is a very affecting truth. 2. Here is an instructive lesson—man should be humble. 3. Learn also the value of time. 4. Learn the nature of sin, the infinite evil, and the awful consequences of it. 5. God will most surely execute the judgments which He threatens in His most Holy Word. II. A MOST MOMENTOUS INQUIRY. It relates not to the body, but to the soul, to the man himself. The soul is still in existence, still thinks and feels. Guided by the light of Scripture, we may safely find an answer to the solemn inquiry, "Where is he?" For the very moment the soul bids farewell to this world he enters the world of spirits, enters upon a state of everlasting happiness or woe. (*John Vaughan, LL.D.*) *The great question:*—I. THE SOLEMN SCENE WHICH IS BEFORE US. 1. Man giveth up the ghost, not by an option, but by an obligation; not by a deed at will, but by the stern and just necessity of law. The surrender of life in the blessed Jesus was an option. But man gives up the ghost, and there is a Divine will in that surrender, a surrender which is resistless when that will makes it so. Death is just the absence of life—and what a mysterious thing is life! I do not stop to show that man has a ghost, an immaterial and immortal spirit. One's own consciousness contradicts the materialist, and the Bible is in harmony with what one observes in nature, and human consciousness teaches. 2. The manner of the surrender is uncertain. Though its occurrence is mysterious, its actual occurrence is certain. There is but one mode of entering life, but there are a thousand methods of leaving it. II. THE INQUIRY OF ANXIOUS AFFECTION WHEN THE SCENE IS OVER. "Where is he?" 1. Death brings a change of condition, never a change of character. 2. Though death is a change of condition, it is not a change of companionship. The same style of company it is a pleasure to him to keep on earth, a man must expect to keep in eternity. (*C. J. P. Eyre, A.M.*) *Man is a dying creature:*—1. This is spoken of man twice in the text. In the original two different words are used, one meaning the strong man, and the other the weak man. In the grave they meet together. (1) Man dies though he be (geber) a mighty man. (2) Man dies because he is a man of the earth (Gen. ii. 7, iii. 10). 2. Man is a dying creature. He dies daily, some or other going off every day. (1) Before death, he "wasteth away." He is weakening. Even in health, certainly in sickness and old age, we are wasting away. Inference—1. See how vain man is. 2. How foolish they are who waste any part of their short lives upon their lusts. (2) In death man giveth up the ghost. Man expires by a sudden stroke. He breathes out his last. (3) After death, where is he? He is not where he was. He is somewhere. Think where the body is. Think where the soul is. It is gone into the world of spirits to which we are so much strangers. It is gone into an unchangeable state; it is gone into eternity. After death the judgment. (*M. Henry.*) *The state of the dead:*—The stage of human existence which intervenes between death and the resurrection is naturally regarded by us with great curiosity and solicitude. On this subject nature is silent, and revelation does but whisper faintly and vaguely. We are able to form a much more distinct conception of the heavenly state than of that which immediately precedes it. The final condition of man is much more analogous to his present state than that which intervenes between the two. At death we enter upon a disembodied state of being, a state of life purely spiritual and immaterial. Of this we have no knowledge from experience or observation; and we can form no clear and satisfactory conception of it. We are so accustomed to the use of material organs and instruments, that we cannot understand how we can do without them. Incorporeal life seems

to us impotent, cheerless, naked, unreal. The souls of men after death remain conscious, still percipient and active. 1. We seem warranted in regarding the interval between death and the resurrection as a period of repose. It is the sleeping time of humanity. The repose that awaits us there will be all the more welcome and delightful from contrast with the turmoil and vexation of the life that precedes it. 2. The intermediate state will be a condition of progress. Progress is the law of life, and we cannot reasonably suppose that its operation will be suspended during that long period which is to elapse between death and the resurrection. 3. To the clearer vision of spirit, purged from fleshly films and earthly obstructions, will truth unfold itself with increased clearness, certainty, and power. 4. The separate state will be a condition of hope. It is a season of waiting, the vestibule only of a more glorious state to which it is introductory. But there is nothing in this waiting that is wearisome or tedious. I have spoken only of the holy dead, of those who "sleep in Jesus." The subject—(1) Gives consolation to the bereaved. (2) In it we find comfort in the prospect of our own approaching departure. (*R. A. Hallam, D.D.*) *The momentous event*:—Men generally live as though they should never die. I. THE SOLEMN STATEMENT. "Man dieth, and giveth up the ghost." 1. An event peculiarly affecting. The removal of man from society; from all the ties of kindred and friendship. Dissolution of the union between body and soul. 2. An event absolutely and universally certain. The seeds of death are in our nature. 3. It is an event to which we are liable every moment. We live on the borders of the grave, on the margin of eternity. 4. An event irreparable in its effects. Its melancholy results no power can repair. 5. An event which demands our solemn consideration. We should consider its certainty, its possible nearness, its awful nature. II. THE IMPORTANT INTERROGATION. "Where is he?" Apply the question to—1. The infidel. 2. The profane. 3. The worldling. 4. The afflicted Christian. Learn—(1) That death will surely come. (2) That an interest in Christ can alone prepare us for the event. (3) That eternal things should have in our hearts the constant pre-eminence. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *Immortality of the soul*:—The people of France once wrote over the gates of their burial-places, "Death is an eternal sleep," but this was only when the nation had run mad. The ordinary mode of proving the immortality of the soul is simple enough. 1. It is argued from the nature of the soul itself—especially from its immateriality. The nature of God seems also to favour the idea that He who made the soul capable of such vast improvement, and such constant advances towards perfection, would never suffer it to perish. 2. Belief in man's immortality is universal. No race of savages can be found, so debased and blind, as not to have some glimmerings of this truth. 3. We claim immortality as the heritage of man, because, on any other supposition, all the analogies of nature would be violated. 4. Man must be immortal, because this is indispensable to explain certain inequalities of happiness and misery on earth—inequalities which a just God would never allow, unless it was His good pleasure to make them right. Man is generally called a rational being; but he hardly deserves the name, while attempting to undermine our faith in that consoling which alone renders life worth having, and robs death of its terrors. (*John N. Norton.*) *The mystery of death*:—This is one of Job's discontented and querulous utterances. It is tinged, too, with all that indistinctness of view which is characteristic of the elder dispensation. Job expresses the general feeling in a somewhat exaggerated form. He speaks as if the hour of dissolution were the hour of extinction. Then he craves for himself that oblivion of anguish which he thinks is only to be obtained in the solitude and silence of the grave. The words of the text express a very natural feeling, of which we have all had more or less experience. "Man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" "Gone," say some, "into absolute nothingness. The individual perishes." "Gone," say others, "into final felicity. All lives, whatever they have been, lead to one bourne, and that the bourne of happiness." These are daydreams, and dangerous daydreams too. Christianity knows nothing about them. She tells us that when life is over, we pass into a conscious but a fixed and unalterable condition. Gone, we say, to reap what he has sown. The life we are living here below is a seed. Eternity is only the development of this puny, petty life of ours. The Divine laws are immutable. Every seed bringeth forth after its kind. We are all of us gravitating towards a certain centre. We move to join our own companions. Gone to give account of himself before God. Human life is like a stage; there are many actors and many parts. When the

play is ended, the question will be about the manner of playing it. Men will be seen, not in their circumstances but in themselves. An hour will come to us when all the world will seem absolutely nothing, and when Christ, and interest in Christ, will seem to be everything. (*Gordon Calthrop, M.A.*) *An anxious query answered* :—After all, this is a question. Reason and revelation leave it such. The speculations of the ancients, where Catholic sentiments prevailed and the voice of poetry, which is but the plaint of philosophy, leave it a question. It is obscure, spectral, vaporous and ghostly as an apparition, the figure of a restless, undeveloped being, beyond our knowledge, crude, cloudy, vague. "Where is he?" There runs a yearning through our nature, as the autumn breeze steals through the trees. It is the question. Its intensity is proportioned to its obscurity. "Where is he?" Other data are needed. We may ask, as we do in reference to a stranger of stately form or commanding voice, whom we meet on the sidewalk, "Who is he?" The question may be of eager interest and concern, of sympathy or of opposition. Or we may say of man, "What is he?" and institute a metaphysical analysis into the nature of matter and mind; then push the query, "What is man, and what am I?" All these problems depend on the disclosure of the ultimate destiny of man. "Where is he at last?" Now we may mistake the shadow for the substance, a ship in the distance for a cloud, a meteor for a star. Walking in the edge of a wood, looking out upon the water, I may see a forest of masts, and for an instant take them for dry trees, until I see those tall, quivering masts move and the vessels floated out upon the bosom of the bay. Human life cannot be distinctly defined until we find out all there is of a man. We want facts. Oftentimes we answer one question by asking another. So let us turn to history and seek a famous or infamous man, a Cyrus or a Caligula, a Washington or a Robespierre. Each may now be but a heap of ashes, but what was the real distinction all the way through the careers of these men? What is love, and what is honour? We cannot answer until we get the data. Notice, then, two things, the unsettled element, and the point of solution where light breaks in. 1. The unsolved question, "Where is he?" You have lost a child. Whither has he gone? You do not say that you have lost a treasure until you have gone to the place where you feel sure it is, and do not find it. You are bereaved because you are bewildered. You were talking to a friend by your side. Unexpectedly he vanished without your knowledge, and you find yourself talking to vacancy. The mother bends over and peers into the vacant cradle, takes up a little shoe, a toy, a treasure, and says, "He was here, he ought to be here, he must be here! Where is he?" "Not here," is all the answer that nature gives her. She is bewildered. The same query touches scepticism. Though there be an intellectual, logical assent to the doctrine of immortality, there is a difficulty in entertaining the idea. We cannot see the spirit or its passage upwards. We enter the chamber of death. We see that still body, white and limp; the garments it wore, the medicines administered, and the objects it once beheld. We look out and see that the sky is just as blue as ever, and the tramp of hurrying feet is heard, as usual, in the street. We cry aloud, "Ho! have ye seen a spirit pass?" "Not here," comes back again. Where, where is he? This is the unsettled element. 2. Here is the point where light breaks in upon the bewildered soul. It is found in the revelation of a flesh form and a spirit form revealed in Christ, the risen one. Science tells us of material elements, unseen by natural vision, globules of ether, and crystals of light to be detected by instruments prepared by the optician. The microscope reveals atoms that the unaided eye never could find. So the New Testament reveals what nature and science cannot make manifest. Dissolution is not annihilation. We read, "In Him was life." He came, He descended, and ascended again. When a candle goes out, where goes the light? Christ went out and back, to and fro, as you show a child the way by going into and out of a door. He came forth from God, and His first life was a glorious disclosure; but we must not forget His second life after His death, burial, and resurrection. He gave up the ghost, and He lay in the tomb; then stood up, walked and talked with the disciples, a human being. He showed the fact that because He lives we shall live also. "I will that they whom Thou hast given Me be with Me, where I am. Let not your heart be troubled. I go to prepare a place for you." Now light, refluent and radiant, breaks upon our way. He is not here, but risen, and "this same Jesus" shall return again. I may ask a mother, "Where are your children?" She may say that they are at school, or at play, or somewhere on the premises. They are not lost, though

she may not exactly locate them. Or, "Where is your husband?" "He went out awhile ago," or, "The children went out with him; their father took them from home early." So with our dear departed. Out of sight they are not out of mind; not out of your mind, of course, and you are not out of their mind, nor out of their sight, I think. They are "somewhere about the premises," the many-mansioned universe of God, expanding, radiant everywhere. It is one abode. (*Hugh S. Carpenter, D.D.*) *The query of the ages*:—This interrogatory has sounded down all the centuries, and thrills to-day every thoughtful heart. Hence, if Job uttered these words in a moment of doubt, it was because he sat in the twilight hour of revelation. Hence, also, we must seek our answer to the question from Jesus, rather than from Job, from the full and final revelation of the New Testament, rather than from the types and shadows of the Old. I. HE IS SOMEWHERE. Death is not annihilation. 1. Jesus taught man's existence after death so often and in such emphatic terms that it became an essential in Christian doctrine. In His words to the Sadducees, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, when speaking to Mary and Martha, when comforting His disciples who were mourning His near departure, in His last prayer with and for them—everywhere He clearly implied that man continues to exist somewhere after death. 2. To this revelation of life and immortality our hearts gladly assent. 3. Reason, likewise, adds its sanction. Thus we believe the dead are somewhere, they have not ceased to be. II. BUT WHERE? This is the emphatic word. 1. Where surroundings correspond with character. In this life man finds the earth prepared for his occupancy, as a house that has been erected, furnished, heated, lighted. Believing in the universality and continuity of law, we expect the same provision and adaptation hereafter. It is the "law of environment" of the scientist, the "Divine providence" of the Christian. Revelation makes this expectation a certainty. The righteous enter a kingdom "prepared for them from the foundation of the world"; the wicked depart to a place "prepared for the devil and his angels." 2. Where the law of spiritual gravitation carries him. In the United States Mint are scales constructed with an ingenuity and delicacy that are wonderful. In them all coins are finally tested. Each one is weighed by itself. From the balance every coin glides into one of several openings, according to its weight; if it is too light, into this one; if too heavy, into that; if it is right, into the third. III. WHERE JUSTICE AND MERCY UNITE TO PLACE HIM. Justice and mercy unite to determine the destinies of both wicked and righteous. Redemption manifests both; so does retribution. Conclusion—It is not so much "where," as "what"; for the "what" determines the "where." We are ourselves determining the "what," in our acceptance or rejection of Christ. (*Byron A. Woods.*) *A fourfold view of man after death*:—1. Man is still on earth, as to his influence. The full amount of good or evil which any one effects will not be ascertained till the end of the world. 2. Man is in the grave, as to his body. In this respect, all things come alike to all. As the saint, so is the sinner. 3. He is in eternity, as to his soul. Man consists of two parts—of soul and of body. At death these for a season separate. The body returns to its native dust; the soul returns to God, who gave it. 4. He is in heaven or hell, as to his state. What a solemn thought is this! (*C. Clayton, M.A.*) *The shortness and vanity of human life*:—1. Man is subject to decay, though he suffer neither outward violence nor internal injury. In the midst of life we are in death. 2. Numbers die by accident—suicide, violence, intemperance. 3. The mortality of the human race is universal. 4. Human life is so short and uncertain that it is invariably compared to those things that are most subject to change. 5. What a specimen we have of the ravages of death since the time of Adam. 6. Death is attended with painful circumstances. "He giveth up the ghost." 1. This expression implies that after man has died and wasted away, the soul still remains in a separate state. This is one of those truths that even reason itself teaches. 2. That the soul remains in a separate state is certain, from Scripture passages and facts. Such as Samuel's appearance to Saul. Moses and Elias at the Transfiguration. At the resurrection of Christ many of the dead arose and appeared. "And whore is he?" 1. This is a question very frequently and very naturally asked, when those are missing whom we constantly saw or heard speak of, or with whom we were wont to converse. 2. The affecting answer is, "They have died and wasted away—they have given up the ghost." What is become of the soul? We only know that the final destiny of man depends upon his state and character at the hour of death. It is true that neither the righteous nor the

wicked enjoy or suffer their happiness or misery until after the resurrection. The intermediate space affords ample time for reflection. 3. But what will be the subject of their reflection? (1) Things present: the good; the blessings, the enjoyments, the company of paradise. The bad: the horrors, the sorrows, the companions of the dark pit. (2) Things absent: the godly, the departure of all evil; the ungodly, the absence of all good. (3) Things past: the righteous, a long and perilous pilgrimage; the wicked, a useless and wicked life. (4) Things to come: the saved, the glories of the last great day, the acquittal of the Judge, the union with the body, the prospect of never-ending felicity; the lost, the terrors of the great day, the presence and sentence of the Judge, the consciousness of having to endure eternal torments. (*B. Bailey.*)

Ver. 12. **Till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep.**—*The sleep of death*:—1. Death is like sleep in its outward appearance. This likeness should remind us, when we lie down to sleep, of that death which sleep resembles. It should teach us to look upon it without dismay. 2. Sleep and death are both a refuge from the ills and cares of this life, and a rest from its labour. 3. In both the soul is conscious still. The soul never sleeps, and hence the phenomena of dreams. 4. Each is followed by an awakening. The consideration that you must shortly "sleep in the dust," and you know not how soon, should constrain you to seek for the pardon of your sins, and the removal of your iniquity, ere it be too late. (*G. Cole.*)

Ver. 14. **If a man die, shall he live again?**—*The one question of humanity, and its many answers*:—I. THE ONE QUESTION. 1. It has always been asked. In all periods of history it has been proposed; time has not diminished its interest; it will always spring naturally from man's heart. 2. It is asked everywhere. It is the question of all nations and of all conditions of men. It is universal—an eminently human question. 3. It arises in varied circumstances. The brevity and the vicissitudes of life, the sufferings of the good, and the prosperity of the wicked; premature deaths, bereavement, and the expectation of our own dissolution suggest it. 4. It is asked with different feelings. With despair. The atheist. With hope and desire. "To be or not to be? that is the question." "Whence comes this pleasing hope, this fond desire, this longing after immortality?" With terror. The murderer, the tyrant, the impenitent, the backslider. It is asked in triumph, "Art Thou not from everlasting to everlasting, O God, mine Holy One?" II. THE MANY ANSWERS. There are three different answers. 1. The negative, or that of atheism. "There is no God, and there can be no immortality." This is an assertion without proof. Who can prove it? 2. The neutral, or that of secularism. "We do not know, but it matters not." However, it does matter. Then we cannot help feeling interested in it. 3. The affirmative, or that of Christianity. Most men have answered yes. But the affirmative responsers have greatly varied in tone and import. The answer of Christianity alone is full and assuring. (1) It is calm and dignified. "I am the resurrection and the life." (2) It proclaims a complete immortality. According to it, the whole of man is to be perpetuated and perfected in eternity. We shall be like Him. There is a spiritual body. (3) It is practical. "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." (4) It is holy in its influence. "He that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure." (*Richard Hancock.*) *The human lien on the immortal life*:—It is a real trouble to the most of us to imagine ourselves out of the body, but still the same man or woman. This touch of trouble is entirely natural, because we are in the body and belong to the life that now is, and find that in proportion to the wealth of our human life is this deep loyalty to the things one can touch and see. I do not think this trouble is met by the perpetual exhortation to consider these conditions of our human life as so many incumbrances we ought to shake off, to treat this nature God gives us as if it were in quarantine; a place to be done with the sooner the better, so that we may attain the fair pleasures of the everlasting rest. Such a feeling may come to be natural through a perpetual brooding over the meanness and poverty of the best there is for us down here if we take that turn; or to those who have had a sore fight, and are quite worn out; or who have drained the world of all its pleasant things, and would toss it away like the skin of an orange. Or it may seem natural to some who have been trained from their childhood to fix their whole heart on the world to come, and so think of this as a stepping-stone, and

no more, between the eternities. But the men who have talked in this strain were out of sorts with the world, or had got down with it; or else they were men who did not practise what they preached. Neither is this trouble met by the suggestion men make, out of a certain despair one thinks, that there may be infinite blessing through our passing again into the infinite life, losing our identity in that mystery out of which we came, forgetting all about it for evermore, and becoming one with God. No one thing in this universe can be of a deeper moment to a whole man than his own proper personal life. You may talk to him until doomsday about being lost in the infinite, but he clings to himself as the true factor. To me the solution of this problem lies where it has always lain,—in the Gospels, and in our power to catch their noble meanings, and make the truth they tell our own. To feel the powers of the world to come we must come close to this Christ who has brought life and immortality to light. This is what those can rest on who trust in these old, simple Gospels, and believe in Jesus Christ as the most human being the world has ever known, and therefore the most Divine. That this change, when it comes, will not wrest us out of the sweet verities of our own existence, and land us utter strangers in a life so separate from this we love that we had better never been born than encounter such a sad frustration. The solution of this question of the immortal life does not lie, as it seems to me, in metaphysics, in evolution, or even in the ascertained verities of philosophy. It lies where it has always lain, in the truth as it is in Jesus, who assures us that we cannot love what is worthy the love of these human hearts to no purpose. So let us take this to our hearts—that it is all right, and right in the line of the life we have to live, drawn here, if we will but make it as noble and good as we can. (*Robert Collyer, D.D.*) *Resignation to the Divine will*:—I. WE HAVE THE PROSPECT OF A CHANGE. Many changes are incidental to human beings, but there are three which stand out with prominence above the rest. One extraordinary change occurs when human beings become rational. A change more momentous occurs when human beings become religious. Above all, the great consummation is reserved for the time when human beings become immortal. Then will the term of our minority expire, and we shall receive our best inheritance. Is it, however, merely the soul of a believer in Jesus Christ that enters the kingdom? Must its ancient partner—the body, lie always in the dust, or roam in a separate and less splendid province of the Divine empire? II. THE INFLUENCE OF THIS PROSPECT. 1. The prospect of our change may be viewed in connection with the current of our thoughts. 2. In connection with our estimate of all earthly good. 3. In connection with our individual exertions and supplications. 4. In connection with all our intervening pains and distresses. 5. In connection with all that is grand and joyful. (*J. Hughes.*) *The true argument for immortality*:—I. REASON FAILS TO ANSWER. So men say there is no positive proof; "but wait," says science, "I have unravelled mysteries before"; so the anxious question. II. SCIENCE ANSWERS—1. The body dies, but the soul lives. (1) Body prepared for soul, not soul for body. (2) But soul has longings, hopes; can science satisfy these? 2. In nature is the law of co-relation—incompleteness completed. But we are conscious that soul has not reached highest perfection; but, says science, See how nature supplies her creatures' demands. (1) But can nature satisfy longing for unending being? No. Science's testimony does not fully satisfy. Her speculations are but born of the finite. We seek the sure foundation—the true argument for immortality. Whence can it come? III. A VOICE FAMILIAR FALLS UPON OUR HEARTS. "I give eternal life." "I am the Life." Yes, in the testimony of Jesus Christ is the mystery of being made clear. Science can give nothing so positive. Therefore, finally—1. What is your responsibility as an immortal being? 2. How are you meeting that responsibility? (*Homiletic Monthly.*) *The two questions about death*:—I. Of this truth we have HINTS IN NATURE. 1. The soul's longing is a promise and prophecy of immortality. The bird's wing and fish's fin prophesy air and water; the eye and ear, light and sound. If man's hope has no object it is the single exception in nature. 2. Force is never lost. It is invisible and indestructible. It passes from body to body, changes its form and mode of manifestation, but never lost or even lessened. No energy is ever lost. 3. Life, the grandest force, is therefore indestructible. Even thought cannot die; how, then, the thinker himself? Death is dissolution, decay. What is there in mind to dissolve or decay? 4. Metamorphosis in nature hints and illustrates life as surviving changes of form and mode of existence. II. Hints in the WORD OF GOD. 1. Man's creation. Made of dust. Living soul inbreathed.

Death penalty inflicted on the body; but soul never said to die in same sense. (Luke xv., where death is alienation of son from father; Rom. viii., where carnal-mindedness is death.) 2. Man's death as described in Eccles. xii. Dust returning to the earth. Spirit unto God. Plain reference to the story of creation. The breath is given up, but does not die, and symbolises the Spirit. 3. This truth is inwrought into the whole structure of the Scriptures. The blood of Abel represented his life that was vocal even after he was dead. (Comp. Rev. vi. 9, where the souls or lives of martyrs cry unto God.) The great incentive to righteousness in both testaments is union with God here, merging into such union perfected yonder, as illustrated in Enoch and Elijah. 4. Immortality is assumed. (Matt. xxii. 23, when Christ confronts the Sadducees.) He teaches that souls in heaven live under new and unearthly conditions; and so God is the God of the living, not the dead. III. But there is DISTINCT TEACHING ON THIS SUBJECT. Examples—The Transfiguration, where Moses represents saints who have died, and Elijah saints that pass into glory without death, but both equally alive. The words to the penitent thief, "To-day with Me in paradise." Stephen's dying vision and exclamation, "Receive my spirit." Paul (Phil. i. 23, 24; 2 Cor. v. 6, 9; 1 Thess. iv. 14–16; 1 Cor. iii.), where a future life is shown to be necessary to complete the awards of this life. (Comp. Luke xvi., the parable of rich man and Lazarus.) (*Arthur T. Pierson, D.D.*) *The immortality of the soul*:—Though the doctrine of the soul's immortality is peculiar to Christianity, yet it has engaged the thoughts and attention of the wisest men in all times. Prior to the advent of Christ, the doctrine was but dimly known even to the wisest of mankind, whether Jew or Gentile. Our present faith rests upon the Word of God. Death is not an eternal sleep, man shall live again. 1. The death of the soul cannot be reconciled with the justice of God. Justice in this life holds but an ill-balanced scale. Vice is seldom punished as it deserves, and rarer still does virtue meet its due reward. If death is an eternal sleep, and man's life ends with the tomb, how shall we reconcile his present condition with the justice of God? This question presents an argument for the immortality of the soul which philosophers and sceptics cannot answer, a moral proof which almost partakes of the nature of demonstration. 2. The death of the soul cannot be reconciled with the wisdom of God. In the providence of God nothing happens without an end, without a reason. The human mind does not act without a purpose or end, however wrong or weak that end may be. If this be true of the finite mind of man, imperfect as it is, how much more is it true of the infinite mind of God, as powerful to execute as it is perfect to conceive. Man is capable of infinite improvement. Though man's mind is constantly progressing, it never wholly matures. We never say his destiny is fulfilled. How, then, can we reconcile man's history and condition with the wisdom of God? 3. The death of the soul cannot be reconciled with the goodness of God. The desire for another life is an universal one, bounded by no geographical lines, limited by no clime or colour. Man is shocked at the very idea of annihilation. If death is an eternal sleep, why should man fear to die, why heed the reproaches of conscience? Did a God of goodness plant this desire in the heart of man merely to mock him with a phantom? Did He create hopes and longings which could never be realised? It needs not to reply. (*G. F. Cushman, D.D.*) *When a man dies*:—Do they live in other lands, or has the grave closed over them for ever? I. THE HEATHEN ANSWER; or the light of reason on this subject. The heathen looked forward to the future with grave misgivings. Even the most enlightened could do little more than form conjectures. In the absence of positive information, they based their arguments on the principles of reason. They felt, as we all feel, a natural desire for immortality. This universal instinct receives confirmation in many ways. 1. By the analogy of nature. All nature dies to live again. 2. By the anomalies of existence. (1) Social irregularities. (2) Unsatisfactory surroundings. (3) Early deaths. In the light of nature, we can only say that a future life is a possibility. II. THE JEWISH ANSWER. Here we pass from darkness into twilight. The Jews had the first faint streaks of Divine revelation. Their information, confined as it was to predictions and promises, was imperfect and unintelligible to the great mass of the people on whose conduct the doctrine exercised little or no practical influence. Such obscurity was in keeping with the temporary and progressive character of their dispensation. III. THE CHRISTIAN ANSWER. Here we come into daylight. In the light of the Gospel, the question of the text presents no difficulty. The Christian replies, in the full assurance of faith, "Yes, he shall live again." This is true of the soul, but what of the body? Modern science is

apt to run away with a mistaken impression of what is meant by the resurrection. St. Paul meets the modern objection by his analogy of the seed. We are not left in uncertainty as to what takes place when a man dies. After death, the judgment. The human race will gather at the call of the last trumpet. All will live again after the long sleep of the tomb. (*D. Merson, M.A., B.D.*) *Does death end all?* —This, it need not be said, is not an hypothetical inquiry as to what may be in this life, as if it was a possible thing that a man might not die; for a little before, he said of man in relation to the law of his appointed mortality, "his days are determined, the number of his months are with Thee, Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass" (ver. 5). The inquiry has reference to what shall be, or shall not be, after death. And what, it has been asked, was Job's own view? Directly opposite opinions have been entertained in regard to it. One writer of considerable note says, "The answer which Job's consciousness, ignorant of anything better, alone can give is, No, there is no life after death. It is, however, no less a craving of his heart that gives rise to the wish; it is the most favourable thought—a desirable possibility—which, if it were but a reality, would comfort him under all present suffering, 'all the days of my warfare' (of my appointed time) 'would I wait until my change came.'" Farther on he says, "even Job is without any superior knowledge respecting the future life. He denies a resurrection and eternal life, not as one who has a knowledge of them, and will not however know anything about them, but he really knows nothing of them: our earthly life seems to him to flow on into the darkness of Sheôl, and onward beyond Sheôl man has no further existence." Entertaining such views, it is not at all to be wondered at, that in these words Job is viewed as asserting his belief that death is the extinction of being, and that for man there is no waking and no rising for evermore (vers. 7–12). Others have entertained a very different opinion as to the answer which Job would have given to the question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" Crushed as Job was by his afflictions, both in body and in mind, I do not think that he entertained such a cheerless view of death, and of a future state. Possibly they mistake Job's hope and prospects for the future, not less than his three friends did his character and the probable design of his sufferings, who do not know, or who are unable to perceive, that it was his hope of a future life, and of complete vindication, implying honour and happiness in a future state, which almost alone sustained him under his unusual load of troubles. There are several arguments that might be urged to show that Job believed in a future state, both of rewards and of punishments, or generally, of a life beyond the grave. First, Job's sacrifices, when he was afraid that his children had sinned in their feasting, show that he both knew the evil of sin, and had faith in the only atoning sacrifice of a Redeemer. Second, Job showed that he knew of, and believed in a future state of retribution and in the last judgment, when he said, "Be ye afraid of the sword; for wrath bringeth the punishments of the sword, that ye may know there is a judgment" (Job xix. 29). And again, when he said, "The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction, they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath" (Job xxi. 30). Third, Job's words cannot be explained in any consistency with his aspirations, unless we admit that he believed in the resurrection of his body, when he said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," &c. In the context preceding that inquiry, "If a man die, shall he live again?" we readily admit that Job asserts the incontrovertible truth that when a man dies, he lives no more at all again in this world, when he says, "But man dieth, and giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" Yet at the same time we maintain that as Enoch the seventh from Adam was enabled to speak of, "the Lord coming with ten thousand of His saints to execute judgment upon all," so might Job be enabled by the same spirit of inspiration, to use words which expressed his belief in the resurrection of the dead at the dissolution of all things, and that probably he did so when he said, "Man lieth down, and riseth not; till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of sleep (ver. 12). What has been said indicates what must be our ultimate conclusion in respect of the inquiry, "If a man die, shall he live again?" But there are some things which would suggest a negative answer to the inquiry. As for example—1. The structure and development of man's body do not give us reason to think that if a man dies he shall live again. There are many expressions in Scripture which are fitted to remind us of the frailty of our bodies. Thus it is declared "that all flesh is as grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of grass." So in like manner, our bodies are not formed of the harder substances in nature, such as stone

and iron, but they consist of flesh, and blood, and bones, which are perishable in their own nature. They are also not only very susceptible of injury, but are very liable to be crushed, or destroyed by accident or by disease. There is not in our bodies any self-sustaining energy of power. We need food, and clothes, and sleep, to nourish and refresh them, and to repair their wasted energies; but all these suffice only for a short time. The gradual development of man's body also, through infancy and manhood, to old age, with its sure and unavoidable decay, seems to indicate a completed existence, which being fulfilled can have no continuance. 2. Observation and experience generally, say, No, in answer to this question, or that if a man die he shall not live again. Temporal death is the cessation of life in the present state of being. And who is there, that upon looking at the lifeless frame of one who is dead, at the motionless limbs that were once so active, and at the pale countenance once so full of intelligence and expression, but now so ghastly and so changed, could from anything that appears, entertain the slightest hope that such an one shall ever live again? But personal observation in regard to this matter is confirmed by the general experience of mankind, from age to age. As a matter of fact, if a man dies he does not live again. None of those also whom death has gathered during all the ages that are past, are to be found restored to life again as mingling with the inhabitants of this world, for "from that bourne no traveller returns." 3. The original cause and nature of death afford no reason to think that if a man die he shall live again. There is no information to be obtained from the light of nature as to the original cause and origin of death, although reason may arrive at the conclusion that it may be, and indeed must be, a penal evil. It is the Word of God alone, that is our only sure guide and instructor in regard to the original cause of death, and the circumstances and manner in which it entered into our world. "By one man," it is said, "sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Again we are told that "the wages of sin is death." It is then manifest from the Word of God, that death is the penalty of sin, of man's disobedience to the only Righteous Lawgiver, and of his rebellion against his Creator and King. An attentive consideration of death, might lead us to the conclusion that it is and must be a penal evil inflicted upon our race. Man is dying from the moment of his birth. Does not "every circumstance bespeak the wrath of God against the work of His hands? He destroys it as if it were loathsome in His sight. This is not the chastisement of a father, but the vengeance of a judge." The original cause therefore, and the penal nature of death, do not afford ground to think that if a man die he shall live again. 4. The testimony of nature is not equal, and therefore while there is a possibility there is no certainty that if a man die he shall live again. It must be granted that in nature there are many deaths, and resurrections, which are very closely connected together. In the light of God's Word, we may view some of them at least as emblems of the resurrection of our bodies. But the simple occurrence of these conveys of itself no certainty to us that if a man die he shall live again. 5. The powers and faculties of the soul render it not improbable that if a man die he shall live again. Man is constituted in his present state of being, of a body and of a soul. These mutually act upon each other, but they have distinct properties. Man is capable of the knowledge of God, and of His will, or of moral and religious truth and duty. He can entertain the conception of glory, honour, and immortality, in a higher and future state of being. Man has a conscience, which can be presently actuated in the discharge of the duties he owes to himself, and to his fellow-men, and above all to God, by conceptions of God, and of what is right and wrong towards Him. Conscience can be presently filled with the dread of His wrath, or tranquillised by assurances of His favour, based upon grounds which are rational and not upon the imagination or fancy. It is probable, therefore, that though the body dies, the soul must live for ever, for all these powers would be useless if the soul were at death to "lie down in everlasting darkness, and mingle with the clods of the valley." 6. The Word of God gives us the most explicit assurance of the future existence of the soul. 7. That the Word of God declares to us not only the immortality of the soul, but the certainty of the resurrection of the body. (*Original Secession Magazine.*) *Annihilation in death*:—In the opinion of the pantheists, the individual is only a transitory manifestation of the collective life of humanity; he appears for a moment like the waves on the ocean's surface, and then he vanishes, and one thing alone survives, humanity! There is, consequently, no eternity but that of the species.

Annihilation! See that ancient doctrine which seduced the Hindoo race and lulled it into a secular sleep, see it now extending its gloomy veil over us! At the very moment when we are sending missionaries to preach resurrection and life to the nations of the East, we ourselves are being enveloped, as it were, in the very error which lost them. Annihilation! We often hear it proclaimed with singular enthusiasm. Men tell us, "Lay down your pride, give up your selfish hopes; individuals pass away, but humanity remains: labour, therefore, for humanity; your afflictions, your sufferings form part of the universal harmony. To-morrow you shall disappear, but humanity shall keep on progressing; your tears, your sacrifices contribute to its greatness. That is enough to inspire you with a generous ambition; besides, annihilation is sweet for whoever has suffered." Notwithstanding, these doctrines would fail to affect the masses if they did not appeal to instincts now everywhere awakened; I mean, to those complex desires for justice and immediate enjoyment, for reparation and vengeance which stir the suffering classes so deeply. It is in the name of the present interests of humanity that men combat all hope of a future life. "Tell us no more, they say, of a world beyond. Too long has mankind been wrapped in enervating and ecstatic contemplation. Too long it has wandered in mystical dreams. Too long, under the artful direction of priests, it has sought the invisible kingdom of God, whilst from its grasp was being wrenched the kingdom of earth which is its true domain. The hour of its manhood has at length struck for it; it must now take possession of the earth. Enslaving faith must now give way to emancipating science. When has science entered upon that era of conquests which have veritably enfranchised humanity? From the hour when it has firmly resolved to free itself from the dominion of all mystery, to consider all things as phenomena to be solved. When has man begun to struggle victoriously against oppression? From the hour when, renouncing the idea of an uncertain recourse to future justice, he was revindicated his rights already upon earth. This task must be achieved. The invisible world must be left to those who preach it, and all our attention must be centred on the present. Equality in happiness upon earth must be revindicated more and more strongly. Away, then, with those who speak to us of future life, for whether they know it or not, they stand in the way of progress and of the emancipation of nations!" You have all heard such language, and you have, perhaps, seen it received with enthusiastic applause. Who would dare to affirm that the idea of a future life has never been placed at the service of inequality? Recall to mind the days when the Church with its innumerable privileges, possessing immense portions of territory, exempt from the taxes under which the masses groaned, comforted the poorer classes with the prospect of heavenly joys and compensations. I denounce and repudiate this iniquity; but let none trace it back to the Gospel, for the Gospel is innocent of it. Ah, if it were true indeed that the Gospel had been opposed to justice and equality, explain to me how, notwithstanding the manifold abuses of the Church, it happens that it is in the midst of the Christian nations that the idea of justice is so living and ardent? By proclaiming the complete triumph of justice in the world to come, Christianity has prepared the advent of justice in this life. Do not, therefore, set these two teachings in opposition to one another, for the one calls for the other, for they complete each other by an indissoluble bond of solidarity. And yet, in another respect, annihilation attracts us. If it be true that all human beings yearn after life, is it not equally true that life weighs heavily upon us at times; and is it not the privilege and the sorrow of the noblest minds to feel most painfully the weight of this burden? Men sneer at the idea of a future life. Again, do you know why? Ah! here I come upon the hidden and unavowed, but most powerful of all reasons. They scoff at it and deny it because they fear the meeting with the holy God. I see that those who endeavour to believe in it do not give it its real name. They recoil from annihilation, and when they come in presence of death, they borrow our language and use it as a brilliant mantle to cover the nakedness of their system. They too speak of immortality, but this immortality, where do they place it? Some place it in the memory of men, and with ofttimes stirring eloquence they lay before us this memory preserved as a sacred thing and becoming a worship destined to replace that of the heathen gods. A man of genius, the founder of positive philosophy, Auguste Comte, has made of this idea a veritable religion. 1. We live in the memory of others! And pray are they many, those whose deeds have escaped oblivion? There are but few who are called to accomplish glorious actions; the life of the great majority is composed

of small, insignificant, humble, yet most necessary duties. The great mass of humanity is sacrificed to the privileged few, and inequality abides for ever. If only these favoured beings all deserved this honour! What justice, great God, is the justice of men! The day will come when, in the words of Scripture, these last in the order of human admiration shall be the first elect of Divine glory. So much for this eternity of memory. 2. Another more elevated, more worthy, is placed before us—the eternity of our actions. Men tell us, "We pass away, but our deeds remain; we live on in those good actions which have contributed to the advancement of humanity; we live on in the truths which we have boldly proclaimed without fear of man, and which we thus hand down to future generations to be translated into noble deeds. This eternity of our works is most truly eternal life." We who are Christians, will not deny this solidarity, this action of the individual upon the whole, this spiritual posterity which we all leave after us; we believe it, moreover, to be most clearly expressed in the Gospel. Howbeit, I question the truth of this grand thought if the future life be denied. I grant that many of our actions are profitable for the whole and stand as stones in the universal edifice. On the other hand, how many are there, of our afflictions in particular, which find no explanation here below, and which remain for ever fruitless if we look only to their earthly consequences. What shall you say to that afflicted one who has been lying for years upon a bed of torture? We Christians, we tell them that they are known of God, that not one sorrow is left unnoticed by Him who is love and who sees their life; we tell them that their sufferings have a still unexplained but certain end of which eternity shall reveal the secret. But if the Lord be not there, if no eye has seen their silent sacrifice, what right have you to tell them that their works shall live after them? That is not all. We shall live again in our works, say you; and the wicked, what of them? Is that the eternity you reserve for them? If you mean by this that, though dead, their iniquities remain and continue to pollute the earth, ah! we know this only too well. Now when you tell me that the wicked are punished by the survivance of their actions, are you well aware of what you affirm? You affirm that this man who has died happy and blest is punished in the victims he has smitten, in the innocent ones whom he has dishonoured. These souls upon which his crimes and vices shall long and heavily weigh, will feel that he survives in his works, they will bear the fatal consequences of the iniquities of which he has only tasted the fruit; and you would teach them that this is God's chastisement upon him, and that eternal justice finds sufficient satisfaction in this monstrous iniquity? This, then, is what the theory of the eternity of actions leads to! No wonder that the most serious of our adversaries take no pains to defend it, and prefer passing the question of eternity under silence. They tell us, "What cares the upright man for the consequences of his actions! in his actions he looks neither to heaven nor to earth: the approbation of his conscience is all he seeks." Conscience is sufficient! Proud words these, which our modern Stoics have inherited from their Roman ancestors. Do they mean that they only do that which is truly good, who do it without calculation and without the interested attraction of reward? Do they mean that the noblest deed becomes vile if prompted by a mercenary motive? If so, they are right; but the Gospel has said this long since. Conscience is sufficient! Ah! if by the approbation of this conscience was meant the approbation of God Himself, whose voice conscience is, then I would understand this affirmation, without, however, approving it fully; but that is not the meaning attached to it. What is meant is simply this: man applying the law to himself and constituting himself his own judge; man approving and blessing himself. Well! I affirm that this is false, because man, not being his own creator, cannot be self-sufficient. Well! are we mistaken when we rise from our conscience to Him who has made it, and when we invoke God as our aid and witness? No; conscience is not sufficient; we need something more, we call for the reparation which this conscience proclaims. Conscience is the prophet of justice; but it must not utter its prophecies in vain. It tells us that eternal felicity is attached to good, and suffering to evil. This belief is not merely a response to interested desires, it is the expression of that eternal law which Christians call the faithfulness of God. Moreover, have you reflected on the other side of the question? You say conscience is sufficient. Will you dare assert that it suffices for the guilty? Reality shows us conscience becoming gradually more and more hardened as sin is indulged in, and more and more incapable of pronouncing the verdict we expect of it. You speak of leaving the

guilty wretch face to face with his conscience; but he knows how to bribe this judge, he knows how to silence its voice, he knows that the best thing he can do to stifle and bewilder it completely is to degrade himself more and more deeply. You will not admit the punishment which Christianity holds in reserve for the sinner, and you replace it by a gradual debasement. Which of you two respects humanity most? I have pointed to the consequences of all the theories which affirm the annihilation of the individual soul. After conscience I would interrogate the human heart, and show how the notion of annihilation little answers to that infinite yearning after love which lies at the depths of our being. But is it needful to insist on this point? Do not these two words, love and annihilation, placed in opposition to one another, form a distressing and ridiculous contrast? Does not the heart, when it is not deformed by sophisms, protest against death? (*E. Bersier, D.D.*) *Immortality and nature*:—It is a strange fact that the human mind has always held to the immortality of the soul, and yet has always doubted it; always believing, but always haunted by doubt. Yet this throws no discredit upon the truth. Were the belief not true, the doubt would long since have vanquished it, for nothing but truth can endure constant questioning. This truth takes up and sets forth the antagonism found in man's own nature, as a moral being put under material conditions, a mind shut up in a body. The consciousness of mind and moral nature is always asserting immortality; the sense of our bodily conditions is always suggesting its impossibility. It is the same thing that has always showed itself in philosophy; idealism denying the existence of matter, and materialism denying the reality of spirit. But the true philosophy of the human mind is both idealistic and materialistic. Nearly all doubt or denial of immortality comes from the prevalence of a materialistic philosophy; nearly always from some undue pressure of the external world. Great sinners very seldom question immortality. Sin is an irritant of the moral nature, keeping it quick, and so long as the moral nature has a voice, it asserts a future life. Just now the doubt is haunting us with unusual persistence. Certain phases of science stand face to face with immortality in apparent opposition. The doctrine of continuity or evolution in its extreme form, by including everything in the one category of matter, seems to render future existence highly improbable. But more than this, there is an atmosphere, engendered by a common habit of thought, adverse to belief. There is a power of the air that sways us, without reason or choice. Science is rapidly changing its spirit and attitude. It is revealing more and more the infinite possibilities of nature. True science admits that some things may be true that it cannot verify by result, or by any test that it can use. Evolution does not account for the beginning of life, for the plan of my life, for the potency that works in matter; for the facts of consciousness, for moral freedom and consequent personality. In considering immortality, it is quite safe to put science aside with all its theories of the continuity of force, and the evolution of physical life, and inwrought potentiality and the like. We are what we are, moral beings, with personality, freedom, conscience, and moral sense; and because we are what we are, there is reason to hope for immortal life. In any attempt to prove immortality, aside from the Scriptures, we must rely almost wholly upon reasons that render it probable. Our consciousness of personality and moral freedom declare it possible, but other considerations render it also probable and morally certain. Let us allow no sense of weakness to invest the word probability. Many of our soundest convictions are based on aggregated probabilities. Indeed, all matters pertaining to the future, even the sunrise, are matters of probability. Give some of the grounds for believing that the soul of man is immortal. 1. The main current of human opinion sets strongly and steadily towards belief in immortality. 2. The master minds have been strongest in their affirmations of it. 3. The longing of the soul for life, and its horror at the thought of extinction. 4. The action of the mind in thought begets a sense of a continuous life. One who has learned to think finds an endless task before him. Man reaches the bounds of nothing. 5. A parallel argument is found in the nature of love. It cannot tolerate the thought of its own end. 6. There are in man latent powers, and others half revealed, for which human life offers no adequate explanation. 7. The imagination carries with it a plain intimation of a larger sphere than the present. It is difficult to conceive why this power of broadening our actual realm is given to us, if it has not some warrant in fact. 8. The same course of thought applies to the moral nature. It has been claimed by some that they could have made a better universe. . . . The step from instinct

to freedom and conscience, is a step from time to eternity. Conscience is not truly correlated to human life. The ethical implies the eternal. Turn from human nature to the Divine nature. We shall find a like, but immeasurably clearer group of intimations. Assuming the theistic conception of God as infinite and perfect in character, this conception is thrown into confusion if there is no immortality for man. 1. There is failure in the higher purposes of God respecting the race; good ends are indicated, but not reached. Man was made for happiness, but the race is not happy. 2. The fact that justice is not done upon the earth involves us in the same confusion. The slighting of love can be endured, but that right should go for ever undone is that against which the soul, by its constitution, must for ever protest. The sentiment of righteousness underlies all else in man and in God. But justice is not done upon the earth, and is never done, if there be no hereafter. 3. Man is less perfect than the rest of creation, and, relatively to himself, is less perfect in his higher than in his lower faculties. 4. As love is the strongest proof of immortality on the manward side of the argument, so is it on the Godward side. The probabilities might be greatly multiplied. If stated in full, they would exhaust the whole nature of God and man. (*Theodore Munger.*) *Is there a future life?*—There is scarcely a religion known to us of which belief in a future life does not form part of its creed. The most notable exception is that of Buddhism. Our natural instincts are against the denial of immortality. Immortality is believed in, altogether apart from the revelation of it in the Christian Gospel, by civilised and savage races alike. At the most this amounts to no more than a probability; but probabilities count for something. The two chief causes of unbelief are bad morals and bad philosophy. By bad morals I mean such a way of living the life that now is as either not to want the doctrine of a future life to be true, or not to keep in activity those higher elements of our nature to which the doctrine more particularly appeals. Sincerely and practically to believe that we are immortal, we must more or less feel ourselves immortal. But this feeling of immortality will seldom visit the bosom of the man who does not honestly try to live on earth the life of heaven. Spiritual things are not likely to be discerned by the animal man. The disbelief also springs from bad philosophy. Many who are living right lives, have no faith in immortality as Christians believe in it. All the immortality they look for is to live in hearts they leave behind them, "in minds made better by their presence." They are agnostics or materialists. Against this unbelief we set the assertion of the Christian Gospel that man is destined to a life beyond the grave. The future life is not in the nature of things a matter of present experience. It is almost entirely a matter of direct revelation from God. We must accept it because it is an essential part of the Christian faith. There are, however, some considerations which render the truth of a future life eminently reasonable. 1. The fact of human personality. The most impressive of the works of God is the soul of man. A soul—a self! Is it possible to exhaust the meaning of those mysterious terms? Our physical frames are ever changing, yet our personalities are preserved. Is the one change we call death going to destroy us? The very suggestion is absurd. 2. A future life is demanded by our feeling of the symmetry of things. The extinction, the utter extinction of one single human soul would shake my belief in God to its foundations. 3. Our conscience demands a future life. To speak as though good men enjoyed here the fulness of reward, and bad men suffered here the fulness of penalty, is not accurate. There are moral inequalities, moral inconsistencies, which need a future life for their removal and redress. Thus, when Christianity comes to us with its magnificent revelation of immortality it finds us already prepared, on such grounds as we have been just noticing, to welcome the revelation, because it accords with some of the deepest convictions both of our heads and of our hearts. The witness without is confirmed by the witness within. Still, it is not on our reason, nor on our feelings that the Christian revelation of a future life is based. It is on the "resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." All the teaching of Christianity on the question is pivoted there. (*Henry Varley, B.A.*) *The resurrection:*—I. THE DIRECT TEACHINGS OF THE BIBLE. The predictions of resurrection in the Old Testament partake of the general character of prophecy, containing much that could not be understood even by the prophets themselves. God, who spoke unto the fathers by prophets, has spoken unto us by Christ. And Christ knew what He Himself said. The disciples preached, through Jesus, the resurrection from the dead. As the Lord Jesus was raised up, so should all His followers be. He was the first-fruits of them that slept. The Bible teaches

the doctrine of the resurrection by the instances which it records. II. THE INDIRECT TEACHINGS OF THE BIBLE. There is one truth which is involved in almost every principle of morality which the Bible sanctions, that fully confirms the idea of the resurrection of the body—the future and eternal existence of man. Man will live hereafter, and live for ever. The living soul, the infinite spirit, is the real man; but from the earliest period of time to the present, personality has been ascribed alike to soul and body, though, in strictness of speech, neither has any personal existence. A proper humanity supposes the union of both body and spirit. That man is the heir of an eternal existence corresponding to his present existence in the union of spirit and body, appears from the doctrine of the eternal humanity of Christ. We believe that, at the last day, the Almighty will raise the bodies of the dead, reunite them with the spirits which formerly animated them, and so, once more, make man a living soul. Deal with the objection, that death involves decomposition. In what consists personal identity? The identity of the body is not to be found in the aggregate of its particles, nor in any precise arrangement of them. Identity cannot be ascribed to a mode of being, only to being itself. Identity does not consist in gross materiality. With what fearful interest does the doctrine of the resurrection invest the cause of the sensualist. But we have in this doctrine a ground of hope, as well as of fear. (*J. King Lord.*) *Nature and immortality*:—Man's mind is something essentially different from his body, and that, therefore, the death of the body does not imply the destruction of the mind. There are those who are materialists. They hold that there is nothing in existence but matter. Mind they regard as a function of the brain. If this were so, some serious consequences would follow. 1. Man would then be only a machine. There would be no specific difference between him and the brutes. The brain certainly is the organ of the mind; but physical science has left unexplained the nature and origin of our mental and moral being. There is yet a great chasm between dead and living matter. Scientists cannot prove that dead matter can originate life. In consciousness there is nothing common with matter. A thought cannot be weighed and measured; nor can love; nor can our power of will. What has materialism to say to conscience? Materialism cannot account for man's mental, moral, and religious nature. Mind is not secreted by the brain, but is an entity distinct from it, and immaterial. This does not prove the soul immortal, but it turns aside one argument of those who would prove that the soul is not immortal. 2. In the moral government of the world there are such inequalities that there must be a future state of conscious existence in which these inequalities will be rectified. Do we see in the world an absolutely perfect system of rewards and punishments? Does every man receive in this life his deserts? It is true that the way of transgressors is hard, and that godliness is profitable for the life that now is. It is inseparable from any proper conception of God, that His righteousness rules the world. We may be sure that He will complete His plan; and in His perfected work He will vindicate His righteousness, and show that all His ways are equal. 3. The soul's capacities and aspirations are such as point to immortality. The lower animals are adapted to the place they occupy. Death rounds off their life, and is the natural termination of it, there is no indication of capacity for a higher life. It is otherwise with man. Look at man's power of gathering knowledge. There is no limit to man's power of acquiring, if only he had life. There is an indication of man's immortality in his natural and ineradicable yearning after it. That a man may desire some blessing is no proof that he is destined to obtain it; but in this case you must consider how this desire is inwrought into the very nerve and fibre of our spiritual being. We shrink appalled at the very thought of annihilation. God has made this desire of immortality part and parcel of our being. It is born with us, and grows with us. Then also, man is the only creature on earth that has risen to the knowledge of God, and has a nature leading to the worship of God. Nay, God is the want of the human soul. If man's conscious existence is to terminate with death, I can see no reason for these high endowments which lead him to know and worship God. 4. In the workings of the conscience we have prophetic foreshadowings of immortality. Look at the prophetic action of conscience. It urges us to prepare for certain eventualities in the future. Conscience urges us to shun the wrong and to do the right, that it may be well with us hereafter. Take two classes of men—those who are upheld by their conscience, and those who are tormented by their conscience. We analyse their feelings and convictions, and find that these take hold on eternity, and look forward to judgment. The man

who meets death to keep his conscience unstained, is impelled by a high moral instinct, which needs an eternal future to approve its wisdom and to vindicate its sacrifices. But when conscience is violated, the anguish it causes also points to the future. Conscience distinctly foreshadows a future life of conscious being. 5. The universality of the belief in immortality is an evidence of its truth. Among barbarous and civilised nations, everywhere, is found this belief in a future state of conscious existence. Bring these different arguments together. What is it that Jesus has done? Made known a future existence not known before? Nay; but brightened, or made clear what was imperfectly understood, and shown that only through Him can be obtained a glorious immortality. (*A. Oliver, B.A.*) *Shall we live again?*—The question is the question of one who doubts. In Job's days men could not pierce the darkness of the grave. Hence the gloomy views men had of death. There is much in the visible aspect of death to lead to the saddest conclusion. 1. The resurrection is not impossible. Can anything be too hard for Him who made us? If God gave us life, He can restore us to life. 2. Resurrection is to be expected—it is in keeping with the instinct implanted in us by our Maker. Man has everywhere a yearning after immortality. Consider the place man holds here on earth amongst God's creatures. He alone is a responsible creature. But reward and punishment are not always meted out according to a man's doings at present. While this is the case, does it not seem a denial of God's justice to say that this life is all? Then we have God's Word of promise for it, that "though a man die, he shall live again." And we have the resurrection of God's own Son, Jesus Christ, for our example. This it is that gives us the victory over our doubts and fears. This is the rock on which we build our hope of rising again. If these bodies of ours are appointed to immortality, does it need a preacher to enforce the necessity of a pure, and sober, and godly conversation? Look at the strong support and comfort which belief in a resurrection can give the heart. (*R. D. B. Rawnsley, M.A.*) *Life beyond the grave*:—Faith in a life beyond the grave is the real, though often unrecognised basis of all stable peace and happiness for us. Without this underlying belief our present existence can have no real coherence, purpose, or meaning. Faith in a future life is the unseen foundation of all that is fairest and noblest in humanity. Even the joy and careless vivacity of the unreflecting seem to me to be ultimately based on the rational and thoughtful faith of deeper souls. Beneath the superficial happiness of trivial natures lies stratum after stratum of profound human thought, extending far down towards the very core of the universe. Ordinary mundane happiness really depends on convictions which its owners do not themselves gain, or even hold consciously. The deeper spirits of our race are often in gravest bewilderment and grief, and their sorrow even now threatens the continuance of man's ordinary satisfactions. It really seems as if, even though in reality there should be no future life, we must invent one, in order to make this life tolerable. Hence, perhaps, the fantastic doctrine of immortality taught by the positivists. The best service a thoughtful spirit can now render is to face the haunting spectre of modern life, doubt of a future existence, to grapple honestly with all besetting difficulties, to seek to know the very actual truth. Sorrowful indeed must ever be this lonely quest of the venturesome pilgrim soul. Nor must it expect much sympathy from man. But the resolute inquirer may still find some comfort from God. I do not think that Christianity is committed to any particular theory as to the natural immortality of the finite soul, or as to its absolute independence of matter in any form. The Christian view is, that the life of the finite soul is entirely dependent upon the uncreated and undying life of God. Ours is a derived, and not a natural immortality. I do not think that St. Paul held at all Bishop Butler's doctrine of the absolute independence of the spiritual or mental principle within us. The apostle's views were nearer to those favoured by modern science. Butler scarcely thought a body a real necessity at all; St. Paul yearned after a "spiritual body." I am glad to think, that, if I live beyond the grave, it is not necessary that I should be a mere ghost, or else a grossly material being as I am on earth. Mill argues that the idea of extinction is "not really or naturally terrible" from the fact that it is held out as a reward in the Buddhist creed. He here entirely ignores the fact that the deep pessimism, which makes the Buddhist hate a future life of consciousness, also makes him hate the present life. Curiously enough, in Mill's essay, the misery of the present life is regarded as inducing men to dislike and disbelieve in a future life, and also as disposing them to demand it and believe in it. Mill teaches that if man's life on earth were more satisfactory,

he would probably cease to care for another existence. On the whole, considering John Stuart Mill's nature and early training, he came as near to the great Theistic faith as we could reasonably expect. I think we shall find that, on the whole, our position to-day is a somewhat stronger one than that occupied by the defenders of immortality in earlier days, though we may have to encounter some new obstacles to belief. We must admit that the merely physical phenomena of death point to annihilation. The difficulty of conceiving that our individuality will survive the shock of separation from its organism, probably arises from our ignorance, and might be no difficulty if we had fuller knowledge. To a very great extent, science now heals the wounds which it inflicted on the human spirit in earlier days. The highest science does not tell us that a future life is impossible for us; it only says that it cannot guarantee it to us; it leaves us quite free to consult our moral and spiritual nature. We Christians can still believe in a future existence on grounds derived from reason. I see no grounds for disbelieving in a future life, if the moral arguments in its favour are cogent and conclusive. One strong moral argument is the unsatisfactory nature of our present life. This is a very real argument, if we believe in a benevolent God. Another argument is derived from the fact that God's moral government is only incipient here on earth. The inchoate condition of many of our highest faculties seems also to suggest faith in a continuance, and development of life beyond the grave. Progressiveness is the distinguishing mark of man. The glorious instinct of worship seems also to vindicate for us a reasonable hope of a grander life in God's nearer presence. Our present moral nature is full of suggestions of a future life. The affections of men plead most eloquently of all for a future life. God has set eternity in our hearts, though our heads may question it. The deepest human love is saturated with faith in immortality. It cannot even speak at all without implying the eternal hope. The loftiest affections, being born of God, are accredited prophets of true religion. (*A. Cranford, M.A.*) *Our immortality God's will:*—The common arguments for the immortality of man are irrelevant. We are not immortal, because we wish to be so, or think we are so, or because immortality befitteth us as lords of the creation, or because we love life, and the thought of annihilation is disagreeable to us, or because there is within us a craving after endless existence. All these arguments, though powerless with those old pagans of whom we have been speaking, are frequently adduced by such as have the Gospel in their hands, as if they were all powerful. But the Gospel, as it needeth them not, ignoreth them. One of the pagans, and he agreeing with others, would tell us that "whatever beginneth, endeth" (Panætius). And another (Epicurus) that "mind ceases with dissolution." Hence we, as we had a beginning, despite all our reasonings to the contrary, beside or beyond the Gospel, might cease to be. We may not like the thought, it is hard, cheerless, chilling; but if it put us into our right place before God,—if it serve to check that pride of immortality, which is the purest hindrance to preparation for it,—let us not disregard the truth, that we, as we began to be, like all other things might, were it God's will, cease to be. . . . But God hath willed it otherwise. If with Job we ask, "If a man die, shall he live AGAIN?" the reply is direct. He shall. And why? Not because we, having a better insight into what is called Natural Theology and the laws of life, and being more mindful of the dignity of our nature than the men of old, are better able to reason ourselves into a belief of this truth. No; our immortality doth not depend upon natural arguments, or upon sensuous predilections. We are immortal because God hath told us so. It is His will. And as if to bring down our pride, the immortality of the soul hath been testified unto us by the resurrection of the body. The proof of the one is in the other. The Gospel of Christ knoweth nothing of the immortality of the soul apart from the immortality of the whole man. And if we regard the one to the neglect of the other, we do but endanger the blessedness of both. We have begun to exist, but not for this reason, but because it is God's decree, and Jesus Christ hath been raised from the dead, and hath ascended into heaven in our nature, we shall exist for ever. This is the solemn thought, which should never be long absent from our minds. We live, and live we must. The destruction of the present order of the globe will affect our being no more than the fall of a raindrop, or a shooting star. Too dreadful is the truth of our immortality, even though the hope of saints should render it lovely, to permit it to make us proud. The gift may raise us beyond the brutes, but if its alternative be the hopeless land, it will sink us below them. (*Alfred Bowen Evans.*) *Yes and no:*—I. We answer the question first

with a "No." He shall not live again here; he shall not again mingle with his fellows, and repeat the life which death has brought to a close. 1. Shall he live for himself? No; if he hath lived and died a sinner, that sinful life of his shall never be repeated. Let the cup be sweet; it is the last time thou shalt ever drink it. Once thou shalt insult high heaven, but not twice. The long-suffering of God shall wait for thee through thy life of provocations; but thou shalt not be born again into this world; thou shalt not a second time defile its air with blasphemies, nor blot its beauties with impiety. Thou shalt not live again to forget the God who hath daily loaded thee with mercies. If you die you shall not live again to stifle the voice of your conscience, and to quench the Spirit of God. Solemnly let us say it, awful as it appears, it is well that the sinner should not live again in this world. "Oh!" you will say, when you are dying, "if I could but live again, I would not sin as I once did." Unless you had a new heart and a right spirit, if you could live again, you would live as you did before. In the case of the child of God, it is the same, so far as he himself is concerned, when he dies he shall not live again. No more shall he bitterly repent of sin; no more lament the plague of his own heart, and tremble under a sense of deserved wrath. The battle is once fought: it is not to be repeated. 2. Shall he live for others? No. The sinner shall not live to do damage to others. If a man die, he shall not live again to scatter hemlock seed, and sow sin in furrows. What, bring back that thief to train others to his evil deeds? Bring back that self-righteous man who was always speaking against the Gospel, and striving to prejudice other men's minds against Gospel light? No, no. And now, let me remind you that it is the same with the saint, "If a man die, shall he live again?" No. This is our season to pray for our fellow-men, and it is a season which shall never return. Hasten to work while it is called to-day; gird up your loins and run the heavenly race, for the sun is setting never to rise again upon this land. II. "If a man die shall he live again?" YES, YES, THAT HE SHALL. He does not die like a dog; he shall live again; not here, but in another and a better or a more terrible land. The soul, we know, never dies. The body itself shall live again. This much cometh to all men through Christ, that all men have a resurrection. But more than that. They shall all live again in the eternal state; either for ever glorified with God in Christ, blessed with the holy angels, for ever shut in from all danger and alarm; or in that place appointed for banished spirits who have shut themselves out from God, and now find that God has shut them out from Him. Ye shall live again; let no one tempt you to believe the contrary. And hark thee, sinner; let me hold thee by the hand a moment; thy sins shall live again. They are not dead. Thou hast forgotten them, but God has not. And thy conscience shall live. It is not often alive now. It is quiet, almost as quiet as the dead in the grave. But it shall soon awaken. Remember that your victims shall live again. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Belief in immortality:*—The great Roman orator, Cicero, said, "Yes, oh yes! But if I err in believing that the soul of man is immortal I willingly err, nor while I live would I have the delightful error extorted from me; and if after death I shall feel nothing, as some philosophers think, I am not afraid that some dead philosopher shall laugh at me for my mistake." Socrates declared, "I believe a future life is needed to avenge the wrongs of this present life. In the future life justice shall be administered to us, and those who have done their duty here in that future life shall find their chief delight in seeking after wisdom." Yes, the soul is in exile. Like the homing-pigeon released, it hurries back to the bosom of the Father. Man is not satisfied with his humanity! As one writer has put it, our race is homesick. (*Homiletic Review.*) All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.—*The resuscitation and its time appointed:*—We are informed of Columbus, that visions of the mighty continent he was afterwards to reveal rose upon his mind long before he set out on the voyage which conducted him thither. He was convinced that such a continent existed, and he burned with an ardent desire to explore its hidden wonders. We are told that he wandered often by the shores of the mighty ocean, or climbed aloft some rocky steep, that he might gaze over the world of waters. There must be a western continent; and who would not brave the dangers of the deep, if, haply, the enterprise would terminate in so wonderful a discovery? The discoveries of Columbus, however wondrous the exhibition there made of human sagacity and perseverance, did, after all, relate but to a portion of this fallen world; a world in which the great discoverer himself could be permitted to go to the grave neglected, impoverished, persecuted. But every man who has

his station on the shores of the ocean of eternity, must ere long embark on its heaving waters, prosecute for himself the dangerous navigation, and occupy a place in the mysterious world beyond. In that region of mystery there are employments, sufferings, joys. Tremendous are the results which ensue from crossing that ocean of eternity. Oh, well, therefore, may we stand on our Atlantic cliff, straining our eyeballs over the deep, as the shades of evening are coming on; listening to the roar of the waters, if haply we may gather thence some intelligence regarding the distant world. What shall be my destiny yonder? I. JOB EVIDENTLY LIVED IN THE HOPE OF A COMING RESURRECTION. He speaks of a tree cut down, yet, under the influence of heat and moisture, sprouting again; and expresses his wonder that man, when "he dieth and giveth up the ghost," should be utterly "wasted away" and become a nonentity. He speaks of rivers and pools of water drying up by the heats of summer; but he leaves the impression that he did not forget that the returning rains would restore them to their former state. He prays that God would "hide him in the grave," and there "keep him in secret", until His wrath was past, when, at a time appointed, he would be remembered and restored. "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." Is this, as if he had said, the destiny of man, the order of God's providence in dealing with him, first to die and then to revive? Must the seeds of death be purged out of his body in the grave? If so, then I need not fear death; I may rather welcome it with joy, looking forward into the future with confidence, waiting with patience for the resurrection day, and "knowing that my Redeemer liveth." It becomes us, in these latter times, to dwell with special interest on the doctrine of a resurrection. It is a fact that we have been born; it is a fact that we shall die; and it is another fact, just as certain, that we shall rise again from our graves. God is able to do it, and has issued the promise. Oh, wonderful exhibition to be thereby afforded of Jehovah's might! So have I seen one of our Scottish mountains invested with its wintry mantle of snow, and incrusted on all sides with thick-ribbed ice. Not a green leaf or tiniest flower broke the uniformity of the snowy waste. What desolation, dreariness, and death! Who would suppose that underneath that icy covering, life, and warmth, and beauty, were lying entombed, awaiting their glorious resurrection! Yet so it is. The months of winter passed away, the snow and ice disappeared, the streamlets flowed and sparkled again in the sunshine, and the whole landscape, once so chill and dreary, was lighted up with a thousand sights of loveliness and joy. The winter too of the grave has its returning spring, and while faith points the finger to the glorious epoch, hope fills the soul with an earnest of future gladness. "If a man die, shall he live again?" Thus saith the Lord, "Rejoice"; "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." II. JOB WAS EVIDENTLY CONVINCED THAT THE YEARS OF HIS LIFE WERE FIXED AND NUMBERED. He speaks, you perceive, of a "time appointed." And this idea is repeatedly suggested elsewhere, when we find him declaring that the Almighty has "numbered his steps," "determined his days and the number of his months," and caused him to "fulfil his days like a hireling." These expressions not only imply, but in distinct terms affirm, the sovereignty of God in fixing the duration of human life. Every individual man lives his "appointed time," and not one moment longer. There are many other utterances of Scripture which make the same affirmation. The Royal Preacher tells us that there is "a time to be born, and a time to die," as if the two grand limits, at least, of human existence, were positively fixed by Divine decree. The Psalmist speaks of the "measure of his days," and compares it to "an handbreadth"; expressions which are not only indicative of the shortness of human life, but also of its precise and actual amount. The Apostle Paul speaks of "finishing his course," and of a "race being set before us"; terms borrowed from the measured racecourse in the gymnastic games of the ancient Greeks, which, as fully as language can express it, affirm the doctrine we have just announced. And, indeed, the same doctrine flows, as a necessary consequence, from all we know of the perfections of God. If it be a truth that Almighty God determines in every case the duration of human life, and fixes the hour and circumstances of our dissolution, we ought to give Him credit for the exercise of supreme wisdom in this part of His procedure. No life is either prolonged or shortened without good cause. We ought to reflect that permanent or even longthened existence in this world is not the end for which we were created. This world is the great seed-bed or nursery for those souls who are destined to occupy diverse places and perform different functions hereafter.

Our residence, accordingly, in this world, is not an end, but a means; and as the Almighty has ordained that this shall be the case, we may rest assured that not a single removal occurs, from the visible into the spiritual, but in the exercise of supreme wisdom. The time during which the spirit of every man must be submitted to the influences of this world, and the special influences to which it is submitted, are things of Divine appointment; and not merely the glory of God, but the welfare of all creation, is contemplated in every such appointment. It is incumbent on us, accordingly, habitually to feel and to act upon the truth of the Patriarch's saying: There is a time appointed for us all. We may not know the hour of our departure from this sublunary scene; the season, the place, and the circumstances of our dissolution may not be revealed to any created intelligence. But all is known to God, and is matter of previous arrangement and ordination. Moreover, the eternal interests of the whole universe are therein consulted. The Judge of all the earth is doing what is wise, and good, and right. Let us, accordingly, cherish the spirit of contentment and submission; filling the place assigned us with meekness, humility, and faith; prosecuting the duties before us with perseverance and godly zeal; holding ourselves in readiness, whensoever the summons reaches us, to arise and go hence. III. JOB FORMED A RESOLUTION TO WAIT WITH PATIENCE THE EVOLUTION OF THE DIVINE PURPOSES. "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." He might have to endure for a season; but the vindication of his character, and the eternal re-establishment of his happiness, were future events, as certain of occurring as the rise of to-morrow's sun, or the budding of the flowers of the ensuing spring. What he felt called upon to do was to exercise patience in waiting for them. The trial, though severe and of long duration, would some time or other come to an end; the distress, though protracted, would not last for ever; the eternal weight of glory which was approaching would far more than counterbalance the sufferings by which it was preceded. Oh, how different this from the faith and hope of the world! History has recorded the deathbed incidents and sayings of one of the infidel leaders of the great French Revolution. "Sprinkle me," said Mirabeau, as he was dying—"sprinkle me with odours, crown me with flowers; for I am sinking into eternal sleep." Oh, what a contrast!—the dying infidel on the one hand, the agonised patriarch on the other! The former had no God in whom he could trust; no Saviour to whom to resort when heart and flesh were fainting; no hope but the eternal sleep of annihilation. Peace he had none, nor the hope of it. And yet he was a dying man, and felt it. The roar of the dark waters was in his ears, and all he hoped for and desired was to be swallowed up in them, and be no more. And is this all that Reason, the boasted deity of French Atheism, can suggest to encounter the King of Terrors, the destiny of the grave?—a few drops of perfume, that speedily will exhale, and leave this poor clay tabernacle putrifying and noisome!—a chaplet of flowers, which ere to-morrow will be withering, and mock the brow it has been gathered to adorn! Poor preparation this for the soul's entrance into the presence-chamber of Almighty God!—miserable comfort, when the heart-strings are bursting! See, however, yonder sorely distressed patriarch. Accumulated sorrows are wringing his spirit with anguish. He has lost all that the world values,—wealth, children, health, and even the good opinion and sympathy of his friends. He is a predestined heir of glory; his name is in the book of life. He is a saint amid all his sorrows; and God loves him, though bodily and mental anguish are making of him a prey. Oh, for the faith and hope of the servant of God! (*J. Cochrane, M.A.*) *The triumph of patience*:—Job makes use of the fact, that human life is so short and so sorrowful, as an argument why God should let him alone, and not chasten him. Life, he seems to say, is short enough without being cut shorter, and sorrowful enough without being embittered by God's judgments. What Job seems to mean is, that when we once die, we cannot resume our earthly life. There is much that is solemn in this truth. There are many things on earth which we can do a second time; if done imperfectly the first time, a failure is not altogether fatal. But we can only die once. If our short life is wasted, and we die unprepared, we cannot make up for lost opportunities—cannot come back to die again. It is easy to see what Job means by his "appointed time," and also by the "change" for which he waited. But in applying these words to ourselves, we may take a wider range; for there is an appointed time to many different events and periods of human life, as well as to life itself; and corresponding to each of these there is a change, for which the true Christian ought to wait. 1. There are seasons of special

temptation and conflict in the Christian life. But temptation endured, is a great furtherance to the spiritual life. 2. It is a law in God's kingdom that we must have trouble. There is sin in our hearts, and where there is sin, there must be chastisement sooner or later. It is well, therefore, to make up our minds that we shall be tried, so that, when it comes, we may not count it a strange thing. Some trials we may be spared, if we live near to God. But some trials we shall still need. How much there is to comfort us under them, if only we are Christ's. (*George Wagner.*) *Life a warfare:*—First, let us hear the warning, "If a man die, shall he live again?" The lives of other men,—their blindness to the changes and decay in themselves which are so evident to their fellows,—the experience of our own hearts, above all, which have so lightly retained many strong impressions, may make us feel the necessity of this caution. We shall indeed live for ever. Our souls cannot lose their consciousness. But a deathless eternity will offer no period similar to this life on the earth. There will be no new trial, no new place of conflict with evil, no time to seek the Lord, and to do good to our own souls. In this consists the true value, and inestimable importance of life; it is the one time of probation for an external judgment; it is the time to fit ourselves "for the inheritance of the saints in light." We are able in some respect to see that the allowing to those who waste the present life a second trial upon earth, would have produced incalculable evil. Even as it is, with death and judgment in view, how many live carelessly. If men knew that after death comes the entrance into a further period of preparation, repentance would be far more rare, and the number of those who are treading the narrow way heavenward greatly diminished. In the case supposed, those who revived from death would enter on their second time of trial, not with a childish proneness to evil, but with hearts inured to sensuality, and we may say, inflexibly hardened in disobedience. Would not the amendment of sinners, and the constancy of the godly then become well-nigh impossible? These considerations may teach us that it is a method at once necessary, righteous, and merciful, by which "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." This is the hour in which God hath appointed you, not to wrath, but to obtain salvation by Him; to be fellow-workers with Him in accomplishing your renovation. If we consider our ways, how much is there to correct and amend! How much remains for the Spirit of God yet to work in us. . . . Such reflections may prepare us to adopt Job's resolution, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come." The word rendered "appointed time" has in the original a peculiar signification. It almost always signifies "an army," as in the expression "Lord God of Sabaoth," or "Lord God of hosts." The word "warfare" is the same as the word Job employs: so we may read, "All the days of my warfare I will wait till my change come." With great propriety Job might speak of himself as enduring a great fight of afflictions. But to each of us this word "warfare" is most significant. The term impresses on us the duty of self-denial. Without forgetfulness of things behind, without submission and prompt obedience to the general's command, no soldier, however excellent might be his personal qualities, however high his courage, would be of any service to the army he had joined, but rather an incumbrance. How much more does this renunciation of our own will and pleasure become us, who follow such a Leader! Our warfare is an especial act of faith; for it is a spiritual combat. Our enemies do not show themselves. He who has made any real efforts to live a godly life, knows that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal." This figure of our warfare represents to us, above all, the necessity of patience. "All the days of my warfare will I wait." . . . To him who is emulating the resolve of Job, there is not only caution, but abundant comfort in his reflection that if a man die, he will not live again any such life as the present. Human life is the day in which we are to rejoice and labour. (*M. Biggs, M.A.*) *The advantages of religious resignation:*—Job grounded his resignation on the principle, that though God was pleased to make so severe a trial of his virtues and innocence, He would, in His due time, restore him to his former prosperity here, or reward him with inconceivable happiness hereafter. I. IN WHAT LATITUDE WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND JOB'S NOTION OF AN APPOINTED TIME. As fixed for the period of human life. The period of our lives is not peremptorily determined by God; but every particular person has it in his option to prolong or shorten it, according to his good or bad conduct. God's foreknowledge hath, in itself, no influence at all upon the things foreknown; nor is it inconsistent with the freedom of man's will; nor doth it determine our choice. Length of life depends very much on the regularity

or irregularity of conduct. Even common observation furnishes us with the fatal consequences that inseparably attend intemperance and lust. Religion and virtue naturally conduce to the lengthening of life, by affording us the advantage of fixed rules of conduct. II. IT IS OUR INDISPENSABLE DUTY TO WAIT, WITH PATIENCE, ALL THE DAYS OF THIS APPOINTED TIME. Our disappointments and calamities are under the inspection and at the disposal of wise providence, and therefore they ought to be endured without the least discontent or complaint. A consciousness of acting in concert with the supreme governor of the universe, cannot fail affecting a human mind with the liveliest transports of joy and tranquillity. III. RULES TO SETTLE IN OUR MIND THIS GREAT DUTY OF RESIGNATION. 1. Keep a firm belief that the universe is under the superintendence of an all-powerful Being, whose justice will finally distribute rewards and punishments according to our virtues and vices. 2. An effectual restraint must be laid upon our impatience and fretfulness. 3. Keep confident that afterward joy will spring up. 4. The inward tranquillity of mind, that proceeds from a consciousness of fidelity in our duty, is inexpressible. (*W. Adey.*) *Good men wait for the day of their death* :—Mutability cleaves to all mankind from the cradle to the grave. I. DEATH IS AN APPOINTED CHANGE. It was in consequence of man's first offence that a sentence of mortality was passed upon the whole human race. It was then appointed to all men once to die. Many allow that God has appointed death to all men; but deny that He has appointed the time, or place, or means, of any particular person's death. But it seems difficult to conceive how it was possible for God to appoint death to every individual, without appointing the time, the place, and the means of his death. II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE GODLY MAN'S WAITING FOR THEIR APPOINTED CHANGE. 1. The habitual expectation of their dying hour. Waiting always carries the idea of expectation. 2. An habitual contemplation, as well as expectation of death. 3. That they view themselves prepared for their great and last change. 4. That they desire the time to come for them to leave the world. We wait for what we desire, not what we dread. III. THEY HAVE GOOD REASONS FOR THIS WAITING ALL THE DAYS OF THEIR APPOINTED TIME, TILL THEIR CHANGE COME. 1. Because it will put them into a state of perfect holiness. 2. And into a state of perfect knowledge. 3. And into a state of perfect and perpetual rest. 4. It will not only free them from all evil, but put them into possession of all good. Improvement—(1) It must argue great imperfection in Christians, not to hope and wait for the day of their decease. (2) It is of great importance to make their calling and election sure, because without this they cannot properly wait for the day of death. (3) If good men do thus wait, then they derive a happiness from their religion to which sinners are strangers. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *Waiting for death* :—We are all, like Job, mortal; like him, we may be assailed by severe afflictions, and tempted to wish impatiently for death; but we ought, like him, to check these impatient wishes, and resolve to wait till our change comes. I. CONSIDER DEATH AS A CHANGE. The word is impressive and full of meaning. It strongly intimates Job's belief in the immortality of the soul, and in a future state of existence. Though death is not the extinction of our being, it is a change. 1. It is the commencement of a great change in our bodies. 2. In our mode of existence. Until death, our spirits are clothed with a body, but after death they exist in a disembodied state, the state of separate spirits. This change will be accompanied by a corresponding change in our mode of perception. Then we shall see without eyes, hear without ears, and feel without touch. 3. In the objects of perception we shall in effect experience a change of place. Death removes us from one world to another. We shall then most clearly, constantly, and for ever, perceive God, the Father of spirits, and of the spiritual world. 4. In our employments, and in the mode of spending our existence. 5. In our state and situation. This world is a world of trial. While we remain in it, we are in a state of probation. Our days are days of grace. 6. A great change with respect to happiness and misery. II. THE APPOINTED TIME ALLOTTED TO EACH OF US ON EARTH, AT THE EXPIRATION OF WHICH THE CHANGE WILL TAKE PLACE. The number of our months is with God; He sets us bounds which we cannot pass. We must allow that God has set to every man an appointed time, or deny the providential government of the universe. III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN WAITING THE DAYS OF OUR APPOINTED TIME? 1. Waiting till God shall see fit to release us, without voluntarily hastening our death, either in a direct or indirect manner. 2. An habitual expectation of it. No man can be said to wait for an event which he does not expect, nor can we be properly

said to wait all our days for death, unless we live in habitual expectation of it. 3. Habitual care to preserve and maintain such a frame of mind as we should wish to be in when it arrives. Whatever preparation is necessary, the good man will take care to make. 4. Waiting for our change may be justly considered as implying some degree of desire for it. Some reasons why we should wait for it in a right manner. 1. The perfect reasonableness of so doing. Consider the certainty and importance of death. 2. The command of Christ, with its attending promises and threatenings. Stand, says he, with your loins girt about, and your lamps trimmed. Be ye like servants who wait for their Lord, that when He cometh ye may open to Him immediately; for ye know not at what hour the Son of Man cometh. Blessed is that servant whom He shall find so doing. (*E. Payson, D.D.*) *The Christian waiting for his final change* :—There is much holy feeling in these quiet words. I. A CHANGE WHICH IS COMING. Job had already experienced many and great changes: yet he speaks here as one waiting for a change, just as though he had hitherto never experienced a single vicissitude. He means death. 1. To the righteous, death is a change of worlds. 2. A change of society. Man's social feelings will doubtless follow him to heaven. 3. We ourselves shall be changed by death. This is needful to give us the full enjoyment of our change of worlds and society. Our souls will be changed. They will be enlarged, strengthened, and, above all, purified. Our bodies as well as our souls will be changed ultimately. Change will take place in our outward condition and circumstances as well as in our ourselves. II. THE DUTY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD WITH REFERENCE TO THIS CHANGE. The text says they must wait for it. This waiting is the highest and holiest frame of mind into which Divine grace can bring us with reference to our future change. It is a great thing to be kept living in the constant thought and expectation of it. This waiting is a triumph over, not merely the worldly-mindedness of the human heart, but the fear and unbelief of the human heart. It seems a high attainment to feel a desire for death; the desire which is a longing to be with Christ. This frame of mind, even when attained, often in deep trouble gives way. Let me call on you to cultivate this patient, waiting disposition. It is good for its own sake. It is good as it redounds to God's honour. It is good in its influence on the whole Christian character. It is only for a little while that we can need this grace. (*C. Bradley.*) *A coming change* :—Here we have reflected before us the character of the true Christian, who will not even in the lowest depths of adversity, throw aside his confidence in God, knowing that afflictions come not forth of the ground, but of him without whom not a sparrow falleth thither. I. THE QUESTION PROPOSED. "If a man die, shall he live again?" The truth of a resurrection may be impressed on us by analogy from nature, and by word of revelation. The same power that bids the earth bring forth abundantly for the use of man, shall hereafter cause the sea, death, and hell, to deliver up the dead which are in them. Revelation would seem to enforce what creation would silently invite us to contemplate. II. THE CHANGE TO WHICH ALLUSION IS MADE. It is one class of persons, and one only, of whom it may be said, that they will wait till their change come—those who have put on the Lord Jesus while here, and who are continually longing and looking for His glorious appearing. It is to be a glorious change. It will introduce us into glory; that glory we can here know but in part, for its fulness shall be revealed hereafter. Another distinguishing feature in its character is that of its being unchangeable. For He that shall bring this to pass is Himself without variableness, or shadow of turning; and they who shall be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body shall be so likewise; age shall roll on after age in rapid succession, and signs of decay shall not make their appearance on these glorified bodies, but they shall ever be the same, and their years shall not fail. (*E. Jones.*) *Awaiting God's time to die* :—In their moments of despair, even good men have desired to be in the grave, but like Job, when they have returned to calmness and confidence in God, each has said, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." No good man will ever deliberately wish merely to die. The true servants of God will never dishonour Him by proclaiming that the task He set them is so intolerable that it were better to be as the clods of the valley than engaged in its performance. The true soldiers of Christ, who have been placed by Him in positions of especial difficulty, danger or hardship, that they may peculiarly distinguish themselves, and win for Him peculiar glory, will never long merely for the ending of the campaign. Victory, not ease, will be the supreme object of their desire. They will hate the wish to desert their post, just as they would

actually to desert. Until the captain of their salvation summons them to Himself, they will cheerfully endure hardships. Even those of Christ's followers to whom life seems one prolonged furnace of affliction, will never forget that God placed them in it, and that His eye is upon them as a refiner and purifier of silver. Not one of them would wish to have the fire quenched before their Heavenly Father Himself sees fit to do so. (*R. A. Bertram.*) *Death a great change* :—What a transition it was for Paul—from the slippery deck of a foundering ship to the calm presence of Jesus. What a transition it was for the martyr Latimer—from the stake to the throne. What a transition it was for Robert Hall—from agony to glory. What a transition it was for Richard Baxter—from the dropsy to the "saints' everlasting rest." And what a transition it will be for you—from a world of sorrow to a world of joy. John Hollard, when dying, said, "What means this brightness in the room? Have you lighted the candles?" "No," they said; "we have not lighted any candles." "Then," said he, "welcome heaven"; the light already beaming upon his pillow. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The last change* :—The patriarch may be referring to the resurrection of the body from the state of the dead; or to the change which takes place at death. I. DEATH TO A GOOD MAN IS A CHANGE AS TO THE SOUL ITSELF. A man may be called a good man, compared with many around him; yet the difference is vast between what he now is and what he shall become, when death shall transfer his soul from earth to heaven. II. IT WILL ALSO BE A CHANGE IN REGARD TO THE SOUL'S HABITATION. The soul's habitation, in the life that now is, is not very convenient for its enjoyment. An apostle calls this tabernacle "a vile body," vile relatively, vile morally, and vile mortally. III. DEATH TO A GOOD MAN IS A CHANGE AS TO HUMAN INTERCOURSE. The very best of men in this world are imperfect. The Christian has not only here to do with men who are good, though imperfect, but with men who make no profession of religion at all; with the openly profane, and with insincere professors. From all such relations a good man is delivered when his connection with time terminates. His glorified spirit is then introduced into that high and holy place where there are no imperfect or wicked men. Its companions now are the "spirits of just men made perfect." IV. IT IS A CHANGE ALSO AS TO THE GOOD MAN'S INTERCOURSE WITH GOD. In this world such intercourse is often interrupted. To no interruption or privation is the soul of a good man subjected after death. The soul will be prepared to dwell in God's immediate presence. The change indicated takes place at an appointed time. The change which takes place in death is one for which all good men wait. All good men wait for death by preparing for it. (*Thomas Adam.*) *Our life, our work, our change* :—I. First, let us observe THE ASPECT UNDER WHICH JOB REGARDED THIS MORTAL LIFE. He calls it an "appointed time," or, as the Hebrew has it, "a warfare." 1. Observe that Job styles our life a time. Blessed be God, that this present state is not an eternity! What though its conflicts may seem long, they must have an end. The winter may drag its weary length along, but the spring is hard upon its heels. Let us then, my brethren, judge immortal judgment; let us not weigh our troubles in the ill-adjusted scales of this poor human life, but let us use the shekel of eternity. 2. Job also calls our life an "appointed" time. Ye know who appointed your days. You did not appoint them for yourself, and therefore you can have no regrets about the appointment. Neither did Satan appoint it, for the keys of hell and of death do not hang at his girdle. To the Almighty God belong the issues from death. 3. You will observe also that Job very wisely speaks of the "days" of our appointed time. It is a prudent thing to forbear the burden of life as a whole, and learn to bear it in the parcels into which Providence has divided it. I must not fail to remind you of the Hebrew: "All the days of my warfare will I wait." Life is indeed a "warfare"; and just as a man enlists in our army for a term of years, and then his service runs out, and he is free, so every believer is enlisted in the service of life, to serve God till his enlistment is over, and we sleep in death. Taking these thoughts together as Job's view of mortal life, what then? Why, it is but once, as we have already said—we shall serve our God on earth in striving after His glory but once. Let us carry out the engagements of our enlistment honourably. There are no battles to be fought, and no victories to be won in heaven. II. JOB'S VIEW OF OUR WORK while on earth is that we are to wait. "All the days of my appointed time will I wait." The word "wait" is very full of teaching. 1. In the first place, the Christian life should be one of waiting; that is, setting loose by all earthly things. 2. A second meaning of the text,

however, is this: we must wait expecting to be gone—expecting daily and hourly to be summoned by our Lord. The proper and healthy estate of a Christian is to be anticipating the hour of his departure as near at hand. 3. Waiting means enduring with patience. 4. Serving is also another kind of waiting. He would not be a servant sometimes, and then skulk home in idleness at another season, as if his term of service were ended. 5. Moreover, to close this aspect of Christian life, we should be desirous to be called home. III. Now comes JOB'S ESTIMATE OF THE FUTURE. It is expressed in this word, "Till my change come." 1. Let it be observed that, in a certain sense, death and resurrection are not a change to a Christian: they are not a change as to his identity. The same man who lives here will live for ever. There will be no difference in the Christian's object in life when he gets to heaven. He lives to serve God here: he will live for the same end and aim there. And the Christian will not experience a very great change as to his companions. Here on earth the excellent of the earth are all his delight; Christ Jesus, his Elder Brother, abides with him; the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, is resident within him; he communes with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. 2. To the Christian it will be a change of place. 3. Specially will it be a change to the Christian as to that which will be within him. No body of this death to hamper him; no infirmities to cramp him; no wandering thoughts to disturb his devotion; no birds to come down upon the sacrifice, needing to be driven away. Right well, good patriarch, didst thou use the term, for it is the greatest of all changes. Perhaps to you it will be a sudden change. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 15. **Thou shalt call, and I will answer Thee.**—*God calling in death*:—Mr. Moody used to say, "Some day you will read in the papers that Dwight L. Moody is dead. Don't you believe it. When they say I am dead, I shall be more alive than I ever was before." Now, it is very easy to say that when one is well and strong, but the last hours Mr. Moody had on earth he lay looking death right in the eye without a quiver. Early in the morning of his last day on earth, before daylight, his son Will, who was keeping watch beside his bed, heard him whispering something, and leaning over the bed, caught the words, "Earth is receding, heaven is opening, God is calling!" Will was disturbed, and called the other members of the family into the room. "No, no, father," he said; "not so bad as that." His father opened his eyes, and, seeing the family gathered round, said, "I have been within the gates. I have seen the children's faces"—those of his two grandchildren who had died during the summer and spring. In a little while he sank into unconsciousness again, but again became conscious, and opened his eyes and said, "Is this death? This is not bad. There is no valley. This is bliss!—this is sweet!—this is glorious!" Then his daughter, with breaking heart, said, "Father, don't leave us!" "Oh," he replied, "Emma, I am not going to throw my life away. If God wants me to live, I will live; but if God is calling me, I must up and off!" A little while later, someone tried to arouse him; but he said faintly, "God is calling me; don't call me back. This is my Coronation Day; I have long looked for it!" And so he went up for his coronation! (*A. R. Torrey, D.D.*) **Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands.**—*Confidence in the Creator*:—The Book of Job seems to me the most daring of poems; from a position of the most vantageless realism it assaults the very citadel of the ideal. Job is the instance-type of humanity in the depths of its misery. Seated in the heart of a leaden despair Job cries aloud to the might unseen, scarce known, which yet he regards as the God of his life. But no more than that of a slave is his cry. Before the Judge he asserts his innocence, and will not grovel—knowing, indeed, that to bear himself so would be to insult the holy. He feels he has not deserved such suffering, and will neither tell nor listen to lies for God. Prometheus is more stoutly patient than Job. Prometheus has to do with a tyrant whom he despises. Job is the more troubled, because it is He who is at the head and the heart, who is the beginning and the end of things, that has laid His hand upon him. He cannot, will not, believe Him a tyrant. He dares not think God unjust; but not, therefore, can he allow that he has done anything to merit the treatment he is receiving at His hands. Hence is he of necessity in profoundest perplexity, for how can the two things be reconciled? The thought has not yet come to him, that that which it would be unfair to lay upon him as punishment, may yet be laid upon him as a favour. Had Job been Calvinist

or Lutheran the Book of Job would have been very different. His perplexity would then have been—how God, being just, could require of a man more than he could do, and punish him as if his sin were that of a perfect being, who chose to do the evil of which he knew all the enormity. From a soul whose very consciousness is contradiction, we must not look for logic; misery is rarely logical; it is itself a discord. Feeling as if God had wronged him, Job yearns for the sight of God, strains into His presence, longs to stand face to face with Him. He would confront the One. Look closer at Job's way of thinking and speaking about God, and directly to God. Such words are pleasing in the ear of the Father of spirits. He is not a God to accept the flattery which declares Him above obligation to His creatures. Job is confident of receiving justice. God speaks not a word of rebuke to Job for the freedom of his speech. The grandeur of the poem is that Job pleads his cause with God against all the remonstrance of religious authority, recognising no one but God, and justified therein. And the grandest of all is this, that he implies, if he does not actually say, that God owes something to His creature. This is the beginning of the greatest discovery of all—that God owes Himself to the creature He has made in His image, for so He has made him incapable of living without Him. It is not easy at first to see wherein God gives Job any answer. I cannot find that He offers him the least explanation of why He has so afflicted him. He justifies him in his words. The answers are addressed to Job himself, not to his intellect; to the revealing, God-like imagination in the man, and to no logical faculty whatever. The argument implied, not expressed, in the poems seems to be this—that Job, seeing God so far before him in power, and His works so far beyond his understanding, ought to have reasoned that He who could work so grandly beyond his understanding, must certainly use wisdom in things that touched him nearer, though they came no nearer his understanding. The true child, the righteous man, will trust absolutely, against all appearances, the God who has created in him the love of righteousness. God does not tell Job why He had afflicted him; He rouses his child-heart to trust. (*George Macdonald, D.D.*) *The believer's confidence*:—It would seem as if in using these words Job had reference to the resurrection of the body. We may regard them, in a more general way, as an assertion of the patriarch's confidence in God; of his assurance that he should be kept unto everlasting life. Believers are invariably witnesses that the more cause a man has to be full of hope and of confidence, the more diligent will he be in the use of appointed means of grace. The privileges of true religion have no tendency to the generating presumption. The man who has the strongest scriptural warrant for feeling sure of heaven is always the man who is striving most earnestly for the attainment of heaven. Never venture to appropriate to yourselves the rich assurances which are found in the Bible, unless you have good reason to believe that you are growing in hatred of sin, and in strivings after holiness. Fear not to take to yourselves all the promises made by God to His Church, so long as it is your honest desire, and your hearty endeavour, to become more conformed to the image of your Saviour. 1. The language of confidence. "Thou wilt call, and I will answer thee." Remember in how many ways God calls. Job's words indicate great confidence of final salvation. We should greatly rejoice to know that you had all been able to cast away doubt and suspicion, and to feel yourselves "begotten again to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled." But we do dread your resting your assurance on insufficient grounds. These are two great features of genuine piety—the not being content with present acquirements, and the resting for the future on the assistances of God. 2. Job strengthens himself in the persuasion that God will have "a desire to the work of His hands." Amid all the reasons which Job might have urged why God should watch over him, he selects that of his being the work of God's hands. There is, however, a second creation more marvellous, more indicative of Divine love, than the first; and on this, probably, it was that Job's thoughts were turned. The human soul was formed originally in the image of God, but lost that image through the transgression of Adam. So marvellous is its restoration, so far beyond all power but the Divine, that it is spoken of as actually a new creation, when reimpressed with the forfeited features. (*Henry Melvill, B.D.*) *The rights of creation*:—Such a chapter as this does not stand by any means alone in the Old Testament. Nature then, as now, lent but ugly dreams to the inquirer after immortality. For one hint from nature, which tells in favour of immortality, you may find a hundred from the same quarter which tell against it. In his

search for a solid ground upon which to build some hope, however scanty, for the unknown future beyond death, the writer is driven at last to the simplest and most solid ground of all—the fact of creation, and what is involved in creation. Every chapter of his work is pervaded with the feeling of mystery, vastness, and awe, whenever he speaks of God. But he holds firmly by his faith in a Creator, whose creature—made in His likeness—he himself is. His argument is this—"The creature simply as a creature, by virtue of creation, has a claim upon the Creator, which the Creator will be the first to avow." It may, perhaps, sound bold to speak thus of creation, as giving a title to the Creator's care. If the Creator were an unfaithful, an unrighteous Creator, there would indeed be no limit to the power of dealing with, and disposing of His creatures. It is our happiness to know that might is not right with Him; that the Almighty is also the All-righteous and the All-merciful. Every created thing or person has certain rights and claims as towards the Creator. These rights and claims are determined by his or its capacities. Man is capable of knowing and doing his Creator's will. He who is capable of fellowship with God will never be suffered by the Creator to perish in death. We are in the hands of a Father, a Creator, who knows what He would do with us, knows what we are capable of, knows what He created us for; and who assuredly will not leave us until He hath done that which He hath spoken to us of. Job's confidence in God was justified to the uttermost. (*D. J. Vaughan, M.A.*)

Ver. 16. **For Thou numberest my steps.**—*God compassing our paths*:—Some people think this idea is oppressive. They shrink from it. It contracts their being, and depresses their energy. You have seen a ripe apple that has been kept in the storeroom all the winter until all its juices have evaporated, and its skin becomes dry and wrinkled, and it has shrunk in size to a fourth of what it was. Take that withered, wizened apple, and place it under the bell-glass of an air-pump, and as you withdraw the air that presses on it from the outside, the air within itself causes it to expand, smooths out its wrinkles, and makes it once more the plump, fresh apple it was when newly plucked. A similar effect, they suppose, would be produced upon their being were the oppressive compassing by God removed. They would move more easily under their own indulgent eye than they could under the strict eye of God's righteousness. But this is a vain expectation. A heavier burden would press upon them than the compassing of their path by God. The apple swells mechanically only with its own internal gas, and not with the fresh juices of life. It is empty and without substance. And so is the life from which the conscious pressure of God upon it is removed. To be without God in the world is to be without hope. There may be the appearance of living, but the soul is dead. (*Hugh Macmillan, D.D.*)

Ver. 17. **My transgression is sealed up in a bag.**—*Memory*:—The figure here employed to denote the certainty of a future investigation into all the secret transactions of a man's life is drawn from the peculiar manner in which payments, for convenience sake, were sometimes made by Oriental merchants. A certain sum of money, or weight of gold, having been securely sown up in a bag, the seal of the banker was impressed upon it, and it passed current from hand to hand without being opened to be counted or weighed for the purpose of ascertaining the exact sum to be contained in it when it was first put into circulation. This custom is used to teach the doctrine of a day of account with every individual soul. The bag must at last be unsealed and unsewn, that the contents hidden from the eye may be made manifest. Look upon yourselves during the time of your trial upon earth, as though the secrets of your life, the life of your soul before God, all the busy multifarious emotions of your existence, were "sealed up," and, as it were, "sewn" within yourself, as money in the bag; preserved there by the memory, and by the memory also to be produced, at a set time, for inspection and judgment. The memory is a wonderful faculty of the mind; where consciousness exists, there also the memory; it dies not with the body, but is active in the soul when emancipated from the flesh. Its instrument is the brain. The memory, which is the power of retaining what we have once grasped, and of recalling it at pleasure, makes the brain the seat of its operations, its busy workshop, its mechanical centre, where it sets all the wheels and intricate motions of the machinery of the intellect. Though our several faculties act upon the physical system, yet they reside essentially in

the soul. If this be the relation between matter and spirit, between body and soul, we can understand their joint action, while we are able to distinguish the agent from the instrument, the power from the machine, the soul from the body. Take an individual, and analyse the working of his memory upon his spiritual history. (*G. Roberts.*) **The waters wear the stones.**—*Silent action of rain*:—The most conspicuous agent employed (in the disintegration of rocks) is rain. Rain is not chemically pure, but always contains some proportion of oxygen and carbonic acid absorbed from the atmosphere; and after it reaches the ground organic acids are derived by it from the decaying vegetable and animal matter with which soils are more or less impregnated. Armed with such chemical agents, it attacks the various minerals of which rocks are composed, and thus, sooner or later, these minerals break up. . . . In all regions where rain falls the result of this chemical action is conspicuous; soluble rocks are everywhere dissolving, while partially soluble rocks are becoming rotten and disintegrated. In limestone areas it can be shown that sometimes hundreds of feet of rock have thus been gradually and silently removed from the surface of the land. And the great depth now and again attained by rotted rock testifies likewise to the destructive action of rain-water percolating from the surface. (*Dr. Geikie's "Earth Sculpture."*)

Vers. 18, 19. **And surely the mountain falling cometh to nought.**—*The law of nature and of life*:—If the patriarch of Uz could listen to all the criticism of his commentators, his patience would be more severely tried than by his contemporaries. 1. Job intentionally uttered a solemn truth. He speaks of the changes to which human life is subjected—great and sudden revolutions and changes—and the changes that result from the slow and silent operation of trivial causes. (1) Many things in life are fixed and stable as the mountains, but are nevertheless suddenly removed. The only abiding and permanent objects are spiritual. (2) Many things in life receive their impress and derive their character from the operation of trivial causes. There is a power in the slow, uniform operation of little things. The present is the result of the past. (3) Many things in life that are most precious, and singularly frail, are nevertheless swept away by some flood. Changes are constantly taking place before our eyes. 2. Job unconsciously stated a great fact. There are laws by which all changes and convulsions in nature are regulated. There is in nature a provision against the waste which appears to follow change. The things which grow out of the dust owe their beauty or fruitfulness to the soil, which is constantly being renewed. There is no soil so miraculously prolific as sorrow,—the seed sown there will bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Life seems to have its birth in death. There is one great change produced directly by Divine agency. It is indispensable that we should experience this. 3. Our days have a definite end. If life is so brief, make the most of it, use all its opportunities, seek to be prepared for death. (*H. J. Bevis.*)

Ver. 20. **Thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away.**—*Man's mittimus*:—I. THE CHANGE. The human countenance an instructive book. All its changes are not of God's working, or ordering. The sharp lines of greed, the curves of pride, the flush of sensuality, &c. These are the brands of sin and Satan; sin ploughs furrows as well as time. 1. There is the change made by time. From infancy to age the face is continually undergoing alteration. Smoothness gives place to wrinkles; freshness to the worn, wan hue of age. The mirror is a solemn teacher. 2. The change made by care. Job's friends did not recognise him; sorrow dims the eye; anxiety makes its woe-mark on features. Nehemiah before the king. Hezekiah. 3. The change by sickness. Pain prints the proofs of its presence there; in sunken eye and snowy pallor, sickness sets its seal upon the face. 4. The change by death. Death is a sculptor who carves his own image in the white marble of the dying frame. 5. The change by grace. The influence of religion on the countenance. The surface of a lake, when overspread with clouds or reflecting the shining of the sun. Who does not know some dear and saintly face, with little of earth and much of heaven in it, waiting at the Beautiful Gate until God opens the temple door for them, and they pass into the glory that excelleth? Stephen's face before the Jewish council. 6. The change in glory. Resurrection glory. "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." But the change of grace, and the change in glory

are only consequent on a "change of heart." II. THE SENDING. 1. Who sends him? "Thou." In God's hands are the issues of life. When He says, "Go," none may resist His mandate. Man's folly in using life, ay, wasting it as though it were his own, and at his own disposal. "O spare me, that I may recover strength," &c. 2. From what is he sent? From probation. Now is the day of salvation, only now. From possessions. We brought nothing into the world, and it is certain, &c. From privileges. Prayer, Word, Sanctuary, Sabbaths, &c. From pleasures. Rejoice, O young man, in the days, &c. From mercies. That flower does not bloom beyond the river. Let the Christian remember also that he is sent from—(1) Temptation. (2) Sorrow. (3) Sin. (4) Death. 3. Whither is he sent? "He giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" (1) To the grave. (2) To judgment. (3) To heaven. To hell. (4) To a fixed and final destiny. In order to answer this question we must inquire, How he died? For "them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." 4. Where is he sent? "If the goodman of the house had known," &c. (*J. Jackson Wray.*)

Ver. 22. **But his flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul within him shall mourn.**—*Physical sensation after death:*—Was it not the opinion of the ancient Jews that the soul retained somewhat of the sensation of the flesh until the body had entirely dissolved? It would not be strange if such were the fact, considering the proximity of the Jews to the Egyptians; since the Egyptians held the notion that the continuance of the soul's existence depended upon the preservation of the bodily organism, a notion which led to the embalming and secure burial of the corpse. Tacitus distinctly ascribes this notion to the Jews as its originators. There are also some Old Testament texts which at first glance seem to convey such a belief, *e.g.*, verse 22, speaking of a man as dead. it adds, "But his flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul within him shall mourn"; and Isaiah lxvi. 24, "They shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against Me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched." Dillman and others regard these texts as proving that the Jews held to the doctrine of physical consciousness in the grave. Delitzsch regards the pain of the soul as merely sentimental, "The process of the corruption of the body casts painful reflections into the departed soul." Professor Davidson admits thus much to have been the Jewish notion. "There are two ideas expressed—(1) That the body in the grave, being that of a still existing person, feels the gnawing and the wasting of corruption, and that the soul in sheol leads a mournful and dreary existence; and (2) That these elements of the person, though separated, still belong to the person." Professor Evans says, "By poetic personification the mouldering flesh is here represented as sharing the aching discontent, the lingering misery of the imprisoned soul." Similarly Dr. Barnes, "It is by the imagination that pain is here attributed to the dead body." Professor Löchler inclines to the opinion that the Jews believed "that man carries with him to sheol a certain corporeality (a certain residue, kernel, or some reflex of the earthly body)." These passages, taken in view of the after revelation through Christ, may serve as illustration of how He delivered those "who all their lifetime were in bondage through fear of death," as well as of the growing dawn-light of the historic Scriptures. (*Homiletic Monthly.*)

CHAPTER XV.

VER. 4. **Thou restrainest prayer before God.**—*The hindrances to spiritual prayer:*—All the motives by which the heart of man can be influenced, combine to urge upon him the great duty of prayer. Whence, then, arises the guilty indifference to spiritual prayer, so prevalent among us? Why will men, whose only hope depends upon the undeserved compassion of their Heavenly Father, close up, as it were, by their own apathy and unbelief, the exhaustless fountain from whence it longs to flow, and restrain prayer before God? Examine some of the more common hindrances to comfort and success in the exercise of prayer; and inquire why so little growth in grace is derived from this essential element of the Christian life. Prayer is restrained before God—I. WHEN HE IS APPROACHED IN A PROUD,

UNHUMBLED STATE OF HEART. Such was the sin of Job when the Tomanite reproved him. Can an unrestrained communion be held with God by one whose spirit has not yet been subdued by the knowledge of his sin, the conviction of his danger, the shame of his ingratitude? If prayer be anything, it is the utterance of one self-condemned, to the Being by whom he was made, the Judge by whose verdict he must abide, the Redeemer through whose mercy he may be saved. If prayer have any special requisites, contrition must be its very essence. Without a proper sense of the evil predominating within us, there can be no holy freedom in prayer; no aspiration of the soul towards heaven; no unrestrained utterance of the Psalmist's cry, "Make me a clean heart, O God!" An unhumbled mind and an unrestrained prayer are palpable contradictions. II. WHEN THE SUPPLIANT IS ENSLAVED BY THE LOVE AND INDULGENCE OF ANY SIN. Augustine relates of himself, that although he dared not omit the duty of prayer, but, with his lips constantly implored deliverance from the power and love of his besetting sins, they had so strongly entwined themselves around his heart, that every petition was accompanied with some silent aspiration of the soul, for a little longer delay amidst the unhallowed sources of his past gratifications. Judge, then, whether Augustine in this state did not restrain prayer before God. Forbidden acts, or the indulgence of unblest desires, overrule and hinder the transgressor's prayer. Let me warn you also against a devotion to the pursuits, pleasures, and attractions of the world. The spirit thus entangled and ensnared, may indeed undertake the employment; but instead of being occupied by the majesty of Jehovah, the love of Immanuel, and the momentous aspect of eternal things, it will be fluttering abroad among the passing and perishing vanities in which it seeks its mean and grovelling good. Can he whose attention is mainly confined to the acquisition of temporal good, expand his heart in prayer for mercies unseen and spiritual? God comes to us in His Gospel, exhibiting on the one hand His greatness and His goodness, and on the other, exposing the emptiness of time and sense. III. WHEN WE PRAY WITHOUT FERVENCY. What is the object of supplication? Is it not that we may share the privileges of the family of heaven; serving God with delight and love among His people below; and becoming meet to serve Him day and night in His temple above, among the spirits of the just made perfect? Are these, then, mercies which should be sought in the mere language of prayer, unanimated by its spirit and its fervency? The prayer which God will hear and bless, demands some touch of the spirit manifested by the believing Syrophenician woman. If this fervour of prayer be wanting, the deficiency originates in an evil heart of unbelief which departs from the living God. IV. WHEN WE NEGLECT TO PRAY FREQUENTLY. Our wants are continually recurring; but only the fulness of infinite mercy can supply them. We are, in fact, as absolutely dependent upon the daily mercies of our God, as were the Israelites upon the manna which fell every morning around their tents. Constant prayer, therefore, must be necessary. There is continual need of prayer for growth in grace. V. WHEN WE REGARD PRAYER RATHER AS A BURDENSOME DUTY THAN A DELIGHTFUL PRIVILEGE. A wondrous provision has been made to qualify guilty and polluted creatures for approaching the God of all purity and holiness. "We who some time were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." "Through Him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father." The Christian draws nigh with the united offering of prayer and thanksgiving. Do we then not restrain prayer, when, instead of addressing ourselves to it with glad hearts and holy boldness, we are led unwillingly to the duty, and urged only by the gloomy demands of a spirit of bondage? Until converse with God in prayer be the life and pleasure of the soul, the balm that best allays its pains, the consolation that best speaks peace and silence to its sorrows, the cordial that revives its fainting affection, there can be no unreservedness of heart in this great duty. We should open our whole hearts to the eye of His mercy; tell Him of every wish; relate every sorrow; entreat Him to sympathise in every suffering, and feel assured that He will minister to every want. VI. WHEN IT IS CONFINED TO REQUESTS FOR MERCIES OF LESSER CONCERN AND MOMENT. We have immortal spirits, no less than perishable bodies. We are probationers for heaven. We have sinful souls which must be pardoned; we have carnal minds, which must be renewed. The spirit is more valuable than the body; eternity more momentous than time. Is not prayer then restrained, when, instead of employing it to seek the things which belong to our peace, we desire this world's good with absorbing earnestness; and the better part, which cannot be taken away, feebly, if at all? Every mercy, we may be sure, waits upon the prayers

of an open heart. (*R. P. Buddicom, M.A.*) *Restraining prayer*:—This is part of the charge brought by Eliphaz against Job. I address myself to the true people of God, who understand the sacred art of prayer, and are prevalent therein; but who, to their own sorrow and shame, must confess that they have restrained prayer. We often restrain prayer in the fewness of the occasions that we set apart for supplication. We constantly restrain prayer by not having our hearts in a proper state when we come to its exercise. We rush into prayer too often. We should, before prayer, meditate upon Him to whom it is to be addressed; upon the way through which my prayer is offered. Ought I not, before prayer, to be duly conscious of my many sins? If we add meditation upon what our needs are, how much better should we pray! How well if, before prayer, we would meditate upon the past with regard to all the mercies we have had during the day. What courage that would give us to ask for more! It is not to be denied, by a man who is conscious of his own error, that in the duty of prayer itself we are too often straitened in our own bowels, and do restrain prayer. This is true of prayer as invocation; as confession; as petition; and as thanksgiving. And lastly, it is very clear that, in many of our daily actions, we do that which necessitates restrained prayer. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *On formality and remissness in prayer*:—This is one of the many censures that Job's friends passed upon him. He could not be convicted of the fact, without being convicted of sin. Prayer is most positively enjoined, as a primary duty of religion; a duty strictly in itself, as the proper manner of acknowledging the supremacy of God and our dependence. Prayer cannot be discountenanced on any principle which would not repress and condemn all earnest religious desires. Would it not be absurd to indulge these desires, if it be absurd to express them? And worse than absurd, for what are they less than impulses to control the Divine determinations and conduct? For these desires will absolutely ascend toward Him. Again, it is the grand object to augment these desires. Then here too is evidence in favour of prayer. For it must operate to make them more strong, more vivid, more solemn, more prolonged, and more definite as to their objects. Forming them into expressions to God will concentrate the soul in them, and upon these objects. As to the objection that we cannot alter the Divine determinations; it may well be supposed that it is according to the Divine determinations that good things shall not be given to those that will not petition for them; that there shall be this expression of dependence and acknowledgment of the Divine supremacy. Now for the manner in which men avail themselves of this most sublime circumstance in their condition. We might naturally have expected an universal prevalence of a devotional spirit. Alas! there are millions of the civilised portion of mankind that practise no worship, no prayer at all, in any manner; they are entirely "without God in the world." To say of such an one, "Thou restrainest prayer," is pronouncing on him an awful charge, is predicting an awful doom. We wish, however, to make a few admonitory observations on the great defectiveness of prayer in those who do feel its importance, and are not wholly strangers to its genuine exercise. How much of this exercise, in its genuine quality, has there been in the course of our life habitually? Is there a very frequent, or even a prevailing reluctance to it, so that the chief feeling regarding it is but a haunting sense of duty and of guilt in the neglect? This were a serious cause for alarm, lest all be wrong within. Is it in the course of our days left to uncertainties whether the exercise shall be attended to or not? Is there a habit of letting come first to be attended to any inferior thing that may offer itself? When this great duty is set aside for an indefinite time, the disposition lessens at every step, and perhaps the conscience too. Or, in the interval appropriate to this exercise, a man may defer it till very near what he knows must be the end of the allowed time. Again, an inconvenient situation for devotional exercise will often be one of the real evils of life. Sometimes the exercise is made very brief from real, unqualified want of interest. Or prayer is delayed from a sense of recent guilt. The charge in the text falls upon the state of feeling which forgets to recognise the value of prayer as an instrument in the transactions of life. And it falls, too, on the indulgence of cares, anxieties, and griefs, with little recourse to this great expedient. (*John Foster.*) *Restraining prayer*:—I. THE EMPLOYMENT, THE IMPORTANCE OF WHICH IS ASSUMED. The employment of prayer. The end and object of all prayer is God. God, who is the only true object of prayer, has rendered it a matter of positive and universal duty. The obligation cannot but be reasonably and properly inferred from those relations which are revealed as essentially existing between man and God. II. THE

NATURE OF THE HABIT, THE INDULGENCE OF WHICH IS CHARGED. Instead of submitting to and absolutely obeying the injunctions which God has imposed upon thee, thou art guilty of holding back and preventing the exercise of supplication. Some of the modes in which men are guilty of restraining prayer before God. 1. He restrains prayer who altogether omits it. 2. Who engages but seldom in it. 3. Who excludes from his supplications the matters which are properly the objects of prayer. 4. Who does not cherish the spirit of importunity in prayer. III. THE EVILS, THE INFLICTION OF WHICH IS THREATENED. 1. Restraining prayer prevents the communication of spiritual blessings. 2. It exposes positively to the judicial wrath of God. (*James Parsons.*) *Restraining prayer*:—This text helps us to put our finger on the cause of a great deal that is amiss in all of us. Here is what is wrong, "Thou restrainest prayer before God." If you are restraining prayer, that is, neglecting prayer, pushing it into a corner, and making it give way to everything else,—offering it formally and heartlessly, and with no real earnestness and purpose, praying as if you were sure your prayer would go all for nothing,—then it is no wonder if you are downhearted and anxious; and if grace is languishing and dying in you, and you growing, in spite of all your religious profession, just as worldly as the most worldly of the men and women round you. There can be no doubt at all that the neglect of prayer is a sadly common sin. It is likewise a most extraordinary folly. There are people who restrain prayer, who do not pray at all, because they believe that prayer will do them no good, that prayer is of no use. But we believe in prayer. We believe in the duty of it; we believe in the efficacy of it. It is not for any expressed erroneous opinion that professing Christians restrain prayer. It is through carelessness; lack of interest in it; vague dislike to close communion with God; lack of vital faith, the faith of the heart as well as head. That is what is wrong; want of sense of the reality of prayer; dislike to go and be face to face alone with God. It is just when we feel least inclined to pray, that we need to pray the most earnestly. Be sure of this, that at the root of all our failures, our errors, our follies, our hasty words, our wrong deeds, our weak faith, our cold devotion, our decreasing grace, there is the neglect of prayer. If our prayers were real; if they were hearty, humble, and frequent, then how the evil that is in us would sink down abashed; then how everything holy and happy in us would grow and flourish! (*A. K. H. Boyd, D.D.*) *Restraining prayer before God*:— When the fear of God is cast off, the first and fundamental principle of personal religion is removed; and when prayer before God is restrained, it is an evidence that this first and fundamental principle is either wanting altogether, or for a time suspended in its exercise. To "cast off fear" is to live "without God in the world"; and to restrain prayer before God is a sure indication that this godless, graceless life, is already begun in the soul, and will speedily manifest itself in the character and conduct. I. WHAT IS PRAYER BEFORE GOD? 1. It has God for its object. To each of the persons of the Godhead prayer may and should be made. To pray unto any of the host of heaven, or any mere creature whatever, is both a senseless and a sinful exercise. Because none of them can hear or answer our prayers. They know not the heart. They cannot be everywhere present. They cannot answer. To pray to any creature is sinful, because giving to the creature the glory which belongs exclusively to the Creator. To hear, accept, and answer prayer, is the peculiar prerogative of the only "living and true God." By this He is distinguished from the "gods many and lords many" of the heathen. 2. It has Christ for its only medium. "In whom we have boldness, and access with confidence, by the faith of Him." He is our friend at the court of heaven. 3. It has the Bible for its rule and reason. For its rule to direct us. It is the reason for enforcing prayer. 4. It has the heart for its seat. It does not consist in eloquence, in fluency of speech, in animal excitement, in bodily attitudes, or in outward forms. Words may be necessary to prayer, even in secret, for we think in words; but words are not of the nature and essence of prayer. There may be prayer without utterance or expression; but there can be no prayer without the outgoing of the heart, and the offering up of the desires unto God. II. WHAT IS IT TO RESTRAIN PRAYER BEFORE GOD? This fault does not apply to the prayerless. They who never pray to God at all, cannot be charged with restraining prayer before Him. 1. Prayer may be restrained as to times. Most people pray to God sometimes. It is a great privilege that we may pray to God at all times. The pressure of business and the want of time, form the usual excuse for infrequency in prayer. But is it not a duty to redeem time for this very purpose? 2. As to persons. For whom ought we to pray?

Some are as selfish in their prayers as they are bigoted in their creed, and niggardly in their purse. Paul says, "I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men." 3. As to formal prayer. The attitude of prayer is assumed, the language of prayer is employed, and the forms of prayer are observed; but the spirit of prayer, which gives it life and energy and efficacy, is wanting. Now look at prayer in its power. Three attributes are requisite to make prayer of much avail with God; faith, importunity, and perseverance. III. WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF RESTRAINING PRAYER BEFORE GOD? These are just like the spirit and habit from which they flow,—evil, only evil, and that continually, to individuals, to families, and to communities, civil and sacred. The evils may be comprised and expressed in two particulars,—the prevention of Divinely promised blessings, and exposure to Divine judgments. Let these considerations be—(1) A warning to the prayerless, and (2) A monitor to the prayerful. (*George Robson.*) "*You don't pray*":—This instructive anecdote relating to President Finney is characteristic:—A brother who had fallen into darkness and discouragement, was staying at the same house with Dr. Finney over night. He was lamenting his condition, and Dr. F., after listening to his narrative, turned to him with his peculiar earnest look, and with a voice that sent a thrill through his soul, said, "You don't pray! that is what's the matter with you. Pray—pray four times as much as ever you did in your life, and you will come out." He immediately went down to the parlour, and taking the Bible he made a serious business of it, stirring up his soul to seek God as did Daniel, and thus he spent the night. It was not in vain. As the morning dawned he felt the light of the Sun of Righteousness shine upon his soul. His captivity was broken; and ever since he has felt that the greatest difficulty in the way of men being emancipated from their bondage is that they "don't pray." The bonds cannot be broken by finite strength. We must take our case to Him who is mighty to save. Our eyes are blinded to Christ the Deliverer. He came to preach deliverance to the captive, to break the power of habit; and herein is the rising of a great hope for us. (*Christian Age.*) *Prayer the barometer of the spiritual state*:—Among the wonders which science has achieved, it has succeeded in bringing things which are invisible, and impalpable to our sense, within the reach of our most accurate observations. Thus the barometer makes us acquainted with the actual state of the atmosphere. It takes cognisance of the slightest variation, and every change is pointed out by its elevation or depression, so that we are accurately acquainted with the actual state of the air, and at any given time. In like manner the Christian has within him an index by which he may take cognisance and by which he may measure the elevation and degrees of his spirituality—it is the spirit of inward devotion. However difficult it may seem to be to pronounce on the invisibilities of our spirituality, yet there is a barometer to determine the elevation or depression of the spiritual principle. It marks the changes of the soul in its aspect towards God. As the spirit of prayer mounts up, there is true spiritual elevation, and as it is restrained, and falls low, there is a depression of the spiritual principle within us. As is the spirit of devotion and communion such is the man. (*H. G. Salter.*) *Restrained prayer of no effect*:—In vain do we charge the gun, if we intend not to let it off. Meditation filleth the heart with heavenly matter, but prayer gives the discharge, and pours it forth upon God, whereby He is overcome to give the Christian his desired relief and succour. The promise is the bill or bond, wherein God makes Himself a debtor to the creature. Now, though it is some comfort to a poor man that hath no money at present to buy bread with, when he reads his bills and bonds, to see that he hath a great sum owing him; yet this will not supply his present wants and buy him bread. No, it is putting his bond in suit must do this. By meditating on the promise thou comest to see there is support in, and deliverance out of, affliction engaged for; but none will come till thou commencest thy suit, and by prayer of faith callest in the debt. God expects to hear from you before you can expect to hear from Him. If thou "restrainest prayer," it is no wonder the mercy promised is retained. Meditation is like the lawyer's studying the case in order to his pleading it at the bar. When, therefore, thou hast viewed the promise, and affected thy heart with the riches of it, then fly thee to the throne of grace and spread it before the Lord. (*W. Gurnall.*)

Ver. 10. **The grey-headed and very aged men.**—*Grey-headed and aged men*:—I. OLD AGE PRESENTS SOCIAL CONTRASTS. Some are rich and some are

poor. Some have all their wants anticipated and supplied; others are beset with difficulties, which seem to thicken with advancing years. II. OLD AGE PRESENTS PHYSICAL CONTRASTS. There is an old man, fresh and ruddy, renewing his youth like the eagle. There is another who answers to Solomon's melancholy description. The cause of this diversity may frequently be found in the past life. "The sins of youth bite sore in age." III. OLD AGE PRESENTS INTELLECTUAL CONTRASTS. In most cases age brings its mental as well as its bodily infirmities. The imagination grows dull, the understanding loses its vigour, the power of originating and sustaining thought fails. There is no intellectual sympathy with living thought, nor power of appreciating it. There are instances of intellectual power remaining unimpaired to the last, so that the latest efforts of their possessors have been among their best. Plato continued writing until he was over eighty. Dryden produced his noblest poem when he was near seventy. We generally speak of old age as pregnant with experience; but "great men are not always wise, neither do the aged understand judgment." Some old people are as foolish as if they had walked through the world with their eyes and ears shut. There are contrasts of temper as well as of intellect. Old age is often fretful. It would seem as if infancy had come again, with all its peevishness, and none of its charms. IV. OLD AGE PRESENTS SPIRITUAL CONTRASTS. The hoary head is sometimes a crown of glory. But there are old sinners as well as old saints. Some men are a terrible curse to society. And a sinful old age is often a miserable old age. This is especially the case where the besetting sin is covetousness. One lesson for all. If you live to be old, your old age will be very much what you are pleased to make it. Your moral and spiritual character rests with yourselves. (*William Walters.*) *The old faith and the new experience*:—The Catholic doctrine has not yet been struck out that will fuse in one commanding law the immemorial convictions of the race and the widening visions of the living soul. The agitation of the Church to-day is caused by the presence within her of Eliphaz and Job—Eliphaz standing for the fathers and their faith, Job passing through a fever-crisis of experience and finding no remedy in the old interpretations. The Church is apt to say, Here is moral disease, sin; we have nothing for that but rebuke and aversion. Is it wonderful that the tried life, conscious of integrity, rises in indignant revolt? The taunt of sin, scepticism, rationalism, or self-will is too ready a weapon, a sword worn always by the side or carried in the hand. (*R. A. Watson.*) *The aged that linger in the world*:—Sometimes the sun seems to hang for a half-hour in the horizon, only just to show how glorious it can be. The day is done, the fervour of the shining is over, and the sun hangs golden—nay redder than gold—in the west, making everything look unspeakably beautiful with its rich effulgence, which it sheds on every side. So God seems to let some people, when their duty in this world is done, hang in the west, that men may look at them and see how beautiful they are. There are some hanging in the west now. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Ver. 11. **Are the consolations of God small with thee?**—*Losing the Divine consolations*:—Some take the words to be an expostulation with Job, showing him the unreasonableness of impatience or despondency, how sad soever were his case, while having the consolations of God to make recourse to. They may also be taken as a reproof to Job for the complaints he had uttered under his sufferings; as if he had not been duly attentive to the Divine consolations. Even the servants of God, under afflictions, are apt to lose the sense of Divine consolations, and to behave as if they were small to them. I. THE CONSOLATIONS HERE SPOKEN OF. Consolation is said to be God's, as He is the father and fountain of it. All true consolation is of and from Him. 1. By way of eminency. No comforts like the comforts of God. 2. By way of sovereign disposal. In and from Him alone consolation is to be had. As none can comfort like Him, so none without or in opposition to Him. Christ, who is called the consolation of Israel, came out from the Father. 3. Note the plenty and variety of the consolations of God. He is the God of all consolation. 4. The consolations of God imply their power and efficiency. No trouble or distress can be too great for Divine consolations to overbalance. II. WHEN MAY THESE CONSOLATIONS BE SAID TO BE SMALL? 1. When God's servants are ready to faint under their affliction. 2. When they grow impatient under affliction, if they are not speedily delivered, or as soon as they desire or expect. 3. When they have recourse to any other method for ease and deliverance from trouble, than that which God

has appointed, of waiting upon Him, and looking to Him. 4. When they are full of anxious disquieting thoughts, what will become of us if our afflictions continue much longer? III. THE SERVANTS OF GOD ARE LIABLE TO SUCH COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVINGS. This proceeds—1. From the grievousness and weight of affliction itself, especially of some sorts of it, under which it is not easy to bear up, or behave ourselves as we ought. 2. From the weakness and imperfection of grace, and the strength of the remains of corruption. Their thoughts are held down to what they suffer, and seem wholly taken up with it. Amidst so much confusion and affliction, if they think of God, they apprehend Him as departed from them, or turned against them. And as their life is bound up in His love, the apprehension of His displeasure wounds them to the heart. IV. THE SINFULNESS OF NOT ATTENDING TO THE CONSOLATIONS OF GOD, OR MAKING LIGHT OF THEM. 1. The consolations of God are great in themselves; so it is a high affront to Him that they should be small with us. The consolations in God, from Him, and with Him, are great. There is no case in which a saint can need consolation, but he is encouraged to look for it from some or other of the perfections of God. He is a God of infinite wisdom, almighty power, infinite goodness and mercy, everywhere present, and this to His people in a way of grace; and unchangeable in His nature and perfections. The consolations from God are in His Son, and by His Spirit, and in His Word. 2. The affront of slighting them may be aggravated, from the unworthiness of the person by whom they are slighted. 3. And further aggravated by the obligations His people are under to Him, for what He has done for them, and bestowed upon them. A servant of God has more matter of comfort and delight in him than reason of sorrow, upon the account of what he suffers. Application—(1) What a wonder is it that there should be such consolations of God. (2) Beware of the guilt of treating such consolations as small. (3) Let God have the glory of any consolation you have had from Him. (4) Under all your troubles, make conscience of applying to your Father in heaven, as the father and fountain of consolation. (5) Wait for comfort in God's time, and presume not to prescribe to Him; but continue to pray and look up. (*D. Wilcox.*) *The consolations of God*:—I. TAKE A BRIEF VIEW OF THE CONSOLATIONS OF GOD. Real comfort, of every kind and in every degree, is from God. 1. There are consolatory providences. There is a special providence which attends the saints. 2. The promises are full of consolation. These unfold the gracious purposes of God, and come between the decree and the execution. 3. There are many experimental consolations, which true believers enjoy. II. WHEN MAY WE BE SAID TO MAKE LIGHT OF THESE CONSOLATIONS, AND TO ACCOUNT THEM SMALL. 1. When we undervalue the blessings of salvation, by placing carnal gratifications on a level with them, or not giving them the preference. 2. These consolations are small to us when we are slothful and negligent in seeking after them. 3. When we do not so estimate the blessings of the Gospel as to find satisfaction in them, in the absence of all created good, we may be said to account them small. III. THE UNREASONABLENESS AND SINFULNESS OF TREATING THE CONSOLATIONS OF THE GOSPEL WITH NEGLECT. 1. These consolations are not small in themselves, and therefore ought not to be lightly esteemed by us. They lay a foundation for peace and comfort under the greatest afflictions. 2. To make light of them is the way to be deprived of them, either in whole or in part. 3. It is to cast contempt upon their Author. Improvement—(1) To those eagerly pursuing riches, honours, and pleasures of the present life in the neglect of their souls. (2) To those dissatisfied with the appointments of Providence. (3) Let all those who, like Hannah, are of a sorrowful spirit, endeavour to recollect their former mercies, as an antidote to present despondency. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *The consolations of God*:—I. THE SUBSTANCE AND CHARACTER OF GOD'S CONSOLATIONS. In their substance they are true, solid, strong, everlasting, and are set in love. The character of these consolations reaches as high a standard as their substance. Consolations, to be effectual, must be appropriate and adequate. For us this character is reflective, contemplative, comparative, and prospective. II. THE METHOD AND MANNER OF THE CONVEYANCE OF GOD'S CONSOLATIONS. God uses the method of an over-ruling providence; of Divine revelation; of the abiding Spirit. The ministry of consolation peculiarly needs a tender heart, an enlightened mind, a gentle hand, and a gracious tongue. There is always need for such a ministry in a world like ours. The manner of God is considerate and concessive and conclusive. III. THE SPIRIT OF RECEPTION GIVEN TO GOD'S CONSOLATIONS. They must be received in the spirit of faith. The spirit of

cheerfulness will be the offspring of this submissive faith. The spirit of prayer will discover that "calamity is but the veiled grace of God." (*W. A. Bevan.*) *The consolations of God* :—1. God is the consoler of man by the very fact of His existence. There is a class of passages in the Bible which appear to rest the peace of the human soul upon the mere fact of the existence of the larger life of God. It is because God *is* that man is bidden to be at peace. I pity the man who has never in his best moods felt his life consoled and comforted in its littleness by the larger lives that he could look at, and know that they too were men, living in the same humanity with himself, only living in it so much more largely. For so much of our need of consolation comes just in this way, from the littleness of our life, its pettishness and weariness insensibly transferring itself to all life, and making us sceptical about anything great or worth living for in life at all; and it is our rescue from this debilitating doubt that is the blessing which falls upon us when, leaving our own insignificance behind, we let our hearts rest with comfort on the mere fact that there are men of great, broad, generous, and healthy lives—men like the greatest that we know. It is not the most active people to whom we owe the most. 2. Then there is the sympathy of this same God. It becomes known to us, not merely that He is, but that He cares for us. Not merely His life, but His love, becomes a fact. The real reason why the sufferer rejoices in the sympathy of God is, that thereby, through love, that dear and perfect nature after which he has struggled before, is made completely known to him. Love is the translating medium. Through God's sympathy he knows God more intensely and more nearly, and so all the consolations of God's being have become more real to him. How do we learn of such a sympathy of God? How can we really come to believe that He knows our individual troubles, and sorrows for them with us? More than from any abstract or scientific arguments about the universality of great laws, I think it is the bigness of the world, the millions upon millions of needy souls, that makes it hard for men to believe in the discriminating care and personal love of God for each. In such perplexity what shall we do? (1) Give free and bold play to those instincts of the heart which believe that the Creator must care for the creatures He has made, and that the only really effective care then must be that which takes each of them into His love. 2. Open the heart to that same conviction, as it has been profoundly impressed upon the hearts of multitudes of men everywhere. 3. Get the great spirit of the Bible. Get possessed of its idea, that there is not one life which the Lifegiver ever loses out of His sight; not one which sins so that He casts it away. 3. God has great truths which He brings to the hearts He wishes to console. He gives them His great truths of consolation. What are those truths? Education, spirituality, and immortality—these seem to be the sum of them. 4. Man wants to feel God doing something on his life, showing His sympathy by some strong act. And so he prays for God to help him, to do something positive for him. All that there is consolatory in God—being, sympathy, truth, power—Christ has set in the clearness and the splendour of His life. If you want consolation you must come to Him. (*Phillips Brooks.*) *The consolations of God* :—I. SOMETIMES THE CHRISTIAN LACKS CONSOLATION FROM THE VERY WEAKNESS AND IMPERFECTION OF HIS NATURE. As perfect holiness would of itself secure perfect bliss, so is there a necessary connection between moral debility and transient and incomplete enjoyment. Nothing could show more plainly that our nature is fallen and corrupt than the simple but startling fact, that even when Divine love had provided a Mediator between God and man, the Holy Spirit must come into the world, not only to apply the remedy, but to make us feel our need of it. II. Another reason why even Christian people are sometimes depressed and desponding is, SEPARATION FROM GODLY FELLOWSHIP. As ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, so does a man his friend by wise and timely counsel. Even St. Paul, hero as he was, had his periods of sadness, while pursuing his weary way, cut off from Christian sympathy; but when he saw the brethren, he thanked God and took courage (Acts xxviii. 15). III. NEGLECT OF THE DIVINELY APPOINTED MEANS OF COMFORT IS ANOTHER VERY COMMON REASON WHY CHRISTIANS ENJOY SO LITTLE OF IT. God will console us in His own way: in devout meditation, in secret prayer, in public worship, in the diligent study of His Holy Word, and in the humble and frequent reception of "the most comfortable sacrament of the body and blood of Christ." When providentially hindered from sharing in the public means of grace, the good Lord will make all due allowance for us. He will be with us in this trouble, and we shall see His power and glory, as we

have seen Him in the sanctuary. IV. ONCE MORE, "THE CONSOLATIONS" OF GOD'S PEOPLE ARE SOMETIMES "SMALL," BECAUSE THEY LIVE IN WILFUL NEGLECT OF HIS HOLY SPIRIT. "Are the consolations of God small with thee?" If so, is it not your own fault? The discovery of the source of the evil is a most important step towards its correction and cure. (*John N. Norton, D.D.*) *Strength impaired*:—I. THE CONSOLATIONS OF GOD ARE SMALL WITH THEE. You have not that satisfactory conviction of things unseen, which once you enjoyed. The light of heaven does not now shine in your hearts. Thou sittest in darkness. Thou hast just enough light to see how great is thy darkness. What is that thing with thee which causes this inward darkness? II. THIS SPIRITUAL BACKSLIDING MAY HAVE CREPT SO SECRETLY OVER THY SOUL, THAT YOU MAY NOT HAVE PERCEIVED IT UNTIL NOW. Inward darkness must be caused by sin. Sin that lies at the root of all declension from God, is neglect of private prayer, or giving way to some inward sin. The consolations of God will be small with us, unless we are constantly stirring up the gift of God which is in us. III. WHAT IS THE CURE FOR THIS? First find out the cause, and this will point to the cure. (*R. A. Suckling, M.A.*) *Unhappy religion*:—That there cannot be an effect without a cause is as true in ethics as in physics, in the kingdom of grace as in the kingdom of nature. However complicated a web that system of facts, truths, doctrines, precepts, promises, duties, exercises, experiences, consciousnesses, which we designate religion, may appear in the estimation of some men, they whose spirit this system has searched through, find it to be a much simpler system than is commonly supposed, and that it is based, for the most part, upon uniform and ascertainable laws. Though its details of operation upon the individual heart and life may vary,—though the path whereby men are led to know God, and to know themselves, by being led to see how thoroughly they are known to God, may not in all instances be the same,—there are certain plain rules which will be found applicable throughout the universe of souls. One of these is, that in the spiritual, as in the natural, life, there is no effect without its cause: that as health and disease have their causes in the natural life, so have prosperity and adversity in the spiritual: that the same laws which would explain the spiritual estate for better or for worse, of those around us, will, if fairly applied, explain ours. As there is "the same God which worketh all in all," His work where it is will assuredly exhibit some feature or other whereby it may be recognised as His. Of this truth Eliphaz seems to have been well persuaded. He beheld the afflictions of Job. He set them down for an effect; and was determined, if possible, to convict the patriarch of some moral obliquity as their cause. His mistake was in assuming that it was his mission to ascertain the cause in this particular case, and in believing that his sagacity had not failed in discovering precisely what it was. There was a cause why Job was thus afflicted; but a cause which may have been, and was, so deeply hidden in the Divine bosom, as at this time to be as inexplicable to the patriarch himself as to his friends. All trouble doth not arise from sin. Much trouble is the consequence of sin; and all sin will, sooner or later, be the source of trouble. . . . Eliphaz is here addressing his spiritual patient in a milder tone. Here he hints that Job's visitation may have been for some sin known only to himself. "*Are* the consolations of God small with thee?" he inquires: "is there any secret thing with thee?" All men are punished secretly for what they do openly; and some are punished openly for what they do secretly. Though the interpretations of the text did not apply to the case of the patriarch, they might have been, as they may be, applicable to the cases of others. How is it that the "consolations of God are small" with any of us? How is it that there is so little religious joy in the world? Mind is so constituted as to be affected by trifles. Little sufficeth to elevate many, and as little to depress. This easiness of being pleased is childhood's happiest attribute. Surely there must be some cause for the cold, joyless, uncomfortable religion, which is so prevalent. All deep thinkers are deep sufferers—not sufferers, perhaps, in body or estate, but in mind. They suffer because they think. The religious man is of necessity a thoughtful one. How is it that religious joy is so little known? There may be seasons when we cannot rejoice; yea, ought not. It may be necessary for us to be for a season in heaviness; to be deprived of the sensible comforts of faith, hope, and charity; being apt to undervalue them till they have fled. We do not, however, look to such cases as these. We are thinking of cases where mourning, heaviness, bondage of spirit, mental gloom, spiritual depression, seem to be chronic complaints; when the soul seldom or

never rejoiceth. There is a constraint, a distrust, a timidity, a suspicion, in our piety. We are afraid, we know not of what. We are ready to say, "Let us be miserable, that we may be religious." Ask then, "Is there any secret thing with us," that will help to explain this enigma of a joyless Christianity? What is possible in this case? 1. Is there any moral obliquity with thee? We do not ask, Have you done wrong; or do you do wrong; but do we cherish any wrong-doing; are we in love with any? Is there any base passion or propensity we will not part with? St. Augustine says, "It is not the act but the habit that justifieth a name," *i.e.*, he is not a sinner who committeth a sin, but who liveth in the commission of it. Is there then any sin indulged or persisted in? 2. Is there aught that is evil in the state of thy affections? Most of us have some pretence to seriousness. 3. Is there any secret misgiving with thee as to the certainty of Divine truth? Did you ever have a doubt if the religion of Christ were true? Did you ever mistrust your persuasions? One doubt does not make an infidel. The habit of doubting may. They who have ended in disbelieving began by doubting, *i.e.*, by giving place to doubt: by making that scruple their own which was at first their enemy's. 4. Is there any secret fear of ourselves? Are we in doubt of our own state before God? Are we afraid to trust our principles? If there be none of these "secret" things, what is to hinder the joys of religion from flooding our souls, or the consolations of God from being great with us? It is related of Dr. Francis Xavier that "he was so cheerful as to be accused of being gay." Why should not we be thus cheerful, gladsome, satisfied? (*Alfred Bowen Evans.*) *The consolations of God and secret things*:—This is a beautiful expression, "the consolations of God." Poor, indeed, are the world's best consolations. But He who has made us does not wish us to rest in these, but gives Himself to us as the consolation. The Gospel is the grand scheme whereby God becomes ours, and we are His; whereby the consolations of God become the consolations of man. If, then, a Christian is a tried man, he ought to be a joyful man—a man abounding in consolation. I. SOME MARKS OF THE STATE OF MIND IN WHICH THE CONSOLATIONS OF GOD ARE SMALL. 1. It is the one great privilege of the true Christian, to know that his sins are forgiven. It is God's gracious will, not only that we should be reconciled to Himself through faith in Christ, but that we should be conscious of our reconciliation. It is just the want of this which we take to be the first mark of all those Christians whose consolations are small. It is possible to live in practical forgetfulness that our sins have been forgiven, and this forgetfulness is always a sign of lukewarmness, and of a very low state of Christian feeling and conduct. 2. Again, Jesus is very near His people, according to His own gracious promise. What singleness of aim in life, what encouragement in duty, what steadfastness in conflict, and what hopefulness in work, this consciousness of the presence of Christ would give us. But, alas! is it not just in this that we grievously fail? How many are the hours of our life—how many are the duties which we perform—how many are the works in which we engage, without thinking of our Saviour's presence and nearness! This may be taken as a second mark. If we live as though Christ were not near, our consolations cannot abound. 3. Not only are great things now given to the true Christian, but still greater things are promised. How pleasant should heaven be to our thoughts. But here also we fail. As our thoughts of heaven, so will our consolation be, little of one, little of the other. II. SOME REASONS FOR THIS STATE. 1. Some besetting sin. "Is there any secret thing with thee?" Many things may be given up, but if only one wrong thought or feeling be retained—one bad habit spared—the injury it will do is incalculable. There is something, it seems a little thing, which we spare. The temper is not always controlled; the tongue is not always bridled; unforgiving feelings are not earnestly uprooted at once. Whatever our besetting sin be, if yielded to but a little, it will darken the heart. It will hinder communion with God. 2. Another secret thing is want of faith. Some look too much into their own hearts, too little to Christ. They know but little of the unsearchable riches which are laid up in Him for our daily use and consolation; hence their hands often hang down, and their knees are feeble. They make little progress. 3. Another secret thing is spiritual sloth. There are many who are very active in body and mind, who, nevertheless, are spiritually very slothful. They are slothful in prayer, and in reading the Bible. Every Christian should seek to attain a fresh and lively spirit, a readiness for communion with God, and for every good work. A spirit of sloth and self-indulgence eats as a canker into the spiritual life, and reduces our consolation

to the smallest possible degree. If this "secret thing" is allowed in our hearts, it is no wonder that our consolations are small. 4. One more secret thing is, guilt upon the conscience. It is essential to a close walk with God, never to allow the guilt of sin to rankle in the conscience, for this is always followed by estrangement of heart from God. Any delay in confessing sin, and casting it upon Jesus, is injurious, and tends to hinder communion with God. The consolations of the Spirit are suspended, and the heart sinks into a low state. Such are some of the secret things which hinder the consolations of God. May God enable us by His grace to guard against them, that our consolations may abound, and our joy may be full. (*George Wagner*). *Why is there no more enjoyment of religion?*—The consolations of God are not small in themselves: "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." They are not small in their design and intended benefit: "light is sown for the righteous and gladness for the upright in heart"—sown as seed that it may bring forth a harvest of joy to the soul. To the experience of the faithful Christian they are not small, for in every age not a few have been able, with the Psalmist, from their own experience to say, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts delight my soul." And yet, alas! it is but too true that many a Christian knows the full value of this joy rather from the want of it than from its possession, having at some time had the taste which leads him to ask, "Where is the blessedness that once I knew?" rather than now having the clear and steady and habitual enjoyment of God and His service, which is the true sunshine and health of the soul. And if we do not find full enjoyment in religion we must look for the reasons in ourselves. I. THE ABSENCE OF BODILY HEALTH. An imperfect, morbid, or deranged state of health impairs our happiness from every source. So intimate is the connection between the soul and body that a weak or depressed state of the former not unfrequently arises from the latter, so that even the faithful Christian may not, at times, find enjoyment in religion because he does not find enjoyment in anything—because the same cloud comes over, at the same time, both his temporal and his spiritual horizon. In such cases the absence of enjoyment is not justly a matter of self-condemnation, and the evil is not a thing to be repented of but regretted, and the remedy is to be sought not in greater fidelity in duty, but rather from the skill of the physician. It is said of the eminent and eminently spiritual Archibald Alexander, that when once asked "if he always enjoyed the full assurance of faith," he replied, "Well—yes—almost always, unless the east wind is blowing." And an eminent divine of wide experience as a pastor has said, that "of twenty persons of hopeful piety who came to him in religious despondency, eighteen had more need of the physician than of the Divine." And more than two hundred years ago, good old Richard Baxter preached and published, in his practical and sharply logical way, on "the cure of melancholy and overmuch sorrow by faith and physic," laying greatest stress on the "physic"; and though his medical prescriptions might excite the smile of the modern physician, yet the treatise, as a whole, is worthy of a place among our religious classics. The truth is, there are not a few troubles that cannot be cured by the Bible and hymn-book or by mere spiritual counsel, that may be cured by rest, and exercise, and diet, and the fresh air of heaven. Another reason why many do not find enjoyment in religion is—II. THAT THEY SEEK IT FOR ITS OWN SAKE, AND AS IN ITSELF AN END, RATHER THAN AS ONLY AN INCIDENTAL RESULT OF FIDELITY IN DUTY. There are not a few who, either thoughtlessly or selfishly, seek for happiness in religion when they should be seeking only for duty—spiritual epicures, aiming at their own comfort when they should be seeking, as the great thing, to be holy and useful. They forget that they were not brought into the family of Christ merely to enjoy themselves, but to obey and serve Him, and that His direction is not, "Seek first your own comfort and enjoyment in My service," but, "Seek first My kingdom and its righteousness," in your own hearts, and in the hearts and lives of others, and then your joy, with all other needed things, shall be added thereto. They forget that happiness, when sought directly and for its own sake, in any sphere, flies from us; but that when we are occupied with the means to it, then it comes of itself, and that in religion the means to it is fidelity in duty. Another reason why some do not find more enjoyment in religion is—III. THAT THEY DO NOT PRACTICALLY REGARD THE COMMON OCCUPATIONS OF LIFE AS A MEANS OF GRACE. They regard the Sabbath and its services and private devotion as intended to draw them nearer to God, and to aid them to enjoyment in religion, and believe that if not misimproved they will actually do it. But the common

occupations and employments of life they practically regard as antagonistic to these ends and tending in the opposite direction. The former they seem to think are a stream bearing them on to God; the latter a stream bearing them away from Him. The Sabbath they practically regard as the antidote to the week, and the week to be counterbalanced by the Sabbath—the piety gained on the Sabbath to be used up and exhausted in the week, and the week in turn to be furnished afresh from the Sabbath. Such, however, is not the teaching of the Bible, though it is, alas! too much the practical belief of multitudes who ought to know better, and who to know better need only to think as to what God has taught. For it is impossible that He should command two things that cross and are inconsistent with each other; and having bidden us to be diligent in business and at the same time fervent in spirit—in the sweat of our brow to earn our bread, and yet to pray without ceasing, it cannot be that He would not have both tend to the same end. The arrangements of His providence, as well as the teachings of His Word, show that the means of grace are not to be limited to the forms of public and private worship, and that the Sabbath is not the only day that God claims, while six days are to be given up to worldliness of thought and aim and spirit. Our trade or profession or calling, the right ordering of our property or farm or merchandise, our family and household cares, each may be a means of access to God and of aiding us to enjoy Him, just as truly the gate of heaven to the soul as the sanctuary itself. The labourer toiling at his task, the mother diligently training up her children or taking the oversight of her household, the merchant in his counting-house, the professional man in his office, or the servant in his daily duties, each may not only find a sphere for the exercise and growth of his graces—for patience, and gentleness, and contentment, and charity, and self-denial, but through these for that joy in God which every good and faithful servant of Christ should expect and may find. Another reason why some find so little enjoyment of religion is—IV. FROM THE WANT OF SYMMETRY AND PROPORTION IN THEIR CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. In the human body the full enjoyment of health is never known except where the various parts are proportioned and sound in themselves, and their various functions are rightfully performed. Let a limb be out of joint, or a bone broken, or a vital part diseased, or a nerve in a disordered state, and the whole system will measurably suffer, and the full and childlike and buoyant feeling of perfect health can never be known. There may be, and there is life, and there may not be positive and greatly painful sickness, but the process or progress of living is not of itself a joy as it is to those in absolutely perfect health. And so it is with the religious life—with the spiritual vitality—with the enjoyment or want of enjoyment in religion. The disproportion of Christian character, the want of symmetry in the Christian graces, the undue development or prominence of some one virtue or class of virtues, with the corresponding depression of their opposites, this, to the soul, is like the disordered nerve, or broken bone, or chronic inflammation to the body. It is only when the true symmetry of Christian character is kept up, when the active and passive virtues are equally cherished, when piety toward God is proportioned to benevolence to man, when principle keeps pace with emotion, and hope with fear, and reverence with love, and knowledge with faith, and trust with obedience, and self-control within with active performance without, and devotion and action go hand in hand—only thus, when every chord of the soul is perfect and in tune, that the full harmony of the strain tells of that joy in the spirit of which it is at the same time the offspring and evidence. A disproportioned Christian character necessarily loses much of the joy of religion, just as the instrument out of tune makes discordant music, or the body in sickness feels not the full joy of health. Still another reason why some find so little enjoyment in religion is—V. BECAUSE THEY HAVE NOT CLEAR VIEWS OF THE GOSPEL GROUND OF RELIANCE FOR THE CHRISTIAN—OF THE FULL AND STRONG AND BROAD FOUNDATION IT LAYS FOR HOPE, AND THUS, OF COURSE, FOR JOY. It is hard for a sinner, even though he is a penitent and forgiven sinner, to realise the glorious fulness of the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Too often for our hope, and thus for our joy, we are prone to look to Christ as one who is to work with us to make up our deficiencies, rather than as one who is a complete and perfect and all-sufficient Saviour, Himself doing the entire work, and bestowing freely on us its full benefit and blessing. "The labour of a lifetime," says Dr. Chalmers, "seeking to establish a merit of our own, will but widen our distance from peace," and so from joy; "and nothing will send this blessed visitant to our bosoms but a firm and simple

reliance on the declarations of the Gospel." As God spared not His own, but has freely given Him up for us all, surely with Him He will freely give us all things. Still another reason why many do not more enjoy religion is—VI. THAT THEY ARE NOT ACTIVE IN DOING GOOD. They look on religion rather as a profession than as a progress, as something they received in conversion, and which is to bear them safely on to heaven, rather than as a spirit to be cherished, and a character to be improved—a principle of duty and effort to be carried out in doing good in imitation of Christ. No truth is more plainly stated by inspiration, or more fully sustained by experience, than that it is more blessed to give than to receive. As to do good with wealth or influence is the way to enjoy wealth or influence, so to do good as a Christian is the way to find enjoyment as a Christian. "Assurance," says President Edwards, "is not to be obtained so much by self-examination as by action"; and the assertion is equally true of the joy that flows from assurance, and is increased by every effort to do good to others. Doubt and depression often come from inactivity. John, active and earnest in the desert, needs no proof that the Messiah has come, but when shut up in prison, inactive and depressed, he seems to have become morbid and doubtful, and sends to inquire if Jesus is indeed the Christ. When Dr. Marshman was a young man and at home, he often had doubts and fears as to his spiritual state, but when after thirty years' missionary work in India, William Jay said to him, "Well, Doctor, how now about your doubts and fears?" his reply was, "I have had no time for them; I have been too busy preaching Christ to the heathen." And Howard, the philanthropist, tells us that his rule for shaking off trouble of any kind was, "Set about doing good; put on your hat and go and visit the sick and poor in your neighbourhood; inquire as to their wants and minister to them; seek out the desolate and oppressed, and tell them of the consolations of religion. I have often tried it," he adds, "and have always found it the best medicine for a heavy heart." This is the true spirit of benevolence, which is always the spirit of enjoyment. This will leave no time for doubt and despondency, and will call forth those sympathies of our nature which are the sure sources of happiness, giving us that evidence of piety which is found in doing good, and which cannot but minister to our joy. One more, and a general reason why many do not find the full enjoyment of religion, may be found—VII. IN NEGLECT AND UNFAITHFULNESS AS TO DUTY. It is that in some form our iniquity separates between us and God, and shuts out the light of His countenance from us—that our sins, either positive or negative, either of commission or omission, hide His face from the soul. One, it may be, is lukewarm and vacillating and changeable, having too little religion to enjoy God, and too much to find enjoyment in the world. With another the private indulgence of some desire, or the pursuit of some object inconsistent with the known will of God, is like the worm to the gourd of the prophet, a cause not visible, but real, withering the refreshing shade over his head by secretly gnawing at the root. Or the source of the evil may be not only the sin committed, but the duty neglected. (*Tryon Edwards, D.D.*) *Small consolations:*—Stars not valued in daytime but at night. So with friends in adversity. Many kinds of friends. Some real but unsafe. Some wanting in tenderness. Thus with Job's three friends. Turn from Job to ourselves. If I ask, Are you all free from trouble? none say "Yes," absolutely. Seneca said, "The happiest man in the world is the man who thinks himself so." As to true happiness, the Christian is the only really happy man, but even he has his bitterness. I. WE NEED CONSOLATION. 1. If we look at our dwelling-place. Our dwelling is the world. God made it. Well, what He made cannot create sorrow. No. Change, sin entered. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." 2. If we look at our afflictions, personal, domestic. Dark dispensations of providence, death. 3. If we look at our enemies. Life a warfare. Satan "goeth about." 4. If we look at our experience. So changeable. We are now on the mountain, next week in the valley. Need not be so. II. THAT CONSOLATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM GOD. All earthly sources fail. 1. In His name. Ideas of God overwhelming. There is His justice, &c. These not His name but His attributes. What is His name? "I am that I am," unchangeable. "The Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious," &c. 2. In His nature. His love infinite. Unbounded gift of His Son. 3. In His relationship. Creator, Preserver, Redeemer. He is our Father. 4. Promises. "As thy day," &c. How variable it is! As thy day, &c. III. THAT IF SMALL CONSOLATIONS, THERE ARE REASONS FOR IT. Reason not with God. What makes them small? 1. State

of health. 2. Neglect of means. 3. Depending on other sources. 4. Neglecting Christ as the meritorious cause, and the Spirit as the instrumental cause of peace. (*Homiletic Magazine.*) *Consolation abundant but unrealised*:—We have heard of persons in Australia who walked habitually over nuggets of gold. We have heard of a bridge being built with what seemed common stones, but it contained masses of golden ore. Men do not know their wealth. Is it not a pity that you should be poor in comfort, and yet have all this gold of consolation at your feet? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Insidious influences destroying spiritual joy*:—In the Harlem district of New York came the report of a disease-smitten residence, the occupants of which gave symptoms of arsenical poisoning. At first it was supposed that some one living in the house was secretly administering the poison to the other inmates through their food. But chemical tests of various dishes at various times, even examination of the drinking water, elicited nothing wrong. Once or twice a domestic was arrested on suspicion, but almost as soon released. The trouble grew more alarming, and with the growing alarm grew the mystery. At last a prominent chemist of the city, who had been quietly studying the newspaper and other accounts given, called at the house, and requested permission to personally inspect it. This was readily granted. Almost the first thing he did upon gaining entrance was to carefully examine, not the sanitary appointments, which were known to be correct, but the paper on the walls. He minutely examined all the paper on every wall in the place, and upon leaving without disclosing his suspicions, took with him several sections of the wall-paper in the bedrooms and dining-room. These he subjected to a careful examination in his laboratory, with the result, as he had suspected, that every sample of wall-paper contained large quantities of pure arsenic, used in the production of the various colours. This poison was particularly plentiful in the composition of the pink papers, one sample of which had enough arsenic on a square foot of it to destroy the life of an adult. The discovery caused at the time much excitement, and many persons tore down their wall-papers, some without cause, and substituted other styles of decoration. So is it often that the soul's life is threatened and dangerously affected by some secret, hidden, mysterious cause as insidious, yet all-pervading and powerful, as the filling of the Harlem lot or the arsenically prepared colours in the wall-paper. "Is there any secret thing with thee?" is in such a case a timely question, which may find a saving answer. (*G. V. Reichel.*) *Concerning the consolations of God*:—These are the words of Eliphaz, one of those three friends of Job who blundered dreadfully over his case. Their words are not to be despised; for they were men in the front rank for knowledge and experience. If we are indeed believers in the Gospel, and are living near to God, our consolation should be exceeding great. Passing through a troubled world, we have need of consolations; but these are abundantly provided. I. Our first question follows the interpretation given by most authorities: "DO YOU REGARD THE CONSOLATIONS OF GOD AS SMALL?" "Are the consolations of God too small for thee?" 1. I would ask you, first, Do you think religion makes men unhappy? Have you poisoned your mind with that invention of the enemy? Have you made yourself believe that godliness consists in morbid self-condemnation, despondency, apprehension, and dread? 2. Is not your verdict different from that of those who have tried godliness for themselves? Do you not know that many, for the joy they have found in the love of Christ, have renounced all sinful pleasures, and utterly despised them? Have you not also remarked, in many afflicted Christians, a peace which you yourself do not know? Have you not observed their patience under adversity? 3. Will you follow me a while as I ask you, Upon consideration, will you not amend your judgment? Do you think that the All-sufficient cannot provide consolation equal to the affliction? See again these consolations of God deal with the source of sorrow. Whence came the curse, but from the sin of man? Jesus has come to save His people from their sins. Comfort which left us under the power of evil would be dangerous comfort; but comfort which takes away both the guilt and the power of sin is glorious indeed. Remember, too, that the consolations of God reveal to us a reason for the sorrow when it is allowed to remain. There is a needs-be that we are in heaviness. Another reflection sweetly cheers the heart of the tried one during his tribulation, namely, that he has a comrade in it. We are not passing through the waters alone. If the Son of God be with us, surely there is an end of every sort of fear. Besides, "the consolations of God" lie also in the direction of compensations. You have the rod: yes, but this is the small drawback to heavenly sonship, if drawback

indeed it be. Would you not far rather be of the seed of the woman, and have your heel bruised? Besides, there is the consolation that you are on your journey home, and that every moment you are coming closer to the eternal rest. II. HAVE THESE CONSOLATIONS BEEN SMALL IN THEIR EFFECT UPON YOU? Have these consolations, though great in themselves, been small in their influence upon you? 1. I will begin my examination by putting to one disciple this question: Have you never very much rejoiced in God? Have you always possessed a little, but a very little, joy? Why is this? Whence comes it? Is it ignorance? Do you not know enough of the great doctrines of the Gospel, and of the vast privileges of the redeemed? Is it listlessness? Have you never felt desirous to know the best of the Christian life? But it may be, that you once did joy and rejoice? 2. Well, then, is it of late that you have lost these splendid consolations, and come down to feel them small with you? Is it that you have more business, and have grown more worldly? Do you reply to me that you do use the means of grace? 3. Do the outward means fail to bring you the consolation they once did? Are you as much in prayer as ever? and is prayer less refreshing than it used to be? I may come near to your experience if I ask—4. Do you revive occasionally and then relapse? 5. Does the cause of your greater grief lie in a trial to which you do not fully submit? 6. It may be that while you are thus without the enjoyment of Divine consolation, Satan is tempting you to look to other things for comfort. III. Since the consolations of God appear so small to you, HAVE YOU ANYTHING BETTER TO PUT IN THEIR PLACE? Perhaps this is what Eliphaz meant when he said, "Is there any secret thing with thee?" If God's Gospel fails you, what will you do? 1. Have you found out a new religion with brighter hopes? 2. Are you hoping to find comfort in the world? 3. Or, do you conclude that you are strong-minded enough to bear all the difficulties and trials of life without consolation? 4. Do you say that what can't be cured must be endured, and you will keep as you are? This is a poor resolve for a man to come to. If there is better to be had, why not seek it? IV. If it be so, that you have hitherto found heavenly consolations to have small effect with you, and yet have nothing better to put in their place, IS THERE NOT A CAUSE FOR YOUR FAILURE? Will you not endeavour to find it out? 1. Is there not some sin indulged? 2. Next, may there not have been some duty neglected? 3. Again, may there not be some idol in your heart? 4. But, if you do not enjoy the consolations of God, do you not think it is because you do not think enough of God? 5. If any of you have not the joy of the Lord which you once possessed, is it not possible that when you used to have it you grew proud? 6. Have you begun to distrust? Do you really doubt your God? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) "*God's consolations*":—It must be admitted that there is a tendency to forget, or at least to under-estimate God's consolations. I. NOW, FIRST LET ME TELL YOU WHAT IT IS THAT PROMPTS THIS ENQUIRY. 1. You really must excuse me for asking you if the mercies of God seem trivial to you, for some of you look as if they were. If I judged by your countenance I should suppose that you had scarcely any of them, and that they were wonderfully paltry and powerless. 2. I ask the question of others, because I am bound to say they speak as if the consolations of God were small. You get into conversation with them for half an hour, and the season is none too long for them to recite the story of their griefs. Some go further than to omit the mention of their mercies; they complain against God, and murmur at their Master. 3. I ask the question of others, because I find that they act as if the consolations of God were small with them. Acts are the outcome of thoughts, the concrete forms of imaginings and emotions. Is not Jehovah enough for Israel? Does not His covenant stand, whatever else fails? Why dost thou draw the blinds, when the sun would fain shine right into thy soul, and make thee glad again? 4. There are others who pray as if the consolations of God were small with them. Some people's prayers are nothing but a long and dismal list of wants, and woes, and weariness. 5. Some there are who sing as if the mercies of God were few, and scarcely worthy of their notice. Some do not sing at all. II. I should like TO RECOUNT THE CONSOLATIONS OF GOD. Here is Jesus. "Behold the Man." "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." Then we have His Spirit, the Comforter, a reservoir of consolations. In this blessed book are twenty thousand promises, "yea," all in Christ Jesus, and in Him, "Amen." Ours is the privilege of prayer. Amongst the other consolations do not forget the whispers of God's love. They have been unmistakable. Thank God also for peace of mind and rest of conscience. III. Shall I try next to DESCRIBE THE

CONSOLATIONS OF GOD? 1. They are Divine. 2. They are abounding too. 3. His consolations are abiding. 4. And they are strong. IV. WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE ARE THE RESULTS OF A PROPER APPRECIATION OF GOD'S CONSOLATIONS? 1. If we appraise them at their real value we shall be forgetful of the past. Forgetting the things which are behind, we shall press forward to those that are before. 2. If you properly appreciate God's consolations, you will be grateful for the present, you will raise a stone of help each day, and pour oil, the oil of gratitude upon it; you will be trustful for the future. V. LET ME MENTION SOME FEW AIDS TO PROPER APPRECIATION OF GOD'S CONSOLATIONS. Will you remember what you used to be? Will you consider also what you must have come to, if God had not come to your rescue and relief? Consolation! How can it be small with me when it was condemnation that I deserved? Moreover, reflect what you still are. "Above all, recollect how great the condescension on God's part to comfort and console." (*T. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 12. **Why doth thine heart carry thee away?**—*Impulsiveness*:—Elihu means to say, Why dost thou allow thy feelings to carry thee beyond the boundaries of reason? The vast masses of mankind are the victims of ungoverned impulses. See this—1. In the formation of friendships. Such impulses often bring the sexes together in a fellowship which does but issue in mutual irritation and disappointment. 2. In the history of religion. The religion of the people is not unfrequently directed by ungoverned impulses, excited by the impassioned appeals of enthusiasts and fanatics. 3. In the current of politics. A few red-hot demagogues and effective stump orators will often turn the whole current of a nation's politics. "Why doth thine heart carry thee away?" Why act from ungoverned impulse? I. It is UNNATURAL. Man's constitution shows that he was made, not to act from blind instinct, but intelligent motive. And that these motives should be formed by an understanding duly enlightened with a knowledge of the fundamental principles of moral obligation. In fact his constitution shows—1. That all his passions should be governed by his intellect. 2. That his intellect should be governed by his conscience. 3. That his conscience should be governed by the revealed laws of heaven. II. It is IMMORAL. Man is a responsible being, amenable to his Maker for all the operations of his existence, bound evermore to give an account of himself. When he acts from impulse, he acts as a brute, not as a man; and acting thus he sins against his Maker. That man is responsible is proved—1. By his own consciousness. He condemns himself when he does not act from the enlightened conviction of duty. 2. By the Word of God. Everywhere, by distinct statements as well as by implications, the Bible holds forth the doctrine of men's responsibility. III. It is RUINOUS. A man, or a community of men—whether the community be commercial, political, or religious—who act from ungoverned impulse, is like a vessel tossed on the ocean in a tempest without chart, compass, or pilot to direct it. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 14–16. **What is man that he should be clean?**—*Original sin*:—Of all the truths acknowledged and assumed in this ancient book, we find none more clearly or readily confessed than that of man's original sin and native corruption. "What is man that he should be clean?" When a question is asked in argument and left unanswered, it is the strongest possible form of denial. It is more than saying no man is clean or righteous. It represents such a supposition as man's purity or holiness to be preposterous and absurd. Man, as man, and as born of woman by natural descent, is necessarily imperfect and impure. God is Himself the pure and perfect one, and nothing is pure or perfect but what is in God. All other purity and perfection is therefore comparative. Man may be pure and perfect as a man, while he is still very far from the purity and holiness of God. God has other and higher beings than man. Compare man with these. By "saints" here are meant the holy angels. God is said not to put trust in them. Their perfection is derived and comparative, not absolute. Contemplate man as he actually is; take the positive side of the charge brought against him in the text. If he is not clean, and cannot be righteous in God's sight, then what is he? "How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water." It might be urged that this is the representation made of the case by an angry and unscrupulous disputant, only anxious to establish his own position. But does not Job himself allow much the same? Is he not brought to say, "Behold, I am vile." "I abhor myself"? Such representations abound in Scripture.

Away, then, with all human maxims and all worldly opinions, which only throw a false gloss over the heart, and conceal its hidden corruption without touching it. Let us always look at ourselves in the looking-glass of God's Word, and not in the deceitful mirror of our own judgment, or the flattering world's opinion. (*W. E. Light, M.A.*) *Holiness imperfect in the best men*:—Archbishop Usher was once asked to write a treatise upon sanctification; this he promised to do, but six months rolled away and the good Archbishop had not written a sentence. He said to a friend, "I have not begun the treatise, yet I cannot confess to a breach of my promise, for to tell you the truth I have done my best to write upon the subject; but when I came to look into my own heart I saw so little of sanctification there, and found that so much which I could have written would have been merely by rote as a parrot might have talked, that I had not the face to write it." Yet if ever there was a man renowned for holiness it was Archbishop Usher; if ever there was a saintly man who seemed to be one of the seraphic spirits permitted to stray beyond the companionship of his kind among poor earth-worms here, it was Usher, yet this is the confession he makes concerning himself. Where, then, shall we hide our diminished heads? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 23. **He wandereth abroad for bread, saying, Where is it?**—*The cry for bread*:—There are certain things which if men want they will have. I have heard say that in the old bread riots, when men were actually starving for bread, no word had such a terrible threatening and alarming power about it as the word "Bread," when shouted by a starving crowd. I have read a description by one who once heard this cry. He said he had been startled at night by a cry of "Fire!" but when he heard the cry of "Bread! Bread!" from those who were hungry, it seemed to cut him like a sword. Whatever bread had been in his possession he must at once have handed it out. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

CHAPTER XVI.

VERS. 1-3. **Miserable comforters are ye all.**—*Miserable comforters*:—They are but sorry comforters who, being confounded with the sight of the afflicted's trouble, do grate upon their (real or supposed) guilt, weaken the testimony of their good conscience that they may stir them up to repent, and let them see no door of hope, but upon ill terms. Learn—1. God's people may mutually charge and load one another with heavy imputations; whereof, though one party be guilty, yet who they are will not be fully cleared (save in men's own consciences) till God appear. 2. Man may sadly charge that upon others whereof themselves are most guilty. For the friends charged Job to have spoken vain words, or words of wind, and yet he asserts themselves were guilty of it, having no solid reason in their discourses, but only prejudice, mistakes, and passion. 3. Men may teach doctrine, true and useful in its own kind, which yet is but vain when ill applied. Thus Satan may abuse and pervert Scripture. 4. Vain and useless discourses are a great burden to a spiritual, and especially to a weary spiritual mind, that needs better. 5. When men are filled with passion, prejudice, or self-love, they will outweary all others with their discourses before they weary themselves. Yea, they may think they are doing well, when they are a burden to those who hear them. 6. Men are not easily driven from their false principles and opinions when once they are drunk in. 7. As men may be bold who have truth and reason on their side, so oft-times passion will hold men on to keep up debates when yet they have no solid reason to justify their way. 8. Men's consciences will be put to it, to see upon what grounds they go in debates. It is a sad thing to start or continue them without solid and necessary causes, but only out of prejudice, interest, or because they are engaged. 9. Men ought seriously to consider what spirit they are of, and what sets them to work in every thing they say and do. (*George Hutcheson.*) *Spiritual depression and its remedies*:—I. SPIRITUAL DISTRESS is either physical, caused by the action of bodily weakness and infirmity upon the mind. Or satanic, directly due to suggestions of the great enemy of souls. Or judicial, arising from the sensible withdrawal of the light of God's countenance. The general cause of this depres-

sion is sin. God occasionally permits it to come upon us, that we may know ourselves, and feel our own weakness. II. HOW SPIRITUAL DEPRESSION MANIFESTS ITSELF. The most common form is, that the sufferer fancies himself lost. The Psalmist expresses the effect thus, "Make the bones which Thou hast broken to rejoice." The sufferer finds no comfort in prayer; or in the ordinances of religion. What can be done for such? 1. Sympathise with the sufferer. 2. Immediately have recourse to prayer. 3. Endeavour to discover the cause of the withdrawal of God's favour. 4. Dwell much on the promises of God. 5. Meditate upon the love and sovereignty of God. 6. Look to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Do not continue to write bitter things against yourselves. This is not the day of condemnation. (*M. Villiers, M.A.*) *Job's comforters*:—The office of the comforter is a very high and blessed one. One who has the tongue of the learned, and can speak a word in season to him that is weary, may often prevent distress becoming despair; may often strengthen faith and hope, and cheer the mourner with the light of eternal peace. He who has force of conviction, clearness of sight, knowledge of God's love, may render one of the richest services that man can render to his fellow-men. In Job's case there was a sorrow that indeed cried aloud for comfort. The pity of the angels must have rested on him, plunged from such a height of mercy into such a gulf of misery. Is there no comforter? When wealth abounded, he had many to felicitate him; are there none now to weep for him, and to uphold his heart? Let us look. There are never wanting hearts that pity the afflictions of men. But it is one thing to pity with silent, onlooking grief; it is another thing to tackle grief itself, and show how right and merciful it is: and for this brave and tender work few are fitted. And so accordingly Job has to complain (chap. vi. 15–17) that his friends on whom he had relied were like the winter torrents, brawling strongly, flowing bravely when less needed; but drying up in the summer heats and leaving caravans, which hoped to drink of their waters, to perish with thirst. But amidst the bewilderment which marks all his friends, and the general shrinking of those who should have tried to comfort, there are three of his old friends—apparently from what they say themselves, and what Elihu says of them, all men at least as old as Job himself—who strive to console him. Not at the very outset of his calamity, but at a time when Job can say (chap. vii. 3), "I am made to possess months of vanity"; these three men make an appointment with each other and go together to comfort him. Job himself flouts them, saying, "Miserable comforters are ye all"; doing thereby not quite justice to men whose task was not so easy to accomplish as some of their critics think. I think that great and obvious as their faults were, perhaps they were better comforters to Job than any others would have been. They did not find a solace for him, but they did something better, they helped him to find the true solace for himself. Let us see what there is in the character and utterances of these men worthy of our remark. 1. They had evidently some of the grandest qualities of a comforter about them. They had a profound sense of Job's calamity. Their whole bearing at the outset is beautiful; when they see him they lift up their voice and weep. They seat themselves beside him on his dunghill, and for a whole week, in grave, respectful silence, they share his sorrow. Everywhere, but especially in sorrow, speech is only silvern, but silence is golden. In great sorrow the room to admit comfort is small, though the comfort needed be very large indeed. Consolation is hardly for early stages of great sorrow, it must be inserted gradually, as the soul gives room to hold it. And when the time comes for direct consolation, it should be line upon line, here a little, there a little. The comfort of the Gospel of providence first; the comfort of the Gospel of salvation second. If they had been but wise enough to hold their peace, they had been almost perfect comforters. They did so for seven days, and showed by doing so they had one great quality of the comforter; they took some proper measure of the trouble they came to soothe. 2. If they had a sense of his calamity they had also another quality of great value in a comforter—they had courage. Amongst Job's numberless friends hardly any but themselves had the courage to face his grief. They had it. Courage is wanted sometimes to forbid the abandonment of despair, to deny the accusations which impatience makes against God. Sometimes, like the great Comforter, you have to begin by convincing of sin, and to lead the afflicted through penitence to consolation. 3. They had also some of the great elements of the creed of consolation. They believed, first of all, that God sent the affliction; and the root of all consolation is there. The sorrow's crown

of sorrow is the thought that chance reigns. And wherever we feel God rules, and what has happened came by Divine prescription or permission, we have a seed of consolation most sufficient. In fact, as we shall see hereafter, all Job's grand comfort springs from this. They have a second great article of faith and consolation—their hearts are strongly moored in a sense of the justice of God. In heathen creeds a large place was often assigned to Divine envy and jealousy. And they have also some knowledge of His love. They urge Job to prayer as to something He habitually answers. They urge him to penitence, assuring him that even though his guilt had been so great, yet God would pardon him. They have some of the great convictions requisite to console. Yet they fail in their effort to console; and when you ask why, you see that while they possessed some of the first qualities of comforters, they had others which marred their work. 1. First of all, their creed, good as far as it goes, does not go far enough. There was in it a certain intellectual and moral narrowness. They think of God almost exclusively as a judge—rewarding right, punishing wrong, pardoning the fault He punishes when it is duly repented. But they seem to give God no margin for any other activities. According to them, all He does is reward or punishment. They have not in their view any grand future extending to the other world—in preparation for which, discipline of various kinds may be useful, even where there is no special transgression. They had a short, clear creed—say to the righteous it shall be well with him, say to the wicked it shall be ill with him—and any refinement, such as "whom God loveth He chasteneth," seems to them something that spoils the clearness and cogency of saving truth. These men could believe in a reward to the righteous, in affliction to the wrong-doer, but the doctrine, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous," enfeebled the hopes of the good and destroyed the alarm of the wicked. Accordingly not one of them ever is able to get out of the feeling that Job had been secretly a sinner above all men. We should beware of narrowness, and, although our light is fuller, remember that we make a mistake whenever we imagine that we have mapped out the whole of God and of the plans and working of God. Leave a margin modestly, and assume that God will do many things, the reasons for which are sufficient, but not knowable by ourselves. Assume that we cannot understand much of His ways, and be on your guard against creeds that simplify too much. Man is rather a complicated thing, and the truth of man cannot be reduced to a set of very easy and very broad statements. These comforters failed to remember that man's understanding was not quite equal to account for all God's acts, and they left out of view all the prospective probable results of God's dealings in the idea that the calamity could have no reason excepting some precedent wrong. And they had another fault. 2. They were short of faith in man. It is easy to understand how men should be suspicious. When we feel how much of volcanic energy there is in the evil of our own hearts, we are apt to believe too readily in the evil of others. Faults are common, falls are common, but deliberate hypocrisy is too rare to justify an easy assumption of its existence on slight grounds. If a wavering thought that their friend must have been guilty of great sins, and all his religion hypocrisy, was pardonable, should they have settled down so fixedly and promptly in this belief, and without any evidence, have first surmised and then asserted guilt beyond that of any other? This unbelief in Job is a sin which God subsequently rebukes them for. It is a serious thing to admit to one's heart any unbelief in the essential integrity of another. Keep faith in man if you would comfort man. These men were short of faith in their fellow-men, and became, as Job called them, "false witnesses for God," in consequence of being so. Perhaps the week of silence is due to suspense as well as sympathy, to some misgiving about their theory as much as to compassion. But as soon as Job has "cursed his day," and given vent to the murmur which, however natural, was not sinless, then the momentary misgiving vanishes, and they begin their work. Eliphaz, more gently than the rest, with little more than a hint of the direction in which he thinks Job would do wisely to proceed. Bildad follows with utterance full of ungracious candour: "If thy children have sinned against Him, and He have cast them away in their transgression. . . . He would restore your prosperity if you prayed." Zophar, who is coarser than either of the rest, roundly tells him that "God exacteth of him less than his iniquity deserves." When Job has declared his innocence, and uttered his longing to stand face to face with God, and reminded them that the prosperity of the wicked was as universally

observed as their calamities, they abate no measure of their censure. In every form of innuendo and accusation they impeach him for some great crime. Till at last Eliphaz himself gathers boldness to make specific charges of inhumanity. Poor Job! to be thus battered by accusations; when soothing tenderness was his need and due. Yet I am not sure he is altogether to be pitied. They could not give him comfort, but they drove him to find it for himself. And in finding it for himself he got it more firmly and more richly than he could possibly have found it ready made on their lips. Several things should be remembered. 1. It is well to act the comforter. 2. Love is the great pre-requisite for doing so. Sympathy soothes more than any philosophy of sorrow. 3. A narrow interpretation of God's ways of love is a common fault of those who would console. 4. There must be time for consolation to grow, and it may come in a form very different from that in which we expect it. 5. At last God brings all the true-hearted to a comfort exceedingly rich and great. (*Richard Glover.*) *Job's comforters:*—These words express Job's opinion of his friends. Nor is it a harsh judgment. These friends missed, and misused, their opportunity. They wanted to be at the philosophy of the matter. Many men now, when asked to assist a neighbour, are more ready "to trace the history of the case," than to render assistance. Job's comforters deserved the epithet "miserable," because—I. THEY FORGOT THAT AFFLICTION IS NOT NECESSARILY PUNITIVE. And, conversely, all exaltation is not blessedness. Job's comforters saw only the surface, and reasoned from what they saw. They did not discriminate between Job's circumstances and the man Job. They did not discriminate between the body of Job and Job. Allowing that the affliction of Job fell heavily on his soul, it was not necessarily punitive on that account. God subjects His people to tests and disciplines as well as to punishments. Christian men are in the school of Christ, and must accept its discipline. II. THEY DID NOT DISCRIMINATE BETWEEN MEANS AND ENDS. Not to do so is grievously to err in matters religious; not doing so is practical superstition. A man regards church-going, Bible-reading, attendance upon ordinances, as ends instead of means. What then? He lessens the felt necessity for the broken and contrite heart. Nay, more, he will never rise into the region of the spiritual, so will never worship God acceptably. III. WE SHALL NEVER BENEFIT A FELLOW-MAN BY CASTING THE PAST IN HIS TEETH. Even if a child has been naughty in the past, we shall only harden it by dwelling upon the fact. Our Lord never twitted men about their past. Job's comforters gratuitously assumed that Job's past had not been well spent, and so they merited the epithet "miserable." We all need comfort; we can get it only in Christ. If we are seeking it in fame, money, friends, learning—anything appertaining exclusively to this world—the time will come when we shall exclaim of these things, "Miserable comforters are ye all!" May that sentence not be uttered in eternity. (*J. S. Swan.*) *Miserable comforters:*—Cold comfort some ministers render to afflicted consciences; their advice will be equally valuable with that of the Highlander who is reported to have seen an Englishman sinking in a bog on Ben Nevis. "I am sinking," cried the traveller. "Can you tell me how to get out?" The Highlander calmly replied, "I think it is likely you never will," and walked away. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *No comfort in cant:*—Those persons are incompetent for the work of comfort-bearing who have nothing but cant to offer. There are those who have the idea that you must groan over the distressed and afflicted. There are times in grief when one cheerful face dawning upon a man's soul is worth a thousand dollars to him. Do not whine over the afflicted. Take the promises of the Gospel and utter them in a manly tone. Do not be afraid to smile if you feel like it. Do not drive any more hearses through that poor soul. Do not tell him the trouble was foreordained; it will not be any comfort to know it was a million years coming. If you want to find splints for a broken bone, do not take cast iron. Do not tell them it is God's justice that weighs out grief. They want to hear of God's tender mercy. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The worldly philosopher no comforter:*—He comes and says, "Why, this is what you ought to have expected. The laws of nature must have their way"; and then they get eloquent over something they have seen in post-mortem examinations. Now, away with all human philosophy at such times! What difference does it make to that father and mother what disease their son died of? He is dead, and it makes no difference whether the trouble was in the epigastric or hypogastric region. If the philosopher be of the stoical school, he will come and say, "You ought to control your feelings,

You must not cry so. You must cultivate a cooler temperament. You must have self-reliance, self-government, self-control"—an iceberg reproving a hyacinth for having a drop of dew in its eye. (*Ibid.*) *The voluble are miserable comforters*:—Voluble people are incompetent for the work of giving comfort. Bildad and Eliphaz had the gift of language, and with their words almost bothered Job's life out. Alas for those voluble people that go among the houses of the afflicted, and talk, and talk, and talk, and talk! They rehearse their own sorrows, and then tell the poor sufferers that they feel badly now, but they will feel worse after awhile. Silence! Do you expect with a thin court-plaster of words to heal a wound deep as the soul? Step very gently round about a broken heart. Talk very softly round those whom God has bereft. Then go your way. Deep sympathy has not much to say. (*Ibid.*) *The comforter must have experienced sorrow*:—People who have not had trials themselves cannot give comfort to others. They may talk very beautifully, and they may give you a good deal of poetic sentiment; but while poetry is perfume that smells sweet, it makes a very poor salve. If you have a grave in a pathway, and somebody comes and covers it all over with flowers, it is a grave yet. Those who have not had grief themselves know not the mystery of a broken heart. They know not the meaning of childlessness, and the having no one to put to bed at night, or the standing in a room where every book, and picture, and door is full of memories—the doormat where she sat—the cup out of which she drank—the place where she stood at the door and clapped her hands—the odd figures she scribbled—the blocks she built into a house. Ah, no! you must have trouble yourself before you can comfort trouble in others. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 7. **But now He hath made me weary.**—*Weariness under affliction*:—The word "he" is not in the original. Some understand it of his grief and sorrow, and read thus, "And now it hath made me weary," or, my pain hath tired me. Others understand it of what had been spoken by his friends; your tedious discourses, and severer censures, have quite spent my spirits, and made me weary. Our translation leads us to a person, and our interpretation leads us to God. Job everywhere acknowledges that God was the author and orderer of all his sorrows. Weariness of mind is referred to, and it is the most painful weariness. 1. A state of affliction is a wearisome estate. Suffering wearies more than doing; and none are so weary as those who are wearied with doing nothing. 2. Some afflictions are a weariness both to soul and body. There are afflictions which strike right through, and there are afflictions which are only skin-deep. 3. Some afflictions do not only afflict, they unsettle the mind. They unsettle not only the comforts, but the powers and faculties of it. A man under some afflictions can scarce speak sense while he acts faith, or do rationally while he lives graciously. 4. A godly man may grow extremely weary of his afflictions. The best cannot always rejoice in temptations, nor triumph under a cross. True believers, as they have more patience in doing, so in suffering; yet even their patience doth not always hold out; they, as Job, speak sometimes mournfully and complainingly. (*Joseph Caryl.*)

Ver. 11. **God hath delivered me to the ungodly.**—*Tracing all to God*:—But Job gets some notion of the reality of things when he traces all to God, saying, "God hath delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over into the hands of the wicked." I begin to feel that even the devil is but a black servant in God's house. There is a sense, perhaps hardly open to a definition in words, in which the devil belongs to God as certainly as does the first archangel. There is no separate province of God's universe: hell burns at the very footstool of His throne. We must not allow ourselves to believe that there are rival powers and competing dynasties in any sense which diminishes the almightiness of God. If you say, as some distinguished philosophers have lately said, God cannot be almighty because there is evil in the world, you are limiting the discussion within too narrow a boundary. We must await the explanation. Give God time. Let Him work in His eternity. We are not called upon now to answer questions. Oh! could we hold our peace, and say, We do not know; do not press us for answers; let patience have her perfect work: this is the time for labour, for education, for study, for prayer, for sacrifice: this poor twilight scene is neither fair enough nor large enough to admit the whole of God's explanation: we must carry forward our study to the place which is as lofty as heaven, to the time which

is as endless as eternity. We all have suffering. Every man is struck at some point. Let not him who is capable of using some strength speak contemptuously of his weak brother. It is easy for a man who has no temptation in a certain direction to lecture another upon going in that direction. What we want is a juster comprehension of one another. We should say, This, my brother, cannot stand such and such a fire; therefore we try to come between him and the flame: this other brother can stand that fire perfectly well, but there is another fire which he dare not approach; therefore we should interpose ourselves between him and the dread furnace, knowing that we all have some weakness, some point of failure, some signature of the dust. Blessed are they who have great, generous, royal, Divine hearts! The more a man can forgive, the more does he resemble God. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

Vers. 17–19. **Not for any injustice in mine hands.**—*A good man's confidence*:—In these words Job delivers us—1. The confidence of a godly man. 2. That kind of infirm anguish and indignation, that half-distemper, that expostulation with God, which sometimes comes to an excess even in good and godly men. 3. The foundation of his confidence, and his deliverance from this his infirmity. (*John Donne.*) **My witness is in heaven, and my record is on high.**—*The true witness of life*:—I. IN REFERENCE TO JOB. 1. A declaration of his belief. 2. An avowal of his sincerity. 3. A proof of his devotion. II. IN REFERENCE TO OURSELVES. 1. In seasons of self-suspicion. 2. Under the assaults of calumny. 3. In the prospect of death. (*G. Brooks.*)

Ver. 22. **When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return.**—*The shortness of human life*:—Doctrine—The coming in of a few new years will set us out of this world, never to return to it. I. IN WHAT RESPECTS WE CAN HAVE BUT FEW YEARS TO COME. 1. In comparison of the many years to which man's life did, at one time, extend. 2. In comparison of the years of the world that are past. 3. In comparison of the great work which we have to do, namely, our salvation and generation work. 4. In comparison of eternity. II. WHY IS THE COMING, AND NOT THE GOING, OF THE FEW YEARS MENTIONED? 1. Because, that by the time they are fully come in, they are gone out. 2. Because that year will at length begin to come which we will never see the going out of. III. WHEN THE FEW YEARS HAVE SENT US OFF, THERE IS NO RETURNING. 1. Men cannot come back (ver. 14). 2. God will not bring them back. Improvement—(1) That men seriously weigh with themselves that they are now a great step nearer another world than they were. (2) That they take a humbling back-look of their way, and consider the many wrong steps which they have taken in their past years. (3) That they renew the acceptance of the covenant, and lay down measures for their safety in another world. (4) Eternity is a business of great weight. The happiness of the other world is too great for us to be indifferent about it, and to be cheated out of it by Satan and our vain hearts. (*T. Boston, D.D.*) *The shortness and frailty of human life*:—This is not one of Job's fretful speeches; it is one in which he is giving forth the utterances of an inspired philosophy, and suggests a few practical reflections, as well on the frailty of life as on the irreversible issues of death. I. THE SHORTNESS AND FRAILTY OF HUMAN LIFE. "When a few years are come." Almost every image that could be thought of to denote transitoriness, fleetness, brief duration, sudden change, will be found in Scripture as an emblem of human life. Our days are represented as passing from us just as an eagle hasteneth to her prey, as the swift post flies on his errand, as the ships of Ebeh cleave a path through the waters, as the weaver's shuttle darts through the web, as the rolling clouds move in the air. Or again, our life is a flower clothed in glory for a day—a shepherd's tent, which on the morrow will be removed to some other place—a vapour, curling up for a moment into some beautiful shape, and then dissolving into nothingness—a shadow, flinging its bold outline across our path, and in an instant departing to leave no trace behind. But let us consider some of the senses in which this expression, a few years, may be taken. Thus it may be taken in a contingent sense with a sad reference to life's uncertainty, to the consciousness which should be present to all of us, that the invisible guiding hand which struck down our friend during the past year may be led to lay us low the next. In this view the word "few" may be taken in its most severe and absolute sense. It may mean three years, or two years, or even one, but it behoves the youngest, and the strongest,

and most full of hope amongst us, to speak as Job spake. Every day throws fresh confusion into our calculated probabilities of life's duration. Death seems to be always finding some new door which we had left out of our account, and which we had not provided against; it seemed to be too remote a contingency to be numbered among human likelihoods. But commonly, the word "few" is used in some comparative sense. The labourers in the field of the Gospel are said to be few compared with the plenteousness of the harvest; they who find the way of life are said to be few compared with those by whom the way is missed; and so, in the text, the years of our life are said to be few, compared with the many things which have to be done therein, in order to fit us for a condition of immortality. The comparison comes natural to us. In all great works to be done, we almost intuitively consider as an element of the difficulty the question of time. The surprise of the Jews when they supposed our Lord to say that He would rebuild their temple after it was destroyed, was not that He should rebuild it, but that what it had cost forty-and-six years to accomplish, He should be able to do in three days. Well, the building up of the spiritual temple does not always require forty-and-six years, though it may require threescore years and ten. But whatever the unknown limit be, the years always seem to be getting shorter as that limit is approached; or as the work to be done in it remains in an unfinished state. The fact, as you perceive, cries aloud against the folly of all delayed repentances. To subdue the power of sin, to get disengaged from the ties of the world, to change the bias of an evil heart, and acquire a relish and taste for holiness, to become skilled in those higher acquisitions of the saintly life—how to wait, how to hope, how to be silent, how to sit still—oh, we want a long life for this! Grace may dispense with it sometimes, and does; as when our young righteous are taken away from the evil to come; and then the green blade is as fit for the garner as the shock of corn in its season. But in all cases where longer time is granted, longer time is required; and then, if a portion of these years be wasted, what arrearages of work are thrown forward to the remainder; and thus we fail to make any advance. We have everything to unlearn and undo. But again, I think the time that remains to us is described by the phrase "few years," because howsoever many they be, they will appear few when they are past. For the truth of this, I may appeal with confidence to the experience of the aged. You may have many years to live, but they will not appear many when you have lived them out. What the text seems to suggest is, that the duration of the future should be measured by the mind's estimate of the duration of the past. Assume, for example, that you have ten more years to live; to know whether this is a long time or a short time, measure it by what appears to you now the length of the last ten years. Something important and noticeable occurred about that time; realise the fact, that after a corresponding lapse for the future you will be no more seen. Such a method of measuring your length of days from the other end of the line cannot fail to leave upon the heart a salutary impression of the shortness of life. Wherefore, let us all calculate our length of days according to Job's life-table; let us reckon our years backwards, that is, not by what they are in prospect, but what they will seem in review. I note one other thought, which could hardly have been out of the patriarch's mind, when he spoke of his remaining years as few, namely, that they must be few—incomparable, and beyond all arithmetical reduction few—when compared with the life which was to succeed. This should be always an element in the Christian's computation of time. We shall never get at the true length of our years without it. If the apostle Paul, when writing to the Corinthians, had taken for his guidance any of our human calendars he would have said, "That light affliction which has been upon me for nearly thirty years"; but instead of this he recollects that time is not to be estimated by this standard at all. Length of service must be compared with length of reward—increase the one and you diminish the other, and this without limit; so that if the duration of the succeeding recompense become infinitely great, the duration of the service becomes inappreciably small. Who cares to be king for a day? Who for one morsel of meat would become another's servant for the rest of his life? Or, on the other hand, who would not endure sorrow for a night to be assured that he should enter upon a life of endless joy on the morrow? "Whence I shall not return." II. THE IRREVERSIBLE ISSUES OF DEATH. 1. Here we should note the moral scope of the expression. Job is not to be understood as if he would exclude the possibility of his return to earth bodily to visit his friends,

and renew his employments, to tell life's tale a second time—his design is manifestly to indicate the fixedness of his spiritual state when these few years of life shall have run out. His meaning is, I shall go to the place whence I shall not return for any of the available purposes of salvation, for repentance, for prayer, for making reconciliation. It is a place where all is determined, unalterable, final; where as each tree falls, so it lies; where he that is unjust is unjust still; where he that is holy will be holy still. He had used similar language in the 7th chapter. "As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away; so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more." To which we may not unfittingly add that exhortation of the wise man, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." 2. And now let me gather up some of the lessons of our subject. I speak to many who must take up the words of our text in their most literal sense. "When a few years are come, I shall go the way whence I shall not return." Your years to come must be few, because your years past have been many. Well, what have you been doing with those many? And your work, how stands it? Has your life been all wasted, all unprofitable, all of the earth, earthy? Have you made nothing of your day of grace and visitation? And yet your sun is going down. As thus—it should teach us to get our hearts fixed upon the true rest, while our few years are continued, and be gradually preparing for our final rest when these years are gone. Let our souls be staid on the right rest now. We know where it is, what it is, who it is says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"; rest from the buffetings of a changeful world, rest from the tossings of an anxious heart, rest from the accusations of an upbraiding conscience, rest from the suggestions of a desponding and fearful mind. Get skilled in the art of dying daily, of anticipating the summons to an eternal world. (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *Calm in prospect of death*:—Why should we be pensive and wistful when we think how near our end is? Is the sentry sad as the hour for relieving guard comes nigh? Is the wanderer in far-off lands sad as he turns his face homewards? And why should not we rejoice at the thought that we, strangers and foreigners here, shall soon depart to the true metropolis, the mother-country of our souls? I do not know why a man should be either regretful or afraid as he watches the hungry sea eating away his "bank shoal of time" upon which he stands, even though the tide has all but reached his feet, if he knows that God's strong arm will be stretched forth to him at the moment when the sand dissolves from under his feet, and will draw him out of many waters, and place him on high above the floods in that stable land where there is "no more sea." (*A. Maclaren.*) *The extreme brevity of human life*:—I. THE FACT ITSELF. It is in accordance with the representations of Scripture. Our life nearly resembles Jonah's gourd, which came up in a night and perished in a night. Our life is short, if you consider—1. The actual span of life. Seventy years, and infantile tenderness is transformed into decrepitude,—the infant at its mother's breast becomes the man of hoary hairs, tottering beneath the pressure of infirmities, and sinking fast into the cold and silent grave. 2. The millions who die young. It is said that by far the greater number of human beings die in infancy. And how many die in youth! 3. The momentous objects to which we have to attend in this life. We came not into this world just to exist, or just to spend a mere animal life; we came to prepare for eternity, for our final and irrevocable destinations beyond these narrow confines. Here we have to repent, to seek an interest in Christ, to love, to serve, to glorify our Creator, to labour in His cause, to cultivate our faculties, to discipline our hearts, prior to our entrance upon a deathless state of existence beyond the tomb. All this to do, and yet so short a time for its accomplishment. 4. The momentous interruptions which we experience in our attention to these essential duties. What cares fill up this little life of ours! what sorrows, what temptations, what losses and crosses, to call off our attention from our grand concerns! 5. The uniform testimony of Scripture respecting it. 6. Its contrast with that dread eternity to which we haste. Our life beyond this present scene will be commensurate, in its duration, with the life of God, eternal as the throne on which He sits and sways the universe. II. IMPROVE THIS FACT. 1. By meditating on the brevity of life; using whatever can aid you to impress your minds deeply with this solemn fact. 2. Take care not to waste life. 3. Improve life. "Seize the fleeting moments as they pass." 4. Ever keep in view the uncertainty of life. 5. Remember that these few years

of your existence will soon be past. 6. Remember that there will be no return to this present world. Let us live while we live. Let us all keep the end of our journey in view. Let us learn to die daily. Let us seek an interest in the grace, and blood, and righteousness, and intercession of the blessed Redeemer. (*F. Pollard.*) *The final journey anticipated:*—I. CONSIDER THE MOMENTOUS JOURNEY WHICH IS HERE ANTICIPATED. Under the figure of a journey, Job directs our attention to that important period, when the immortal spirit must quit terrestrial things, and our perishing bodies be consigned to the silent grave. This journey may be considered—1. Solemn in its nature. There is an indescribable solemnity in death, even to the man who is best prepared for the event. The path is unexplored; at least, the experience of those who have gone is of very little benefit to survivors: to know what it is to die, we must enter the darksome vale. The journey is of a solitary description; we must perform it lonely and unattended; the tenderness of affection, and the pomp of equipage, are of very little avail in the hour of mortality. 2. Indisputable in its certainty. 3. Unknown in its commencement. The moment when we shall be called to begin this momentous journey is wisely hid from our view. Our passage to the tomb may be by slowly rolling years of gnawing pain; or by a sudden stroke we may be launched into eternity. 4. Important in its consequences. The hour of death terminates all possibility of spiritual improvement. II. DESCRIBE THE EFFECT WHICH THIS ANTICIPATION OUGHT TO PRODUCE. The anticipation of a journey, so momentous in its nature and consequences, ought—1. To elicit serious examination respecting our state of preparation. Man by nature is not prepared for this important event. 2. To excite just fear in those who are unprepared. 3. To stimulate the righteous to constant watchfulness. 4. It furnishes a source of consolation to the afflicted Christian. He looks forward with solemn delight to that period when he shall be called from this state of suffering and pain to the blissful regions of immortality. He considers the hour of dissolution as the time of his introduction to angelical society, heavenly employment, a fulness of felicity, the unveiled glories of his Redeemer,—and the whole eternal in duration. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *Our last journey:*—I. Let us REALISE OUR INEVITABLE JOURNEY. I shall go the way whence I shall not return. Let us apply it each one to himself. The fact that all men are mortal has little power over our minds, for we always make a tacit exception and put off the evil day for ourselves. How the individuality of a man comes out in his dying hour! What an important being he becomes! Differences on the dying bed arise out of character and not out of rank. In death the financial element looks contemptible, and the moral and the spiritual come to be most esteemed. How did he live? What were his thoughts? What was his heart towards God? Did he repent of sin? The individuality of the man is clear, and the man's character before God, and now it is also evident that death tests all things. If you look upon this poor dying man, you see that he is past the time for pretences and shams. II. Now, let us CONTEMPLATE ITS MEANING. Very soon we shall have to start upon our solemn and mysterious pilgrimage. Hence, if there is anything grievous to be borne, we may well bear it cheerfully, for it cannot last long. When a few years are come we shall be gone from the thorn and the briar which now prick and wound. Hence, too, if there is any work to be done for Jesus let us do it at once, or else we shall never do it, for when a few years are come we shall have gone whence we shall not return. III. Now, CONSIDER THE FACT THAT WE SHALL NOT RETURN—"When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return." To the occupations of life—to sow and reap, and mow; to the abodes of life—to the store and to the country house; to the pleasures of life. To the engagements of the sanctuary, the communion table, the pulpit, or the pew, we shall not return. We need not wish to return. What is there here that should either tempt us to stay in this world or induce us to return to it if we could? Still, I could suppose in a future state some reasons for wishing to return. I can suppose we might have it in our hearts, for instance, to wish to undo the mischief which we did in life. You cannot come back to carry out those good resolutions, which as yet are as unripe fruit. Neither can we come back to rectify any mistake we have made in our life-work, nor even return to look after it, in order to preserve that which was good in it. IV. And now let us ENQUIRE WHITHER WE SHALL GO? In some respects it happeneth alike to all, for all go upon the long journey. All go to the grave, which is the place of all living. Then, we shall all go forward in our journey towards resurrection. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

CHAPTER XVII.

VER. 9. **The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.**—*The way of the righteous*:—It may seem a work of supererogation to say anything upon such a subject as righteousness. But the subject labours under some obscurity. Many seem to think that righteousness in the Old Testament means something entirely different from righteousness in the New. We are enabled by the New Testament distinctly to recognise that which is in itself eternal truth in the Old Testament as well as the New. The righteousness of faith is grounded in the loyalty of the soul to God, and consists in the manifestation of this loyalty in words, in thoughts, and in deeds. Here, cleanness of hands is spoken of—singleness of intent, perfect simplicity of motive. There is no righteousness without this to some extent. The text speaks of the perseverance of such a man. "He shall hold on his way." Still, all promises concerning the moral nature must necessarily be conditional. It does not follow with a mechanical certainty that every righteous soul shall hold on his way. He has a way. It is not every one in this world that has a way in the sense of the text. Some have no definite aim or way. Others have a way, but it is a wrong way. The righteous shall hold on his way. His way is before him, clear and plain, though steep. He has nothing to do but to keep on day by day in the Divinely appointed path, for every step brings him nearer to the goal. And the strength here spoken of is moral strength. It springs from energy of conviction, and grasp of faith, and fervour of resolution, and depth of emotion. They are of the new life, the sense of Divine life in the soul. If you will believe in God, do the right, and leave everything to Him, you also shall find that the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger. (*J. A. Picton, M.A.*) *The laws of spiritual progress*:—Weakness of all kinds is painful, inconvenient, and humiliating. So much indeed is power valued by us, that not a little of the world's hero-worship has been the ardent adoration of strength in some one of its three principal manifestations, of either physical, or intellectual, or moral might. And all three have a glory, though not an equal glory. Intellectual power, by comparison with spiritual power, has had a large, and on the whole, a growing share of glory assigned to it. But physical force has had the most extensive sway in the world, and the longest reign. Look—I. AT THE KIND OF STRENGTH AND PROGRESS THAT IS PROMISED IN THE TEXT TO THE RIGHTEOUS. Our text speaks of a strength whose greatest triumphs in this world are still future, as Christ's greatest triumphs in and over men are still future. It is a benign strength this that lies calmly resting on the sure promises and unchanging faithfulness of God. This kind of strength is moral and spiritual might, active, aggressive, victorious goodness. The strength of our text is the strength of right in vanquishing wrong, the strength of moral goodness in overcoming moral evil, both in its possessor and around him. This spiritual strength is counted weakness by the world, because its triumphs are not only like itself, spiritual, but they are often not immediate. Men who walk by sense, seeing not the things which are invisible, cannot wait God's time and way. And yet to conquer sin and self is man's best and greatest triumph. Every man's noblest battlefield lies within, not without himself; lies within, not without his fellow-man. In harmony with the world's prevailing false idea of greatness, the idol gods, and the human heroes that men have made or chosen for themselves, have for the most part been powerful, but not good. Look at the gods of the heathen. Superhuman in power always, but human, and almost infra-human, in character often. It is not moral and spiritual power, but grosser forms of power, that most people admire most. The suffering attitude of Jesus seemed to His contemporaries, and still seems to the eye of the natural man, the weakest of all Divine displays of power. And yet this in truth is not only the highest kind of power, but it is the mightiest in moral result. For the Cross of Christ is the very "power of God unto salvation." Here in the Cross of Christ we see more of the peculiar power of God "who is love," than anywhere else. Here lies the power of the Gospel. It is the revelation of God's rich grace and love to the evil. God instructs us to seek as our best personal attainment, the possession of a goodness so strong, and pure, and lofty, that evil from within us and from without us shall flee away ashamed and vanquished before its overcoming and subduing power. This strength needs to be all the more diligently cultivated by us because it is not natural to us. In our fallen state we are spiritually

weak. But this best kind of strength may be obtained. It is the life of God in the soul of man, and it re-creates in God's image the soul that it enters, and its presence becomes in part visible. The men in whom this life not only exists, but is abundant, by their very presence, both at rest and in action, exert a beneficent moral power and influence. These are the men from whose moral being a felt virtue goes forth that good men seek, and bad men shun. For there are men, every movement of whose mind creates currents of healthful, healing, spiritual influence, and such God-inspired men are strong. The text holds before us the encouraging prospect, that the really good man shall, by the inherent laws of goodness, go on his way, and become stronger and stronger in goodness, more and more successful in gaining victories over evil. Intellectual greatness we ought all profoundly to revere as one of God's best gifts to man; but we ought not to dishonour the Holy God and His moral image in man by an unholy worship of intellect as disjoined from goodness. How much even in the service of religion is talent often exalted above grace! View the text as a Divine direction, and also as a positive promise of success, to every renewed soul that is trying to make progress in the Divine life, and asks by what means he may become strong. An answer to this inquiry is much needed. II. WHO ARE THEY THAT OBTAIN THE STRENGTH PROMISED IN THE TEXT? All do not. The man who would be strong and hold on his way must be in God's sense "righteous, and keep his hands clean." 1. The righteous,—the upright, honest, virtuous, pious. Our obligations to God and man not only lie near together, but at many points intersect and overlap each other. Righteousness is a name which covers over and enters into the whole web of human duty. The Bible name "righteous" denotes a well-defined class of men who are not now what they once were, but have been "born again." Our text does not speak of any man in his natural unrenewed state; but it speaks of man when under a supernatural tuition, of man the subject of Divine grace. Life comes before strength, and is more important. Get life, and strength will follow. III. THE LAWS THAT REGULATE THIS GROWTH OF STRENGTH. The reasons why the righteous grow stronger are both natural and supernatural. Note—1. The operation of the natural law that the exercise of our faculties strengthens them. This is a law of the mind as well as a law of the body. The religion of the Bible perfectly harmonises with all Divine law. It is a reasonable service which yet rises above reason. Mature piety is ordinarily the ripened product of years well spent. 2. The righteous man who has clean hands holds on his way, and ever grows stronger through the ordinary operation of the great law of habit. Habit makes all things easier, and among others the most difficult Christian duties. The law of habit comes into action in favour of duty as well as in favour of sin. 3. The righteous man, and of clean hands, holds on his way, and waxes stronger and stronger by the teachings of experience. 4. The righteous man holds on his way, because religion is a life of which Christ is the source. But all life is much affected by food, climate, and exercise; and so is this higher life. Divine truth is the fit food of this life. 5. The great reason is that the righteous man's God and Father holds him up and strengthens him. And He is the living God. When others stumble and fall, the righteous man rises and stands upright, because God strengthens and upholds him. Clean hands, and such alone can lay a firm hold upon God, and lovingly constrain Him in His visits to leave a blessing behind Him. Polluted hands have no such power. The man who seeks and finds this Helper must hold on his way and grow stronger. The whole atmosphere of Scripture is strongly provocative of robust spiritual health. The Godward attitude continued in makes weak men to become strong, and strong men to become stronger and stronger. (*J. C. Macintosh.*) *The nature of the doctrine of the saint's final perseverance*:—I. A CHARACTER SPOKEN OF. "Righteous." As persons who are taught to discard their own righteousness, and are clothed upon with the righteousness of another. Clad in that righteousness, they are taught to live "soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world." II. THESE RIGHTEOUS ONES ARE DESCRIBED AS ON THEIR "WAY." There is but one way, and Jesus is that way—the way of acceptance with God, the way in which alone we can walk so as to please God. It is the only way of happiness, and may be a way of self-denial. III. THE PROMISE. "Shall hold on." It is as positive as language can express it. He shall do it. Discouragements he may have, and shall have; trial of his patience, his hope, and his love—this he stands continually in need of, day by day, and hour by hour; through want of watchfulness he may slumber; through want of diligence he may stumble; withholding prayer, he ceases to fight;

through self-confidence he may fall; but "the righteous shall hold on his way." It is the "mouth of the Lord that hath spoken it." (*J. H. Evans, M.A.*) *The hope of Job*:—What does "righteous" mean? We understand by it one in whom there is something more than a moral life; more than convictions of sin; more than religious impressions; more than sensations of joy arising from the Word of God; more even than one on whose mind there are certain influences of the Spirit; for the grace of God may enlighten the understanding, arouse the conscience, and move the affections, and yet with all this, the will may be unsubdued, and there may be no full and complete surrender of the heart to God. By the "righteous," then, we understand one who believes with the heart in Jesus. Nor is there any essential difference between the Old Testament and the New in this; for the righteous under the first dispensation, believed in a Saviour to come. The righteous now believe in a Saviour already come. A righteous man is one who trusts in a Redeemer; who, in a special sense, belongs to Christ, and in Christ to God. Of such an one the text speaks. It is a difficult way on which he holds his way. The word "his" refers to the righteous man, and yet it is God's way. The way which God has marked out for him; the way into which God has led him. It is no easy way. It is so narrow that you cannot carry the world with you along it; so steep, that if self-indulgent, you will never get up it; so rough, that if faint-hearted, you will fear the labour; and so long, that it requires much perseverance. But it is a happy way, the only happy way. It is a wonderful thing to see the righteous hold on his way; to see him out of weakness made strong, defeat changed into victory, his soul restored, his strength renewed. How are we to account for this triumph? The secret lies not in himself, but in God the Father who loved him, the Son who redeemed him, the Spirit who sanctifies him. (*George Wagner.*) *The saint's perseverance*:—The Christian is frequently compared to a traveller; but no traveller reaches his journey's end merely by starting upon the road. If it should be a journey of seven weeks' length, if he shall sit down after journeying six weeks, he certainly will not reach the goal of his desires. It is necessary, if I would reach a certain city, that I should go every mile of the road; for one mile would not take me there; nor if the city be a hundred miles distant, would ninety-nine miles bring me to its streets. I must journey all the length if I would reach the desired place. Frequently, in the New Testament, the Christian is compared to a runner—he runs in a race for a great prize; but it is not by merely starting, it is not by making a great spurt, it is not by distancing your rival for a little time, and then pulling up to take breath, or sauntering to either side of the road, that you will win the race: we must never stop till we have passed the winning-post; there must be no loitering throughout the whole of the Christian career, but onward, like the Roman charioteer, with glowing wheels, we must fly more and more rapidly till we actually obtain the crown. The Christian is sometimes, by the apostle Paul, who somewhat delights to quote from the ancient games, compared to the Grecian wrestler, or boxer. But it is of little avail for the champion to give the foe one blow or one fall: he must continue in the combat until his adversary is beaten. Our spiritual foes will not be vanquished until we enter where the conquerors receive their crowns, and therefore we must continue in fighting attitude. It is in vain for us to talk of what we have done or are doing just now, he that continueth to the end, the same shall be saved, and none but he. The believer is commonly compared to a warrior—he is engaged in a great battle, a holy war. Like Joshua, he has to drive out the Canaanites, that have chariots of iron, before he can fully take possession of his inheritance; but it is not the winning of one battle that makes a man a conqueror: nay, though he should devastate one province of his enemies' territories, yet, if he should be driven out by-and-by, he is beaten in the campaign, and it will yield him but small consolation to win a single battle, or even a dozen battles, if the campaign as a whole should end in his defeat. It is not commencing as though the whole world were to be cleared by one display of fire and sword, but continuing, going from strength to strength, from victory to victory, that makes the man the conqueror of his foe. The Christian is also called a disciple or scholar. But who does not know that the boy by going to school for a day or two does not therefore become wiser? If the lad should give himself most diligently to his grammar for six months, yet he will never become a linguist unless he shall continue perseveringly in his classic studies. The great mathematicians of our times did not acquire their science in a single year; they pressed forward with aching brow; they burnt the midnight oil and tortured their

brains; they were not satisfied to rest, for they could never have become masters of their art if they had lingered on the road. The believer is also called a builder, but you know of whom it was said, "This man began to build, but was not able to finish!" The digging out of the foundation is most important, and the building up of stone upon stone is to be carried on with diligence; but though the man should half finish the walls, or even complete them, yet if he do not roof in the structure, he becomes a laughing-stock to every passer-by. A good beginning, it is said, is more than half, but a good ending is more than the whole. Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Christian's persistency*:—That master allegorist, John Bunyan, has not pictured Christian as carried to heaven while asleep in an easy chair. He makes Christian lose his burden at the cross-foot, he ascribes the deliverance of the man from the burden of his sin, entirely to the Lord Jesus; but he represents him as climbing the Hill Difficulty—ay, and on his hands and knees too. Christian has to descend into the Valley of Humiliation, and to tread that dangerous pathway through the gloomy horrors of the Shadow of Death. He has to be urgently watchful to keep himself from sleeping in the Enchanted Ground. Nowhere is he delivered from the necessities incident to the way, for even at the last he fords the black river, and struggles with its terrible billows. Effort is used all the way through, and you that are pilgrims to the skies will find it to be no allegory, but a real matter of fact: your soul must gird up her loins; you need your pilgrim's staff and armour, and you must foot it all the way to heaven, contending with giants, fighting with lions, and combating Apollyon himself. (*Ibid.*) *Completing the good work*:—The present life is the only scene of probation of man; if he should fail in the scene in which he is now placed, he fails for ever. How encouraging, then, to be assured that he who has begun the good work will carry it on amid all the perils of our present state, until we reach the state where no danger can arrive. I. THE CHARACTER OF THOSE WHO ARE HERE INTRODUCED. They have already commenced the course of the Christian life. The expression "clean hands" denotes their freedom from those pollutions which are connected with human nature in its unconverted state. The language further suggests an open and honest profession of their attachment to the ways of God and righteousness. The man who partakes of this character will necessarily be concerned that he may hold on his way, and wax stronger and stronger. II. THE CONSIDERATIONS WHICH LED YOU TO SEPARATE YOURSELF FROM THE WORLD, AND TO DEVOTE YOURSELF TO GOD. All these claims are now at hand, and possess all the claim they ever possessed. Hold on your way, and look to the exercise of that cleanness of spirit which every honest mind will be concerned to possess. Look to the exercise of purity of intention, to the testimony which God has connected with His Word, that it may come home to your heart, and work mightily there. (*R. Vaughan.*) *Clean-handed righteousness*:—I. THE PERSONS SPOKEN OF. The "righteous" are those who have "clean hands." The former term describes their state, the latter their character. Righteous is a forensic term. There can only be two ways of being righteous—either by never having sinned, or by being delivered, in some way or other, from the condemnation due to sin. The former applies to the angels. For fallen man another kind of righteousness must be devised, which is, the imputation of Christ's righteousness unto him. II. WHAT IS SAID CONCERNING THEM? "Shall hold on his way." They are going onward in the way to heaven; in this way they meet many obstacles—as from false brethren, false teachers, false waymarks. There are obstacles both in the way of faith and of conduct. Nevertheless, they shall "hold on their way." This must necessarily follow. 1. From a consideration of the character of God. He is faithful and immutable. 2. From a consideration of the death of Christ. He died for us, not leaving it doubtful what effects would be produced by His death. 3. From a consideration of the nature and constitution of the covenant of grace. It is God's will that saints should have strong consolation, upon the ground of their final perseverance. 4. From a consideration of the nature of real conversion, and the work of God the Holy Spirit. 5. From a consideration of the intercession of Christ, which must be ever prevalent. 6. From a consideration of the nature of that principle which is implanted within them. It is an immortal principle; an "incorruptible seed." (*John Davies.*) *The godly man*:—Consider the character in the text. I. HE IS RIGHTEOUS. The character in the text is right with God. Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. II. HE IS HOLY. He has "clean hands."

The hand is the instrument of action; it is moved by the heart—the pulsations of which are right, and so he can lift them up to God "without wrath or doubting." He is not afraid for God to see them, nor for Him to know the principles whence these actions emanate. A man has just as much religion in his business as he has in his closet; the same in the counting-house as he has on his knees. There is no reason why labour should not be a psalm, and commerce a ritual in the best sense of the word. The time shall come when "holiness to the Lord" shall be written upon the bells of the horses; and then, whether men eat or drink, or whatever they do, they "do all for the glory of God." III. HE IS PERSISTENT. "He shall hold on," &c. At an important period of his existence, Gibbon said of his prospects, "All is dark and doubtful." Of this character's future, all is bright and hopeful—"Glory, honour, immortality, eternal life," are in the future. "He shall hold on his way." The wind, and tide, and sea may be against the steamers which reach your port, but through the power of the steam within, they hold on their way. Outward circumstances may appear to be all against the character of the text; but by the power of the principle within he "holds on his way." This is a moral duty. Final perseverance is an article for the code, rather than for the creed. This is a law of the Divine life. The leaven is put in to leaven the whole lump. You must go on, or recede; you cannot stand still. The purest water that ever fell from heaven will corrupt if it be stagnant. IV. HE IS GROWING. The Bible beckons you on to better things, and urges you to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is also confirmed by experience. There is also a power in the habit of goodness. The more you exercise faith, the easier you can do so. The more you do for God, the more delightful becomes the exercise. In every conflict with hell in which you conquer, you learn the tactics of war, and become mightier for further engagements. What a bright vista opens before the soul which is morally right! (*G. Warner.*) *The penitence of perfect Job* (ver. 9, with ch. xlii. 5, 6):—1. It is not possible to set out the salient features of *Job's strength* with even a slight approximation to completeness, without taking into account the immense energy he derived from his burning consciousness of unimpeachable integrity. Not that Job made no mistakes. He made many. He misconceived God's methods, misjudged God's heart, flung censures to right of him and censures to left of him, spoke rashly and petulantly. But never did he sink into an insincerity, or clothe himself with a sham; but maintained an unbroken consciousness of integrity of spirit and purity of heart. Integrity is power. Sincerity is a high form of human energy. Righteousness as a passion of the heart, and an element in character and life, is a manifest and undeniable source of imperial force. Wickedness is, in spite of seeming strength, actual imbecility. 2. Nevertheless, the closing picture of this hero, Job, is not that of a conqueror, but a confessor; not of an enthroned prince, but a kneeling penitent. This is not what we expected. The language of genuine sorrow and deep self-abasement loads his lips, and his far-shining integrity is not worth a moment's lip-defence by the side of his failure to keep the law of God. Sincerity is good, but it is not sinlessness. Indisputable integrity of purpose, and inflexible honesty of heart, are jewels of unspeakable worth, but they will not atone for rash speech, misjudgment of God, and hatred of weak and faulty men. Be true, by all means; but think of Job's penitence, and remember that the heroic virtue of integrity and wholeness, superlatively good as it is, is not enough. 3. It is the special charm of Job's story that it exhibits this high-strung and strenuous integrity dwelling in the same spirit with the acutest penitence and throbbing self-loathing. We can recognise these qualities apart, and appreciate them in their singleness, but that they should blend in the same life, tenant the same spirit, and be sources of power to the same character, conflicts with our habitual thought. Yet the minds of culminating power in the vast brotherhood of the world's workers and redeemers, have not been more deeply marked by their persistent devotion to purity of thought, uncompromising fidelity to fact, and aspiration after perfection, than by their quivering sensitiveness to the smallness of their achievements, acute sense of personal fault, and prevailing consciousness—often attended by spasms of weakening pain—of absolute failure. The righteous Job in his penitence anticipates the Church of the first-born in heaven. It is fidelity to the clearest laws of advancing human life which marries in one and the same progressive spirit, inflexible consecration to reality and right, and deep and true penitence for failure and sin. 4. Whence came this penitential mood? What induced this change of feeling? The unex-

pected revolution is effected by the revelation of God to the eye of the soul. "Mine eye seeth Thee." He passes out of the realm of mere "hearsays" about God, to that of inward experience and actual communion. The eyes give fuller and clearer knowledge than the ear. Job knows God as he did not know Him before. The *character* of his knowledge is changed, heightened, vitalised, intensified, personalised. 5. Was not Job led to this renewing sight of God by the *voice* that addressed, startled, and overwhelmed him out of the whirlwind, forcing in upon his mind an oppressive and overwhelming conception of the creative and administrative power of the Almighty? Is not the *ear* the way to the spiritual eye, as surely as the sight of God is the way to repentance, and repentance the way to life? 6. Here, then, is one signal value of the knowledge of God, even of His immense power and greatness. It is the ground and spring of a true conception of ourselves, of our limitations and possibilities, our actual condition and ethical ideal. 7. Such God-inspired penitence swiftly vindicates itself in the pure sincerity and holy brotherliness it creates, and the reconciliations it effects between man and man, and man and his lot. Sin divides; repentence unites. Humbled before the Lord, Job becomes a priest. Set the tree of penitence in such a Divine soil, and it must bear this kind of fruit. (*J. Clifford, D.D.*) *The righteous holding on his way*:—I remind you that while final perseverance is necessary, it is extremely difficult. The way itself renders it so. The way to heaven is no smooth-shaven lawn. 1. It is a rough road, up-hill, down-dale, across rivers, and over mountains. 2. Moreover, the road is long. It is a life-long road. 3. Besides that, the road is so contrary to fallen nature. It is a way of faith. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 10. **I cannot find one wise man among you.**—*The wise are not always wise*:—All the ways of sin and error are ways of folly. But was not Job censorious and rigid, too bold and adventurous to speak thus concerning men of such gravity, authority, and reputation for wisdom and learning, yea for holiness too, as these three were? Job did not speak this from any ill-will to his friends. 1. It is no fault to speak of men as we find them. 2. A wise man may do or speak that which is a just forfeiture of his present reputation for wisdom. 3. Wise men are rarely to be found. There are store of subtle men, and crafty men there are too many; but the wise man is a rare jewel. 4. Wise men are apt to show themselves unwise in expounding and judging the providences and dealings of God towards men. The works of the most wise God are all right, but few men are wise enough to pick out the right meaning of them. This arises—(1) From the seeming confusions which are in the world. God doth not keep a method, nor govern Himself by precedents. No man can tell the way He will go, by looking into the way which He hath gone. (2) From the narrowness of man's heart, who, measuring God by his own line, and comparing what God hath done by what he would do, cannot attain unto the righteousness of God in what He doth. It is excellent wisdom to know how to interpret and improve the dealings of God with ourselves or others. The grossest misinterpretation of his dealings is, to conclude from them the guilt or innocency of men, or the love and hatred of God. (*Joseph Caryl.*)

Ver. 11. **My purposes are broken off.**—*Broken purposes*:—What mental anguish is concentrated in these few words! They raise the sufferings of Job from one of mere physical pain to one of mental despair. Let us glance, first, at some objects of human ambition—their wreck, their loss, and their gain. I. THE CHERISHED PURPOSES OF LIFE. The generality of persons live without forming any purposes at all. They drift along the current, and laying aside the strength and glory of manhood are nothing but logs. The true purposes of life are not mere languid dreams, or objectless hopes, or anticipations of pleasure, and we must not confound those with the ambition alluded to by Job. But they are the thought-out plans and aspirations of a vigorous mind in true earnest. 1. Sometimes those purposes are selfish. 2. Sometimes these ambitions are philanthropic. 3. Sometimes these purposes are religious. There is the longing to lead a notably pious life, to be a pattern for others to copy, to bring up a godly family, to convert sinners, and to be worthy soldiers of the cross. II. THE BROKEN PURPOSES OF LIFE. How often are ambitions formed; how seldom are they realised! Our purposes are always being broken. We have had a cherished plant, and longed to see it flower. But the frost has nipped the bud, and it has withered and drooped. We have had a loved child for whom we cherished a

hope of carrying forward the work of our lives. But the loved one has been taken from us altogether or has turned out a sorrow instead of a joy. We have intended to go hither or thither, but the storm has intervened and we have been left behind. III. THE HAND OF GOD IN THE PURPOSES OF LIFE. Job did not realise that his purposes had been cut off by God, and that there was an object underlying the sorrow which filled his heart. Neither do men understand that there may be a reason that they cannot fathom which has hindered the success of their cherished hopes. Eternity will show that man's purposes are broken—1. Because if successful they would have been injurious to ourselves. Many souls have been saved by being kept from riches or power. Many have been kept from ruin by having their cherished idol taken away. 2. Because they might work some evil for others. We often see instances of misdirected philanthropy. But how seldom we can see behind the scenes, and how little do we know what will really benefit our fellow-creatures! 3. Because God sees that we are not fitted for the work. 4. Because He has higher and better purposes for us. 5. Because He desires to bring us to a state of perfect trust in Himself. He crushes our plans to show us how weak, how foolish we are, and to lay us low in humility. How much wiser are His arrangements! (*J. J. S. Bird.*) *Broken purposes*:—I. MEN FORM PURPOSES. Mind is active and made to think. Men speculate and resolve. Pleasure and wealth, honour and worldly position eagerly sought. II. THESE PURPOSES NOT ALWAYS FULFILLED. Broken off as threads of the web cut off from the loom (Isa. xxxii.). Impossible to realise. Providence intervenes; man proposeth, God disposeth. Greeks represented the fates as spinning the threads of human life. Procrastination prevents performance. Satan hinders (1 Thess. ii. 18). III. THIS IS A SAD FACT IN EXPERIENCE. "My" purposes. Good resolutions formed and never carried out; plans adopted and forsaken; principles never come to maturity, and life wasted in attempting, and nothing done! (*The Study.*) *Broken purposes*:—The world is full of broken columns. Every heart carries its own crowded cemetery. The cemeteries in which you lay dead flesh and bones are not the true cemeteries. The graveyards are in the heart. "My purposes are broken off"; this is the cry of a disappointed man; the muffled moan of a baffled hope. It is not the peculiar cry of a Jew, or of a Gentile, of an Orientalist, or an Occidentalist, it is simply the voice of universal man. God has graciously enriched the world with example-men; men who have been made to show in their melancholy experience how vain is ambition, how uncertain is expectation, how unstable is strength. Job is such a man. I. AS REVEALING THE SPECULATIVE SIDE OF HUMAN LIFE. All men have purposes. Man cannot live by history alone; he must strengthen himself by hope. Man puts out his hand and plucks of the tree of to-morrow. Every man speculates concerning the future, and feels himself inspired as he dwells on the charms of the coming time. Man's power of speculation always exceeds man's power of realisation. The poetic fancy is in advance of the toiling hand. The wanderer's mind is at the destination long before the wanderer's foot has taken the first step of the journey! The power of speculation and the power of realisation are not co-ordinate. We paint many a fire which we never can enkindle. We plant oliveyards which bear no fruit, and dig wells which hold no water. Yet we would not give up this power of projecting ourselves into the future! We would not like to be barred in the small prison called "to-day." Not a man but is pleasing himself with some dream of fancy. Each is saying, "The times will change for the better; the cold winds will die out; the sky will be a cloudless arch; I shall walk on a carpet of violets through palaces of perfume." II. AS DISCLOSING THE REAL SIDE OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE. "Purposes"!—that is poetry; "Broken"!—that is history! This is a sad combination of words! Life is full of half-built towers. Men had begun to build, but were not able to finish. Life is a pile of fragments. Nowhere is there aught complete. Life is all beginnings; there is no finished pinnacle! III. AS SUGGESTING MAN'S TRUE COURSE AS A SPECULATIST AND AS A WORKER. "Go to now, ye that say to-day or to-morrow," &c. There is a "to-night" between to-day and to-morrow. Learn—1. All purposes against God must be broken off. 2. Form the loftiest purposes for God, and they will be fulfilled. 3. Remember the moral import of uncertainty. (*Anon.*)

Ver. 13. **If I wait, the grave is mine house.**—*The house of the grave*:—I. DESCRIBE THE HOUSE. 1. The grave is a very spacious house. 2. It is very

dark and dreary. 3. It is a house of silence. It is empty. 4. It is the house of corruption. 5. It is the house of oblivion. II. ALL MEN ARE GOING TO THIS HOUSE. 1. This lot is ours by the appointment of God. 2. Ever since God appointed death, He has been carrying mankind to the grave in a constant and uninterrupted succession. 3. We not only see the mortality in others, but feel it coming upon ourselves. III. WHY WE SHOULD KEEP THIS SERIOUS TRUTH IN MIND. 1. Because God requires men to keep their mortality in view. 2. God takes many methods to impress this important truth upon men's hearts. 3. It is necessary in order to their forming all their worldly schemes with wisdom and propriety. 4. In order to form a just estimate of the world and its inhabitants. 5. In order to prepare them to endure the trials and afflictions of the present life with patience and fortitude. 6. It will have a direct tendency to prepare men for death when it comes. Improvement. Every way of thinking and acting is sinful, which tends to banish the thoughts of death from our minds. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*)

Ver. 15. **And where is now my hope?**—*Where now my hope?*—I. OCCASIONS IN LIFE WHICH FORCE UPON US THIS INQUIRY. 1. In those seasons when the troubles of life press heavily. 2. When our human dependencies have failed. 3. When the terrors of a guilty conscience seize us. 4. The question irresistibly presses upon all as death seems to approach. II. THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF THOSE WHO HAVE NOT PROVIDED AGAINST THESE SEASONS OF TRIAL. 1. All earthly hopes are, in their very nature, inadequate to our exigencies. 2. All the hopes which are derived from the world and the creatures are temporal in their duration. 3. If they could endure and go with us into eternity, or the separate state of souls,—yet they would not stand the test of the final day of account. III. SEE THE NECESSITY OF CLOSE SELF-EXAMINATION. 1. This examination should refer to the object of our hope. 2. We should examine whether we have a well-grounded and scriptural prospect of attaining to the object of our hope. It is possible that we may practise self-delusion. 3. Your hope may be good as to its object, its foundation may be the work of Jesus Christ, an anchor sure and steadfast, but have you a valid title to appropriate that hope to yourself? 4. Inquire whether your hope has borne any trials. Application—(1) The discovery that our hope is good, and entereth into that within the veil, may well afford exultation. 2. But if our hope is found vain and weak, or absolutely false, it is high time to abandon it and seek a better. (*The Evangelist.*) *Hope held out to anxious inquirers*:—I. THE INQUIRY. "Where is my hope?" 1. Is your hope in the world? This is the case with multitudes. Then your hope is set on that which is not good. 2. Is your hope in sin? Is that possible? The pleasures of sin are but for a season, the pains of sin are for eternity. 3. Is your hope in your works? This was the case with the ancient Pharisees. They "went about to establish their own righteousness," but failed in the attempt. All who are "of the works of the law" are under it as a covenant; and as such it requires perfect obedience, or there is no justification by it. 4. Is your hope in your knowledge? "Knowledge puffeth up." "The Kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." 5. Is your hope in Christ? Then it is in the right place. The hope of Job was in him—the Redeemer; so was the hope of the primitive Christians. II. THE CASES IN WHICH INQUIRERS ARE WARRANTED TO HOPE. We are not warranted to hold out hope in every case. You must be made to feel your guilt, before you will give up your false hope. You must be made to feel your insufficiency before you will apply to Christ for relief. 1. If you repent you are warranted to hope. 2. If you believe, you are warranted to hope. 3. If you obey, you are warranted to hope. 4. If you love Christ, you are warranted to hope. 5. So you are, if you love the house of prayer. 6. And if you love the brethren. 7. And if you seek the Divine glory. III. THE QUALITIES OF THE HOPE WHICH THE GOSPEL INSPIRES. 1. It is a Divine hope. 2. A lively hope. 3. A joyful hope. 4. A liberal hope. 5. A permanent hope. In conclusion, let us consider the inquiry in the text in reference to ourselves, and thus endeavour to make a suitable improvement of the subject. Where is now my hope? (*Thomas Hitchin.*)

CHAPTER XVIII.

VERS. 1–21. **Then answered Bildad the Shuhite.** — *The danger of denouncing wickedness* :—How wonderfully well the three comforters painted the portrait of wickedness! Nothing can be added to their delineation of sin. Every touch is the touch of a master. If you would see what wickedness is, read the speeches which are delivered in the Book of Job. Nothing can be added to their grim truthfulness. But there is a great danger about this; there is a danger that men may make a trade of denouncing wickedness. There is also a danger that men may fall into a mere habit of making prayers. This is the difficulty of all organised and official spiritual life. It is a danger which we cannot set aside; it is, indeed, a peril we can hardly modify; but there is a horrible danger in having to read the Bible at an appointed hour, to offer a prayer at a given stroke of the clock, and to assemble for worship upon a public holiday. But all this seems to be unavoidable; the very spirit of order requires it; there must be some law of consent and fellowship, otherwise public worship would be impossible; but consider the tremendous effect upon the man who has to conduct that worship! It is a terrible thing to have to denounce sin every Sunday twice at least; it is enough to ruin the soul to be called upon to utter holy words at mechanical periods. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *The second discourse of Bildad* :—We may look at the words of Bildad in this chapter in two aspects: as representing the reprehensible in conduct, and the retributive in destiny. I. THE REPREHENSIBLE IN CONDUCT. There are four things implied in the second, third, and fourth verses, which must be regarded as elements of evil. 1. There is wordiness. "How long will it be ere ye make an end of words?" Job had spoken much. Wordiness implies superficiality. Copiousness of speech is seldom found in connection with profundity of thought. But it promotes, as well as implies, infertility of thought. The man of fluent utterance gets on so well without thinking, that he loses the habit of reflection. Nor is it less an evil to the hearer. The wordy man wastes their precious time, exhausts their patience, and often irritates his auditors. 2. There is unthoughtfulness. "Mark, and afterwards we will speak." He insinuates that Job had spoken without thought or intelligence, and calls upon him to deliberate before he speaks. Unthoughtfulness is an evil of no small magnitude. 3. There is contemptuousness. "Wherefore are we counted as beasts, and reputed vile in your sight?" Job had said in the preceding chapter, "Thou hast hid their heart from understanding: therefore shalt thou not exalt them." Bildad perhaps refers to this, and insinuates that Job had treated him and those who were on his side as the beasts of the field—"senseless and polluted." Contempt for men is an evil: it is a moral wrong. 4. There is rage. "He teareth himself in his anger." Bildad means to indicate that Job was in a paroxysm of fury, that he had thrown aside the reins of reason, and that he was borne on the whirlwind of exasperated passion. Hence he administers reproof: "Shall the earth be forsaken for thee?" As if he had said, Thou speakest as if everything and everybody must give way to thee; as if the interests of all others must yield to thee; and that thou must have the whole world to thyself, and all of us must clear off. "Shall the rock be removed out of his place?" As if he had said, It would seem from thy reckless speech that thou wouldest have the most immutable things in nature to suit thy comfort and convenience. Rage is bad. When man gives way to temper he dishonours his nature, he imperils his well-being, he wars with God and the order of the universe. Now we are far enough from justifying Bildad in charging these evils upon Job; albeit he was right in treating them as evils. II. THE RETRIBUTIVE IN DESTINY. What are the retributive calamities that pursue and overtake the sinner? 1. Desolation. "The light of the wicked shall be put out." Light, by the Orientals, was ever used as the emblem of prosperity. The extinction of the light therefore is an image of utter desolation. Sin evermore makes desolate. 2. Embarrassment. "The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own council shall cast him down," &c. In every step of the sinner's path it may be said "the snare is laid for him in the ground, and a trap for him by the way." Truly the wicked is snared by the work of his own hands. 3. Alarms. "Terrors shall make him afraid on every side, and shall drive him to his feet," &c. (vers. 11–14). Fear is at once the offspring and avenger of sin. The guilty conscience peoples the whole sphere of life with the grim emissaries of retribution. Fear is one of hell's

most tormenting fiends. 4. Destruction. "It shall dwell in his tabernacle because it is none of his," &c. (vers. 15–21). His home will be gone; his tabernacle will be "none of his" any longer. His memory will be gone. "His remembrance shall perish from the earth." Once his name was heard in the street, pronounced perhaps often in the day by merchant, manufacturer, clerk, &c., but it has passed away from all tongues. His presence will be gone. "He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world." His progeny will be gone. "He shall neither have son nor nephew among his people." His nearest relations will soon follow him to the grave, and none will appear to make mention of his name. Suffering must follow sin, as certain as season follows season. Hell is bound by chains stronger than those that bind the planets to the sun. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 4. **Shall the earth be forsaken for thee?**—*The folly of discontent:*—Some of Job's friends said to him, "Shall the earth be forsaken for thee, and shall the rock be removed out of its place?" So I may say to every discontented, impatient heart, "What! shall the providence of God change its course for thee? Dost thou think it such a weak thing that, because it does not please thee, it must alter its course? Be thou content, or not content, the providence of God will go on." When you are in a ship at sea that has all her sails spread with a full gale of wind, and swiftly sailing, can you make it still by running up and down in the ship? No more can you make the providence of God change its course with your fretting; it will go on with power, do what thou canst. (*J. Burroughs.*)

Vers. 5, 6. **The light of the wicked shall be put out.**—The reference is to a lamp that was suspended from the ceiling. The Arabians are fond of this image. Thus they say, "Bad fortune has extinguished my lamp." Of a man whose hopes are remarkably blasted, they say, "He is like a lamp which is immediately extinguished if you let it sink in the oil" (see Schultens). The putting out of the lamp is to the Orientals an image of utter desolation. It is the universal custom to have a light burning in their houses at night. "The houses of Egypt in modern times are never without lights; they burn lamps all the night long, and in every occupied apartment. So requisite to the comfort of a family is this custom reckoned, and so imperious is the power which it exercises, that the poorest people would rather retrench part of their food than neglect it."—Paxton. It is not improbable that this custom prevailed in former times in Arabia, as it now does in Egypt; and this consideration will give increased beauty and force to the passage. (*Albert Barnes.*) *Three sorts of light:*—Moral, spiritual, civil. 1. Moral light is the light of wisdom, prudence, and understanding. In this sense some Rabbins understand the text; as if he had said, the wicked man shall be made a very fool, destitute of wit, reason, understanding, and ability to judge or know what evil is upon him, or what is good for him. The spirit of counsel shall be taken from him. That is a sore judgment. 2. There is spiritual light, and that is double. The light of the knowledge of God, and the light of comfort from God. The knowledge we receive from God is light; and the joy we receive from God is light. Some interpret the peace of this spiritual light. Though a wicked man, an hypocrite, hath a great measure of this light, yet his light shall be put out, as Christ threatens (Matt. xiii. 12). 3. A civil light: that is, the light of outward prosperity. And so these words are a gradation, teaching us that, not only whatsoever a carnal man reckons his greatest splendour, but what he calls his smallest ray of temporal blessedness, shall be wrapt in darkness and obscurity. Outward prosperity may be called "light" upon a threefold consideration. (1) Because as light refresheth and cheereth the spirits, so doth outward prosperity and the presence of worldly accommodations. (2) Light helps us on in our work; no man can work until he have either the natural light of the sun and fire, or some artificial light. Prosperity and peace carry us on in our worldly affairs. 3. Light makes us conspicuous: we are seen what we are in the light. Thus outward prosperity makes men appear. Poverty joins with obscurity. (*Joseph Caryl.*) **The light shall be dark in his tabernacle.**—*A plea for the idiot:*—The text is part of Bildad's description of a wicked man. The description might, however, be adapted to represent weakness and deficiency, as well as wickedness. Those who are of radically weak understanding may be spoken of thus: "The light shall be dark in his tabernacle." There is a fourfold

light in our nature, placed there by our Creator, the Father of our spirits—the light of the understanding, the light of the judgment, the light of the conscience (including the whole moral sense), and the light of the religious sensibility. This light may be diminished, nay, even extinguished, by wickedness. Sin reduces the natural light within us, and continuous sinning involves constant decrease in that light. Sins in the body and sins against the body lessen the light of the understanding, and reduce the power of mental conception, and the power of thought. All sin perverts the judgment, scars the conscience, and blunts the moral sense. By continuing in sin there is a hardening process carried on, so that sin is at length committed without fear, or remorse, or regret. All sin tends to destroy faith in God, and to stop intercourse with God. The whole tendency of sin is to reduce the light within him. But there is a Deliverer from this position; there is a Saviour from this condition. . . . There is, in some cases, a natural deficiency of the light of which we have been speaking—a natural defect in conscience, understanding, judgment, and religious sensibility—a deep and radical defect. This is idiocy. "The light is dark in the tabernacle." What can be done in such cases? Five things. 1. Whatever latent capacity is possessed may be developed—power of observation, and of speech, power of attention and acquisition, power of thought and feeling, power of skill and labour, moral and religious power. The idiot is not a broken vessel, but an unfilled vessel; not a broken candlestick, but a candlestick with a feeble lamp. 2. The external condition may be made comfortable and pleasant, and favourable to the idiot's improvement. The dwelling may be made wholesome and attractive, and may present objects to the eye which shall call out the imagination, and evoke healthy sentiment and feeling. 3. All the energy of the body and of the spirit which is manifested may be directed into the channels of usefulness. 4. The almost insupportable burden of providing for an idiot child in the family whose means are scanty and insufficient may be shared or entirely borne by Christian benevolence. 5. A refuge from observation, and mockery, and injudicious treatment, and from ill-treatment, may be provided for idiots who are not poor. On all grounds it is most undesirable for those who are distinctly idiotic to live with those whose condition is sound. Consider the claims of idiots upon us Christians. The birth of idiots is a great mystery. It is one of the mysteries that would crush us if we did not look up. Why does God permit and inflict idiocy? It cannot come from malevolence in God. All we can say is, God willeth, and it must be right. Children smitten through their parents have a strong claim—the strongest possible claim—upon Christian benevolence. We may not be kept back from providing for the idiot by the fact that the affliction is sometimes directly traceable to sin in the parents and other ancestors. (*Samuel Martin, M.A.*)

Ver. 12. **His strength shall be hunger-bitten.**—*The hunger-biter:*—I. A CURSE WHICH WILL BE FULFILLED UPON THE UNGODLY. It is not said that *they* are hunger-bitten, but that their *strength* is so; and if their strength is hunger-bitten, what must their weakness be? When a man's strength is bitten with hunger, what a hunger must be raging throughout the whole of his nature! A large proportion of men make their gold to be their strength, their castle, and high tower. But every ungodly man ought to know that riches are not for ever, and often they take to themselves wings and flee away. If this hunger does not come upon the ungodly man during the former part of his life, it will come to him at the close of it. II. THE KIND OF DISCIPLINE THROUGH WHICH GOD PUTS THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS WHEN HE MEANS TO SAVE THEM. Many people are very religious, but are not saved. When God means to save a man, the hunger of the heart comes in and devours all his boasted excellence. Some are very satisfied because, in addition to a commendable life, they have performed certain ceremonies to which they impute great sanctity. May your strength be hunger-bitten if you are resting in anything which is external and unspiritual. III. THERE ARE MANY OF GOD'S SERVANTS WHOSE STRENGTH IS LAMENTABLY HUNGER-BITTEN. They may be hunger-bitten through not feeding upon the Word of God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 14. **His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, and it shall bring him to the king of terrors.**—*The confidence of the wicked:*—The world understands by the word "wicked" one who offends against the law of conscience,—

one who breaks the second table of the law, the only table which it thinks important. Scripture means by it one who violates his relationship to God,—who transgresses the first table of the law. The term "wicked" has much more reference to the state of our hearts towards God than their state before man. Bildad shows the effects of wickedness. I. ON THE WICKED MAN HIMSELF (vers. 7, 8). The great point in these verses is the certainty with which he brings misery upon himself. His very sins are made his chastisement. II. ON HIS FAMILY (ver. 6). "The light shall be darkened in his tabernacle." In some Eastern countries a lamp is suspended from the ceiling of each room, and kept burning all the night, so that the house is full of light. And so, in the dwellings of the godly, there is light—the light of God's presence. But in the dwellings of the ungodly there is no such light, and no blessing. And with the absence of this there is also, very often, the absence of family union and love. Very different is the Christian's confidence. It rests upon a faithful and unchanging Saviour. Its roots strike deep into the everlasting hills. (*George Wagner.*) **It shall bring him to the king of terrors.** — *Death is terrible:* — Under a threefold consideration. 1. If we consider the antecedents, the forerunners or harbingers of death, which are pains, sicknesses, and diseases. 2. If we consider the nature of death. What is death? Death is a disunion; all disunions are troublesome, and some are terrible. Those are most terrible which rend that from us which is nearest to us. Death is also a privation, and a total privation. Death is such a privation, as from which there can be no return to nature. 3. In regard of the consequents. Rottenness and corruption consume the dead, and darkness covers them in the grave. We may make a threefold gradation of the terribleness of death. (1) To a godly man, when his spiritual state is unsettled. (2) When his worldly estate is well settled, when he hath deeply engaged in the creature, and his earthly mountain apparently stands strong. (3) Death is most terrible to those who, though they have the knowledge of God, and outwardly profess the Gospel of Christ, yet walk contrary to it. It should be our study, as it is our wisdom, to make this "king of terrors" a kind of "king of comfort" to us. Many believers have attained to this. A believer moves on these principles. 1. That death cannot break the bond of the covenant between God and us. 2. Death may break the union between the soul and the body, but it cannot break the union between the soul and Christ. This outlives death. 3. The apostle asserts that the sting of death is out. 4. Scripture calls death a sleep or rest. 5. Death puts a period to our earthly sorrows, and we have no reason to be sorry for that. 6. It is called a "going to God," in whom we shall have an eternal enjoyment. 7. It is a dying to live, as well as a dying from life. (*Joseph Caryl.*)

CHAPTER XIX.

VERS. 1-29. **Then Job answered and said.** — *Complaints and confidences:* —I. JOB BITTERLY COMPLAINING. 1. He complains of the conduct of his friends, and especially their want of sympathy. (1) They exasperated him with their words. (2) With their persistent hostility. (3) With their callousness. (4) With their assumed superiority. Nothing tends more to aggravate a man's suffering than the heartless and wordy talk of those who controvert his opinions in the hour of his distress. 2. He complains of the conduct of his God. God had "overthrown and confounded him": had "refused him a hearing and hedged up his way." He complains that he was utterly "deprived of his honours and his hope." God had even treated him as "an enemy, and sent troops of calamities to overwhelm him." God had put "all society against him." These complainings reveal—(1) a most lamentable condition of existence; (2) considerable imperfections in moral character. II. JOB FIRMLY CONFIDING. He still held on to his faith in God as the vindicator of his character. 1. His confidence arose from faith in a Divine vindicator. 2. A vindicator who would one day appear on the earth. 3. Whom he would personally see for himself. 4. Who would so thoroughly clear him that his accusers would be filled with self-accusation. "But ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?" (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 6, 7. **Know now that God has overthrown me.** — *The difficulties of unbelief* :—One thing is to be noticed, with both Job and his friends the existence of God is a part of the problem, not to be discharged from it even hypothetically. The misfortunes of the good, the prosperity of the wicked, the inequalities and the caprices of fate—these are just what have to be reconciled with the existence of a just and all-powerful God. The discussion starts from the supposition of a temporal Providence. All the debate is on what the debaters take to be religious ground. In a certain sense, the idea of God introduces a difficulty into the discussion. If we could look out upon the world as if it had no moral order dependent upon the will of One infinitely good and wise, then the particular difficulty of reconciling things as they are with any worthy conception of Divine power and goodness would suddenly disappear. It is suggested that, when a belief in God is dropped, the difficulty and confusion will disappear. The world, it is true, will be no brighter for the abandonment of faith; but at least no delusive marshfires will lead us astray from the true objects of life. We shall know neither whence we came, nor whither we are going; but we shall live our little day, neither vexed by vain questionings, nor relying upon baseless hopes. No doubt this is true to a certain extent, but only to that limited extent which involves essential and absolute untruth. Theism brings its own difficulties with it into the physical and moral problem of the universe. . . . But what right have we to suppose that any hypothesis, as alone we can conceive it, will explain everything? And have we not the right to turn round upon rival theories, and ask if they can explain more than ours, or whether to them the mystery of the world is not mysterious still? Theism, with all that it is commonly held to involve, is an explanation of the mysteries of nature and of life; but not a complete explanation. Taking its pretensions at the lowest, and the least, it gathers up the facts of life into a unity, and supplies us with a theory in the light of which they may be correlated and understood. More than this, it furnishes a practical rule of living. It is precisely this which the opposite theory cannot do. The very necessity of its nature is to explain nothing. It leaves the obscurities of life just as it finds them. Pain and sin and loss are with it ultimate facts; nor has it the faintest glimmer of light to throw upon their absolute blackness. . . . The case might be different had human nature no side of relation to the infinite, or even were that relation apprehended only by one here and there. The mystery of the universe would be nothing to us if we had no faculty of knowing and feeling it. But, with a few and partial exceptions, this attempt to pass beyond the finite into the infinite belongs ineradicably to us all. A shrewd thinker once said, that if there were not a God, it would be necessary to invent one. Men will never permanently consent to the narrowing of power and life. Eternity and infinity may still hold their secrets in inexorable grasp, but we shall never cease to go in search of them, and to hold ourselves higher and better for the quest. Granting for a moment that these aspirations and longings are mistakes, remnants of a lower state, things out of which we shall grow, is the aspect of the case materially altered? I am still face to face with the facts of existence: I have still to meet, and bear, and make the best of my fate. We cannot permanently silence curiosity as to the universe simply by rejecting a single familiar explanation of it. In ceasing to believe in a God, you have made absolutely no progress in explaining the mystery of the universe. You have only returned to the standpoint of absolute uncertainty and blank perplexity. Take the mystery of pain, and its correlative mystery of wrong—evil, that is, on its physical and on its moral side. Theism will not explain it. It points out palliations of it. It suggests that it is related to the power of choice in man, and so necessary to the moral government of the world. Still, these answers do not cover the whole question. But is Atheism better off or worse? Are pain and wrong any more endurable, any less weight upon the sympathetic conscience, because they are looked upon as bare, blank, absolutely unexplained facts? Atheism escapes from the characteristic difficulties of Theism only at the price of encumbering itself with a difficulty of its own. According to any theory, there is at least a set of humanity in an upward direction. Theism has hard work to account for the evil in the world; Can Atheism explain the good? How should the whole creation move, to one "far-off event," and rise upon the circling wheels of time higher and ever higher, unless at the call and under the inspiration of God? One more illustration. We all know too well the meaning of human waste and loss. You tell me this is simply a matter of physical law. But, in so saying, have you explained what needs explanation? I cannot answer

these questions, I know; but dream not that they do not weigh upon you too. You have to face them as well as I, and to bear the heartache, and the desolation, and the thought of severance, *without* the hope of immortality, and the stay of a Divine presence. (*C. Beard, B.A.*)

Ver. 14. **My kinsfolk have failed.**—*Fickleness of friends*:—What is sweeter than a well-tuned lute, and what is more delightful than a faithful friend, who can cheer us in sorrow with wise and affectionate discourse? Nothing, however, is sooner untuned than a lute, and nothing is more fickle than a friend. The tone of the one changes with the weather, that of the other with fortune. With a clear sky, and a bright sun, and a gentle breeze, you will have friends in plenty; but let fortune frown, and the firmament be overcast, and then your friends will prove like the strings of the lute, of which you will tighten ten before you will find one that will bear the tension, or keep the pitch. (*Gotthold.*)

Ver. 20. **And I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.**—*A narrow escape*:—Job had it hard. What with boils, and bereavements, and bankruptcy, and a foolish wife, he wished he was dead. His flesh was gone, and his bones were dry. His teeth wasted away until nothing but the enamel seemed left. He cries out, "I am escaped with the skin of my teeth." There has been some difference of opinion about this passage. St. Jerome, and Schultens, and Doctors Good and Poole and Barnes, have all tried their forceps on Job's teeth. You deny my interpretation, and say, "What did Job know about the enamel of the teeth?" He knew everything about it. Dental surgery is almost as old as the earth. The mummies of Egypt, thousands of years old, are found to-day with gold filling in their teeth. Ovid, and Horace, and Solomon, and Moses wrote about these important factors of the body. To other provoking complaints, Job, I think, had added an exasperating toothache; and putting his hand against the inflamed face, he says, "I am escaped with the skin of my teeth." A very narrow escape, you say, for Job's body and soul; but there are thousands of men who make just as narrow escape for their soul. There was a time when the partition between them and ruin was no thicker than a tooth's enamel; but as Job finally escaped, so have they. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

Ver. 21. **Have pity upon me, for the hand of God hath touched me.**—*Christ's passion*:—Apt illustration of a more perfect sufferer—one more holy than Job, and one involved in deeper sorrow. I. IN MANY RESPECTS THERE IS AN ANALOGY BETWEEN THE SUFFERERS. 1. Christ was an innocent and benevolent sufferer. 2. But when was He not a sufferer? 3. How His sufferings increased as He approached His end. 4. It was the hand of God that had touched Him. 5. Job suffered for himself, and for his own benefit; Christ, not for Himself, but for us, and in our stead. II. HOW OUR PITY SHOULD BE EVINCED. 1. By the ordinary movement of our feelings. 2. We should awaken these feelings by the use of all means. 3. Our pity should be evinced by hatred of sin. 4. If our compassion is sincere, we shall feel a deep interest in the result of his sufferings. (*F. Close, A.M.*) *Compassion a human duty*:—Afflictions like Job's were sufficient, one would have imagined, to have extorted a tear of pity from his most implacable foe. It would surely require none of the warm attachments and tender sensibilities of friendship to awaken compassion in the heart on such an occasion as this. With the common feelings of humanity, one would imagine it impossible to behold the afflictions of Job, and not to weep over them. These so-called friends, however, turned a deaf ear to his entreaties, and under the cloak of friendship continued to wound him by the most ungenerous and inhuman treatment. The world in which we live is full of misery. Distress appears before us in a thousand different forms; and in every shape she supplicates our notice, with an importunity which the humane and generous heart is unable to resist. Of all others, the most affecting scene of calamity which we can behold is, when a fellow-creature is at once oppressed with the difficulties of want, and tormented with the pains of bodily affliction. Every man should consider himself as immediately addressed in supplications like this; for every man is, or ought to be, a friend to the wretched. Compassion is a debt which one human creature owes to another; a debt which no distinction of sect or party, no imperfection of character, no degree of ingratitude, unkindness, or cruelty will cancel. Compassion is a plant which flourishes in the human heart, as in its native soil. So

great is the satisfaction which results from the sentiments of humanity, that there is scarcely any consideration which more fully vindicates the wisdom and goodness of the Supreme Being, in permitting the numerous ills of human life, than this, that they afford us an opportunity of exercising the most amiable affections, and partaking of the noblest pleasures. The exercise of this disposition is, likewise, necessary to gain the esteem and love of our brethren. And to show compassion to such as are in distress is the way to qualify ourselves for the Divine acceptance at the great day. Let us remember that to be compassionate is not merely to feel and cherish the emotions of pity in our hearts, but to embrace every opportunity of expressing them by our actions. (*W. Enfield.*) *Hindrances to sympathy* :—Sympathy is peculiarly liable to inhibition from other instincts which its stimulus may call forth. The traveller whom the Good Samaritan rescued may well have prompted such instinctive fear or disgust in the priest and Levite who passed in front of him, that their sympathy could not come to the front. Then, of course, habits, reasoned reflections, and calculations may either check or reinforce one's sympathy, as may also the instincts of love or hate, if these exist, for the suffering individual. The hunting and pugnacious instincts, when aroused, also inhibit our sympathy absolutely. This accounts for the cruelty of collections of men hounding each other on to bait or torture a victim. The blood mounts to the eyes, and sympathy's chance is gone. (*James, Psychology.*)

Vers. 23, 24. **Oh that my words were now written!**—*Job longing for a permanent memorial* :—Job's wish has been gratified; his memorial has found inscription on a tablet compared with which the granite rock is rubbish, and lead a withered leaf. It has found entry in the "Word of God, which liveth and endureth for ever." No temple of fame like this. This dying desire of Job to find memorial is much too natural to be at all strange. Nothing is more common in death scenes than to find the departing one rally his failing strength, and eagerly utilise his last few breaths to give final charges that shall be religiously honoured, and with painfully wistful looks try to speak after vocal power is gone. Many and impressive are the lessons that here crowd into the mind. 1. Let us say what we have to say, and do what we have to do, in time, that during life we may so live that in the hour of death we may have only to die. 2. Let us be careful to say and do nothing in life which we shall long in death—alas! unavailingly—to unsay or undo. 3. Let us, above all, speak for God and the Gospel; for that, be assured, if we are conscious and in our right mind, will be what at death we shall be most eager to do, that every word might photograph itself on the everlasting rock, and speak in its living influence long years after we are dead. (*J. Guthrie, D.D.*) *Job's wish for a permanent record* :—As one accustomed to the use of wealth Job speaks. He thinks first of a parchment in which his story and his claim may be carefully written and preserved. But he sees at once how perishable that would be, and passes to a form of memorial such as great men employed. He imagines a cliff in the desert with a monumental inscription bearing that once he the Emeer of Uz, lived and suffered, was thrown from prosperity, was accursed by men, was worn by disease, but died maintaining that all this befell him unjustly, that he had done no wrong to God or man. It would stand there in the way of the caravans of Lema for succeeding generations to read. Kings represent on rocks their wars and triumphs. As one of royal dignity Job would use the same means of continuing his protest and his name. (*R. A. Watson, D.D.*) *The Redeemer* :—The secular view is that Job is here expressing a confident hope of recovery from his leprosy, and of justification in the sight of men. The spiritual view is that Job is looking beyond death, and is expressing his belief either in the future life of the soul, or in the resurrection of the body. It is necessary to say a few words, first on the external evidence for the meaning of the passage, and then on the internal. Both seem to me to point decisively to its spiritual interpretation. I. THE EXTERNAL EVIDENCE is in its favour. 1. Job did not expect recovery at all, much less was he confident of it as a certain thing which could not fail to happen. What his expectation of life was we see from such words as these (chap. xvii. 1): "My breath is corrupt, my days are extinct, the graves are ready for me"; or these (chap. xvii. 11, 15): "My days are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart. . . . Where is now my hope? as for my hope, who shall see it?" Even if he wavered between hope and fear, he could not use such language as implies the utmost certainty. 2. The Septuagint translation (made by Jews who must be

supposed capable of understanding the Hebrew words, and made by them long before Jesus Christ brought immortality to light, and taught the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead) gives the spiritual sense of the passage: "He shall raise up my body, after these present things have been destroyed." 3. The Jewish Targum on the passage (which must be free from all Christian bias) is also wholly in favour of the spiritual sense. I give its rendering by a great Hebrew scholar (Delitzsch, to which one of our most competent British Hebraists tells me he has nothing to add): "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and hereafter His redemption will arise (become a reality) over the dust (into which I shall be dissolved); and after my skin is again made whole, this will happen, and from my flesh I shall again behold God." II. THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE is even more strongly in favour of the spiritual sense. 1. Observe the great solemnity with which the declaration is introduced (ver. 23), and how inconsistent this is with the idea that Job refers to recovery from his leprosy, and desires to inscribe that fact on the rock for the teaching of posterity. 2. Mark next the perfect assurance of the writer, which is fully in accord with the strong conviction of spiritual faith, but is quite out of place with regard to a secular expectation. 3. The sublime and spiritual keynote of the whole passage seems thoroughly out of keeping with any feeling which ends in mere temporal blessing. 4. To "see God," which is the burden of his confidence, is surely something more and deeper than the recovery of health. Not to dwell longer then on questions of interpretation, and avoiding minute verbal criticism, I give in substance the probable meaning of the passage, and pass on to consider the spiritual teaching which it implies in anticipation of the Gospel. It is to be regarded as a rock-inscription. I know that my Goël liveth ever, and that He, as survivor, shall stand over my dust, and after this skin of mine is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God; whom I shall see again; mine eyes shall see Him, and not another for me; for this also my reins do long. I. WHO AND WHAT IS THE REDEEMER? 1. He is the Goël. The word has two meanings, and it has been disputed which is the correct one here. It means the avenger of blood, and it means the kinsman. Those who have adopted the secular view of the passage have contended that it must bear the former meaning only. But they have surely forgotten that the office of the avenger of blood could not be executed till after the death of the person to be avenged; and that this is one of the indications that not recovery, but something after death is looked forward to by Job. But if we ask what is the root-meaning, the original idea in the Goël, it surely is not difficult to determine. Did a man become kinsman to the murdered one because he was the avenger of his blood? Or did he not become the avenger because he was already the kinsman, and was therefore called on to avenge him? The latter is the truth; and hence kindred is the first idea of the Goël: "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh." Avenger is the next thought involved in the word: one seeking reparation for our death, and therefore protecting our life by the thought that his sword is behind it. And a third idea is that of deliverance and redemption, as of family property, by one "whose right is to redeem." Job then is looking forward to such a kinsman—a kinsman in the largest sense, who, being the ideal, shall fulfil all the meanings of the institution; who shall be of the same blood; who shall protect and avenge that blood, after death, of which Job is to taste; and who shall also redeem for him the lost inheritance. Here, too, the dim finger of want and of hope points onward to Him who said of every doer of the will of God: "The same is My brother and sister"; our "kinsman, according to the flesh." 2. The Redeemer or Goël is an everliving person. So the Septuagint aptly renders the words, "My Redeemer liveth." Job is thinking of and expecting his own death; but he has full confidence that after that there shall arise his kinsman and Redeemer. Yet is it certain that He too may not pass away through death? The reply of Job's soul is, No; He cannot pass, for He lives for ever. After my flesh is dust; after, perhaps, all flesh is dust, yet He, the survivor, shall stand over the earth. This is a kinsman "whose years are throughout (and beyond) all generations"! 3. Still further and more remarkably Job's kinsman is Divine. It is impossible to resist the conclusion that He who is the redeeming kinsman of the 25th verse is also the God of the 26th. And the whole interest of the passage centres in this, that Job's kinsman-Redeemer is a Divine person, who shall interpose on Job's behalf hereafter, by revealing Himself after death! II. WHAT IS THE EXPECTED REDEEMER TO DO? (*J. E. Cumming, D.D.*) *Job finding comfort for himself*:—The words and efforts of Job's comforters were not in vain. Sometimes in bodily inflammations a lenitive is the best treatment, and

sometimes a counter-irritant. It is not very different in inflammations of the soul. In Job's case, perhaps, mere condolence would have completed his despair. But when they accuse him of hypocrisy of the basest kind,—when they arraign him as being rejected of God, and lying under the special curse of the Almighty,—then his manhood gathers strength in endeavour to crush the great lie. 1. Job's first step towards recovery was when he found his voice,—though only to curse the day of his birth. The friends who sat silently beside him did this for him. They revived him from the stupor of his grief. Sometimes a sense of pain, and an exhibition of impatience, is a sign of a favourable turn in serious disease; so is it in diseases of the soul. "She must weep, or she will die," sings the poet of the widow, when "home they brought her warrior dead." And so the stupor of despair is always one of the gravest signs. It is true that a terrific lamentation breaks forth from him (chap. iii.), unexampled in literature,—a model on which again and again our great dramatist has formed his representations of blank despair. Solomon's despair in the Book of Ecclesiastes is the result of the cynical surfeit of luxury, which finds nothing in life sufficiently important for its regard. But this is the despair of agony and grief, natural and seemingly incurable. Still it marks a slight advance. It is a feeble symptom of returning vigour. Hearts break with silent, not with uttered, grief. Speech is a sort of safety-valve. 2. Job's second step towards comfort was praying for death (chaps. vi. and vii.; specially vi. 8-13). Some, ignorant of human nature, fancy comfort would be reached by a great leap; and had they from imagination drawn a picture of a Job finding consolation, their story would have consisted of a record of his despair, and of the visit of some gracious prophet declaring God's fatherhood. Such is not the usual experience of men. "First the blade; then the ear; then the full corn in the ear"; so grace always grows. Accordingly, the next step towards comfort is, though a strange, a great one. To lament a sorrow in the ears of men was some relief, but it marks an advance of the grandest kind when the soul lifts it to the ears of God. Job will not admit the accusation of Eliphaz, but he will act on the suggestion to "seek unto God and commit his cause to Him." He is strengthened by the general testimony of Eliphaz to the justice and mercy of God, while repelling his insinuation that God is punishing his crimes. And so poor Job raises his eye again to his God. It is not a proper prayer, it is much too despairing; it has but little faith, and it involves an accusation against the mercy of God's providence. Blessed be His name, God lets us approach Him thus. He casts out none that come unto Him, even though they come with the presumptuous murmurings of an "elder brother," or with the despairing agony of Job. Whatever you have to say, say it to Him. It is not the proper, but the sincere prayer God wants. And when a Job comes to Him, in his desolation asking only to die, the great Father looks through all the faults of woe and weariness, to pity only the great anguish of the soul. It is not to be overlooked that before the prayer ends, he can address God by one of His noblest names: "O Thou Preserver of men" (chap. vii. 20). Is it the first Bible name of God? 3. As a further step, Job longs for clearing of his character. At first he doubtless cared but little for this. If his character was crushed beneath the judgment of God, it was just one more victim; and in a world of such disorder—where only disappointment reigned—it would have been something beneath his care whether all his fellow-men frowned or smiled upon him. But with returning help and grace he wants something more,—that the approval of God might rest on him (chaps. ix. 32–35, viii. 2). This longing for a settlement with God, to know why and wherefore he is afflicted, does it not mark some growing force within him? Only from Him, with whom they wrestled; did either Job or Jacob gather the strength by which they overcame. When Zophar assails him, with still more bitter consolation than the rest, he seems to stimulate Job's faith still more. His faith grows strong enough to declare "though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." "I have ordered my cause; I know that I shall be justified." "He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not stand before Him" (chap. xiii. 15, 18, 16). What a hope was even then reached that God would yet justify him—vindicating his character, owning the integrity of his purpose and the sincerity of his religion. The next stage we notice is—4. We see, again, that Job prays for some blessedness in the other world. There is a wonderful distance between the prayer of chap. vi. 9—"O that it would please God to destroy me"; and the prayer in chap. xiv. 13—"O that Thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that Thou wouldest keep me secret, until Thy wrath be past, that Thou wouldest

appoint me a set time, and remember me!" The other world emerges into light. Death is not an end of this life merely; it is a gateway to another state of being—a place where God can remember a man, where He can "call" and be "answered," where He can show the "desire," the favour He has to the work of His hands. It is not yet the exultant hope he reaches, but still a hope exceeding precious. The soul feels itself strangely superior to disease and decay, and begins to speculate on what it will do when it "shuffles off this mortal coil." A prophet-poet of the nineteenth century has sung—

> "Thou wilt not leave us in the dust,
> Thou madest man he knows not why;
> He thinks he was not made to die:
> And Thou hast made him—Thou art just."

Three thousand years ago, through the same sort of baptism of grief, the patriarch was led to the same conclusions. The Sheol, the place of the dead which had seemed so void of life and being, became to his mind a sphere of Divine activities—"O that Thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that Thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me." "Thou shalt call and I will answer Thee." It is not evangelical divines alone that construe this as a dream of finding fellowship with God in the calm of an untroubled after-life. Even M. Renan, in his translation, takes the same view. Someone says: "The hope of eternal life is a flower growing on the edge of the abyss." Job found it there, and it was worth all his anguish to reach it. It is not yet a conviction. Doubt breaks in with the question—"If a man die, can he live again?" And the doubt is left there, faithfully registered. But felt and faced as the doubt is, the great dream reasserts itself and fastens on his imagination. So, through cloud and sunshine, over hilltops of vision, and through low valleys whose views are narrow, the soul goes on. At the outset death seemed desirable only because it seemed an absolute end. Now the great may-be that is the beginning of a better life, where God's desire towards the work of His hands will be manifested, dawns on him. It will be lost—it will come back to him—it will seem too good news to be true. He has caught now a glimpse of it. In the next valley he will lose it, but it will never fade away again. Some people forget that each has to find his own creed. The creed cannot be manufactured. Others may give you truth; you must find the power of believing it. So the faiths of men are propagated by living seeds of truth falling on living hearts. But if there is something deeply suggestive in the beginning of his great dream, the hope does not stop there, but grows into assured confidence, for Job reaches an assured hope of immortality. You notice a strange increase of calmness in the mind of Job after Eliphaz and Bildad have spoken. Just in the degree in which his friends become angry he becomes calm. The anger even dies out of his replies, and instead of resenting their upbraiding he tenderly pleads for their sympathy. This calmness grew from his praying; his hoping that he still might reason out his cause with God, and that God would even take his part against Himself. He found a wonderful increase of it in the new thought that he might in the land of the dead walk with God. And thus subsiding into a simple faith, at last the great comfort reaches him of a sure and certain hope—of a blessed immortality. Few eyes that have not been washed with tears can look steadfastly into the world to come. Not as the world giveth does God give peace, but in a different way altogether,—by storm and grief and loss and calamity of direst kind. So He bringeth them to their desired haven. The prophets have been all men of sorrows. Sometimes a little unwisdom has been shown in pressing a dubious translation, and gathering from Job's words a testimony to the resurrection of the body. Whether you should translate his words, "In my flesh I shall see God"; or, "apart from my flesh I shall see God," is, indeed, quite immaterial. We shall probably be safest in taking Job's words in their most general meaning, as details of future conditions were hardly to be expected. But taking his words in the lower sense which all interpreters admit they must carry; taking, say, the interpretation of M. Renan himself, what a wonderful hope they express. 1. That God will be his Deliverer, Protector of person and of character, Guardian and Deliverer in the world unseen. 2. That after death and divested of his body, he yet will find himself the subject of richest mercies. 3. His personal identity will be indestructibly maintained. He will not subside into the general life, but for ever

be a separate soul; he will see God for himself; his eyes shall behold his very self, unchanged, unite another. 4. And in this relieved and rescued, but unchanged personality, he will have the highest of all bliss—he will see God. And so Job found his dunghill become a land of Beulah—delectable mountains from which the city of God was seen. Faults of murmuring and impeachment of God's dignity are still to be corrected, and his comfort is to be perfected by a restoration of earthly comforts. Leaving them, we only note—1. God's Spirit is never idle where His providence is at work. 2. We are not following cunningly devised fables. In every age the best have been the surest of an immortality of bliss, and such faith is evidence. See we reach that heaven. (*R. Glover.*)

Vers. 25-27. **For I know that my Redeemer liveth.**—*Of the resurrection* (on Easter Day):—This text is a prophecy and prediction of our Saviour Christ's glorious resurrection. A sacred truth, requiring not only the assent, but the devotion and adoration of our faith. Here Job foresees and foretells the resurrection of Christ. He tells us that Christ, who by His death redeemed him, hath again obtained an endless life. That after His fall by death, He is recovered and got up again; stands, and shall stand, at last upon the earth. And Job prophesies of his own resurrection, that, though he were now in a dying condition, death had already seized upon him; yet he knew there was hope in his death, that he should be raised from the grave of corruption to an ever-living and blessed state and condition. I. JOB'S BELIEF CONCERNING CHRIST. Here is—1. The saving object of his faith; that is, Christ, his Redeemer; his Redeemer dead and alive again; and to appear again at the last day to judge the quick and the dead. Here is a personal interest he claims in Christ. "My Redeemer." 2. Job's assurance. "I know." It fully expresses the nature of faith; it is strongly persuaded of what it believes; it puts it beyond "ifs," and "ands," and hopeful supposals. Faith is an evidence, not a conjecture; not a supposition, but a subsistence. This knowledge of Job will appear the greater and more admirable, as his belief was beset with three great impediments. (1) There is the resurrection of the dead. That is a matter beyond all reach of reason. (2) Things at a distance are not discernible. (3) Distance hinders sight; but darkness and indisposition of the air, much more. Yet Job, in the thickest mists of contrariety and contradiction, sees clearly and believes assuredly. 3. Job's close and personal application. The word "mine" makes Christ his own. II. JOB'S BELIEF CONCERNING HIS OWN RESURRECTION. Although death had already seized upon him, yet he was assured he should rise again, and be made partaker of a joyful resurrection. 1. The several truths included in this faith of Job concerning his own resurrection. He apprehends the truth of the resurrection. It is easier to conceive of Christ's resurrection than of ours. He lays the ground and foundation of his faith. Why is he sure he shall rise again? Because he is sure that Christ is risen. We may strongly argue, from Christ's resurrection to the possibility of ours. Job expects a true, real, substantial, bodily resurrection. Nay, here is not only a reality, but an identity; he shall have a body, and the very same body. 2. The motions and evidences of piety his faith expresses. Here appears the great strength of his faith; the alacrity and cheerfulness of his faith, against present discouragements. It is a point of his piety, that he longs for the seeing of his Saviour, the beholding of God. 3. Notice the benefit Job makes to himself of this meditation. It supports his spirits under present afflictions. It settles and composes him. It is his defence and apology against the accusations of the friends. (*Bishop Brownrig.*) "*I know that my Redeemer liveth*":—When was Job's greatest conquest won? At what part in the malign struggle does he march forth in the greatness of his strength? The crown of the crisis is passed and the real victory won when there bursts forth, with all-enlightening ray from the dark-rolling clouds of Job's sorrows, the sublimely strong convictions, chronicled in the familiar, immortal, and exhaustless words of the text. That is "the hour and power" of Job. There in his Gethsemane he triumphs. I. JOB'S SUPPORTING CONVICTIONS. 1. At the outset we must take care lest we misjudge our facts, and fail to get at the precise power of Job's convictions, through crediting him with more light than he beheld, and reading into his great sayings the ideas of a new and largely different world. Men have read into these verses such doctrines as eternal redemption; the humanity of the Redeemer; the resurrection of the flesh; and the so-called Second Advent. It is not perhaps surprising that a saying of such super-

lative wealth in itself, so impressive in its setting, stirring in its influence on the hearts of the sons and daughters of suffering, should have been enlarged by the gifts of loving hearts, and invested with the ideas of eager and admiring readers. It is, in fact, a bold challenge made by a suffering man to the ages, an appeal from the accusations of clever but mistaken and unsympathetic friends, to the tribunal of the God of eternity. You cannot miss the ring of conviction in the man's speech. He says what he knows. He believes, and therefore speaks. It is not desire or caprice, wish or will, faith or hope, but unwavering, absolute knowledge, whose voice arrests our listening ear, and directs our expectant thought. Three distinct assertions follow the quickening preface. 1. He declares that God is the vindicator of right-seeking and right-doing men. The language is indicative of a state of thought and of social life wholly alien to our own, in which the administration of justice proceeds on lines with which we are no longer familiar. The sacred duty of kinsmen to avenge the damage done to their kin, is the one social form in which faith in the power that makes for righteousness finds expression, and kinship is the principal instrument for the execution of the decrees of justice, embracing and discharging the functions of police and witnesses, judge and jury, gaoler and executioner. God is Job's Goël. He will act for him. Redemption from loss, and pain, and wrong, and calumny is in Him! Of the fact he is sure; of the how, and when, and where he says nothing, but an invincible faith that, before "the last" moment in his history comes, God will be his Redeemer from all the ills of which he is then the unfortunate victim, animates and sustains his suffering spirit. Nor is that all. Job is sure that he himself, in his own conscious person, will be the rejoicing witness of that Divine vindication. He sees beforehand the glorious re-assertion of his integrity. He does not expect that clearing here. He is beyond that hope. It is personal and conscious witnessing of his vindicated character that neutralises the poison of the bitter cup he is drinking, and leaves him in full-toned spiritual health. But even that is not the most precious treasure in this chaplet of pearls. The chief, conquering, and most meritorious quality in Job's mood of mind, is his clear and steadfast recognition of the real but dimly revealed law that the suspension of the accepted and outward manifestations of the Divine care and regard is not the suspension of the Divine sympathy, nor the withdrawal of the Divine love and help. Our difficulty, and Job's, is to believe in the living God, in His unbroken love. The suspension of the ordinary signs of the Divine favour is no proof whatever of changed purpose, or exhausted love to God! Is not that the trial of our faith? Because happiness is not our portion, and power not to our hand, do we not conclude that God does not "delight" in us? We have no misgivings as to His existence, but if He is, why does He hide Himself? Resist the diabolical sophistry which identifies a cloudless sky with an existing sun, affirms the unseen to be the non-existent, and the unhappy to be the unholy. God is love. That is His nature, the essence of His being; not an accident, an occasional emotion, or a passing mood; and therefore He is, as Job saw and felt, the Redeemer and Vindicator of all souls that sincerely seek Him, and diligently serve Him; the guarantee that defeated, and humiliated, and oppressed man will be set free, and exalted to behold the triumph of eternal righteousness; and the witness that man is at present, and here in this world, scarred and defaced with evil though it be, the object of God's pitiful sympathy, redeeming care, and constant protection. II. THE FRUITFUL ORIGIN OF THESE STRENGTH-GIVING CONVICTIONS IN THE MIND OF JOB. For it is often more important to know why a man says what he has to say, than it is to know what it is that he does say. It goes without saying that Job's most far-reaching and comprehensive declaration falls unspeakably short of that abolition of death, and bringing of life and immortality to light, accomplished by the Gospel of Christ; but what it lacks in fulness and breadth, it gains in the burning intensity and glow out of which it springs, and the sublime motives which urge and impel him, not only to speak, but also to covet a monumental and immortal pulpit for his words. His sayings form a window through which we look into his soul; a lit lamp by whose clear ray we see the workings of his mind, and enter into partnership, not only with his ideas, but with himself, as those ideas are born in his soul, and take their place in his life. The impulse, the goad to Job's heavenward ascent is suffering itself; the very sharpness of his tribulation causes the rebound, pushes his thought far afield to the things unseen and eternal, carries him over the dark river, and supplies the background for his vision of final triumph. But

though the impulse to speak comes from the very sufferings which his friends cite as witnesses to his hypocrisy and insincerity, the power of wing, the motive-force is obviously inward, and of the mind and spirit. 1. First in the genealogy of Job's convictions comes his passion to set the great controlling and cleansed faith of his life in the spotless excellence and living sympathy of God with men, directly over against all the seeming contradictions, chaotic perplexities, and bewildering entanglements of his experience; and so to prove that the view of the three friends would receive its doom as essentially a lie and a libel, later, if not sooner. 2. We may fairly credit Job with the desire to guide the friends to the perception of the one true principle in the criticism of life. They are the victims of sense. They judge by appearances. And still men fasten on the trivial and accidental, and neglect the weightier matters of principle and aim and spirit. 3. The deepest reason and strongest motive of all with Job must have been an insatiable yearning that the truth he had lived and felt and suffered might secure an immortal career of enlightenment and benediction. God is better to us than our best desires, and gives a larger blessing than our fullest prayers. (*J. Clifford, M.A.*) *The Christian's assurance of a glorious resurrection* :—I. THE ILLUSTRIOUS PERSON SPOKEN OF. The "Redeemer." The words "redeem" and "Redeemer" frequently occur in the sacred Book. To redeem is to buy or purchase, and the person thus buying is justly styled the "Redeemer." As our Redeemer He was—1. Divinely appointed. "God sent forth His Son—made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." Here the benevolent act of sending the Redeemer is attributed to God. 2. He is our Redeemer by price; He "gave Himself for us." 3. He is our Redeemer by power; that is, He delivered us from the captivity and misery of sin, and, consequently, from the wrath of God and the punishment of hell. 4. He is the living Redeemer. The knowledge of a living Redeemer afforded unspeakable consolation to the mind of Job. "My Redeemer liveth." Yes, He was alive in Job's day, and, in some way, was engaged in promoting his temporal and eternal welfare; consequently, such a consideration dispelled his fears, enabled him to wipe away his tears in transports of joy, and furnished him with a bright prospect of a happy immortality. Since then, the Redeemer has made a visit to our world, to effect the work of redemption. After which, He ascended to the celestial mansion whence He came. He lives, and because He lives, we shall live also. II. AN IMPORTANT EVENT ANTICIPATED. "He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth," &c. The latter day is sometimes called "the last day," and "the great day." It is the day to which all other days are pointing; the day in which all other days will end. 1. He will stand to redeem us from death; He will ransom us from the power of the grave. No matter where that grave may be. But Job anticipated not a resurrection only, but a glorious one. "In my flesh shall I see God." 2. He shall stand at the latter day; stand to direct, or rather to invite His people to their everlasting habitation. "Where I am," says He, "there ye may be also." See the Redeemer standing at the last day, at the head of His people,—a number which no man can number—arrayed in spotless white, with imperishable crowns upon their heads. "In my flesh shall I see God." "In my flesh." Flesh no more liable to toil, sorrow, sickness, suffering, and death; the former things shall have passed away. III. THE CHRISTIAN'S ASSURANCE. We do not profess to have any extraordinary revelation, or personal inspiration; yet we know that we have a living Redeemer, and that He will raise us up at the last day. 1. We know from the testimony of Sacred Writ. The prophets in the Old Testament, and the apostles in the New, have clearly and fearlessly furnished us with a treasury of sterling information on this subject. And, above all, our Lord Jesus, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, brought life and immortality to light. 2. But we have additional evidence of our resurrection in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. We shall conclude by remarking—1. This knowledge of the Redeemer is interesting and capable of supporting the mind. 2. This knowledge is of the utmost worth, as it cheers the mind amidst the sorrows, toils, sufferings, and trials of this unfriendly region, and whispers to the fainting spirit. 3. This knowledge calms the troubled breast in the hour of bereavement. 4. This knowledge supports the Christian, smooths his pillow, and brightens his prospect in the extremity of life. 5. This knowledge furnishes the good man with an assurance of mingling with the pious of his family and with Christian friends in the better land for ever. 6. Is not this, therefore, the most interesting know-

ledge? (*A. Worsnop.*) *Faith triumphing over circumstance:*—I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF JOB WHEN HE DELIVERED THIS PROPHECY. We have all heard of the patience of Job, and know well the series of trials which called it forth. We have sympathised with him in his adversity, and rejoiced with him in his first and latter state of prosperity. The injudicious conduct on the part of his friends greatly embittered the sufferings. It is such injudicious conduct as this which causes much mischief as well as misery in the world at large. If our misery is attributable to ourselves, we know whence is the disorder, and, in general, by the same knowledge, we know how to provide a remedy, if the case is not altogether hopeless. If God is afflicting us, when He speaks, He speaks to be understood. If He is pleased to put our faith and obedience to a severe but wholesome test, by a single blow, or a long series of trials, the matter is entirely between God and a man's own soul. II. OBSERVE THE FAITH OF JOB. "I know that my Redeemer liveth," &c. The hardest lesson that man has to learn in this school of his probation is submission to the will of God. The permission of evil in the world, as it is one of the hidden mysteries of God's righteous government, so is it, as might naturally have been expected, a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, with which unbelief is wont to impede the progress even of a Christian. Faith supported the holy Job, not only under his unparalleled privations, but under a far more galling load, the accusations and suspicions of friends. In this painful dilemma, unable to vindicate his innocence to them, who, notwithstanding, suspected him guilty, he is borne on the wings of faith, over the head as it were of many intervening ages, to that glorious time when he should stand before God in the imputed righteousness of his Saviour. "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Would you then realise the glories and know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,—imitate the faith and patience of Job in his various states and complicated trials. (*John Stedman, D.D.*) *Job's faith in the Redeemer:*—I. THE CHARACTER OF JOB'S REDEEMER. There is only one Redeemer of guilty men. 1. His person. A Divine Person, possessing the true and proper nature, titles, and perfections of the Godhead. Possessed of perfect humanity. In all things made like unto us, except being sinless. Thus He became the "kinsman" of every child of man. He was therefore both human and Divine. 2. His work. How did He redeem us? From natural depravity, by the purity of His nature. From the demands of the law, by His perfect obedience to all its commands. From the infliction of the curse, by His death upon the Cross. "Being made a curse for us." From the power of Satan and death, by His resurrection from the dead. He redeems from the power of sin, and into the image of God, by the influence of the Spirit which He sends down into the hearts of His people. He redeems into heaven by entering it for us with His precious blood, and by receiving the souls of His people to His right hand in glory. He will redeem by His almighty power, all the bodies of His saints, from corruption and the grave, at the last day. II. JOB'S PROFESSION OF HIM. "My Redeemer." 1. Appropriation. Angels, devils, and those in unbelief cannot say this. The humble, devout believer both realises it and says it. 2. Assurance. "I know." In religion there is consciousness and certainty. He is ours because we are sinners, and He was given to save sinners. He is ours because we believe in Him. We know because we love Him. 3. Confidence. In Christ's unchanging existence. He liveth now. Therefore His promises shall be fulfilled, His cause maintained, His Church glorified; and His saints shall live with Him for ever and ever. Application—(1) This subject should be the support and joy of the Christian in temptations, afflictions, and death. (2) It will be the song of the redeemed for ever. (3) Urge all to come and experience the saving power of this living Redeemer. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *I know that my Redeemer liveth:*—I. First of all, then, with the patriarch of Uz, LET US DESCEND INTO THE SEPULCHRE. The body has just been divorced from the soul. The body is borne upon the bier and consigned to the silent earth; it is surrounded by the earthworks of death. Death has a host of troops. If the locusts and the caterpillars be God's army, the worms are the army of death. These hungry warriors begin to attack the city of man. The skin, the city wall of manhood, is utterly broken down, and the towers of its glory covered with confusion. How speedily the cruel invaders deface all beauty. The face gathers blackness; the countenance is defiled with corruption. Where is beauty now? The most lovely cannot be known from the most deformed. The vessel so daintily wrought upon the potter's wheel is cast away upon the dunghill with the vilest potsherds. The

skin is gone. The troops have entered into the town of Mansoul. And now they pursue their work of devastation; the pitiless marauders fall upon the body itself. There are those noble aqueducts, the veins through which the streams of life were wont to flow, these, instead of being rivers of life, have become blocked up with the soil and wastes of death, and now they must be pulled to pieces; not a single relic of them shall be spared. Mark the muscles and sinews, like great highways that, penetrating the metropolis, carry the strength and wealth of manhood along—their curious pavement must be pulled up, and they that do traffic thereon must be consumed; each tunnelled bone, and curious arch, and knotted bond must be snapped and broken. But these invaders stop not here. Job says that next they consume his reins. We are wont to speak of the heart as the great citadel of life, the inner keep and donjon, where the captain of the guard holdeth out to the last. The Hebrews do not regard the heart, but the lower viscera, the reins, as the seat of the passions and of mental power. The worms spare not; they enter the secret places of the tabernacle of life, and the standard is plucked from the tower. Having died, the heart cannot preserve itself, and falls like the rest of the frame—a prey to worms. It is gone, it is all gone! Mother Earth has devoured her own offspring. Why should we wish to have it otherwise? Why should we desire to preserve the body when the soul has gone? The embalming of the Egyptians, those master robbers of the worm, what has it done? It has served to keep some poor shrivelled lumps of mortality above ground to be sold for curiosities, to be dragged away to foreign climes, and stared upon by thoughtless eyes. No, let the dust go; the sooner it dissolves the better. And what matters it how it goes! What if plants with their roots suck up the particles! What if the winds blow it along the highway! What if the rivers carry it to the waves of ocean! II. Now, having thus descended into the grave, and seen nothing there but what is loathsome, LET US LOOK UP WITH THE PATRIARCH AND BEHOLD A SUN SHINING WITH PRESENT COMFORT. "I know," said he, "that my Redeemer liveth." The word "Redeemer" here used is in the original Goël—kinsman. The duty of the kinsman, or Goël, was this: suppose an Israelite had alienated his estate, as in the case of Naomi and Ruth; suppose a patrimony which had belonged to a family had passed away through poverty, it was the Goël's business, the redeemer's business, to pay the price as the next-of-kin, and to buy back the heritage. Boaz stood in that relation to Ruth. Now, the body may be looked upon as the heritage of the soul—the soul's small farm, that little plot of earth in which the soul has been wont to walk and delight, as a man walketh in his garden or dwelleth in his house. Now, that becomes alienated. Death, like Ahab, takes away the vineyard from us who are as Naboth; we lose our patrimonial estate. But we turn round to Death and say, "I know that my Goël liveth, and He will redeem this heritage; I have lost it; thou takest it from me lawfully, O Death, because my sin hath forfeited my right; I have lost my heritage through my own offence, and through that of my first parent Adam; but there lives One who will buy this back." Remember, too, that it was always considered to be the duty of the Goël, not merely to redeem by price, but where that failed, to redeem by power. Hence, when Lot was carried away captive by the four kings, Abraham summoned his own hired servants, and the servants of all his friends, and went out against the kings of the East, and brought back Lot and the captives of Sodom. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ, who once has played the kinsman's part by paying the price for us, liveth, and He will redeem us by power. O Death, thou tremblest at this name! Thou knowest the might of our Kinsman! Against His arm thou canst not stand! Oh, how glorious the victory! No battle shall there be. He comes, He sees, He conquers. The sound of the trumpet shall be enough; Death shall fly affrighted; and at once from beds of dust and silent clay to realms of everlasting day the righteous shall arise. There was yet a third duty of the Goël, which was to avenge the death of his friend. If a person had been slain, the Goël was the avenger of blood; snatching up his sword, he at once pursued the person who had been guilty of bloodshed. So now, let us picture ourselves as being smitten by Death. His arrow has just pierced us to the heart, but in the act of expiring, our lips are able to boast of vengeance, and in the face of the monster we cry, "I know that my Goël liveth." Thou mayst fly, O Death, as rapidly as thou wilt, but no city of refuge can hide thee from Him; He will overtake thee; He will lay hold upon thee, O thou skeleton monarch, and He will avenge my blood on thee. Christ shall certainly avenge Himself on Death for all the injury

which Death hath done to His beloved kinsmen. Passing on in our text to notice the next word, it seems that Job found consolation not only in the fact that he had a Goël, a Redeemer, but that this Redeemer liveth. He does not say, "I know that my Goël shall live," but that "He lives,"—having a clear view of the self-existence of the Lord Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He is the Lord and giver of life originally, and He shall be specially declared to be the resurrection and the life, when the legions of His redeemed shall be glorified with Him. Let us look up to our Goël, then, who liveth at this very time. Still the marrow of Job's comfort, it seems to me, lay in that little word "my." "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Oh, to get hold of Christ! I know that in His offices He is precious. But, dear friends, we must get a property in Him before we can really enjoy Him. What is honey in the wood to me, if, like the fainting Israelites, I dare not eat? What is gold in the mine to me? Men are beggars in Peru, and beg their bread in California. It is gold in my purse which will satisfy my necessities, purchasing the bread I need. So what is a kinsman if he be not a kinsman to me? A redeemer that does not redeem me, an avenger who will never stand up for my blood, of what avail were such? But Job's faith was strong and firm in the conviction that the Redeemer was his. There is another word in this consoling sentence which no doubt served to give a zest to the comfort of Job. It was that he could say, "I know." To say, "I hope so, I trust so," is comfortable; and there are thousands in the fold of Jesus who hardly ever get much farther. But to reach the marrow of consolation you must say, "I know." "Ifs," "buts," and "perhapses" are sure murderers of peace and comfort. Doubts are dreary things in times of sorrow. I would not like to die with a mere hope mingled with suspicion. Assurance is a jewel for worth but not for rarity. It is the common privilege of all the saints if they have but the grace to attain unto it, and this grace the Holy Spirit gives freely. Surely if Job in Arabia, in those dark, misty ages when there was only the morning star and not the sun, when they saw but little, when life and immortality had not been brought to light,—if Job before the Coming and Advent still could say, "I know," you and I should not speak less positively. God forbid that our positiveness should be presumption. III. And now, in the third place, as THE ANTICIPATION OF FUTURE DELIGHT, let me call to your remembrance the other part of the text. Job not only knew that the Redeemer lived, but he anticipated the time when He should "stand in the latter day upon the earth." No doubt Job referred here to our Saviour's first advent, to the time when Jesus Christ, "the Goël," the Kinsman, should stand upon the earth to pay in the blood of His veins the ransom price, which had, indeed, in bond and stipulation been paid before the foundation of the world in promise. But I cannot think that Job's vision stayed there; he was looking forward to the second advent of Christ as being the period of the resurrection. We cannot endorse the theory that Job arose from the dead when our Lord died although certain Jewish believers held this idea very firmly at one time. We are persuaded that "the latter day" refers to the advent of glory rather than to that of shame. Our hope is that the Lord shall come to reign in glory where He once died in agony. Mark, that Job describes Christ as standing. Some interpreters have read the passage, "He shall stand in the latter days against the earth"; that as the earth has covered up the slain, as the earth has become the charnel-house of the dead, Jesus shall arise to the contest and say, "Earth, I am against thee; give up thy dead!" Well, whether that be so or no, the posture of Christ, in standing upon the earth, is significant. It shows His triumph. He has triumphed over sin, which once like a serpent in its coils had bound the earth. He has defeated Satan. On the very spot where Satan gained his power Christ has gained the victory. Then, at that auspicious hour, says Job, "In my flesh I shall see God." Oh, blessed anticipation—"I shall see God." He does not say, "I shall see the saints"—doubtless we shall see them all in heaven—but, "I shall see God." Note, he does not say, "I shall see the pearly gates, I shall see the walls of jasper, I shall see the crowns of gold and the harps of harmony," but "I shall see God"; as if that were the sum and substance of heaven. "In my flesh shall I see God." The pure in heart shall see God. It was their delight to see Him in the ordinances by faith. There in heaven they shall have a vision of another sort. Please to notice, and then I shall conclude, how the patriarch puts it as being a real personal enjoyment. "Whom mine eye shall behold, and not another." They shall not bring me a report as they did the Queen of Sheba, but I shall see Solomon the King for myself.

I shall be able to say, as they did who spake to the woman of Samaria, "Now I believe, not because of thy word who did bring me a report, but I have seen Him for myself." There shall be personal intercourse with God; not through the Book, which is but as a glass; not through the ordinances; but directly, in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be able to commune with the Deity as a man talketh with his friend. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The living Redeemer*:—Job seems to have entertained no expectation of deliverance from his troubles in the present world. Therefore he looks forward to the world beyond death and the grave for perfect felicity and undisturbed repose. Make some general observations for opening up the passage. 1. God, in His abundant mercy, has provided a Redeemer for fallen man. The word "redeemer" here means "next-of-kin." 2. The living Redeemer has been the hope of the saints under every dispensation of grace, and in every period of the world. 3. No distress or suffering can pluck asunder those bonds that unite the believer to his Saviour. 4. When the believer has attained to the knowledge of his interest in the Redeemer, this will administer great comfort and encouragement to him in suffering and distress. Consider now the support and consolation which believers should derive from the assurance that their Redeemer liveth. 1. It should afford Christians consolation and support when struggling with a body of sin and death, to know that their Redeemer liveth; who shall at last be "glorified in His saints." 2. It may afford the Christian support and consolation in the season of poverty and want. 3. It may afford the believer support and consolation in the prospect of death and the eternal world. 4. And under all the distresses and afflictions to which the Church is exposed in this evil world. 5. And also with respect to the public calamities and judgments which threaten the place or country where the believer's lot is cast. (1) Hence see to whom we are indebted for all the privileges and blessings and security which we now enjoy. (2) Let us be encouraged to trust in Christ in every future exigency and difficulty. (3) Let Christians make it their great study to live to the honour and praise of this living and exalted Redeemer. (4) Let perishing sinners make it their great concern to get an interest in the living Redeemer. (*James Hay, D.D.*) *Job's confident expectation*:—In this confession Job declares the promised Messiah to be his Saviour; and professes his faith in His coming to judgment; the resurrection of the dead; and the beatifical vision. I. THE MATTER OF THE COMFORT. 1. That there is a Redeemer. It implies that He is our kinsman after the flesh, or by incarnation. That He paid a price to God for us in His Passion. That He pursueth the law against Satan, and rescues us by His power; all which are notable grounds of comfort. 2. That He is their Redeemer. Job, by a fiducial application, makes out his own title and interest. Faith appropriates God to our own use and comfort. 3. The next ground of comfort is that our Redeemer liveth. This is true of Christ, whether you consider Him as God or as man. Christ's living again in His resurrection is a visible demonstration of the truth of the Gospel in general, and in particular of the article of eternal life. His living after death was the solemn acquittance of our Surety from the sins imputed to Him, and a token of the acceptation of His purpose. His living implies His capacity to intercede for us, and to relieve us in all our necessities. His living is the root and cause of our life; for He having purchased eternal life, not only for Himself, but for all His members, ever liveth to convey it to them, and maintain it in them. 4. Another ground of comfort is the certainty of persuasion. "I know." This implies a clear understanding of this mystery; and a certainty of persuasion, which includes a certainty of faith, or of spiritual sense. II. THE APPLICABILITY OF THIS COMFORT IN OUR AFFLICTIONS. Such as public troubles and difficulties; spiritual distresses; outward calamities; calumnies and slanders; and death. Exhortation—Believe and be persuaded of this truth. Endeavour to arrive at the highest degree of assent. (*T. Manton.*) *The believer's triumph*:—1. Afflictions do not dissolve the endeared relation between the Redeemer and the redeemed. 2. Jesus Christ, as He is the only Redeemer of fallen man, has been all along so, even from the beginning. 3. A believer may attain a comfortable evidence of a special relation to Christ and interest in Him. 4. A believer knowing his Redeemer liveth, hath therein a spring of abundant consolation, whatever affliction he here labours under, or is liable to. I. HOW THE TITLE REDEEMER BELONGS TO CHRIST. He is fitly called a Redeemer upon a threefold account. In regard to the bondage-state He finds us in. His relation to us. And what, in that relation, He does for us. As our kinsman, He redeems

us by paying the price of our redemption; and by rescuing us from the tyranny of Satan. II. BELIEVERS WILL AND OUGHT TO BETAKE THEMSELVES TO CHRIST, THE LIVING REDEEMER, FOR RELIEF AND COMFORT UNDER ALL THEIR TROUBLES. 1. As fallen creatures, there is no coming unto the Father but through a Mediator. 2. Christ is the only Mediator between God and man. 3. He is provided and exalted of God to this very end, that the weary and heavy-laden, under whatever burden, might apply to Him for ease and rest. 4. To them that believe He is precious, from the experience they have had of His power and grace. III. IT IS OF POWERFUL USE TO THE CONSOLATION OF BELIEVERS, IN LOOKING TO THEIR PROVIDED REDEEMER, TO KNOW THAT HE LIVETH, AND THAT HE IS THEIRS. That He liveth may be said of Him as God, and as Immanuel, God-man. As Divine, and as risen. The resurrection speaks the value and efficacy of His death and sacrifice. His living again confirms the truth of His doctrine and promises. 3. It is no small addition to a Christian's comfort that Christ lives in heaven. And Christ also is theirs; in gracious, helpful, personal relations with them. IV. HOW BELIEVERS MAY FETCH SUITABLE SUPPORT FROM HENCE, UNDER THE TRIALS WHEREWITH THEY MAY BE MOST SORELY PRESSED. 1. What they feel upon a public account; their tender sense of the Church's troubles, and concern for their brethren in the same household of faith, by reason of the hard things they suffer, and the deep distress they are sometimes brought into. He liveth, and has the turning of all the great wheels of providence. 2. As to public calamities that may happen in our day, or reach the place where our lot is cast. Christ's voice to all is, "Be not terrified." 3. In poverty and want, pinching necessities and straits, we may look up with comfort while able to say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." 4. As to losses in substance, or near and dear relations, bodily pains, the injuries and reproaches of enemies, and hard censures of friends, with whatever the Christian may undergo from heaven, he hath enough to feed his comfort in being able to say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." 5. As deprived of the sense of God's favour. 6. As to the temptations of Satan, the wiles and assaults of the power of darkness. 7. Under the afflictive sense of sin, as to guilt and corruption. 8. As in solitude about finding the way to heaven by reason of error and delusion. 9. Under persecution of suffering for the sake of Christ, and devotedness to Him. 10. The Redeemer's living is the believer's security against the dread and danger of apostasy. 11. As afflicted with the death of the righteous, private Christians or ministers. 12. That the Redeemer liveth may keep up the believer's joy when he comes to die. Application—(1) Let your faith be well grounded and firm in this great truth, that there is a Redeemer living. (2) How much is every one concerned to look after an interest in a living Redeemer. (3) In order to this, let every heart open to a living Redeemer. (4) Having a living Redeemer, follow His example, and tread in His steps. (5) Long to be with your living Redeemer. (*D. Wilcox.*) *Glory of the resurrection*:—Faith is most sorely tried when the hand of God touches ourselves. Yet even then the patriarch Job believed in the coming of Christ, whom on earth he was not to see; he believed that the Redeemer who was to come "akin to us," had then, too, life in Himself, and should come to redeem him also. "I know that my Redeemer liveth." He should at the end "stand the Last," as well as the First, with power "over the dust"; and though the worms should prey upon and bore through this poor body, he himself, for himself, should, out of that very flesh, behold and gaze on God. "I know," said the patriarch. True faith is solid, sure as knowledge. God writes it on the heart, and the heart knows what it believes, more surely than the senses know what they perceive. See how Job contrasts, not only life with death, but life as the produce of death. And so it must be. After our bodies had through sin become subject to corruption, it had been endless misery for them to have lived on for ever. And so God the Son took our nature upon Him in its purity, to make it to us a new origin of being. For us He was born as man. For us, to pay the ransom for us, He died. For us, not for Himself, He rose again. Jesus rose to give us all which He is. After His resurrection, the very being of His body was spiritual. The glory of Christ began with the grave. As to Him, so to us, if we are His, the grave is the vestibule to glory. Claudius says, "The tokens of decay are the cock-crowing to the resurrection." Yet the change and transformation must begin here. It consists in first giving our whole souls to God, yielding ourselves to His transforming grace, that He would change us as He wills; and then, with steady, unwavering step to obey each impulse of His grace. This will seem hard until

thou knowest the sweetness of pleasing God. (*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*) *Job's sure knowledge*:—I. JOB HAD A TRUE FRIEND AMID CRUEL FRIENDS. He calls Him his Redeemer, and looks to Him in his trouble. The Hebrew word will bear three renderings, as follows—1. His Kinsman. Nearest akin of all. No kinsman is so near as Jesus. None so kinned, and none so kind. Voluntarily so. Not forced to be a brother, but so in heart, and by His own choice of our nature: therefore more than brother. Not ashamed to own it. "He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. ii. 11). Even when they had forsaken Him, He called them "My brethren" (Matt. xxviii. 10). Eternally so. Who shall separate us? (Rom. viii. 35). 2. His Vindicator. From every false charge: by pleading the causes of our soul. From every jibe and jest: for he that believeth in Him shall not be ashamed or confounded. From true charges, too; by bearing our sin Himself and becoming our righteousness, thus justifying us. From accusations of Satan. "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan!" (Zech. iii. 2.) "The accuser of our brethren is cast down" (Rev. xii. 10). 3. His Redeemer. Of his person from bondage. Of his lost estates, privileges, and joys, from the hand of the enemy. Redeeming both by price and by power. II. JOB HAD REAL PROPERTY AMID ABSOLUTE POVERTY. He speaks of "my Redeemer," as much as to say, "Everything else is gone, but my Redeemer is still my own, and lives for me." He means—1. I accept Him as such, leaving myself in His hands. 2. I have felt somewhat of His power already, and I am confident that all is well with me even now, since He is my Protector. 3. I will cling to Him for ever. He shall be my only hope in life and death. I may lose all else, but never the redemption of my God, the kinship of my Saviour. III. JOB HAD A LIVING KINSHIP AMID A DYING FAMILY. "My Redeemer liveth." He owned the great Lord as ever living—As "the everlasting Father," to sustain and solace him. As head of his house, to represent him. As intercessor, to plead in heaven for him. As defender, to preserve his rights on earth. As his righteousness, to clear him at last. Our Divine Vindicator abides in the power of an endless life. IV. JOB HAD ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY AMID UNCERTAIN AFFAIRS. "I know." He had no sort of doubt upon that matter. Everything else was questionable, but this was certain. His faith made him certain. Faith brings sure evidence; it substantiates what it receives, and makes us know. His trials could not make him doubt. Why should they? They touched not the relationship of his God, or the heart of his Redeemer, or the life of his Vindicator. His difficulties could not make him fear failure on this point, for the life of his Redeemer was a source of deliverance which lay out of himself, and was never doubtful. His cavilling friends could not move him from the assured conviction that the Lord would vindicate his righteous cause. While Jesus lives our characters are safe. Happy he who can say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Have you this great knowledge? Do you act in accordance with such an assurance? Will you not at this hour devoutly adore your loving Kinsman? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *My Redeemer*:—There is no need to push these words too far. We lose a great deal by attempting to find in a passage like this what in reality is not in it. Suppose that Job is referring to Goël, the elder brother of the family, whose business it was to redeem, and protect, and lead onward to liberty—suppose that this is an Oriental image, that is no reason for saying that it is nothing more. There have been unconscious prophecies; men have uttered words, not knowing what they were uttering; thus Caiaphas said to the council, "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not," not knowing himself what he said. We must allow for the unconscious region of life, the mysterious belt that is round about so-called facts and letters; we must allow for that purple horizon, so visible, so inaccessible. He would be an unwise teacher who said, Job knew all that we understand by Christ, resurrection, and immortality; but he would be unwiser still who said that when his soul had been wrought up to this high pitch of enthusiasm in the ardour of his piety he knew nothing of the coming glory. Let Job speak literally, and even then he leaves a margin. Here we find a man at the utmost point of human progress; figure him to the eye; say the progress of the world, or the education of the world, is a long mysterious process; and here, behold, is a man who has come to the uttermost point: one step further and he will fall over: there, however, he stands until vacuity is filled up, until vaticination becomes experience, until experience has become history, until history, again, by marvellous spiritual action, shapes itself into prophecy,

and predicts a brighter time and a fairer land. There have been men who have stood on the headlines of history: they dare not take one more step, or they would be lost in the boundless sea. Thus the world has been educated and stimulated by seer, and dreamer, and prophet, and teacher, and apostle. There have never been men wanting who have been at the very forefront of things, living the weird, often woeful, sometimes rapturous, life of the prophet. What was a dream to Job is a reality to us. We can fill up all Job would have said had he lived in our day; now we can say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." When these words are sung, do not think they are the words of Job that are being sung; they are Job's words with Christ's meaning. Yes, we feel that there must be a "Redeemer." Things are so black and wrong, so corrupt, so crooked, so wholly unimaginable, with such a seam of injustice running through all, that there must be a Goël, a firstborn, an elder brother, a Redeemer. It is the glory of the Christian faith to proclaim the personality and reality of this Redeemer. I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the almightiness of God, the very omnipotence of the Trinity, to everyone that believeth. "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Nor can we consent to change His name: what word sweeter than "Redeemer"? what word mightier? A poem in itself; an apocalypse in its possibilities; Divine love incarnated. Oh, come Thou whose right it is! "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." That same Son of Mary, Son of Man, Son of God. Accept Him as thy Redeemer! (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *Job's great hope*:—Let us clearly understand the point and value of the argument. It is not that a man who has served God here and suffered here must have a joyful immortality. What man is faithful enough to make such a claim? But the principle is that God must vindicate His righteousness in dealing with the man He has made, the man He has called to trust Him. It matters not who the man is, how obscure his life has been, he has this claim on God, that to him the eternal righteousness ought to be made clear. Job cries for his own justification; but the doubt about God involved in the slur cast upon his own integrity is what rankles in his heart; from that he rises in triumphant protest and daring hope. He must live till God clears up the matter. If he dies he must revive to have it all made clear. And observe, if it were only that ignorant men cast doubt on Providence, the resurrection and personal redemption of the believer would not be necessary. God is not responsible for the foolish things men say, and we could not look for resurrection because our fellow-creatures misrepresent God. But Job feels that God Himself has caused the perplexity. God sent the flash of lightning, the storm, the dreadful disease; it is God who, by many strange things in human experience, seems to give cause for doubt. From God in nature, God in disease, God in the earthquake and the thunderstorm, God whose way is in the sea, and His path in the mighty waters,—from this God, Job cries in hope, in moral conviction, to God the Vindicator, the eternally righteous One, Author of nature and friend of man. This life may terminate before the full revelation of right is made; it may leave the good in darkness, and the evil flaunting in pride; the believer may go down in shame, and the atheist have the last word. Therefore a future life with judgment in full must vindicate our Creator, and every personality involved in the problems of time must go forward to the opening of the seals, and the fulfilment of the things that are written in the volumes of God. This evolution being for the earlier stage and discipline of life, it works out nothing, completes nothing. What it does is to furnish the awaking spirit with material of thought, opportunity of endeavour, the elements of life; with trial, temptation, stimulus and restraint. No one who lives to any purpose or thinks with any sincerity can miss in the course of his life one hour at least in which he shares the tragical contest, and adds the cry of his own soul to that of Job, his own hope to that of ages that are gone, straining to see the Goël who undertakes for every servant of God. By slow cycles of change the vast scheme of Divine providence draws towards a glorious consummation. The believer waits for it, seeing One who has gone before him, the Alpha and Omega of all life. The fulness of time will at length arrive, the time foreordained by God, foretold by Christ, when the throne shall be set, the judgment shall be given, and the æons of manifestation shall begin. (*Robert A. Watson, D.D.*) *My Redeemer*:—Then there pass from Job's lips

words into which Christian translators have breathed a distinctness, a hope and certainty, which doubtless far transcends the sublime, but dim, faith of the original. "I know," he cries, "that my Redeemer, my Rescuer, my Vindicator, liveth." Liveth, for He is none other than the living God—no mere mute inscription, no human Goël, or avenger—on whom Job rests his faith. "And He, at the last," when all this bitter conflict is over, "will stand upon the earth," or rather, "on the dust," the dust of death into which I am sinking. "And" even "after my skin," this poor skin with all that it encases, "is destroyed" —even when "the first-born of death," and the "King of Terrors" himself, of whom you speak, have done their worst—"yet," even then, not "in," but rather "from" (in the sense most probably of "removed from," or "without") "my flesh," though my body moulder in the dust, "I shall see my God"—the God now hidden, the God to whom he had appealed before to hide him for awhile from the world of the dead, and then to call him forth. He will manifest himself at last to his forgotten friend, who will have survived for this the shock of the great Destroyer; "whom I shall behold," he goes on, yea, I the prey of death, "shall see Him, shall see Him for myself." (Or see Him "on my side," the phrase is ambiguous.) "Yea, mine eyes shall behold Him, I, and not another. My reins," my very inmost heart, "consume," and melt "within me" at the vision. . . . The sick heart faints with joy. Despair gives way to gladness. The poor tortured sufferer, who again and again has looked on the inevitable death which is waiting for him, as the limit of his days, as the final severer between himself and his God, rises to the region of a sublime, a rapturous hope. We dare not write into his words all the "sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection," which the Christian utters; still less that anticipation of a bodily rising from the grave, of a reclothing of his spirit in flesh, which the passage breathes in the great Latin translation, dear for ages to Western Christendom. We recognise even in the familiar words of our own older version, phrases and thoughts which outrun the patriarch's aspirations, the patriarch's faith. But for all that, when we have stripped the passage of all that is adventitious—all that even unconsciously imports into its framework the ideas and faith of another and later age—we still hear the cry of the saint of the old world, as he stands face to face with the King of Terrors; "Though my outward man decay and perish, yet God shall reveal Himself to me, to my true self." He plants, as it has been well said, the flag of triumph on his own grave. And his words, in one form or another, have lived longer than he looked for. They will outlive the scroll for which he sighed, the very rock on which just now he wished to see them engraved. (*Dean Bradley.*) *The hope of restoration:*—Trans. thus, "For I know that my *Goël* lives, and (my) Vindicator will arise upon the earth." The Fathers, both Oriental, and Occidental, regarded this passage as a proof text, not only of the immortality of the soul, but also of the resurrection of the body. Some even saw in it a conclusive proof of the divinity of Christ. This view prevailed through the Middle Ages. But this interpretation is now generally rejected by critics and commentators, though it was at one time almost universal. Two views need to be considered. I. JOB HOPED FOR RESTORATION IN THIS LIFE. This view has never been popular. Some scholars support it on the following grounds:—1. The language requires such an interpretation. 2. Whatever there is in the passage which can be applied to a resurrection body, can also be referred with equal force to a restored body in this life. 3. If this passage refers to a future life, it is strange that this glorious doctrine is not more fully presented. Elihu passes it over in silence. Not a word is to be found regarding it in the sublime discourses of the Almighty. 4. The question of restoration to the favour of God in another existence is not even incidentally raised. 5. There is no force in the assertion often made that we cannot limit Job's expectation for deliverance to this life without lowering the evidence and power of his faith. This is mere rhetoric. Instead of his faith being lowered, it is enhanced. 6. It would have been more satisfactory to Job to have been delivered from the unjust charges laid against him, and to have been justified by the Almighty, who could not err, in the presence of his friends and acquaintances, on the very scene of the conflict here on earth. 7. Certainly this would have been of more advantage to Job's contemporaries, for whom the new revelation was intended. 8. The *dénouement*, or final issue, favours this view. II. JOB DID NOT EXPECT DELIVERANCE IN THIS LIFE, BUT IN A DISEMBODIED STATE, AFTER DEATH. The following arguments for this view have been adduced. 1. This is evident from the plain meaning of the text. The two clauses in ver. 26 are not antithetic, for the second

has the same thought as the first, and must read, "And after my skin is thus destroyed, and without my flesh (body) I shall see God." After my skin, without my flesh, and dust, are parallelistic equivalents. 2. That Job did not expect deliverance in this life is also shown by his desire to have his protestations of innocency engraved on the rock for ever. 3. That Job expected no restoration here on earth is clear from his own words in other portions of the book. . . . After carefully weighing the arguments *pro* and *con*, we are forced to the conclusion that Job expected restoration in this life. This is the most natural interpretation. It also accords with the development of doctrine in the Old Testament, for it is an intermediate step between Mosaism and Christianity in regard to suffering and retribution in this life. And in accepting this view, no one is forced to the conclusion that Job had no hope or knowledge of immortality, but only that the future life is not referred to in this passage. (*W. W. Davis, Ph.D.*)

Precious experience :—I. THE HIGHEST FORM OF KNOWLEDGE IS THE CONSCIOUSNESS THAT WE HAVE A REDEEMER. 1. This is the knowledge which diminishes the distance between us and God. Whatever else sin may be, it is the estrangement of the soul from the source of all its joys. Sin has made us to be "far off" from God. He is denied His place in thought. He is excluded from the counsels of the will. His own monitor—conscience—is indifferent to His presence. The heart has sought the fellowship of other lovers, but they all have left "an aching void," which cries, "Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both." This has been attempted by many. Prophets, priests, and kings stretched their hands upwards towards God, and downwards towards man, but their arms were too short. Philosophers, moralists, and philanthropists have endeavoured to fill the gulf, and pave the way for the contending parties to approach each other, they also have all disappeared in that awful chasm. But there is "One Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Have we felt the reconciling touch of His hand? "I know that my Redeemer liveth," is the only answer. 2. This is the knowledge which removes all differences. We cannot meet God, we cannot enjoy God, with the burden of guilt on our soul. The voice of justice in heaven cries against us; the voice of conscience within is not less in its denunciation. 3. This is the knowledge which restores the full harmony between us and the Father. There is no other platform from which we may survey the whole situation. II. THAT THE HIGHEST FORM OF CONSCIOUSNESS IS FAITH IN A LIVING SAVIOUR. "My Redeemer liveth." If we possibly can, let us bring the text to a nearer touch of our life. One of the functions of faith is to convert historical Christianity into a living power in the soul, by enacting the life of Jesus in our own. 1. The living Redeemer is the life of faith. Faith leans on a living bosom, and draws its comfort from a living heart. 2. The living Redeemer is the stay of faith. The Hebrew Goël was the next-of-kin who avenged his brother's wrongs, and redeemed his life and property. Our Saviour is that next-of-kin who watches over our affairs, and will see that justice is done. Remember, brethren, He is the custodian of your character and reputation. The man who deals a blow at your circumstances, must meet Jesus, and settle the matter with Him. "Avenge not yourselves," but "cast all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." 3. The living Redeemer is the satisfaction of faith. He who can say "My Redeemer!" has enough. Things of life are transmissible. The man goes to his solicitor to have the property he has bought conveyed to him. When it is done, he says, "I want you to make my will." Then runs the instrument, "I give and bequeath," &c. But "my Redeemer" is not a transitory possession; it abides the inheritance of the soul for ever. Thomas made a noble confession, "My Lord, and my God." III. THE FINAL TRIUMPH OF FAITH WILL BE THE MEETING OF THE SAINT AND THE SAVIOUR. "Whom I shall see," &c. Faith will launch her bark into the sea of His presence. 1. Your rights will be vindicated, and all your trials explained. A light will be thrown on all the difficult passages in your life. Faith said all the time that His judgments are righteous and true; you will understand that then. That day will be a commentary on all the chapters of life, for "the day will reveal it." 2. Immediate communion with Jesus. In that day they will all turn aside, and our eyes will feast on the beatific vision, for "we shall see Him as He is." Those eyes, which have wept many times, shall see Him in the clear light of heaven. Thank you, a thousand times, ye noble prophets and apostles, for your beautiful photos of Him, now we see Jesus Himself. 3. Faith will realise all anticipations and hopes. What is your ruling passion; is it Poetry? Then the muse will be on the heights of Parnassus. Music? The melody of the

cross will have attracted all the harmonies of the universe to itself. Beauty? The rose of Sharon will be there. Life? Live on. Regarding the wonderful utterance in the text in the light of the circumstances in which the patriarch was placed, we have here a marvellous picture of faith. In the presence of such a faith, shall we allow ours to fret and fear in the face of small difficulties? Put all the difficulties and sufferings of your life by the side of those endured by the patriarch, and they will pale and die. However, we may not be the strong men in faith that his stature would suggest. Look to your Goël. (*T. Davies, M.A.*) *The living Redeemer*:—Schultens suggests that the patriarch, in the previous verses, refers to an inscription upon a sepulchral stone. Job relies upon God for his ultimate and full vindication. Expecting to go down to the grave under the reproach of guilt, he would have it engraven upon the stone at the door of his sepulchre, that his trust was in his Redeemer. I. THE MEANING OF THE TERM REDEEMER, AS APPLIED TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. The word Goël has two significations. One, to be stained or polluted with blood; the other, to ransom, redeem, or purchase back. The duties of a Redeemer among the Jews included—delivering a kinsman out of captivity by force or ransom; and to buy him out when his liberty had been forfeited by debt, buying back an inheritance that had passed out of the hands of a poorer kinsman; advocating the right of those who were too weak to sustain their own cause. All these offices of the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus was fitted to sustain, and has executed, or will execute for us. To become our Redeemer He became our kinsman. Three principal things are intended by Christ's title of Redeemer. 1. Atonement or satisfaction made to the Divine law in behalf of His people. 2. Deliverance and salvation of His people from all their enemies and difficulties. 3. The securing for them an eternal inheritance of life and blessedness. II. THE EXCELLENCE OF THE LORD JESUS AS A LIVING REDEEMER. He whom Job knew to be his Redeemer is the only-begotten Son of God in whom we trust. The excellency of Christ as our living Redeemer is seen in His resurrection, in His power, and in His glory. (*Geo. W. Bethune, D.D.*) *Job's knowledge and triumph*:—I. A REDEEMER IS PROVIDED FOR SINNERS OF MANKIND. This important truth Job plainly avows, in the solemn profession of his faith which he makes in the text. The character of Redeemer is, with peculiar propriety, ascribed to God our Saviour. That He might obtain complete eternal redemption for us, in the fulness of time, God sent forth His own Son, made of a woman, made under the law. Never was there such a glorious Redeemer as God manifest in the flesh. Never was such a price paid for redemption as the precious blood of Christ. He redeems us from all evil. II. HE IS AN EVER-LIVING REDEEMER, WHO HAS ACCOMPLISHED OUR REDEMPTION. It is not said, the Redeemer hath lived, or shall live, but that "He liveth." He is without beginning of days or end of life; the "same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." As God, He liveth for ever and ever. As Redeemer, He is called a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, in the purpose and promise of God. III. THE LIVING REDEEMER SHALL STAND AT THE LATTER DAY UPON THE EARTH. Lit., "He shall stand the last upon the earth." He will again stand upon the earth, or over the earth, as the words may signify. He will come in glory, to raise the dead bodies of His people, and to judge the world in righteousness. IV. THE REDEEMED AMONG MEN CLAIM RELATION TO THEIR REDEEMER. "My Redeemer." Job expresses the confidence of a living faith in his intimate relation to the ever-living Redeemer, in whom he believed and trusted, with the other patriarchs of early ages. V. THE MORTAL BODIES OF THE REDEEMED SHALL BE CONSUMED, BUT THEY SHALL SEE GOD. Though death doth no more to the soul of man than separate it from the body with which it is united, yet it entirely demolishes the curious structure of the body. The mighty Redeemer shall raise all His redeemed ones from the power of the grave. Their souls, when in the separate state, behold Him with the eyes of the mind; but after the resurrection they shall behold Him in their flesh with their bodily eyes. VI. THE KNOWLEDGE OF ALL THIS SUPPORTS THE SERVANTS OF GOD UNDER PRESENT TRIALS, AND THE PROSPECT OF DEATH. Job himself was a remarkable instance of the truth of this observation. (*W. M'Culloch.*) *Job's confidence*:—I. THE TITLE UNDER WHICH CHRIST IS HERE SPOKEN OF. "Redeemer." Our Redeemer has exceeded in His work the redeemers among the Jews. All they could do for their murdered relative was, put to death the murderer. II. JOB SPEAKS OF THE REDEEMER AS LIVING AT THE TIME WHEN HE SPOKE. And so He was. "Before Abraham was, I am," He said of Himself. There never was a period when He was not. He was virtually the Redeemer of men, though He had

not actually wrought out their redemption. III. THE PERSONAL INTEREST WHICH JOB CLAIMS IN THE REDEEMER. Here is no uncertainty or doubt, but the fullest assurance. A personal interest in Christ is absolutely necessary if you would be saved. IV. AN IMPORTANT TRUTH RESPECTING THE FUTURE MANIFESTATION OF THE REDEEMER. The time of the advent is sometimes called the "last time," the latter, or last, days. It is, however, more probable that the words of Job refer to the second coming of Christ, which will be literally the latter or last day. V. THE BLESSED HOPE WHICH THE PATRIARCH INDULGES. He refers to the inevitable lot of man at death. But we shall yet live again. Job could say, "In my flesh I shall see God." When he should see God, he would learn the purpose of his affliction. Then his character would be cleared of the aspersions which had been cast upon it. Job's confidence that he should see God would be a source of joy, inasmuch as to see God is heaven itself. (*W. Cardall, B.A.*) *Job's confession* :—It regards—I. THE PROMISED SAVIOUR. It speaks of Him—1. As a Redeemer. A title peculiarly applicable to the Lord Jesus. 2. As a living Redeemer. Which applies to that grand and consolatory truth, the resurrection of our Lord from the dead. The words may, however, refer to His divinity rather than His resurrection. 3. As a Redeemer in whom he had a peculiar interest. His Redeemer in particular. "My Redeemer liveth." 4. As a Redeemer who would stand at the latter day upon the earth. This may refer to the incarnation, but it must also refer to the great resurrection. II. JOB'S OWN JOYFUL RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD. 1. How he dwells on the effects which would be produced by death on his bodily frame. 2. How, in defiance of every difficulty which might obstruct or hinder it, he yet expressed his assured hope of a joyful resurrection. We have here the views of this ancient believer respecting—1. The resurrection of the body. The body, after the resurrection, would be true flesh, not a spirit, thin and subtle as the air, as some have vainly imagined. At the resurrection he would receive the very same body which he had on earth. The nature of that happiness to which the servant of God, after his resurrection, would be admitted, is indicated. It was the beatific vision of that God and Saviour in whose presence is fulness of joy. But those only will thus see Him who have received Him here as their Redeemer, by a faith which purifies the heart, overcometh the world, worketh by love, and maintaineth good works. (*John Natt, B.D.*) *Realising the second advent* :—The hardest, severest, last lesson which man has to learn upon the earth, is submission to the will of God. All that saintly experience ever had to teach resolves itself into this, the lesson how to say, affectionately, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Slowly and stubbornly our hearts acquiesce in that. The earliest record that we have of this struggle in the human bosom is found in this Book of Job. In the rough rude ages when Job lived, when men did not dwell on their feelings as in later centuries, the heart-work of religion was manifestly the same earnest passionate thing that it is now. What is the Book of Job but the record of an earliest soul's perplexities? The double difficulty of life solved there, the existence of moral evil—the question whether suffering is a mark of wrath or not. Job appealed from the tribunal of man's opinion to a tribunal where sincerity shall be cleared and vindicated. He appealed from the dark dealings of a God whose way it is to hide Himself, to a God who shall stand upon this earth in the clear radiance of a love on which suspicion itself cannot rest a doubt. It was faith straining through the mist, and discerning the firm land that is beyond. I. THE CERTAINTY OF GOD'S INTERFERENCE IN THE AFFAIRS OF THIS WORLD. 1. A present superintendence. The first truth contained in that is God's personal existence. It is not chance, nor fate, which sits at the wheel of this world's revolutions. It is a living God. To be religious is to feel that God is the "ever-near." Faith is that strange faculty by which man feels the presence of the invisible. We must not throw into these words of Job a meaning which Job had not. Job was an Arabian Emir, not a Christian. All that Job meant was, that he knew he had a Vindicator in God above. At last God Himself would interfere to prove his innocence. God has given us, for our faith to rest on, something more distinct and tangible than He gave to Job. 2. The second truth implied in the personal existence of a Redeemer is sympathy. It was the keenest part of Job's trial that no heart beat pulse to pulse with his. In the midst of this it seems to have risen upon his heart with a strange power, to soothe, that he was not alone. Note the little word of appropriation, My Redeemer. Power is shown by God's condescension to the vast; sympathy by His condescension to the small. 3. The third thing implied in the present superintendence is God's vindication of wrongs. The word trans-

lated here. Redeemer, is one of peculiar signification. Job was professing his conviction that there was a champion or an avenger, who would one day do battle for his wrongs. 4. There is a future redress of human wrongs, which will be made manifest to sight. There will be a visible, personal interference. If we use his words, we must apply them in a higher sense. The second Advent of Christ is supposed by some to mean an appearance of Jesus in the flesh to reign and triumph visibly. But every signal manifestation of the right and vindication of the truth in judgment, is called in Scripture a coming of the Son of Man. The visual perception of His form would be a small blessing; the highest and truest presence is always spiritual, and realised by the spirit. II. THE MEANS OF REALISING THIS INTERFERENCE. There is a difference between knowing a thing and realising it. Job knew that God was the vindicator of wrongs. It was true, but to Job it was strange, and shadowy, and unfamiliar. Two ways are suggested for realising these things. One is meditation. No man forgets what the mind has dwelt long on. You can scarcely read over Job's words without fancying them the syllables of a man who was thinking aloud. The other is this—God ensures that His children shall realise all these things by affliction. If ever a man is sincere, it is when he is in pain. There are many things which nothing but sorrow can teach us. Sorrow is the realiser. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *A spiritual deliverance*:—In these remarkable words Job was not anticipating a mere temporal deliverance from his afflictions, but expressing his confidence in a higher deliverance, connected with another state of being, and involving his immortal happiness. I. THE GLORIOUS CHARACTER HE CONTEMPLATES. A "Redeemer." The word is used of the Blood Avenger (Goël) of ancient times. The title of "Redeemer" is used by the prophets as an appellation of Jehovah, and with peculiar adaptation it is appropriated to the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom, it is stated, we have redemption. With propriety and force the Mediator between God and man is invested with the name of our "Redeemer." The Mediator was unquestionably the revealed and acknowledged object of faith and hope in patriarchal ages. The future Messiah was the being now contemplated by Job when he spoke of a Redeemer. II. THE IMPORTANT TRUTHS HE STATES. The first refers to the actual state of the Redeemer,—He "liveth," or "is now living." To His being, no commencement, however remote, can be assigned. We conceive that the patriarch was now rendering a specific ascription to Him, as essentially "the living One," and was acknowledging Him in that attribute of absolute eternity which furnishes so immovable a basis for the confidence and joy of the saints throughout every period of the world. The second of these truths refers to the future manifestation of the Redeemer. "He shall stand (arise) at the latter day upon (over) the earth." We consider this a prediction of the last day. The clause means, "He shall arise in triumph over the ruins of mortality." From the certainty of that event, Divine truth derives the appropriateness and the efficacy of its appeals. In what manner, and with what feelings, do you look towards the day of the revelation of Jesus Christ? III. THE PERSONAL HOPE JOB INDULGES. These remarkable words are strong affirmations of a personal interest in the grace and redemption of Him who at the latter day is to appear in His glory as the Judge; and are an anticipation of eternal happiness then to be awarded and enjoyed. The expressions furnish several remarks. 1. Death must be uniformly suffered before the happiness of true believers can be completed. 2. On the arrival of "the latter day," the bodies of believers will be raised in a state refined and glorified. 3. Believers, in their state of restoration, will enjoy the presence and friendship of God for ever. IV. THE ABSOLUTE CONFIDENCE JOB ASSERTS. "I know." These expressions of certainty by the patriarch arose from no equivocal impulse. We who are now numbered among the heirs of promise, tell to the world that we have the same confidence too. "We know in whom we have believed." (*J. Parsons.*) *The faith and expectation of the Patriarch Job*:—1. THE GLORIOUS CHARACTER ASCRIBED TO JESUS CHRIST. Redeemer. Goël. Christ became our Blood-relation, our kinsman after the flesh, and as such the right of redemption devolved upon Him. This right He exercises. 1. By redeeming our forfeited inheritance of eternal life. 2. By redeeming us from the slavery of sin. 3. He avenges the blood of His people on their murderer Satan. II. CHRIST IS THE "LIVING ONE," POSSESSING LIFE IN HIMSELF, AND BEING THE SOURCE OF LIFE TO THOSE WHOM HE CAME TO REDEEM. As God, this is a title peculiarly appropriate to Him, for He possesses independent and eternal life. His existence as our Redeemer is from everlasting to everlasting. III. THIS LIVING REDEEMER WOULD AT SOME FUTURE

PERIOD MAKE HIS APPEARANCE ON THE EARTH. The resurrection of the dead is an event reserved for the second appearance of our Redeemer at the last day. Notice the assured confidence with which the patriarch interests himself in this living Redeemer, who was to stand at the latter day upon the earth. He uses the language of appropriation, "My Redeemer." He infers the completion of his own redemption by Christ raising him from the dead, and permitting him to enjoy the beatific vision of God. These sublime truths are peculiarly fitted to comfort the children of God amid all the sufferings, anxieties, and sorrows of life and death. (*Peter Grant.*) *The believer's confidence in the dominion of Christ after death* :—I. THE SUBJECTION OF THE BODY TO THE DOMINION OF DEATH. Man is composed of body and soul. Die we must. II. THE SUBJECTION OF DEATH TO THE DOMINION OF CHRIST. Jesus came to destroy death; He will come to complete His work. The resurrection of the dead will be universal. III. THE CHARACTER IN WHICH CHRIST WILL ASSERT HIS DOMINION. Redeemer. 1. There was infinite love in the price of redemption. 2. There is omnipotent power in the application of this work. 3. There will be immutable fidelity in the completion of this work. What a source of consolation in all the changes, troubles, and bereavements of the world. IV. THE FINAL TRIUMPH OF CHRIST OVER DEATH WILL CONSTITUTE THE FINAL HAPPINESS OF ALL THE REDEEMED. The text admits of two senses. 1. I shall see God my Redeemer in this my body. 2. I shall see God in my flesh, *i.e.* in that flesh which He assumed to become my Redeemer. (*Edward Parsons.*) *The staying power of certitudes* :—Job's triumphant assertion of his confidence in God is deservedly ranked as the most important passage in all his discourses. The flukes of his anchor have taken hold of the immovable Rock of Ages; and the rage of the tempest, and the dashing waves and the heaving sea, cannot tear his vessel from its moorings. Held by the strong grasp of the invisible, he can defy all that is visible, and on the surface; and Satan's most furious assaults have no power to dislodge him, or unsettle his well-grounded persuasion. My Redeemer shall arise last. Job and his friends had been contending first. My Redeemer shall arise last; and He shall enter latest on the scene. And He shall settle the matter unresisted, in His own way. And this shall be the final settlement of this much-disputed case. And none shall come after Him to change what He has done. Abraham saw Christ's day; and Job rejoiced to see Christ's day; and he was glad. It was the seed of Abraham to whom the "Father of the faithful" looked forward. It was his Divine Redeemer that gladdened the believing soul of the man of Uz. (*William H. Green, D.D.*) *Certitude* : — The sceptic beholds his misgivings multiply and his doubts thicken. The believer as a rule sees them all vanish. Schiller, the great German thinker, goes to his study, sits down as usual to his desk, writes with that masterly ability which distinguished him, begins a new sentence, writes the word "But"—and then dies. The great advocates of Scepticism always die with a doubt, expire with a "But." The Christian, however, grows in faith as he approaches death. "I *know* that"—in my flesh, &c. *Christ mine* :—Dean Stanley tells us that Dr. Arnold used to make his boys say, "Christ died for *me*," instead of the more general phrase, "Christ died for us." "He appeared to me," says one whose intercourse with him never extended beyond these lessons, "to be remarkable for his habit of *realising everything* that we are told in Scripture." (*Life of Dr. Arnold.*) *Natural tendencies to dissolution* :—There is in every living organism a law of death. We are wont to imagine that Nature is full of life. In reality it is full of death. One cannot say it is natural for a plant to live. Examine its nature fully, and you have to admit that its natural tendency is to die. It is kept from dying by a mere temporary endowment, which gives it an ephemeral dominion over the elements—gives it power to utilise for a brief span the rain, the sunshine, and the air. Withdraw this temporary endowment for a moment and its true nature is revealed. Instead of overcoming Nature it is overcome. The very things which appeared to minister to its growth and beauty, now turn against it and make it decay and die. The sun which warmed it withers it; the air and rain which nourished it rot it. It is the very forces which we associate with life which, when their true nature appears, are discovered to be really the ministers of death. (*H. Drummond.*) *The law of justice universal and unfailing* :—Whence came our sense of justice? We can only say from Him who made us. He gave us such a nature as cannot be satisfied nor find rest till an ideal of justice, that is of acted truth, is framed in our human life, and everything possible done to realise it. Upon this acted truth all depends, and till it is reached we are in suspense. . . . Justice there is in

every matter. The truthfulness of nature at every point in the physical range is a truthfulness of the over-nature to the mind of man, a correlation established between physical and spiritual existence. Wherever order and care are brought into view there is an exaltation of the human reason, which perceives and relates. Is it of importance that each of the gases shall have laws of diffusion and combination, shall act according to those laws, unvaryingly affecting vegetable and animal life? Unless those laws wrought in constancy or equity at every moment, all would be confusion. Is it of importance that the bird, using its wings adapted for flight, shall find an atmosphere in which their exercise produces movement? Here again is an equity which enters into the very constitution of the cosmos, which must be a form of the one supreme law of the cosmos. Once more, is it of importance that the thinker should find sequences and relations, when once established, a sound basis for prediction and discovery, that he shall be able to trust himself on lines of research, and feel certain that, at every point, for the instrument of inquiry there is answering verity? Without this correspondence man would have no real place in evolution, he would flutter an aimless unrelated sensitiveness through a storm of physical incidents. Advance to the most important facts of mind, the moral ideas which enter into every department of thought. Does the fidelity already traced now cease? Is man at this point beyond the law of faithfulness? This life may terminate before the full revelation of sight is made; it may leave the good in darkness and the evil flaunting in pride; the believer may go down to shame, and the Atheist have the last word. Therefore a future life with judgment in full must vindicate our Creator. No one who lives to any purpose or thinks with any sincerity can miss in the course of his life one hour at least in which he shares the tragical contest, and adds the cry of his own soul to that of Job, his own hope to that of ages that are gone, straining to the Goël who undertakes for every servant of God, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," &c. (*R. A. Watson, D.D.*) **In my flesh shall I see God.**—*The general resurrection*:—Now, this clause of our text has been understood by the Church of Christ throughout all ages, as expressing Job's assurance of the general resurrection of the body at the last day, and such appears to be the plain, straightforward meaning of the passage. Others, however, seem to think that Job, in these words, refers only to a metaphorical resurrection, that is, a restoration to his former happiness and prosperity. But if he expected such a resurrection, then his constantly longing for the approach of death, as his only hope of relief, seems totally inexplicable. It was under these circumstances of accumulated affliction that Job uttered the words of the text. How strong is faith—how rich the consolations of religion—how powerful that Divine influence which raised the spirit of the patriarch superior to the ills of her earthly tabernacle, and while, in near vision, contemplating the approach of "the last enemy," illumined and quickened by the Sun of Righteousness, to record her feelings, and embody her prospects. "I know that my Redeemer liveth." The true state of the case is here—Job looks toward the period when he should become a tenant of the house appointed for all living, as the due of his sorrows; and his grief was that he should sink into the grave in the estimation of his fellows as one punished by God for his hypocrisy; but his joy was that there would be a general resurrection of the body, which would be followed by a general judgment, when the shades should be removed from his character—and that character presented in its own unblemished rectitude. We say, then, that in the text, Job directs our attention to the general resurrection. "In my flesh shall I see God." Now, unless Job's body were re-moulded, the statement in the text could not be realised. Man was at first created with body and soul, and he will live so throughout all eternity. The fact itself is certain; but how it shall be brought about we do not know. Our bodies will then undergo some change. Our bodies now are adapted to an earthly state; but the resurrection body will be adapted to the heavenly state. These bodies will undergo many general changes; this corruptible will put on incorruption; this mortal will put on immortality; this dishonour will put on glory; this weakness will put on power, and so forth. These bodies will undergo many particular changes; all blemishes, all deformities, will be done away; all varieties, arising from climate, from employment, from disease, and so on, will doubtless be done away. Now, doubtless, this will be met by a corresponding change in the conformation of our bodies. Our bodies will then be made of imperishable materials. But, amid all these changes, our bodies will be essentially the same; fashioned after the glorious body of our ascended Lord and Master. Yes, when the archangel's trump shall sound, in the plenitude of omnipotence,

these bodies which have long reposed in the noiseless chambers of the grave, will rise, from their dusty beds, superior to disease and death. Run in the same mould as that of Jesus Christ—they will be adorned with living splendour—splendour and honour surpassing the brightness of the noonday sun, and shall continue co-existent with the ages of eternity. At this glorious period our bodies will be exempt from those diseases which now desolate our world. We say, such a remoulding of the fabric which sin has dissolved and destroyed, Job anticipated in the words of the text; but he looked forward to another event, namely, the general judgment. "And though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." The meaning of these words, "Whom I shall see for myself," is, I shall stand before His throne; I shall plead my own cause; I shall be able to tell my own tale, and shall receive from His hands a righteous reward. Now I am misrepresented by my friends; now I am misconceived by my relatives; now I am treated as a hypocrite by those of my own household. But a period is coming when I shall stand before the bar of the Omniscient, when these clouds shall be dissipated by the brightness of His appearance, and I shall appear before an assembled world—before angels, and before the spirits of just men made perfect, as the sincere and devoted servant of the Most High. This, doubtless, had been a source of much consolation and comfort to the patriarch, and would doubtless throw a kind of calm over his troubled bosom when he thought of the day of restitution that was coming. That day when he should see God on his side, not estranged, but as his friend. This is often a source of much joy to Christians in general. It not unfrequently happens that clouds of calumny overhang their character; often are their actions and motives misconceived by their own Christian friends; often are they misrepresented by the wicked and ungodly; but it should be a source of joy to them that their record is on high—their testimony is with God; they should not indulge a principle of revenge, but live like men having in prospect the period of accounts, when all men shall receive according to the deeds done in the body. (*S. Hulme.*) *Job and the resurrection of the body*:—That God refrained from uttering to the ancient world the promise of the resurrection is easily understood. Many other important truths, cardinal truths, accepted by the modern world and necessary to its life and movement, were withheld, and for the same reason. The average human mind, even among His chosen people, was too simple, feeble, and benighted to appreciate thoughts so transcendent and refined. But this reason did not apply to a mind and soul like those of Job. The mountain tops catch the glory of the coming sunlight long before it strikes the levels below. We know that God did reveal it to Moses when, in the solitude and silence of the wilderness, He spoke from the burning bush. Why should He not reveal it to Job, His servant, His worshipper, His faithful friend, who was fighting his forlorn battle with the foes, as it were, "of his own household," with the torment of his body and the anguish of his soul? (*D. H. Bolles.*) *Vision of God*:—There is a sense in which reason and the Bible assure us God cannot be seen. He is the Unapproachable, the Invisible. There is a solemn sense in which He can be seen, and in which He must be seen sooner or later. We make three remarks concerning this soul vision—I. It implies the HIGHEST CAPABILITY of a moral creature. The power to see the sublime forms of the material universe, is a high endowment. The power to see truth and to look into "the reason of things," is a higher endowment far; but the power to see God, is the grandest of all faculties. To see Him who is the cause of all phenomena, the life of all lives, the force of all forces, the spirit and beauty of all forms,—this faculty the human soul has. Depravity, alas! has so closed it generally that there are none in their unregenerate state who see God. Jacob said, "God is in this place and I knew it not." II. It involves the SUBLIMEST PRIVILEGE of a moral creature. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "In Thy presence is fulness of joy." III. It includes the INEVITABLE DESTINY of a moral creature. All souls must be brought into conscious contact with Him, sooner or later "we must all appear before His judgment seat." Every soul must open its eye and so fasten it upon Him that He will appear everything to it, and all things else but shadows. The period of atheism, religious indifferentism, ends with our mortal life. (*Homilist.*) *The sight of God incarnate*:—The happiness of heaven is the seeing God; and because our Lord and Saviour is God incarnate, God the Son made man, by taking to Himself a soul and body such as ours, therefore to see Christ was, to faithful men, a kind of heaven upon earth, and losing

sight of Him, as they did at His Passion, was like being banished from heaven. Of course, then, His coming in their sight again was the greatest happiness they could have. I do not say that St. John, St. Mary Magdalene, and the rest, were all of them at the time fully aware that He whom they had seen die, and whom they now saw rise again, was the very and eternal God. They probably came by slow degrees, some at one time, some at another, to the full knowledge of that astonishing truth. But thus much they knew for certain, that they could not be happy without seeing Him. The sight of God was the very blessing which Adam forfeited in Paradise, and which poor fallen human nature, so far as it was not utterly corrupt, has ever been feeling after and longing for. The holy men before the time of our Lord's first coming in the flesh, looked on, by faith, to the happiness of seeing God. But the apostles, and those who were about Him when He came, actually had that happiness. They enjoyed in their lifetime that privilege which Job had to wait for till he came to the other world. In their flesh they saw God. Some of them even touched God, and handled Him with their hands. When they knew He was risen, it was their life and joy, the light of their eyes, and their soul's delight, their comfort, their hope, and their all, come back again after seeming to be lost. This is why Easter was so bright a day to them. After forty days, He promised to send His Holy Spirit, which should make Him really, though invisibly, nearer to them than He had been as yet. Upon the faith of this promise we and all Christians even now live, and if we have not forfeited our baptismal blessings, are happy. But our happiness is so far dim and imperfect, in that we do not as yet see Christ. The apostles saw Christ, but were not yet members of His body; we are members of His body, but do not yet see Him. These two things, which are now separated, are to be united in the other world; and, being united, they will make us happy for ever. Behold, He has mixed up the account of His resurrection, so awful to sinners, with the most affecting tokens of His mercy. From the moment of His rising to the hour of His ascension, He is never weary of giving them signs, by which they might know Him, however glorified, to be the same mild and merciful Jesus, the same Son of Man, whom they had known so well on earth. Think not that our Master's condescending grace in all these things was confined to those disciples only. Surely it reaches to us, and to as many as believe on Him through the apostles' word. Though He be at the right hand of God, His human body and soul are there with Him, and all His brotherly pity for the lost children of men, and tender fellow-feeling towards those who stand afar off and smite upon their breast. All these blessings of our Lord's presence are sealed and made sure to us with the promise of the Holy Ghost, which makes us members of Him, in His baptism first, and afterwards in the holy communion. (*Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times."*) *Job's idea of resurrection:*—The question asked concerning this passage is, does it refer to the Messiah, and to the resurrection of the dead; or to an expectation which Job had, that God would come forth as his vindicator in some such way as He is declared afterwards to have done? 1. Arguments which would be adduced to show that the passage refers to the Messiah, and to the resurrection from the dead. (1) The language which is used is such as would appropriately describe such events. This is undoubted, though more so in our translation than in the original. (2) The impression which it would make on the mass of readers, and particularly those of plain, sober sense, who had no theory to defend. (3) The probability that some knowledge of the Messiah would prevail in Arabia in the time of Job. This must be admitted, though it cannot be certainly demonstrated (Numb. xxiv. 17). (4) The probability that there would be found in this book some allusion to the Redeemer—the great hope of the ancient saints, and the burden of the Old Testament. (5) The pertinency of such a view to the case, and its adaptedness to give to Job the kind of consolation which he needed. (6) The importance which Job himself attached to his declaration, and the solemnity of the manner in which he introduced it. This is perhaps the strongest argument. 2. The weighty arguments showing that the passage does not refer to the Messiah and the resurrection. (1) The language, fairly interpreted, does not necessarily imply this. (2) It is inconsistent with the argument, and the whole scope and connection of the book. The Book of Job is strictly an argument—a train of clear, consecutive reasoning. It discusses a great inquiry about the doctrine of Divine Providence, and the Divine dealings with men. Had they possessed the knowledge of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, it would have ended the whole debate. It would not only have met all the difficulties of Job, but we should

have found him perpetually recurring to it—placing it in every variety of form,—appealing to it as relieving his embarrassments, and as demanding an answer from his friends. (3) The interpretation which refers this to the resurrection of the dead is inconsistent with the numerous passages in which Job expresses a contrary belief. (4) This matter is not referred to as a topic of consolation by either of the friends of Job, by Elihu, or by God Himself. (5) On the supposition that it refers to the resurrection, it would be inconsistent with the views which prevailed in the age when Job is supposed to have lived. It is wholly in advance of that age. (6) All which the words and phrases fairly convey, and all which the argument demands, is fully met by the supposition that it refers to some such event as is recorded in the close of the book. God appeared in a manner corresponding to the meaning of the words, here upon the earth. He came as the Vindicator, the Redeemer, the Goël of Job. He vindicated his cause, rebuked his friends, expressed His approbation of the sentiments of Job, and blessed him again with returning prosperity and plenty. The disease of the patriarch may have advanced, as he supposed it would. His flesh may have wasted away, but his confidence in God was not misplaced, and He came forth as his vindicator and friend. It was a noble expression of faith on the part of Job; it showed that he had confidence in God, and that in the midst of his trials he truly relied on Him; and it was a sentiment worthy to be engraved on the eternal rock, and to be transmitted to future times. It was an invaluable lesson to sufferers, showing them that confidence could and should be placed in God in the severest trials. (*Albert Barnes.*)

Ver. 28. **But ye should say, Why persecute we him?**—*Toleration of intolerance:*—One of the hardest things in this world is, for the tolerant to have to tolerate intolerance, for the liberal to have to endure illiberality, for the charitable to have to put up with bigotry. We can conceive of an intolerant person being vexed by the intolerance of others; but it is because their intolerance is not of the same kind as his own. To the abettors of particular theological tenets, and the adherents of particular religious systems, such terms as intolerance, illiberality, and uncharitableness, convey no meaning. With them there are no such things. According to their notions, you cannot be too intolerant, so long as you are orthodox; nor too illiberal, so long as you are correct; nor too uncharitable, so long as you are on the right side; which singularly enough, usually happens to be the strong side. Intolerance, in their eyes, is nothing but consistency. It is hard to have to tolerate intolerance. This is what the patriarch had to do, throughout and in addition to the sore calamities permitted by the Almighty to fall upon him. It was a case in which any one might well have cried, "Save me from my friends." The book is filled with the recriminations of the friends on one side, and the remonstrances of Job on the other. But the cause pleaded by the patriarch was the cause of humanity at large, against Jewish and every other form of intolerance. . . . If you see a man bearing good fruits in his life, knowing somewhat of himself and more of God,—though he may not agree in all points with you, speak as you speak, or use the forms you use,—do not suspect him, think the worse of him, or disparage him; but say, rather, to the confusion of all who would do so, "Why should I persecute him, seeing the root of the matter is found in him?" (*Alfred Bowen Evans.*) **Seeing the root of the matter is found in me.**—*The root of the matter:*—I. WHAT THE PATRIARCH INTENDED BY THE ROOT THAT WAS IN HIM. A root may be employed for any principle from which effects proceed. Sometimes the metaphor is employed for a good principle, as in the parable of the sower, where they who withered because they "had no root," lacked the good principle from which spiritual life proceeds. We may find several points of analogy between the principle of faith in the soul, and the root of any plant or tree which vegetates upon our earth. 1. The root is the means of stability. So is faith. As the root balances every plant, from the gigantic oak and the towering cedar, to the hyssop that grows upon the wall, so faith balances and sustains the soul and character of the Christian. 2. The root—and faith—are the channels of nourishment. As the fibrous parts of the root of any plant absorb the moisture which the earth supplies, so faith receives the Spirit which the Saviour imparts. Thus the idea of vitality is intimately connected with faith in the rooting of the Divine Word. 3. Faith is the source of spiritual production. Botanists tell us that the root performs the part of a tender parent, by preserving the embryo plant in its bosom; and thus all the stems, and leaves, and petals, and fruit, are found in the root. Here the analogy is very complete; because as the root

is the source of production to the plant, so faith is the source of every other grace in the soul. II. How THE PATRIARCH MANIFESTED THAT THIS ROOT WAS IN HIM. 1. By the confession which he uttered. Faith has ever been the parent of a good confession. Job could say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." 2. By the satisfaction he avows. Faith in the Son of God satisfied his mind under all the desolations. 3. By the disposition he displayed. What was his patience but the result of faith? III. WHAT THE PATRIARCH EXPECTED. Forbearance and sympathy from his fellow-believers. Many of us greatly err in entertaining uncharitable thoughts, and in using unguarded words, in reference to them who have "the root of the matter in them." (*J. Blackburn.*) *Faith a root*:—Faith is the root of that tree whose flower and fruit is righteousness. Not much fruit is produced without roots. Generally the roots are hid, but they are always there. Sometimes they are unsightly, but they are very necessary. He is a foolish gardener who neglects them, or allows beast or insect to destroy them. So intimate is the relationship existing between belief and righteousness. This utilitarian age may find fault with the careful culture of a faith in the unseen, but these roots, so ugly in many eyes, have produced some luscious fruit. While the world cries out so lustily for the fruits of pure lives and noble deeds, why should it despise the roots from which the finest virtues spring? Christian works are no more than animate faith and love, as the flowers are animate spring buds. (*J. L. Jackson.*) *The root of the matter*:—What is the meaning of "the root of the matter"? Everything would seem to depend upon the root; if we go wrong there, we go wrong everywhere. Now what do we mean by the "root"? Sometimes we talk of a radical cure. It simply means a root cure; not a cure of symptoms, not an alleviation of pain for the moment, but going right down to the root. If the root is right, the tree is worth saving; if the root is right the man is saved. The root is the man. Not your coat, but your character is you. Oh, if we could look at one another in the root, there would be ten thousand times better men in the world than we seem to think there are. But we cannot get men to look at root ideas, root purposes. Now, the root is you; what you are in the root, that you really are before God. The root is the verb out of which all the other words come. Here is the verb; how am I to treat this long verb? Wring its tail off; that is the first act in true grammar. Take off its tail, throw it away, there is the root left; that is the thing you have got to deal with. Beware of artificial qualifications, beware of human certificates, if above it all is not the signature of God. So the root is the man. Do we always judge so? What do they say about the man? His "oddities." Well? His "eccentricities." Well? His "infirmities." That is a little deeper, but not much. What of it? His "peculiarities"—what of them? You have said nothing yet; that is not criticism. What is the man's purpose in life? Talk of that. "Oh, so good!" Then that is the man, and why should you and I talk about his whimsicalities and his oddities? Here is a man about whom they say, "You would mark, I am sure, his want of polish; you would see that there was a great deal of *gaucherie* about his whole air and manner." Yes, I saw that. "You observed that he was not metropolitan in his bearing, that there was a good deal of the agricultural districts about him." Yes, there was a good deal of the agricultural districts about him. Well, what more? Are you going to put me off with that judgment? Oh, tell me what he is in his soul, in his root, in his first idea, in his grandest aspiration. That is the man; that is how God judges us. And here is a man about whom they say, "He made a great many slips, you know." Yes, he did. What shall we do with him? Will you say? Why do you not tell me about his truthfulness? We are to be judged by our truthfulness, which is permanent, constant, all-pervasive, and not by our accidental alightings upon some great truth, and naming it. Many a man has told the truth occasionally who is not filled with the spirit of truth. And many men are misunderstood about this matter because we look for the wrong points of judgment. Many a man is misunderstood through shyness; he does not do himself justice. And many a man would be better in private life, would do himself more justice, but for timidity, for fear. He wants to be so good, and so proper in all his outward behaviour and relations, that he stumbles in the very act of trying excessively to walk uprightly. Do not misjudge him; he is a good soul. And many a man is misunderstood by poverty. He has good judgment, he has a capacious mind, but he has no money, and he thinks that poverty should slink off into the corner. My aim is to show you that we must get to the root of a man before we can know

what the man is. Look not upon his outward appearance, but look, as God looks, on his heart. "The root" means more than it seems to mean at first. It is not the fruit, but it must bear fruit, or it must be cut up and burned. You cannot have this wonderful, invisible, inscrutable root in you without having some proof of its existence; you must grow something good. Now, what is your fruit? Here, again, is the danger of wrong social judgment. There is your whole world's judgment upon one another. We are trees of the Lord's right-hand planting, and I believe in fruit trees of all kinds. I do not believe in a Christianity so absolutely hidden that it never makes itself seen or felt or known in any of the outgoing and action of life. What is the root in a man? Christ, Christ received personally, officially, atoningly, in all the grandeur and pathos of His priestly character; not Christ the Example whom I can keep on a shelf, but Christ the living God that I must hide in my heart if I would have Him at all. Here is the hope of heterodoxy. It is in the root. You know you are curious in your view of things, don't you? Well, but what do you think of Christ? "Oh, I love Him. Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." But do you really and truly love Him? "Yes." Then you are orthodox. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

The root of the matter:—I take up the expressive figure of our text to address myself to those who evidently have the grace of God embedded in their hearts, though they put forth little blossom and bear little fruit; that they may be consoled, if so be there is clear evidence that at least the root of the matter is found in them. I. Our first aim then will be TO SPEAK OF THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL TO TRUE GODLINESS IN CONTRAST, OR, I might better say, IN COMPARISON WITH OTHER THINGS WHICH ARE TO BE REGARDED AS SHOOTS RATHER THAN AS ROOT AND GROUNDWORK. The tree can do without some of its branches, though the loss of them might be an injury; but it cannot live at all without its roots: the roots are essential. And thus there are things essential in the Christian religion. There are essential doctrines, essential experiences, and there is essential practice. 1. With regard to essential doctrines. It is very desirable for us to be established in the faith. But we are ever ready to confess that there are many doctrines which, though exceedingly precious, are not so essential but that a person may be in a state of grace and yet not receive them. A man with weak eyesight and imperfect vision may be able to enter into the kingdom of heaven; indeed, it is better to enter there having but one eye, than, having two eyes and being orthodox in doctrine, to be cast into hell fire. But there are some distinct truths of revelation that are essential. The doctrine of the Trinity we must ever look upon as being one of the roots of the matter. A Gospel without belief in the living and true God—Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity—is a rope of sand. As well hope to make a pyramid stand upon its apex as to make a substantial Gospel when the real and personal Deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost is left as a moot or disputed point. Likewise essential is the doctrine of the vicarious sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. Any bell that does not ring sound on that point had better be melted down directly. So, again, the doctrine of justification by faith is one of the roots of the matter. 2. Turning to another department of my subject; there are certain root-matters in reference to experience. It is a very happy thing to have a deep experience of one's own depravity. It may seem strange, but so it is, a man will scarcely ever have high views of the preciousness of the Saviour who has not also had deep views of the evil of his own heart. High houses, you know, need deep foundations. Yet die you must, before you can be made partaker of resurrection. This much, however, I will venture to say, you may be really a child of God, and yet the plague of your own heart may be but very little understood. You must know something of it, for no man ever did or ever will come to Christ unless he has first learned to loathe himself, and to see that in him, that is in his flesh, there dwelleth no good thing. It is a happy thing, too, to have an experience which keeps close to Christ Jesus; to know what the word "communion" means, without needing to take down another man's biography. But though all this be well, remember it is not essential. It is not a sign that you are not converted because you cannot understand what it is to sit under His shadow with great delight. You may have been converted, and yet hardly have come so far as that. Now what is the root of the matter experimentally? Well, I think the real root of it is what Job has been talking about in the verses preceding the text—"I know," saith he, "that my Redeemer liveth." There must be in connection with this the repentance of sin, but this repentance may be far from perfect, and thy faith in Christ may be far from strong;

if Christ Jesus be thine only comfort, thy help, thy hope, thy trust, then understand, this is the root of the matter. 3. Did I not say that there was a root of the matter practically? Yes, and I would to God that we all practically had the branches and the fruits. These will come in their season, and they must come, if we are Christ's disciples; but nobody expects to see fruit on a tree a week after it has been planted. It is very desirable that all Christians should be full of zeal. The real root of the matter practically is this—"One thing I know; whereas I was blind now I see; the things I once loved I now hate; the things I once hated I love; now it is no more the world, but God; no more the flesh, but Christ; no more pleasure, but obedience; no more what I will, but what Jesus wills." There are those who do certain duties with a conscientious motive, in order to make themselves Christians—such as observing the Sabbath, holding daily worship of God in their families, and attending the public services of the Lord's house with regularity. But they do not distinguish between these external acts—which may be but the ornaments that clothe a graceless life, and those fruits of good living that grow out of a holy constitution, which is the root of genuine obedience. Some habits and practices of godly men may be easily counterfeited. You may generally ascertain whether you have got the root of the matter by its characteristic properties. You know a root is a fixing thing. Plants without roots may be thrown over the wall; they may be passed from hand to hand; but a root is a fixed thing. Well, now, if you have got the root of the matter you are fixed to God, fixed to Christ, fixed to things Divine. If you are tempted, you are not soon carried away. Oh, how many professors there are that have no roots! Get them into godly company, and they are such saints; but get them with other company, and what if I say that they are devils! You have no roots unless you can say, "O God! my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed; by stern resolve and by firm covenant Thine I am; bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." Again, a root is not only a fixing thing, but a quickening thing. What is it that first sets the sap a-flowing in the spring? Why, it is the root. Ah! and you must have a vital principle; you must have a living principle. Some Christians are like those toys they import from France, which have sand in them; the sand runs down, and some little invention turns and works them as long as the sand is running, but when the sand is all out it stops. A root, too, is a receiving thing. The botanists tell us a great many things about the ends of the roots, which can penetrate into the soil hunting after the particular food upon which the tree is fed. Ah! and if you have got the root of the matter in you, you will send those roots into the pages of Scripture, sometimes into a hymn-book, often into the sermon, and into God's Providence, seeking that something upon which your soul can feed. Hence it follows that the root becomes a supplying thing, because it is a receiving thing. We must have a religion that lives upon God, and that supplies us with strength to live for God. II. WHEREVER THERE IS THE ROOT OF THE MATTER THERE IS VERY MUCH GROUND FOR COMFORT. Sounds there in my ears the sigh, the groan, the sad complaint—"I do not grow as I could wish; I am not so holy as I want to be; I cannot praise and bless the Lord as I could desire; I am afraid I am not a fruitful bough whose branches run over the wall"? Yes, but is the root of the matter in you? If so, cheer up, you have cause for gratitude. Remember that in some things you are equal to the greatest and most full-grown Christian. You are as much bought with blood, O little saints, as are the holy brotherhood. You are as much an adopted child of God as any other Christian. You are as truly justified, for your justification is not a thing of degrees. Though "less than nothing I can boast, and vanity confess," yet, if the root of the matter be in me, I will rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the God of my salvation. III. WHEREVER THE ROOT OF THE MATTER IS, THERE WE SHOULD TAKE CARE THAT WE WATCH IT WITH TENDERNESS AND WITH LOVE. If you meet with young professors who have the root of the matter in them, do not begin condemning them for lack of knowledge. People must begin to say "Twice two are four," before they can ever come to be very learned in mathematics. Now I ask you, by way of solemn searching investigation, Have you the root of the matter in you? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The substance of true religion*:—You will always understand a passage of Scripture better if you carefully attend to its connection. Job in the verse before us is answering Bildad the Shuhite. Now, this Bildad on two occasions had described Job as a hypocrite, and accounted for his dire distress by the fact that, though hypocrites may flourish for a time, they will ultimately be destroyed. In the two bitter speeches which he made he described the hypocrite under the figure of a tree which is torn up by the

roots, or dies down even to the root. The inference he meant to draw was this: you, Job, are utterly dried up, for all your prosperity is gone, and therefore you must be a hypocrite. No, says Job, I am no hypocrite. I will prove it by your own words, for the root of the matter is still in me, and therefore I am no hypocrite. Though I admit that I have lost branch, and leaf, and fruit, and flower, yet I have not lost the root of the matter, for I hold the essential faith as firmly as ever; and therefore, by your own argument, I am no hypocrite, and "Ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?" There is a something in true religion which is its essential root. I. Our first thought will be that THIS ROOT OF THE MATTER MAY BE CLEARLY DEFINED. We are not left in the dark as to what the essential point of true religion is: it can be laid down with absolute certainty. This is the root of the matter, to believe in the incarnate God, to accept His headship, to claim His kinship, and to rely upon His redemption. Still look at the text further, and you perceive that the root of the matter is to believe that this Kinsman, this Redeemer, lives. We could never find comfort or salvation in one who had ceased to be. II. THIS FUNDAMENTAL MATTER IS MOST INSTRUCTIVELY DESCRIBED by the words which I have so constantly repeated—"the root of the matter." What does this mean? 1. First, does it not mean that which is essential? "The root of the matter." To a tree a root is absolutely essential; it is a mere pole or piece of timber if there be no root. It can be a tree of a certain sort without branches, and at certain seasons without leaves, but not without a root. So, if a man hath faith in the Redeemer, though he may be destitute of a thousand other most needful things, yet the essential point is settled: he that believeth in Christ Jesus hath everlasting life. 2. The root, again, is not only that which is vital to the tree, it is from the root that the life-force proceeds by which the trunk and the branches are nourished and sustained. There is hope of a tree if it be cut down that it shall sprout again, at the scent of water it shall bud; so long as there is a root there is more or less of vitality and power to grow, and so faith in Christ is the vital point of religion; he that believeth liveth. 3. Again, it is called the "root of the matter" because it comprehends all the rest; for everything is in the root. The holiness of heaven is packed away in the faith of a penitent sinner. Look at the crocus bulb; it is a poor, mean, unpromising sort of thing, and yet wrapped up within that brown package there lies a golden cup, which in the early spring will be filled with sunshine: you cannot see that wondrous chalice within the bulb; but He who put it there knows where He has concealed His treasure. The showers and the sun shall unwrap the enfoldings, and forth shall come that dainty cup to be set upon God's great table of nature, as an intimation that the feast of summer is soon to come. The highest saintship on earth is hidden within the simplicity of a sinner's faith. III. THIS ROOT OF THE MATTER MAY BE PERSONALLY DISCERNED, AS BEING IN A MAN'S OWN POSSESSION. Job says to his teasing friends, "Ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?" Notice the curious change of pronouns. "Ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in him?" that is how the words would naturally run. But Job is so earnest to clear himself from Bildad's insinuation that he is a hypocrite, that he will not speak of himself in the third person, but plainly declares, "The root of the matter is found in me." Job seems to say, "The vital part of the matter may or may not be in you, but it is in me, I know. You may not believe me, but I know it is so, and I tell you to your faces that no argument of yours can rob me of this confidence; for as I know that my Redeemer liveth, I know that the root of the matter is found in me." Many Christian people are afraid to speak in that fashion. They say, "I humbly hope it is so, and trust it is so." That sounds prettily; but is it right? Is that the way in which men speak about their houses and lands? Do you possess a little freehold? Did I hear you answer, "I humbly hope that my house and garden are my own"? What, then, are your title-deeds so questionable that you do not know? 1. Note well that sometimes this root needs to be searched for. Job says, "the root of the matter is found in me," as if he had looked for it, and made a discovery of what else had been hidden. Roots generally lie underground and out of sight, and so may our faith in the Redeemer. I can understand a Christian doubting whether he is saved or not, but I cannot understand his being happy while he continues to doubt about it, nor happy at all till he is sure of it. 2. And note again, the root of the matter in Job was an inward thing. "The root of the matter is found in me." He did not say, "I wear the outward garb of a religious man"; no, but "the root of the matter is found in me." If you, my

hearers, are in the possession of the essence of true Christianity, it does not lie in your outward profession. True godliness is not separable from the godly man; it is woven into him just as a thread enters into the essence and substance of the fabric. 3. When grace is found in us, and we do really believe in our Redeemer, we ought to avow it; for Job says, "The root of the matter is found in me. I know that my Redeemer liveth." Are there not some among you who have never said as much as that? 4. The fact of our having the root of the matter in us will be a great comfort to us. "Alas," saith Job, "my servant will not come when I call him, my wife is strange to me, my kinsfolk fail me, but I know that my Redeemer liveth. Bildad and Zophar, and others of them, all condemn me, but my conscience acquits me, for I know that the root of the matter is in me." Critics may find fault with our experience, and they may call our earnest utterances rant, but this will not affect the truth of our conversion, or the acceptableness of our testimony for Jesus. If the little bird within our bosom sings sweetly it is of small consequence if all the owls in the world hoot at us. There is more real comfort in the possession of simple faith than in the fond persuasion that you are in a high state of grace. 5. This fact also will be your defence against opposers. Thus may you answer them in Job's fashion, "You ought not to condemn me; for, though I am not what I ought to be, or what I want to be, or what I shall be, yet still the root of the matter is found in me. Be kind to me, therefore." If our friends are sincere in their attachment to the Redeemer, let us treat them as our brethren in Christ. IV. THIS ROOT OF THE MATTER IS TO BE TENDERLY RESPECTED BY ALL WHO SEE IT. "Ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?" 1. What a rebuke this is to the persecutions which have been carried on by nominal Christians against each other, sect against sect! How can those who trust in the same Saviour rend and devour each other? If I believe, and rest my soul on the one salvation which God has provided in Christ Jesus, have charity towards me, for this rook will bear both thee and me. This should end all religious persecutions. 2. But next, it ought to be the end of all ungenerous denunciations. If I know that a man is really believing in Jesus Christ, I may not treat him as an enemy. 3. Further than this, the question is, "Why persecute we him?" We can do that by a cold mistrust. Do not let us stand off in holy isolation from any who have the root of the matter in them. Wherefore should we persecute such? (*Ibid.*) *Roots give fixity*:—A root is a fixing thing. Plants without roots may be thrown over the wall; they may be passed from hand to hand; but a root is a fixing thing. How firmly the oaks are rooted in the ground. You may think of those old oaks in the park; ever so far off you have seen the roots coming out of the ground, and then they go in again, and you have said, "Why! what do these thick fibres belong to?" Surely they belong to one of those old oaks ever so far away. They had sent that root there to get a good holdfast, so that when the March wind comes through the forest and other trees are torn up—fir trees, perhaps; trees that have outgrown their strength at the top, while they have too little hold at bottom—the old oaks bow to the tempest, curtsey to the storm, and anon they lift up their branches again in calm dignity; they cannot be blown down. Now if you have got the root of the matter you are fixed, you are fixed to God, fixed to Christ, fixed to things Divine. (*Ibid.*)

CHAPTER XX.

VERS. 4, 5. **That the triumphing of the wicked is short.**—*The triumph of the wicked*:—The words of the text are indisputably true, though misapplied. In the world there is, alas! very often a triumphing of the wicked. Sometimes we see it on a grand scale, as in the cases of Pharaoh, or of Nero. Sometimes we see it on a small scale. There is great mystery in this apparent triumph of evil. Many a suffering saint has been perplexed by this feature of the Divine government (Psa. xxiii.). I. Some thoughts as to WHY THE WICKED SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO TRIUMPH FOR A SEASON. 1. God is a God of patience and long-suffering. He does not cut short the day of grace, even of the most ungodly, but gives them space for repentance. And even if this is of no avail, yet it is a display of His own attributes, and leaves the impenitent more completely without excuse. 2. This

triumph may be permitted for a time, as a chastisement to His people, or to His world. God uses the wicked as unconscious instruments in executing His will, and especially in inflicting chastisement on His backsliding people. II. There is another, and how different a triumph, THE TRIUMPH OF THE CHRISTIAN. His triumph is not over the weak and suffering, but over the strong—the world, the flesh, the devil. (*George Wagner.*) *The triumphing of the wicked short:*—I. THE TRIUMPH MENTIONED. The term used by Zophar is of very general meaning. It signifies the joy which is displayed by the conqueror on account of the successes which have attended him. It is to be understood as referring to the boast which ungodly men often make of their achievements. The term applies to the general conduct of all those who set God's laws at defiance, and by their life show who take pleasure in the ways of sin. The enjoyment of transgression is the triumph of ungodliness. II. THE SHORTNESS OF THE TRIUMPHS OF MAN. 1. In regard to the object itself. It is a conquest which circumstances put into their hands. But see how unstable is war. 2. The expression is also true as it regards the term of human life. The period allotted to man, even the longest period, is only a small portion of time. Death will soon overtake the ungodly, and put a final termination to all his plans and purposes; he will hurry the soul before the Judge of quick and dead, to give account of the deeds done in the body. Then will appear the value of the one thing needful. This subject teaches the people of God not to despond, not to judge or conclude that the wicked are happy, because they seem to prosper and triumph. It teaches the believer the obligations under which he lies to God for grace—grace which has enlightened his mind—grace which has led him to Christ, to believe in Him, and find mercy and peace—grace which has guided his steps, and enabled him to bear patiently all the ills of life, in the hope of a triumph for ever. (*F. Rogers Blackley.*) **And the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment.**—*Against hypocrisy:*—Prejudice or passion will miserably warp the judgment. It will hide from us what we know not, and cause us to pervert what we do know. This is exemplified in the friends of Job. Job had hinted to them the evil and danger of their conduct (Job xix. 28, 29). And Zophar, irritated at the caution, replies with great severity. His words, however, though misapplied, suggest to us two very important truths respecting sinners. I. THEIR PROSPERITY IS TRANSIENT. Of sinners, some make no profession of religion, and others a false profession. Each of these characters may enjoy, for a while, great prosperity. The profane are often exalted to places of dignity and power. They prosper in all their labours for wealth and preferment. They "triumph," as though no evil should ever happen unto them (Psa. lxxiii. 3–12). Hypocrites also frequently are held in estimation (Rev. iii. 1). They are objects of envy to many an humble and contrite soul. They will boast of experiences which might well be coveted. And even attain considerable heights of joy (Matt. xiii. 20). But their prosperity will be of short duration. The hypocrite shall have a period put to his dissimulation. He shall soon appear in his proper character (Deut. xxxii. 35). In comparison of eternity, the duration of his joy will be "but a moment." II. THEIR RUIN WILL BE TREMENDOUS. The ungodly will in due time be visited for their offences. They will then "perish." 1. To their own eternal shame. 2. To the astonishment of all that knew them. The question "Where is he?" refers primarily to the utter extinction of the ungodly. Address—"Know you not this?" Know you not that this has been so from the beginning of the world? Does not the Word of God assert that "it shall be ill with the wicked"? (Isa. iii. 11; Psa. ix. 17.) Does not the most authentic history in the world prove it to have been so? (*Sketches of Sermons.*)

Ver. 8. **He shall fly away as a dream.**—*The dream of life:*—Job, in the text, speaks of life as a "dream," a mere passing phantom of the brain. I. A DREAM IMPLIES A DORMANCY IN CERTAIN FACULTIES OF OUR NATURE. The flitting visions of the brain at night always imply the slumbering state of certain powers of the soul. The will has but little to do with the creations of the dream world. In what sense is the soul asleep? What are the faculties that lie dormant within us? There are those that consciously connect the spirit with the spiritual universe—God and moral responsibilities. But spiritual sleep is unnatural and injurious. II. A DREAM FILLS THE MIND WITH ILLUSIVE VISIONS. The mind sees things in the dreams of the night that never will and that never can have any actual existence. Like dreams, our life here is full of fictions and fancies. 1. Man's notions as to what his life here will be are illusions. 2. Man's notions as to what

constitutes the dignities and blessedness of life are illusions. Compare the world's ideas of dignity with the dictates of common sense, the teaching of philosophy, to say nothing of the higher light of revelation. All notions of dignity and happiness are illusive which have not—(1) To do more with the soul than the senses. (2) To do more with the character than the circumstance. (3) To do more with the present than the future. (4) To do more with the absolute than with the contingent. III. A DREAM IS OF VERY SHORT DURATION. The night dreams of men are very brief, compared with the regular thoughts of their waking hours. Like a dream, life too is brief. This life dream will soon be over. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 11. **His bones are full of the sin of his youth.**—*The sins of youth:*—I. THE STATE OR CONDITION OF A WICKED MAN. "His bones are full of the sin of his youth." 1. The sin. "Youthful pranks." By youthful sins we may understand either kinds of sin, or the time of sin. Corrupt nature, though it cleave to all conditions of life, does not put forth itself alike in all. There are lusts that youth is more especially subject unto. Such as vanity both of spirit and conversation. Flexibility to evil. Easily wrought upon, and drawn away and enticed to that which is evil. Unteachableness. Wax to temptation and flint to admonition. Impetuousness; intemperance; uncleanness. 2. The punishment of sin. "His bones are full of them." The Spirit of God would hereby signify to us the sad and miserable condition of an obdurate and impenitent sinner that has lived for a long time in a course of sin. The word "bones" may be taken either in a corporal or in a spiritual sense. There are many in old age who feel the sins of their youth in their body, their "bones." There are diseases which attend on vicious courses, and hasten bodily destruction. Some kinds of sin God punishes even in this present life. But by "bones" we may understand the spirit, and more particularly the conscience. There is the remembrance of sin in the soul. Sin will stick in the conscience for a long while after the commission of it. God charges the guilt of the sins of youth upon men's souls when the things themselves are past and gone. He rubs up their memories and brings their sins to remembrance. He convinces the judgment as to the nature of the sins themselves. He afflicts them also for them. This is all as true of secret as of open sins. The reasons why God proceeds against sins of youth are these: (1) Because He will maintain His own right and interest in the world. (2) Because sins of youth are commonly acted with greater violence and vehemency of spirit. 3. The sins of youth are a foundation of more sin. Various improvements of the subject. To those who are young, that from hence they would be so much the more careful and watchful of themselves. We should all study to consecrate and devote our best time to God and to His service. Those who have the care of youth should have a more watchful eye upon them. The aged may well pray with the Psalmist, "Remember not the sins of my youth." Take up a general lamentation of the great exorbitancies and irregularities of youth, especially in these days. Notice the extent or amplification of the condition in these words, "Which shall lie down with him in the dust." This denotes the continuance of a wicked man's sin. It begins with him betimes, for it is the sin of his youth, and it lasts with him a long while; for it follows him even into another world. Two ways in which sin is said to "lie down in the dust." First, in regard to the stain of it, and then with regard to the guilt of it. There are two things in Christ which are great arguments for closing with Him. There is holiness answerable to pollution, and there is pardon answerable to guilt. (*T. Horton, D.D.*) *Youth the root of age:*—It should be borne in mind that in old age it is too late to mend, that then you must inhabit what you have built. Old age has the foundation of its joy or its sorrow laid in youth. You are building at twenty. Are you building for seventy? Nay, every stone laid in the foundation takes hold of every stone in the wall up to the very eaves of the building; and every deed, right or wrong, that transpires in youth, reaches forward, and has a relation to all the after-part of man's life. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Sins and their punishments:*—There are seven sorts of special sins. 1. Such as appertain to and most commonly show themselves in this or that age of man's life. 2. There are sins more proper to some countries and places. 3. To the season or times wherein we live. 4. There are special sins of men's special callings, dealings, and tradings in the world 5. Of their conditions, whether poor or rich, great or small. 6. There are special sins following the constitution of the body, whether sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic, or melancholy. 7. There are special sins hanging about our relations. The bones of some are full

of the sins of their relations and constitutions; the bones of others are full of the sins of their conditions and callings; the bones of not a few are full of the sins of the place, time or age wherein they live. The bones of many are full of that special age of their lives, their youth. The sins of their youth-age are visible in their old age, and the sins of their first age prove the sorrows of their last. Till sin be repented of and pardoned, the punishment of it remains. The punishment of sin reacheth as far as sin reacheth. All the sins of youth remain in and upon the oldest of impenitent persons. It is the greatest misery to persevere in sin. (*Joseph Caryl.*) *The sin of youth:*—We commonly say, it is not the last blow of the axe that fells the oak; perhaps the last may be a weaker blow than any of the former, but the other blows made way for the felling of it, and at length a little blow comes and completes it. So our former sins may be the things that make way for our ruin, and then at length some lesser sins may accomplish it. (*J. Burroughs.*) *The enduring effects of early transgression:*—The season of youth should be passed religiously, if old age is to be honourable, and if death is to be conquered. The sins of our younger days pursue us through life, and even "lie down with us in the dust." 1. How difficult and almost impossible it is, in reference to the present scene of being, to make up by after diligence for time lost in youth. It is appointed by God that one stage of life should be strictly preparatory to another. It is also appointed that neglect of the several duties of any one stage shall leave consequences not to be repaired by any attention, however intense, to those of a following. If there have been neglected boyhood, so that the mind's powers have not been disciplined, nor its chambers stored with information, the consequences will propagate themselves to the extreme line of life. Just because there has been negligence in youth, the man must be wanting to the end of his days in acquirements of whose worth he is perpetually reminded, and which, comparatively speaking, are not to be gained except at one period of his life. The same truth is exemplified in reference to bodily health. The man who has injured his constitution by the excesses of youth, cannot repair the mischief by after acts of self-denial. The seeds of disease which have been sown whilst passions were fresh and ungoverned, are not to be eradicated by the severest moral regimen which may afterwards be prescribed and followed. The possession of the iniquities of youth which we wish most to exhibit is that which affects men when stirred with anxiety for the soul, and desirous to seek and obtain the pardon of sin. Take the case of a man who spends the best years of his life in the neglect of God, and the things of another world. It is not necessary that we suppose him one of the openly profligate. If awakened to a sense of sin, such a man is very likely to defer resolute action till death overtakes him. On the most favourable supposition the mind finds it most difficult to forsake sin and change his conduct. The carelessness of to-day inevitably adds to the carelessness of to-morrow. Beginning with attachment to this world, men bind themselves with a cord to which every hour will weave a new thread. And however genuine and effectual the repentance and faith of a late period of life, it is unavoidable that the remembrance of misspent years will embitter those which are consecrated to God. By lengthening the period of irreligion, and therefore diminishing that of obedience to God, we almost place ourselves amongst the last of the competitors for the kingdom of heaven. If we devote but a fraction of our days to the striving for the reward promised to Christ's servants, there is an almost certainty that only the lowest of those rewards will come within our reach. The iniquities of youth will hang like lead on the wings of his soul, restraining its ascendings, and forbidding its reaching those loftier points in immortality which might have been attained by a longer striving. (*Henry Melvill, B.D.*) *The sin of youth in the bones of age:*—Expositors differ in their exposition of a text in which so material a word as "the sin" is supplied by our translators. "His bones are full *of the sin* of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust"—the italicised words not occurring in the original. The Vulgate version is in favour of ours, "His bones are full of the sins of his youth"; while the Septuagint has it, "His bones are full of his youth"; in accordance with which rendering, Gesenius and others take the passage to mean, full of vigour, so that the man is cut off in his physical prime. Dr. Good's reading is, "His secret sins shall follow his bones, yea, they shall press upon him in the dust." Others take the literal Hebrew, "His bones are full of secret things," to refer to the hidden, long-cherished faults of his life—the corrupt habits secretly indulged, which would "adhere to him, leaving a withering influence on his whole system in advancing

years." "His secret lusts would work his certain ruin," the effect being that which, as a popular commentator says, is so often seen, when vices corrupt the very physical frame, and where the results are seen far on in future life. In this sense be the text accepted here. Graphic, after the manner of the man, is Dr. South's picture of the old age that comes to wait upon what he calls a "great and worshipful sinner," who for many years together has had the reputation of eating well and doing ill. "It comes (as it ought to do to a person of such quality) attended with a long train and retinue of rheums, coughs, catarrhs, and dropsies, together with many painful girds and achings, which are at least called the gout. How does such a one go about, or is carried rather, with his body bending inward, his head shaking, and his eyes always watering (instead of weeping) for the sins of his ill-spent youth! In a word, old age seizes upon such a person like fire upon a rotten house; it was rotten before, and must have fallen of itself, so that it is no more but one ruin preventing another." Virtue, we are admonished, is a friend and a help to nature; but it is vice and luxury that destroy it, and the diseases of intemperance are the natural product of the sins of intemperance. "Chastity makes no work for a chirurgeon, nor ever ends in rottenness of bones." Whereas, sin is the fruitful parent of distempers, and ill lives occasion good physicians. (*Francis Jacox.*)

Vers. 12–14. **Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth.**—*The woe of the wicked:*—I. THE DISPOSITION OF A WICKED MAN IN REGARD TO SIN. 1. His complacency in it. "It is sweet to his mouth." A metaphor taken from natural food, which is pleasing and delightful to the taste, which is seated in the mouth or palate. So is sin to the carnal heart. It is very sweet and refreshing to it. Especially in the first embracing or entertaining of it. The ground hereof is this. It is suitable and connatural to him. We may judge of the delight which a wicked person has in sin, by the measure of a gracious person's delight in goodness. Satan enlarges and advances things to them, and makes them seem greater than they are. 2. His concealment of it. "He hides it under his tongue." This wicked persons do, either by speaking for sin, or by speaking against it. They speak for it by denying it, or diminishing it, or defending it. 3. His indulgence or favourableness towards it. He spares it, and does not forsake it. He spares it, as to matter of search and inquiry; as to matter of resistance and opposition; as to matter of expulsion, and ejection, and mortification. He does not forsake it. He never forsakes his sin, till his sin forsake him, and he can keep it no longer. A man cannot be said to forsake any sin in particular, who does not forsake the way of sin in general. II. THE EFFECT OF SIN TO A WICKED MAN. "Yet his meat," &c. In the general, "His meat within his bowels is turned." In the particular, "It is as the gall of asps within him." This figure represents the bitterness and the perniciousness of sin. Use and improvement. 1. Beware of being taken with any sinful way or course whatsoever, from the seeming sweetness that is in it. 2. Do not please thyself in the covering and concealing of sin. 3. Or in self-security and presumption. 4. Use Christian prudence to see the plague afar off, to hide yourselves from it. (*T. Horton, D.D.*)

Ver. 19. **Because he hath oppressed, and hath forsaken the poor.**—*Social wickedness:*—What is it that excites all this Divine antagonism and judgment? Was the object of it a theological heretic? Was the man pronounced wicked because he had imbibed certain wrong notions? Was this a case of heterodoxy of creed being punished by the out-pouring of the vials of Divine wrath? Look at the words again. His philanthropy was wrong. The man was wicked socially—wicked in relation to his fellow-men. All wickedness is not of a theological nature and quality, rising upward into the region of metaphysical conceptions and definitions of the Godhead, which only the learned can present or comprehend; there is a lateral wickedness, a wickedness as between man and man, rich and poor, poor and rich, young and old; a household wickedness, a market-place iniquity. There we stand on solid rock. If you have been led away with the thought that wickedness is a theological conception, and a species of theological nightmare, you have only to read the Bible, in its complete sense, in order to see that judgment is pronounced upon what may be called lateral wickedness—the wickedness that operates among ourselves, that wrongs mankind, that keeps a false weight, and a short measure, that practises cunning and deceit upon the simple and innocent, that fleeces the unsuspecting,—a social wickedness that stands out that it may be seen in all its

black hideousness, and valued as one of the instruments of the devil. There is no escape from the judgment of the Bible. If it pronounced judgment upon false opinions only, then men might profess to be astounded by terms they cannot comprehend: but the Bible goes into the family, the market-place, the counting-house, the field where the labourer toils, and insists upon judging the actions of men, and upon sending away the richest man from all his bank of gold, if he have oppressed and forsaken the poor. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

CHAPTER XXI.

VERS. 1–34. **But Job answered and said.**—*Job's third answer*:—There is more logic and less passion in this address than in any of Job's preceding speeches. He felt the dogma of the friends to be opposed—I. TO HIS CONSCIOUSNESS OF RECTITUDE. If their dogma was true, he must be a sinner above all the rest, for his sufferings were of the most aggravated character. But he knew that he was not a great sinner. 1. This consciousness urged him to speak. 2. It gave him confidence in speaking. 3. It inspired him with religious solemnity. The providential ways of God with man are often terribly mysterious. Under these mysterious events solemn silence rather than controversy is most befitting us. II. TO HIS OBSERVATION OF FACTS. 1. He saw wicked men about him. He notes their hostility to God, and their devotion to self. 2. He saw such wicked men very prosperous. They prosper in their persons, their property, and their posterity. 3. He saw wicked men happy in living and dying. Job states these things as a refutation of the dogma that his friends held and urged against him. III. TO HIS HISTORIC KNOWLEDGE. He refers to the testimony of other men. 1. They observed, as I have, that the wicked are often protected in common calamities. 2. That few, if any, are found to deal out punishment to wicked men in power. 3. That the wicked man goes to his grave with as much peace and honour as other men. IV. TO HIS THEORY OF PROVIDENCE. Though nothing here expresses Job's belief in a state of retribution beyond the grave, we think it is implied. I see not how there can be any real religion, which is supreme love to the Author of our being, where there is not a well-settled faith in a future state. Conclusion. God's system of governing the race has been the same from the beginning. He has never dealt with mankind here on the ground of character. True, there are occasional flashes of Divine retribution which reveal moral distinctions and requite moral conduct; but they are only occasional, limited, and prophetic. No stronger argument for a future state of full and adequate retribution it would be possible to have, than that which is furnished by God's system of governing the world. (*Homilist.*)

VER. 7. **Wherefore do the wicked live?**—*Reason for the existence of the wicked on earth*:—I. AS WITNESSES TO ATTEST. 1. The amount of freedom with which man is endowed. How free is man compared to everything about him. 2. The wonderful forbearance of God. 3. The existence of an extraordinary element in the Divine government of this world. We know that in heaven beings live and are happy because they are holy; we are taught that in hell there is inexpressible misery because there is such awful sin. But here are men living often to a good old age, often possessing all they can wish of earthly comfort, and yet rebels against God, without repentance, without faith, without love, and we wonder why this world is thus an exception. Earth is under a mediatorial government. This great mystery of Christ's suffering for man, and prolonging his probation, can alone explain the other great mystery, that men of debased spirit and godless life are permitted to live here instead of being banished to hell. II. AS INSTRUMENTS TO DISCIPLINE. 1. In calling out resistance. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; when he is tried he shall receive a crown of life." The wicked are often as the chisel by which God carves out the good man's character, the fires by which it is purified. 2. By calling out the Christian's benevolence. Our compassion, prayers, self-sacrifice, work, are all called forth by the existence of the wicked. III. AS BEACONS TO WARN. 1. As to the progress of sin. 2. As to the effects of sin. IV. AS CRIMINALS TO REFORM. This is the grand end of their

prolonged life. The world is a great reformatory. (*Urijah R. Thomas.*) *Why do the wicked live?*—1. That they may have the opportunity of being reconciled to God. 2. That they may be the instruments of good to others. 3. That they may display the long-suffering and forbearance of God. 4. That they may furnish an argument for a future state of retribution. 5. That they may demonstrate the equity of their own everlasting condemnation. (*G. Brooks.*) *Why do the wicked live?*—They build up fortunes that overshadow the earth, and confound all the life insurance tables on the subject of longevity, some of them dying octogenarians, or perhaps nonagenarians, or possibly centenarians. Ahab in the palace, and Elijah in the loft. Unclean Herod on the throne, and Paul, the consecrated, twisting ropes for tent-making. Manasseh, the worst of all the kings of Judah, lives the longest. While the general rule is that the wicked do not live out half their days, there are instances where they live to a great age in paradises of beauty and luxury, with a whole college of physicians expending its skill in the attempt for further prolongation, and then have a funeral with coffin under mountains of calla lily and a procession with all the finest equipages of the city flashing and jingling into line, taking the poor angle-worm of the dust out to its hole in the ground with a pomp that might make the passing spirit from some other world think that the archangel Michael was dead. Go up among the great residences of our cities and read the door-plates and see how many of them hold the names of men mighty for commercial or social iniquity, vampires of the century, Gorgons of the ages. Every wheel of their carriage is a Juggernaut wet with the blood of those sacrificed to their avarice and evil design. Men who are like Caligula, who wished that all people were in one neck that he might cut it off at one blow. Oh, the slain! the slain! what a procession of libertines, of usurers, of infamous quacks, of legal charlatans, of world-grabbing monsters. What apostles of despoliation! what demons incarnate thousands of men who have concentrated all their energies of body, mind, and soul into one prolonged and ever-intensified and unrelenting effort to sacrifice and blast and consume the world! I do not blame you for asking the quivering, throbbing, burning, resounding, appalling question of the text: "Why do the wicked live?" (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

Ver. 13. **And in a moment go down to the grave.**—*Things contingent upon a moment:*—Whatever begins, begins in a moment, and whatever ends, ends in a moment. Thoughts and purposes are formed in a moment—plans contemplated for years are decided in a moment—instantaneously. In so short a space everything comes to life and expires. In a moment we plant seed which takes centuries to grow, but which, in a moment only, the storm may cast down to the ground. The lightning may, in a moment, blast the work of a thousand years. A man's character may be ruined in a moment. In a little space of time it begins to go down. Break the law of gravitation, and crash would go creation. Job is moralising thus with his friends, and it seems to him strange that one event befalls the righteous and the wicked. It is a quick text, and has a sudden termination. 1. Life is a very little thing. It may be crushed as we would crush an egg-shell. It need not take an hour to strike the blow which shall shiver it. Indeed, the wonder is that with such a little thing we live at all, for death is lurking all around us—the destructive forces so thick, that it seems as if the earth was made of nothing else. The pestilence rings at no man's door to tell of its coming, but it comes suddenly, and sweeps hundreds of men into the tomb. We stand on the grave's brink every day. 2. Some men think death to be a long way off when the precipice is right at their side, and they are liable to fall into it at any moment. The young are not more free from the enemies of destruction than their parents. The great and the small, the good and the evil, are taken away in a moment. What is to rescue us from death's dominion? Moses on Pisgah's top might plead that he was but 120 years old, that his eye was not dim, that he greatly desired to enter the promised land, but the plea was too weak, and he laid him down there on the top of the Mount. The man of business may plead that he is young and healthy, and his plans not yet accomplished, but death is inexorable, and he bows his head and gives up the ghost. Charles I. and Marie Antoinette might plead their royal blood, or the popular will in their exaltation, but the executioner's axe severed their heads and their excuses in a moment. Death cares for none of these things. 3. How suddenly, too, his arrows fly. Like that night in Egypt, when suddenly at midnight the gleam of the destroying angel's sword was seen in the darkness, and, in a moment, the firstborn of all that land passed from life

to death. The king's son and the chained captive lie side by side in death's embrace, and a kingdom is in tears. How sudden the exit of Dickens, Thackeray, and others, hurried off ere their last chapter was written and last page dried. And sometimes death aggravates his work, and takes thousands on the battle-field, and hacks and tears them to pieces; or, on the steamer, burns and scalds their flesh from their bones. Learn from destructive forces being near not to tempt Providence by carelessness and negligence. A great deal is set down to Providence which should be set down to ourselves. And let us be always ready, since but a step between us and the grave! (*Anon.*)

Ver. 14. **Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways.**—*The riches of grace*:—Job shows that wicked men may prosper in life and health (ver. 7); in their multitude of children (ver. 8); in tranquillity and safety (ver. 9); in success and increase of their substance (ver. 10); in wealth, security, and pleasure (vers. 11, 12, 13). Job sets down two things—their sin, in the text; their punishment, in verse 13. The text contains three things—Wicked men's contempt of grace. Their contempt of the means of grace. The profaneness of their lives. From the first of these,—a wicked man's contempt of grace, observe this doctrine:—That a wicked man doth not so much as desire saving grace. A true desire of grace is a supernatural appetite to grace not had for the goodness of it. Four things in this appetite—1. It is an appetite of the soul to grace, when the heart doth even go out of itself for the attaining of grace. A hungry appetite signifies a hunger unfeigned, which is unsupportable without meat, so that he who truly desires grace cannot be without grace: nothing can satisfy him but meat, though he had all the wealth of the world. Hunger is irrepulsable, so he who truly desires grace will not let God alone, but begs and cries for it. And hunger is humble, it is not choice in its meat, it will be content with anything. 2. It is a supernatural appetite, distinguished from that which natural men have, and yet hate grace. 3. It is an appetite or desire after grace not had. No desire is desire indeed, but true desire; because grace is above the reach of nature; because grace is contrary to nature; because grace is a hell unto the natural man. The first step to grace is to see that we have no grace. Grace which wicked men desire, is not true grace. Thy hands and thy heart are full of corruption, so that though grace lie even at thy feet, yet thou canst not receive it up, unless thou empty thy hands and thy heart. Wherefore if there be any lust, though never so dear, any bosom sin, which thou wilt not part with; it is an evident sign that thou hast not a true desire of grace. It is a vehement desire, if true; a lukewarm desire is no true desire. Though delight be an effect of true desire, yet it is also a sign of grace, because grace *in potentia* is in the ordinance of God. Therefore the man that desires grace, he will delight in the ordinances of grace. The more delays the greater becomes the desire; delays are as oil cast into the fire, which makes the flame the greater. If thy desires be true, thou hast gotten some grace: examine therefore thyself. They that truly desire grace, desire the means of grace. Men that desire a crop of corn, they will be at the cost, charges, and pains, for ploughing, harrowing, and sowing of their ground. How shall we get our hearts truly to desire grace? 1. Learn to know it. Grace is such an admirable thing, that if men knew it, they could not but desire it. The taste of grace is sweet and dainty, that if we could but once taste it, our hearts would ever water after it, and we should have little lust to the contrary evil. If you would desire grace, then purge out the ill-humours of sin out of thy soul. Fear to offend God, for the fear of evil is the desire of good. The desire of the righteous is only good; he desires God, and Christ, and the eternal love of God in Christ to be manifested to him, and therein he rests himself; but the hope of the wicked is indignation, he only desires the base self of the world; but the wrath of heaven is with that, and he shall bewail his own soul, that for such base things he should refuse the eternal good, and neglect it. In God there is all good. God is such a good, that without Him nothing is good. (*William Fenner, B.D.*) *The sinner's prayer*:—I. THIS PRAYER REVEALS TO US THE AWFUL CONDITION OF THE HUMAN HEART. Lower than this neither man nor demon can sink, for what is it but saying, "Evil be thou my good, darkness be thou my light"? Here we have the climax of criminal audacity. The climax of self-deception. And the climax of ingratitude. II. THIS PRAYER SHOWS US THE NEARNESS OF GOD TO MAN. The difficulty is not for man to find God, but to avoid finding Him. There is underlying this prayer a profound consciousness of the Divine presence. The sinner feels that God is

near, but he would be altogether without Him, if he could. III. THIS PRAYER EXPRESSES THE CONVICTION OF MEN, THAT THE LORD'S CLAIMS UPON THEM ARE FOUNDED ON REASON AND TRUTH. God invites them to reason with Him, to consider their ways, to ascertain the character of His commandments. They desire not the knowledge of God's ways. It is this reluctance to give the Gospel any attention, this indisposition to think about eternal things, which hardens men in their sin and folly, and ensures their destruction. IV. THIS PRAYER SETS BEFORE US THE GREAT CONTRAST WHICH EXISTS BETWEEN THE CONVERTED AND THE UNCONVERTED. Those who are not converted, pray in their hearts and lives that the Lord will depart from them. The converted thirst after God as the hart pants for the water-brooks. V. THIS PRAYER ILLUSTRATES THE LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD. The very fact that men offer this prayer and still live, exhibits the Lord's forbearance and compassion in the most striking manner. VI. THE ANSWER TO THIS PRAYER INVOLVES THE MOST SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES TO THOSE WHO OFFER IT. If persevered in, the answer will come. There is a bound beyond which men cannot pass with impunity. It is a fearful thing to be left alone of God, to be suffered to sin unrestrained, and to drink in iniquity like water. This is the result of the prayer being answered. (*H. B. Ingram.*) *The language of impiety*:—The more God does for wicked men, the more ill affected they are towards Him. I. OBSERVE THE LANGUAGE OF IMPENITENT PROSPERITY. 1. "They say." They not only conceive it in their thoughts, but utter it in words. Persons are lost to all fear and shame, when instead of suppressing, or so much as concealing their sinful thoughts, they can publish them abroad, and let the world know their strong propensity to evil. 2. "They say unto God." To speak to the Lord is a great privilege, and to do it with humility, reverence, and delight, is an important duty. How opposite is the language we are contemplating. How full of irreverence and daring impiety! 3. "Depart from us." The Divine presence is exceedingly desirable to a good man, nor can he be happy without it; but it is far otherwise with the carnal heart. 4. They impiously say, "We desire not the knowledge of Thy ways." Sinners are not only ignorant, but willing to continue so. They dislike the way in which God walks. And they are equally averse to the way in which God has directed His creatures to walk, the way of holiness and happiness, of humility and self-denial, of faith and love, and evangelical obedience. II. THE SOURCES OF THIS IMPIETY. No reason can be rendered for a thing in itself so unreasonable. 1. This ignorance proceeds from pride. 2. From practical atheism. 3. From hatred and aversion. 4. From slavish fear and dread. 5. There is an utter contrariety of nature which renders the sinner averse from God, and from a knowledge of His ways. Reflections—(1) Without considering the depravity of human nature, nothing could appear more unaccountable, because nothing can be more unreasonable, than that man should feel averse from God, and from a knowledge of His ways. (2) If any one should presume to say to God, "Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways," let him tremble at the consequences. If God takes him at his word, he will be given up to hardness of heart. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *God repudiated*:—I. GOD OFFERS TO INSTRUCT AND GUIDE MEN IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WAYS. Wicked men could not say to God, Depart, unless He came near to them. No truth is more clear than that our Lord really desires to instruct men in His ways, that He may bless them with His favour. In the Bible God has revealed the methods by which we may learn His will, gain His grace, and be saved; and this Word, with all its priceless offers, His providence has placed in our hands. In the whole capabilities of human thought can there be a more wonderful, a vaster idea than this: the absolute and Almighty Sovereign, instead of subduing rebellious subjects by power, perseveringly seeking to win them by love! II. SOME REPEL THESE GRACIOUS OFFERS. The practical response of every unregenerate soul, acquainted with the Gospel, to these proffers of God, is "Depart from me." This is the virtual utterance, not only of the profligate and profane, but of all who practically repudiate the law of the Lord as a rule of their lives. Every sinner makes the gratification of his own propensities and desires—not the will of the Lord—the rule of his life. Even what he does that is right and good, he does because he chooses, not because God requires it. III. THE SINNER'S STRANGE REASON FOR HIS REPULSE OF GOD. "We desire not." Yet the human intellect craves for knowledge. Men want to know what history, literature, philosophy, science can teach. But of the ways of the great God, who made and governs all things, they desire not to know. See some of the causes of this unreasonable

aversion. 1. The mode of acquiring knowledge of God is too humbling for the depraved, human will. 2. A subtle, scarcely acknowledged unbelief in the inspiration and authority of the Bible. 3. The supreme reason is the love of sin. 4. Others do not desire a knowledge of God's ways now. Not yet, but at some convenient future season they hope to learn more of this matter. (*J. L. Burrows, D.D.*)

Ver. 15. **What profit should we have, if we pray unto Him?**—*The profitableness of religion:*—Let me first lay down the doctrine, that no man can hold the Christian view of God's personality and dominion without his whole intellectual nature being ennobled. He no longer looks at things superficially; he sees beyond the grey, cold cloud that limits the vision of men who have no God; the whole sphere of his intellectual life receives the light of another world. The difference between his former state and his present condition, is the difference between the earth at midnight and the earth in the glow and hope of a summer morning! This is not mere statement. It is statement based upon the distinctest and gladdest experience of our own lives, and based also upon the very first principles of common sense. The finer and clearer our conceptions of the Divine idea, the nobler and stronger must be our intellectual bearing and capacity. When the very idea of God comes into the courses of man's thinking, the quality of his thought is changed; his outlook upon life widens and brightens; his tone is subdued into veneration, and his inquisitiveness is chastened into worship. Intellectually the idea of God is a great idea. It enters the mind, as sunlight would startle a man who is groping along a path that overhangs abysses in the midst of starless gloom. The idea "God" cannot enter into the mind, and mingle quietly with common thinking. Wherever that idea goes, it carries with it revolution, elevation, supremacy. I am speaking, please to observe, not of a cold intellectual assent to the suggestion that God is, but of a reverent and hearty faith in His being and rule. Such a faith never leaves the mind as it found it. It turns the intellect into a temple; it sets within the mind a new standard of measure and appraisement; and lesser lights are paled by the intensity of its lustre. Is this mere statement? It is statement; but it is the statement of experience; it is the utterance of what we ourselves know; because comparing ourselves with ourselves we are aware that we have known and loved the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that since we have done so, our intellectual life has sprung from the dust, and refreshed itself at fountains which are accessible only to those who live in God. This, then, is the first position which I lay down for your thought and consideration, namely: That no man can entertain with reverence and trust the idea that God is, without his whole intellectual nature being lifted up to a higher plane than it occupied before; without his mind receiving great access of light and vigour. Do you tell me that you know some men who profess to believe in God, and who sincerely do believe in His existence and His government, and yet they are men of no intellectual breadth, of no speciality in the way of intellectual culture and nobleness? I hear you; I know what you say, and I believe it. But will you tell me what those men would have been, small as they are now, but for the religion that is in them? I know that at present they are very minute, intellectually speaking,—exceedingly small and microscopic. But what would they have been if the idea of God's existence and rule had never taken possession of their intellectual nature? Besides that, they are on the line of progress. There is a germ in them which may be developed, which may, by diligent culture, by reverent care, become the supreme influence in their mental lives. Please to remember such modifications when you are disposed to sneer at men who, though they have a God in their faith and in their hearts, are yet not distinguished by special intellectual strength. You tell me that you know some men who never mention the name of God, and who, therefore, seem to have no religion at all; who are men of very brilliant intellectual power, very fertile in intellectual resources, and who altogether have distinguished themselves in the empire of Mind. I believe it. But will you tell me what these men might have been if they had added to intellectual greatness a spirit of reverence and adoration? Can you surely tell me that those men would not have been greater had they known what it is to worship the one living and true God? Not only is there an ennoblement of the nature of a man, as a whole, by his acceptance of the Christian idea of God—there is more. That in itself is an inexpressible advantage; but there is a higher profit still, forasmuch as there is a vital cleansing

and purification of a man's moral being. Let a man receive the Christian idea of God, let him believe fully in God, as revealed by the Lord Jesus Christ, and a new sensitiveness is given to his conscience; he no longer loses himself in the mazes of a cunning casuistry; he goes directly to the absolute and final standard of righteousness: all moral relations are simplified; moral duty becomes transparent: he knows what is right, and does it; he knows the wrong afar off, and avoids it. (*Joseph Parker.*) *Profitable prayer*:—You will see at once on looking at the context in what spirit this question is asked. Job puts the words into the mouth of ungodly men, whose prosperity he could not understand. "Wherefore," he asks, "do the wicked live, become old, yea, wax mighty in power?" Describing their outward condition he says, "Their seed is established" (vers. 8–13). But blessings such as these, instead of evoking some such thanksgiving as "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits," make them forgetful, even defiant of Him. It is an extreme and offensive utilitarianism which prompts the inquiry, and in these days if it could be proved to a mathematical demonstration that praying always produces material advantage, if prosperity and prayer were invariably associated, as fortunately they are not, the number of knees bent in outward worship would be indefinitely increased, and to all outward appearance we should become a praying nation. But perplexities gather around the subject of prayer to men of a far nobler type than those contemplated in the words before us. The uniformity of so-called nature, the absence of any expression of sympathy visible to human eye, or audible to human ear from either nature, or the God of nature, in times when we are faint with fear or overwhelmed with anxiety; the unchangeableness of God, even the sublime truth of the reality of the Divine Fatherhood lead some to think, "Well, if God is in reality my Father, He is sure to do the very best possible thing for me, whether I pray to Him or whether I do not." So let us try and lift up the question of our text into a higher and purer atmosphere than that which, as asked by a godless, material prosperity, surrounds it. I. Now, in order to give any answer to the question, WE MUST BE ABLE TO SAY TO WHOM WE PRAY, and must have some clear idea of what we mean by prayer. Let us address ourselves to these questions first. When we speak of prayer, to whom do we pray? Now it is quite plain that prayer can only be addressed to a personal Being. If we resolve God into an inexorable fate, from the relentless grip of which escape is impossible, then the question of our text is meaningless. Fate implies an inevitable destiny which can in no way be altered. Or if we resolve God into a mere force or energy or tendency, which works mechanically and blindly without thought or feeling or will, the question is equally meaningless. It is simply an absurdity to pray to a force, an energy, or a tendency. Or if God is an unknown God, of whom and of whose character we cannot speak with any certainty, then in no full Christian sense of the word can we pray unto Him. Or, if whilst ascribing such attributes as omnipotence and omniscience to Him, we think of Him as far removed from this world, having delegated its affairs to certain forces which, quite apart from Him, work according to certain laws, as we say, laws which He has established, but with which He has no further connection, then it is simply absurd to pray. Or if we think of Him as arbitrarily working out His own will, that will having nothing whatever to do with the welfare of His creatures, it is manifestly absurd to pray. Now all will admit that such conceptions, so current amongst us, are as contrary as they can be to what Jesus taught us about God. But whilst we may reject them, does our conception of God rise to the level of what Jesus taught us? To many the central thought about God is that which underlies the expression, to many perhaps the most common of all, and that commonness to which we owe, perhaps, more to the influence of the Prayer-book than to any other cause, the expression "Almighty God." A power which cannot be limited, a pressure from which there is no escape, a nature which knows no change, are the main elements of the conception which many entertain about God. But such physical attributes lay no sufficient basis for prayer. They may exist, to a large extent, in combination with other attributes which render prayer an absurdity. And even if we add intellectual attributes, such as infinite knowledge, a wisdom which cannot possibly err in thought or deed, we are far from having reached the central conception of God as Jesus revealed Him to us. His avowed object in coming into the world being, as He repeatedly assured us, to reveal God, surely the fact is full of significance that He never emphasised these attributes, which we put into the forefront,

such attributes as infinity, unchangeableness, eternity, omnipotence, and so on? The great question is, Who is He to whom such attributes belong? To speak of God as the Almighty One, the Eternal One, the Unchangeable One, in inquiring who God is, is about as accurate and full of meaning as if in defining the rose, we were to speak of it as "the sweet" or "the red." We want to know who it is who is infinite, who it is who is eternal, who it is who is omniscient, who it is who is unchangeable. And this is the question which Christ answers. He reveals to us God's nature, not merely His attributes. He tells us who it is who is almighty, who it is who is unchangeable, and so on. And there is no uncertainty whatever in what He taught. Fatherliness is no mere attribute of God. Father is the one and only word which sets forth His nature; He of whom all these attributes are affirmed is the righteous Father, the Holy Father, the ideal Father. It is the Father, then, who is at the helm of the universe, over all and in all, constrained in everything He does by no law whatever save and except the law of His holy will. It is He to whom the welfare of every one, without exception, is unspeakably dear, dearer than the welfare of your beloved child is to you. II. Now let us ask WHAT WE MEAN BY PRAYER. As used in a general and less exact sense, it often includes all that is comprehended in communion with God—adoration, confession, thanksgiving, intercession. In its narrower and more exact sense, it means simply asking, as when our Lord said, "Ask, and ye shall receive." The best definition I ever saw of prayer is by the late T. H. Green, of Oxford, when he says, "Prayer is a wish referred to God." Now, manifestly, what we ask from God must be regulated largely by what we think about Him. And if we pray to the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, there are certain thoughts about Him which will never be absent when we ask anything from Him. The first is that the Father can grant anything we ask. Here is the true place for omnipotence. His power is not hemmed in by any bounds at all, excepting only those of physical or moral impossibilities. No force limits, for there is no force in which He is not. Force is merely the mode of His working. No law limits Him, for law is simply a term which we use to express what we have learned in apparently the inviolable mode of His action. There is no entity, no being with nature which is outside of Him which controls Him in any measure. Apart, then, from that which is physically and morally impossible, God can do everything. It is not a thing incredible that He should raise the dead. There is no sickness which He cannot heal. There is no calamity which He cannot avert. "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think." Again, there is no limit on the side of God's willingness to give us what we desire to have. This is simply an axiom if the great central truth of Christianity is conceded. But all this seems to be completely at issue with the facts which stare us in the face. It seems to be denied point blank by the experiences of life. With unutterable anguish written on uplifted face, and the body bathed in bloody sweat, the cry is extorted from us at all times, "Oh, Father, do take this cup away," but it has to be drunk to its very dregs. The breadwinner in some dependent family, who has hardly known an idle hour, who has spent his little all, both of means and strength, on the small country farm he has tilled, obliged to sell everything that he might retain the honesty of his name, drifts into some metropolitan centre. Early and late, week after week, he strives to find employment by which to keep the wolf away from his home, but in vain. As he returns home at night he sees hunger and despair printed on the countenance he loves far better than life. What intensity does the agony of love give to his prayer. But no hand is outstretched, and he dies of a broken heart. If there is no limit on the side of the Father's willingness to answer prayer, then why, oh! why does He not answer prayers such as these, and save His children from such crushing sorrows? Thomas Erskine, who, being before his age, was of course misunderstood, somewhere asks, "If it has taken God untold ages to make a piece of old red sandstone, how long will it take Him to perfect a human soul?" Elsewhere he writes, "The depth of our misery now is an earnest of the immensity of that blessing which is to make all this worth while." I know of no standpoint whatever, save the one contained in such words as those, from which any light whatever can be seen playing upon the darkness. Nothing can dispel that entirely. It belongs to the primal fact of human freedom. But if it be true that the present life is but the mere tiniest fragment of a fragment in the life of any of us; if it be true that life is unending, that God's education of us will never cease in any case until we are perfect, then

there is no darkness here which may not intensify the brightness to come. So that the one and only answer, and the only limit to God's answer to prayer is that implied in the words, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification"; or, in the words which you have in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "For our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness." Now let us in the light of these truths, remembering to whom we pray, remembering that the only limit to His answers to our prayer is not inability or unwillingness to answer, but the purpose of His holy love to make us perfect as He is perfect, let us in the light of these truths consider the question, "What profit shall we have if we pray unto Him?" It is perfectly plain from what has been said, that if prayer is true prayer, let it be for what it may, it will have attached to it, if not in word, at any rate in spirit, "Not what I will but what Thou wilt." It cannot be otherwise if we have any worthy conception of Him to whom we pray. If that limit is attached to our prayer, there is nothing at all we cannot appropriately make the subject of prayer. Then are we to pray for success in our worldly calling, that God would bless us in our basket and in our store? By all means; only let it be remembered that success in the form in which we should choose it would very probably be about the worst thing for us, and certainly we shall not have it if it would. Are we to pray for restoration to health, when it seems as though life were about to be brought to a premature close, or when some one intensely loved by us seems to be withering away? By all means; only even then we must not forget that in all that is baffling medical skill, God is probably preparing us for the blow, which, just because He is love, He must let fall upon us. The supreme prayer is "Thy will be done." Any prayer that overlaps the limits there laid down is the prayer of presumption, not the prayer of true faith. I have not spoken, nor is it needful, of prayer for what are commonly called spiritual blessings. We pray, and properly so, for growth in grace, for purity of life, for joyousness of heart, for control of self, that we may be delivered from uncharitableness, envy, evil speaking, covetousness, that we may be transparently truthful, that we may be patient, generous, brave and strong. But even here we must not forget that the answer to prayer may come just as certainly through failure as through success. It may come through the revelation of evil that is in us, as well as through the subjugation of such evil—that the prayer, "Lead us not into temptation," can only be fully answered when we have passed through experiences such that we count it all joy when we fall into direst temptations. That there is profit in such prayer who can doubt, especially for people who have passed the meridian of life, and I trust younger people will realise it by and by. I say that there is profit in such prayer. We may not get the very thing we ask for, undoubtedly often shall not, but is there no profit? If when a father is obliged to say "no" to his child, he looks with love into that child's eyes, and lays his hand affectionately upon that child's head, is there no profit? We may feel most sensibly the Divine touch, and we may see most clearly the Divine face when the Divine love says "no." Some one has said, "The man who does all his praying on his knees does not pray enough." Undoubtedly. The Apostolic injunction is, "Pray without ceasing." "What profit shall we have if we pray unto Him?" It will be in a tone of gratitude which becomes deeper and deeper until the end. In that may each of us ask the question we have been considering this morning. (*Caleb Scott, D.D.*) *On the nature of acceptable prayer*:—I. OBJECTIONS URGED AGAINST THE DUTY OF PRAYER. 1. Does not the Omniscient God know our wants and desires much better than we do ourselves? Answer—Is not prayer an acknowledgment of our dependence upon God for life, and breath, and all things? Every intelligent creature ought to acknowledge his dependence. Self-sufficiency is not the property of any created being. 2. Another objection is drawn from the immutability of the Divine nature. No petitions of ours, it has been said, can ever change Him. Answer—Though prayer produces no change in God, it may, through the promised influences of His grace, change the temper and dispositions of our minds, and prepare us for the reception of those blessings which He has promised to those who call upon Him in sincerity and truth. The change, then, is not in God, but in ourselves. 3. Another objection—As every event is foreordained, it is vain for us to imagine that God's eternal purposes can be reversed; or that He will depart from His system in the government of the universe, in order to gratify our desires. Answer—Apply this mode of reasoning to the ordinary affairs of life, and its fallacy will at once appear. The great duties of personal religion rest on a ground of obligation similar to that

of all the ordinary duties of life. On the same principle on which the farmer acts, when he ploughs his ground and sows his seed, we are morally obliged to improve all the means and ordinances of religion. Prayer is not inconsistent with the Divine decrees; it is one of the means leading to their accomplishment. II. THE NATURE OF ACCEPTABLE PRAYER. 1. Prayer must be the desires of the heart. 2. Prayers must be for such things only as God hath promised to give. 3. They must be fervent and persevering. 4. They must be offered in faith. We must believe that God is able and willing to grant our requests. III. POINT OUT SOME OF THE ADVANTAGES OF PRAYER. 1. Its fixing the heart upon God, the true centre of its happiness. 2. By fixing the heart on God, prayer prepares it for the reception of His richest blessings. 3. The benefit of prayer is particularly felt in the hour of affliction and distress, and in the immediate prospect of death. In order to give a full and satisfactory answer to the question in the text, consider man in his social, as well as his individual capacity, in social and family worship. (*James Ross, D.D.*) *Questioning:*—Men in general are not sufficiently aware of the importance of the manner of asking questions. Of so much importance is the manner, that we could cite good questions as evidences of bad men. For instance, Pharaoh's question, "Who is the Lord that I should obey Him?" Now, in itself nothing could be more reasonable than this question. Pharaoh was a heathen, and this is just the question that a missionary would wish a heathen to ask. There was the question asked by Pilate, "What is truth?" A proper question, but always cited as a proof of the culpably indifferent state of his mind; for we are told that he did not wait for a reply. The question in our text is a reasonable inquiry, but it is here a part of a speech of the most wicked of mankind. We can suppose it asked in various manners. 1. In a trifling, impertinent manner. 2. In an unbelieving manner. 3. In a spirit of utter impiety. 4. As a grave and proper inquiry. 1. In a trifling manner; just as if a man should say, "Don't trouble me! What you say may be very true; but at present I feel no concern about it." 2. In a spirit of unbelief, not exactly that of an atheist. 3. In a spirit of daring impiety. There are spirits that can turn full on the Almighty with a frown of dislike, and can turn away from all appeals to their consciences respecting the claims of God, and the glory of Christ. 4. But we suppose this question asked in great simplicity. "Tell us (we might say to the inquirer), have you been long making this inquiry? How long? If only lately, it is very wonderful. How has it happened that you have deferred it so long? How did it not come among your first inquiries?" Let those persons who have not made the inquiry, think how strange it is that they have neglected it, while God has sustained them every moment till now, amidst all the manifestations of mercy. (*John Foster.*) *Is there reason or profit in prayer?*—Thus spake sceptical men in the days of Job. Thus speak sceptical men now. The question of prayer is not a question of natural science; it comes within the domain of moral science. And moral questions must be judged of by moral evidence. Prayer is a question that lies entirely between God and the soul of man, and is consequently quite removed from the field of scientific research, and out of the region of scientific analysis. Is the soul of man so constituted as to make prayer an essential element of his spiritual being? And has God made known to us His mind and will in reference to prayer? Each Person of the ever-blessed Trinity has made known His will on the subject of prayer. We may answer the question of the text by appealing to the personal experience of multitudes of all past ages. History and biography come in as witnesses to the profit and value of prayer. We learn the value of a blessing by its being taken away. What would be the moral condition of the world were there no prayer? How long would our religion exist without prayer? (*Bishop Stevens.*) *The profit of prayer:*—Men are averse to call upon God. I. EXPOSE AND REPROVE THE UNWORTHY, ERRONEOUS, AND CARNAL NOTIONS SOME ENTERTAIN OF PRAYER. 1. They wish to make it subservient only to their temporal interest—pray only for health, prosperity, long life, and yet imagine themselves religious people. 2. Some scorn it altogether, because they do not find it answer this low purpose. 3. Some enter their prayers in heaven only as a sort of debtor and creditor account against their sins. 4. Others view prayer as only intended to be their last resource. When they are "at their wit's end, then they cry unto the Lord." The iron hand of adversity, but nothing else bends their stubborn knees. II. THERE IS A HIGHER KIND OF PROFIT IN PRAYER. 1. Right prayers shall obtain the forgiveness of sin. 2. A new heart is another essential blessing to be obtained by prayer. 3. Another invaluable

blessing is the Holy Spirit to dwell in us. 4. Prayer may obtain His delivering grace in all exigencies, or support under them. 5. Prayer shall gain the kingdom of heaven. III. THE GROUND ON WHICH THOSE WHO PRAY ARIGHT ARE ASSURED OF ATTAINING ALL THIS PROFIT. 1. The revealed character of God. 2. The express promises of God are our security. The work and office of Christ form another most important ground of security. He is our intercessor to plead for us, to present our prayers, and enforce them by His own merit. (*The Evangelist.*) *Prayer a profitable exercise:*—I. THE EXERCISE ASSUMED. "If we pray unto Him." Prayer implies—1. A consciousness of want. Man is a needy creature. Destitution is his inheritance. They are best qualified to pray who know most of themselves. 2. Prayer supposes a Being capable of supplying our wants. This Being must know our necessities, and possess sufficient benevolence and power to supply them. Such is the Almighty. Prayers to saints or angels are impious, as they transfer the homage from the Creator to the creature; and absurd, as angels are as dependent as men. 3. Prayer implies an approach towards the Almighty. Man is an alien from God; far gone from original righteousness. When he begins to pray, his mind turns towards God. Hence prayer is called feeling after God, looking to Him, seeking His face, and pouring out the heart before Him. 4. Prayer includes an expression of our wants. We may express our wants fully; we should do it humbly and importunately. We should pray in faith. II. THE INQUIRY INSTITUTED. "What profit should we have," &c. Selfishness is universally prevalent in the world. Wicked men are invariably selfish men. Because prayer is deemed unprofitable, therefore it is neglected. There is no exercise under heaven attended with so much profit as prayer. 1. Prayer contributes to the removal of evil. Of moral evil. Of natural evil—affliction and oppression. 2. Prayer is instrumental in procuring good. All good, for body and soul, for time and eternity. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *The advantages of prayer:*—1. The pleasure and satisfaction immediately attending the several acts and instances of a devout temper. 2. Prayer by a natural influence calms our passions and makes us considerate and wise. 3. Prayer establishes our integrity and virtue against temptations; thus makes us happy in ourselves, and gains us the esteem and confidence of others, which are of the utmost advantage in life. 4. Prayer will produce a noble joy and confidence in God, and a permanent cheerfulness and tranquillity, amidst all the uncertainty of events. 5. If we can trust to the clearest dictates of reason, or to the most express promises of revelation, a religious temper and conduct will certainly procure for us peculiar guidance, assistances, and supplies from an ever-present God, though we cannot always distinctly know and assign them. 6. Prayer is the best relief in all distress, and especially when death approaches. (*W. Amory.*) *Is prayer of any use?*—1. Doubts arise as to the use of prayer in the minds of men who have no feeling of need. 2. By men who disrelish prayer. 3. By men who have regard to the uniformity of nature. 4. Doubts also arise from the fact that multitudes of prayers seem unanswered. (*D. G. Watt, M.A.*) *The profit of prayer:*—It does us good in various ways. 1. There is a certain relief to our overcharged feelings procured by means of prayer to the Almighty. A striking passage occurs in the celebrated paper by Tyndall, proposing a plan by which the efficacy of prayer should be put to the test. While he distinctly denies to prayer the power of effecting objective results, or results outside of us, Tyndall admits that the exercise is not altogether vain and valueless. It does some good. His words are, "There is a yearning of the heart, a craving for help it knows not whence. Certainly from no source it sees. Of a similar kind is the bitter cry of the hare when the greyhound is almost upon her. She abandons hope through her own efforts, and screams. It is a voice convulsively sent out into space, whose utterance is a physical relief." Prayer is a physical relief. Herein is its value. In moments of distress the soul is relieved by giving vocal expression to its anguish. The doom is not averted by the prayer—it can have no possible result of that kind—but the prayer dominates the pain with which the soul anticipates calamity. 2. Prayer is valuable as an intellectual drill. As the mental faculties are brought into exercise by this approach to the Deity, the mind is benefited by prayer in the same way that the body is benefited by a turn at gymnastics. The profoundest and noblest themes engage us in our addresses to God; and expressing our thoughts usually in words, we have the additional advantage of being compelled to clearness and definiteness in our conceptions. 3. According to this theory, prayer is valuable

in respect of what it does for our moral and spiritual nature. The emotional part of our being is quickened by this Divine exercise. You can at once see how humility, patience, resignation, and suchlike qualities are developed in our hearts by this means. Contact with a Being infinitely holy will also stimulate our admiration and desire for what is pure and good and noble. If I cannot benefit another by my prayers, I can, at least, by the intercourse and fellowship I have with God in them, secure for myself moral impulse and moral tone. Prayer is a means of grace, not in that it secures for our sanctification any supernatural agency, but in that it brings us into communication and close converse with a Holy Being. (*A. F. Forrest.*) *Prayer proved to be a profitable exercise*:—I. THE EXERCISE ASSUMED. "If we pray," &c. Prayer implies four things—1. A consciousness of want. Man is a needy creature. They are best qualified to pray who know most of themselves. 2. Prayer supposes an object capable of supplying our wants. This Being must know our necessities, and possess sufficient benevolence and power to supply them. Such is the Almighty, who is considered in this verse as the object of prayer. Prayers to saints or angels are impious, as they transfer the homage from the Creator to the creature; and absurd, as angels are as dependent as men. II. THE INQUIRY INSTITUTED. "What profit should we have?" &c. Selfishness is universally prevalent in the world. There is no exercise under heaven attended with so much profit as prayer. 1. Prayer contributes to the removal of evil. Of moral evil. Jabez prayed that God would keep him from evil; and God granted him that which he requested. David said, "I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Of natural evil. Affliction. "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray." "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them," &c. (Psa. cvii. 6). Hezekiah prayed, and wept in his affliction, and God said, "Behold, I will heal thee" (1 Kings xx. 5). Sorrow. "I found," said David, "trouble and sorrow: then called I upon the name of the Lord," &c. (Psa. cxvi. 1–4). 2. Prayer is instrumental in procuring good. All good, for body and soul, for time and eternity, is promised to prayer. And the profit of prayer infinitely outweighs all other profit. It is Divine. Worldly profit consists in flocks, herds, money, &c. This, in faith, grace, love, happiness, &c. It is mental. Worldly profit is sensual, all for the outward man; but he who prays is enriched inwardly; all his intellectual powers are profited. It is comprehensive. Worldly profit is circumscribed and bounded by time; the profit of prayer illimitable. It is universal. Worldly profit affects us partially; this, in body, and soul, and substance. And the profit arising from prayer is secured without risk, and retained without any fears of deprivation. 1. The conduct of the wicked is impious. They not only live without prayer, but live as if God had no right to exact this duty of them. 2. The conduct of the wicked is erroneous. They consider prayer a profitless exercise, and therefore neglect it. But this calculation is totally unfounded. Prayer avails much. 3. The conduct of the wicked is ruinous. Without prayer salvation is unattainable (Prov. i. 24–31). (*J. Benson.*) *The profitableness of prayer*:—These words are an objection of bold, ungodly, and profane men against the duty of prayer. The stress of the argument is taken from its unprofitableness; it is said that it does not procure us the advantages which might be expected from it. But because God is pleased to incite us to the observance of His commands by the promise of a reward, and because there are peculiar blessings annexed to this duty of prayer, I shall not insist on the absolute right of God to require it. That prayer is unprofitable, the objectors must show, either from reason or from experience. They must either prove that God cannot hear prayers, or that He doth not; that it is inconsistent with the notion of God that He should be prevailed on by the prayers of men; or that by trial it has been found that He has never been prevailed on. But if men can prove from the nature or the attributes of God, that He cannot be prevailed on by the prayers of men, they need not trouble themselves to prove that He is not. But if we can prove that God is sometimes wrought on by the prayers of men, we need not trouble to prove against them, that He can be wrought upon. The blessings we receive, do, the objectors own, follow our prayers; but they will not own that they are the consequences of our prayers. The objections we now deal with are offered by those who own the being of God, and acknowledge His providence, His power, and His goodness, but raise difficulties concerning the profitableness of prayer. They say God is an unchangeable Being, not only in His nature and essence,

but also in His counsels and purposes; and therefore He is not to be moved by prayers to send down gifts upon clamorous and importunate petitioners for them. All change, they say, among men argues weakness and infirmity of mind. Shall we then charge this weakness upon God? He cannot change His purposes for the better, because they are always perfectly good and wise. Whatever difficulties there may be in this objection, they are not so great as to shake our assurance, that God hears the prayers of men. For the unchangeableness of God cannot be better proved from reason or from Scriptures than His readiness to supply the wants of those who call upon Him. It is not more inconsistent with the perfections of God to be wavering and changeable than it is to be deaf to the prayers of His servants, and unable or unwilling to grant their requests. I will try to show that God may be unchangeable, and yet that He may be wrought upon by the prayers of men; or, which is all one, that He may grant those things to men upon their requests, which, without such requests, He would not grant. God's purposes are not so absolute as to exclude all conditions. He determines to bestow His favours upon men, not indiscriminately, but upon men so and so qualified. God determines to give grace to the humble, and pardon of sins to the penitent. Humility and repentance are therefore the conditions on man's part. God, by His infinite wisdom, foresees the wants and dispositions of all men. One of His required dispositions is prayer. The objectors may however doubt whether the dependence which God requires must necessarily be expressed and evidenced by prayer. For, they say we may trust in God, and yet not call upon Him. Nay, it may even be a sign of our entire trust and confidence, that we submit ourselves implicitly to His will, and do not trouble Him with our requests. To this false reasoning it may be answered, that if this dependence on God means anything, it must be, to all intents and purposes, the same thing as a mental prayer. For prayer consists in the elevation of the soul to God. As to the objection, that if we are worthy of God's favours, He will grant them unasked; this is frivolous, since in God's esteem they only are worthy who do ask. Asking is one thing requisite to make us so far worthy; and what for our own unworthiness we cannot hope, we may expect from the goodness of God, through the merits of Christ. . . . The more nicely or scrupulously we examine the grounds of this or any other religious duty, the more fully shall we be convinced of the reaonableness of it. Weak and infirm minds, who use to take up duties upon trust, and without trial, are too apt, when they hear anything that looks plausible, urged against the necessity of such duties, to be easily led away. It remains only, that being upon the mature deliberation, and impartial examining the merits of the cause, fully convinced of the reasonableness of the duty, we apply ourselves to a conscientious and faithful discharge of it; that being thoroughly persuaded of the profitableness of prayer, we do not so far overlook our own interest, as by neglect of prayer to lose those many and unspeakable advantages which we may expect from it; but that, by praying to God frequently, humbly, and fervently, we should be able to give the best, the shortest and fullest proof of the usefulness of prayer from our own experience. As we plead experience for the usefulness of prayer, so the objectors plead experience against its being profitable. They say the blessings we pray for are not granted; the evils we pray against are not removed. To make this a convincing argument against prayer, it must be supposed—1. That because God has not yet regarded our prayers, therefore for the future He will not. 2. That because God has not regarded some prayers, therefore He will regard none. 3. That because God does not answer the particular requests of such as pray to Him, therefore He does not regard their prayers. As the contrary of all these is true, the argument of the objector is a bad one. . . . Prayer is so weighty, so necessary, and so advantageous a duty, that we cannot take too much pains to establish it upon the firmest grounds, and to settle it upon its true foundations. Note the chief of those qualities which are most essential to a valid and effectual prayer. 1. Trust in Him to whom we pray. 2. Attention of mind whilst we pray. 3. A fervent desire of that for which we pray. 4. The deepest humility of soul and body in the act of praying. Argue the following points—(1) The same prayers repeated may be of some force; so that God's disregard of our first prayers is no good reason why we should desist from renewing our petitions. (2) Other prayers substituted in the room of those which have not been heard, may be answered; so that God's disregard of some sort of prayers is no reason for our intermission of all. (3) Though God does not grant the particular requests of such as pray unto Him, He may yet regard

their prayers; so that God's absolute and peremptory denial of our requests is no good argument against praying unto Him. (*Bishop Smallridge.*) *Is prayer useless?*—Whether prayer ought to have any place in the sphere of human life is clearly a question of very grave importance. To Christians, prayer is the simple necessity of a newborn life—the instinctive utterance of conscious want; and God can no more disregard it than a tender mother can jest with the cry of her helpless babe. Without prayer, religious duty would degenerate into treadmill drudgery—begun with reluctance, ended with a sigh of relief. Outside the pale of the Christian Church too many there are in every social grade who look on prayer as a symptom of intellectual feebleness, of superstitious alarm, or of fanatical delusion. Examine the grounds on which this notion rests, more especially as it is held by those who have picked up a smattering of our modern science and philosophy. 1. Prayer is assumed to be useless, because of the immutability of God's character. There is no logical resting-place between theism and atheism—between a God absolutely perfect, and no God at all. Grant His existence, and every excellence must belong to Him, so completely and finally, as to be incapable either of addition or subtraction. Why hope to move such a Being with mortal entreaties? What response can they have but their own sad echoes? The objection thus urged is based on a fundamental misconception. Rightly understood, prayer is not intended to change God; it is designed rather by its reflex influence, to change ourselves; to lift us into the circle of His transforming fellowship. Immutability must not be confounded with insensibility. The crowning glory of God's nature is, that He feels appropriately towards all things, unalterably pained with what is wrong, unalterably pleased with what is right; and the supreme object of prayer is to bring us into such relations to Him, that the benignant fulness of His Godhead, free from all fitful caprices, may flow forth with unvarying willingness and certainty for our help and happiness. 2. Prayer is assumed to be useless, because of the fixity of God's purposes. Every being gifted with intelligence acts more or less from deliberate predetermination. How much more must this be the case with Him who is the great fountain of intelligence, and who ordereth all things according to the counsel of His own mind! This is the simple truth, but does it present any valid argument against the worth of prayer? Does not prayer run parallel with God's designs, not counter to them? Does it not ask what is agreeable to His will; not what is contrary to it? Is it not itself an ordained part of the Divine scheme—a something enjoined by the eternal Maker and Ruler of us? Heaven's decrees no more forbid supplication than they forbid effort. Intercession with God is not an attempt to frustrate His purposes, but to obey and carry them into harmonious fulfilment. 3. Prayer is assumed to be useless, because of the unchangeableness of God's laws. Laws of nature, men call them. Laws of God, whereby nature is governed, would be a more accurate and equally scientific definition. It is said, Will prayer alter, by so much as a hairbreadth, the course of that huge machinery, named the "System of the Universe," any more than the shriek of perishing villages will arrest the avalanche, or extinguish the volcano? This reasoning leaves untouched the whole realm of the supernatural; and, after all, it is spiritual benedictions with which prayer is chiefly concerned, and which constitute the richest heritage God can bestow, or man receive. With respect to the physical, it is not sound philosophy to represent the world as a piece of clockwork, wound up millenniums ago, and left to run its round without further dependence on the Divine Artificer. He who made the world sustains it; is the source of all its energies, the guide of all its movements. Even human skill can utilise nature's laws. Is the Creator more impotent than the creature? 4. Prayer is assumed to be useless, because of the infinitude of God's wisdom and love. No incident in our chequered history, be it great or small, is hidden from His omniscient gaze. Why tell Him that of which He is already fully cognisant? Since He comprehends what we need better than we do ourselves, will He not grant or deny all the same, whether we ask or not? But prayer was never meant for any purpose so impertinent as to inform the Deity, or to teach wisdom and understanding to the Most High. But it does not follow that His blessings will be dispensed alike, sought or unsought. Prayer is the sign of moral fitness to receive. Because "God is love," it is lame logic to conclude that He must lavish His treasures equally on those who solicit and on those who spurn them. Heaven's kindness is not an amiable weakness, blind, impulsive. Prayer takes what love offers, and what, without prayer, can never be personally appro-

priated. 5. Prayer is assumed to be useless, because of the withholding of God's answer. It can hardly be denied that there is much praying that ends in nothing. It falls still-born from the lips, and is buried in the dust of abortive and forgotten things. What is the use of presenting requests which are thus unheeded? But to argue after this fashion is to jump at totally false conclusions. While we are waiting, the answer may already be given in another shape. May there not be an indolent proneness to beseech God to do precisely what He expects us to do, and what He has given us the power of doing ourselves? Does delay necessarily mean denial? Surely there are causes enough to account for unanswered prayer, without impugning its efficacy when rightly offered. Instead, therefore, of pleading untenable objections, let the worth of prayer be tried and tested by individual experience. (*L. B. Brown.*) *The profit of religion*:—There have always been men who estimate the value of a thing by its marketable and commercial qualities. "What will it profit me?" is the question that precedes every outlay and governs every action. These men have no eye for the spiritualities, the sentiments, the unuttered and unutterable glories of life. "How much will it fetch?" is their only method of determining the worth of a thing. That was the way the men of Job's time estimated the religion he professed. Religion to them was an investment. Job's acquaintances are not all dead yet. Blot out the notion that has possessed us, that, somehow, it will be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked hereafter, and how many of us would say the prayers we now say, or participate in the forms and rites of worship that now engage our attention? We are religious because we think it pays. We have a kind of ineradicable notion that it will pay still more in the life to come. So it comes that religion may be degraded into the most absolute selfishness, and the highest and holiest functions of life be turned into an investment that savours of mammondom. I. WHAT IS RELIGION? WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SERVICE? Religion is not an observance, but a life; it is the conscious union of the soul with God, manifesting itself in conduct, and uplifting itself in speech. It is the carrying of the Divine principles of integrity, honesty, charity, love, peacefulness, and goodwill, into the daily rounds and daily duties of our common life. Serving God is the unforced obedience of love; the fulfilling of the will of God in every sphere of life to which it shall please God to call us; to work and act and think as those whose aim is to carry out the purposes of God. If you would know how to serve God, learn how to serve humanity by living for it in loving ministrations, and, if needs be, by dying for it. God is neither served nor flattered by words, or postures, or gesticulations, or the observance of days and times. He who serves his brother, his neighbour, even in the humblest spheres, and by the humblest means, serves God. "They also serve who only stand and wait." II. WHAT WILL BE THE RESULT OF ALL THIS? What rewards does God offer? Should I be far wrong if I were to say, None? God has no system of conferring favours. He does not pay for service with Cæsar's coin. So far as the world goes, religion pure and undefiled is not a stepping-stone to its most valued things. It was once the stepping-stone to a Cross. Serving God is not incompatible with worldly wealth; righteousness and religion need not be barriers in the way of worldly progress. But God does not pay men for service in that way. Let me point out what my conceptions of the results of serving God are. 1. It links us to the Infinite and the Eternal. It stamps this poor, imperfect life with the Divine insignia. It touches the sordid things of earth into sanctities and sacrednesses. 2. Add the inward peace and satisfaction which comes from the consciousness of being identified with the Infinite and the Eternal; the consciousness that we are fulfilling the highest end of our being, and that, come life, or come death, God is the strength of our life, and our portion for ever. Some will ask, Does not God reward service with heaven? No; service is heaven, here and hereafter. Heaven will be the result of character—developed, ripened, sanctified to the service of God. There can be no heaven for the man who has not learned to do the will of God. (*W. J. Hocking.*) *Of the reasonableness of religion*:—Religion, or the service of God, is an equivalent expression for a virtuous and good life. Religion is grounded on the very best reason, having its foundation in these three things—I. THE EXISTENCE AND NATURE OF GOD. The being of a God is not an idle, fanciful notion, but a sacred and eternal truth, witnessed by the whole universe; so that we may as reasonably doubt whether anything at all is, as whether there be a God, who is the cause of all other things. God's working everywhere is a plain proof of His presence everywhere. The

same God, whose presence, power, and knowledge are infinite, is likewise most holy, just, good, merciful, faithful and true, and in all these attributes is "without variableness, or shadow of turning." Religion must be a reasonable service, being founded in the existence and nature of this Almighty Being. II. THE NATURE OF MAN. It is therefore reasonable. Creatures that are part bodies and part souls. Our bodies surrounded with innumerable dangers, and naturally weak and defenceless; subject to manifold wants, passions, and diseases. Our souls of a rank and order much advanced above our bodies; possessed of powers and faculties excellent in their nature, but that may become the foundation of our guilt and shame, and the means of our greater torment and misery. Religion only can preserve the peace of the mind, or restore it when lost. It is not peace alone that religion bestows, but pleasures too. The soul lives when our body dies. III. RELIGION IS FOUNDED IN THE RELATION BETWIXT GOD AND MAN. I am related to God as the author of my being, and all belonging to it. God is the fountain of happiness, the object as well as the author of it. Reflections—1. How thankful we should be for the Gospel of our blessed Saviour, and how very highly should we value it. 2. Christianity is wonderfully suited to the nature of man as a fallen creature. 3. Appeal to every man's conscience, whether it be not a plain case what his choice ought to be? (*H. Grove.*) *The claims and rewards of God's service:*—This question is not difficult to answer. I. CONSIDER THESE MOTIVES WHICH OUGHT TO INDUCE US TO SERVE GOD, DRAWN FROM HIS CHARACTER AND RELATIONS. Service supposes superiority; for the greater is served by the lesser; also a right to our services, and an ability to reward them. We therefore assert as motives to the service of God—1. The justice of His claims, grounded on His sovereign greatness; grounded on the end of our creation; grounded on His providential goodness. Consider how His claims receive additional strength from the doctrine of the Gospel, by which we are declared His purchase. At what a price did He redeem us! 2. The rewards He gives to His servants. In the present life He gives peace of mind; the supply of every want; protection from danger. In the future—what? II. IMPROVE THE SUBJECT. 1. Think of the pleasure of serving God. 2. Think of the improvement of all our powers—for all the advantage is ours. 3. Think, by contrast, that if you do not serve God, you serve the god of this world. Think of the future rewards of ungodly service! (*J. Walker, D.D.*) *Profit in service and prayer:*—A not wholly illogical induction of the facts of life. The wicked prospered, the righteous cast down. What is the good of serving the Almighty? Answer—I. ALMIGHTY WILL MAKE IT RIGHT HEREAFTER. But—1. This narrow range of prayer must have help now. 2. "There is no other world here or nowhere is whole fact," *i.e.*, no different administration hereafter. Justice is sovereign here and now. 3. No force with Job and his friends; knew little about hereafter, of rewards and punishments. They inclined to think God's service paid here. Answer—II. GOD'S SERVICE IS RICH IN REWARD, HERE AND NOW. 1. God's service is compliance with His laws, which always pays. 2. Servant of God makes best use of what he has. Lord's poor better off than the devil's poor. 3. His service pays in character; makes a man unselfish. 4. Pays in spiritual rest and joy. 5. Pays to pray to God, for He answers prayer. Indirectly. Don't always get what is asked for, but something better. Directly. Often get very thing asked. Scepticism says, "Would have got it, anyhow." Faith answers, "God, not 'anyhow,' heard me." Almighty is not then a blind force, not a chemical affinity. Almighty is a Sovereign whose it is to say whether He shall answer prayer at all, and when and how. "Jehovah God," who "shall reign for ever and ever." (*John S. Plumer.*)

Ver. 22. **Shall any teach God knowledge?**—*Mental independence of God:*—The mental independency of God involves two things—uninstructibleness and irresponsibleness. The former in man is either a calamity or a crime. But that which in any finite intelligence would be either a misfortune or a sin, is a glorious perfection in God. It is the glory of God that He cannot be instructed—that no one can teach Him knowledge. He knows all things, actual and possible. But whilst the former ought not to exist in any intelligent creature, the latter irresponsibility does not exist. No being is authorised to use his knowledge in any way he may think fit. All rational creatures are accountable for the use of their knowledge. Not so with God. He can use His infinite knowledge in any way He pleases. He is answerable to none: all are responsible to Him.

I. THAT ALL HIS OPERATIONS MUST EMANATE FROM PURE SOVEREIGNTY. All that exists must be traced to the counsel of His own will. He received neither the plan nor motive for any act. Creation — redemption — conversion — every part of each—every Divine movement in connection with each—rises out of benevolent spontaneity. II. THAT ALL HIS LAWS MUST BE THE TRANSCRIPT OF HIS OWN MIND. It is seldom just to regard human laws as a correct reflection of the mind of the sovereign, for a human sovereign, in most cases, receives counsels and suggestions from others; but as God has had no "counsellor," His laws are the expression of Himself. What they are, He is. The history of His government is the history of Himself. Irresponsible power in a creature would be despotism, but in God it has, from the beginning, been mercy. III. THAT ALL HIS DISPENSATIONS SHOULD BE CORDIALLY ACQUIESCED IN. 1. Rectitude dictates this. The Absolute Mind has a right to do what He does. 2. Expediency dictates this. Opposition is useless. No being can give Him a new idea or motive, and, therefore, no one can turn Him from His course. IV. THAT ALL HIS REVELATIONS SHOULD BE PROPERLY STUDIED. A book from a Mind absolutely independent should be studied—1. With an expectation of difficulties. 2. With the profoundest reverence." (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 23, 25, 26. **One dieth in his full strength . . . Another dieth in the bitterness of his soul.**—*Providence vindicated against the superficial observer*:—That which hampers men most in understanding providence is its tremendous extent. It is like a great poem, and all that one life or one observer can read is a few words, or at most, a few lines. God does not always show His hand. Sometimes He does, and when it suits Him better, He hides it. It is expedient that some mystery hang over the dispensations of this life. Whatever is unsatisfactory, therefore, at present plainly suggests that the scheme is yet unfinished. The unsatisfactory nature of the present suggests a future. Revelation steps in to tell us that this life is but the vestibule of existence. One or two considerations will modify our hasty conclusions in regard to the real fortunes of those who live and die around us, whether their circumstances be apparently prosperous or depressed. 1. Happiness and misery are by no means always according to appearance. They depend more upon the inner state of the soul than its outward surroundings, and are therefore put, to some extent, within the power of every one. 2. Men make their judgments too much from the outside. It is the outside look of providence that puzzles us, and makes understanding difficult. We arrive at the following conclusions—1. God is no indifferent spectator of human fortunes, but manages them on a perfectly righteous plan. 2. The deceptive character of appearances makes it necessary to subtract a good deal from the apparent happiness and misery of the world at the outset of our investigations. 3. Physical disadvantages, and deprivation of the members and senses are capable of compensation in the other world. 4. The difficulty in understanding aright the providence of God, arises from the complex nature of many of His acts, which may have various distinct branches or departments, as penal, disciplinary, merciful, and even remunerative, all in a single stroke. 5. We can understand enough of the Divine doings to enable us to trust for the remainder. 6. The root of all happiness is a good conscience, and this is put within the reach of all. 7. A good conscience can only be had and maintained by seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness with all the means in our power. 8. And for all the purposes of practical piety, it is rather necessary we should remember the superintending arm of the great Worker, than that we should understand what He is doing. (*William Isaac Keay.*)

Ver. 34. **How then comfort ye me in vain?**—*False comfort*:—Some years ago, I met a woman in Philadelphia, who was anxious about her soul, and had been a long time in that state. I conversed with her, and endeavoured to learn her state. She told me a good many things, and finally said she knew she ought to be willing to wait on God as long as He had waited upon her. She said God had waited on her a great many years before she would give any attention to His calls, and now she believed it was her duty to wait God's time to show mercy and convert her soul. And she said this was the instruction she had received. She must be patient, and wait God's time, and, by and by, He would give her relief. Oh! amazing folly! Here is the sinner in rebellion. God comes with pardon in one hand, and a sword in the other, and tells the sinner to repent and

receive pardon, or refuse and perish. And now here comes a minister of the Gospel, and tells the sinner to "wait God's time." Virtually, he says that God is not ready to have him repent now, and is not ready to pardon him now, and thus, in fact, throws off the blame of his impenitence upon God. Instead of pointing out the sinner's guilt, in not submitting at once to God, he points out God's insincerity in making the offer, when, in fact, He was not ready to grant the blessing. (*C. G. Finney.*)

CHAPTER XXII.

VERS. 1–4. **Can a man be profitable unto God?**—*The third speech of Eliphaz:* —Two general truths. I. That the great God is perfectly INDEPENDENT OF MAN'S CHARACTER, WHETHER RIGHT OR WRONG. "Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to Him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?" 1. He is so independent of it that He is not affected by it. No hellish crimes can lessen His felicity; no heavenly virtue can heighten His blessedness. He is infinitely more independent of all the virtues in heaven than the orb of day is independent of a candle's feeble rays, more independent of all the crimes of hell than noontide brightness is of a mere whiff of smoke. He is not worshipped with men's hands as though He needed anything. This fact should impress us—(1) With the duty of humility. He is independent of the most righteous services of the highest intelligence in the universe. None are necessary to the carrying out of His purposes. (2) With the benevolence of His legislation. Why does He lay down laws for the regulation of human conduct? Simply and entirely for our own happiness. 2. He is so independent of it that He will not condescend to explain His treatment of it. "Will He reprove thee for fear of thee? Will He enter with thee into judgment?" One great cause of Job's murmuring was that God had sent punishment upon him without any explanation. For this Eliphaz here reproves him, and virtually says, "Is it not in the highest degree absurd to expect that the Maker should be willing to explain His doings to the creatures He has made?" II. MAN'S CHARACTER IS OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE TO HIMSELF. "He that is wise may be profitable unto himself." Eliphaz means to say that the wise and pious man is profitable to himself. To the man himself, character is everything. The wealth of Crœsus, the strength of Samson, the wisdom of Solomon, and the dominion of Cæsar are nothing to a man in comparison to his character. His character is the fruit of his existence, the organ of his power, the law of his destiny. It is the only property he carries with him beyond the grave. (*Homilist.*) *The independence of God:*—The question, "Can a man be profitable unto God?" requires, in order to its thorough discussion, that it be resolved into two,—Can anything which a man does be injurious to God? Can anything which a man does be advantageous to God? When human actions are considered in reference to the Almighty, their consequences it appears can in no degree extend themselves to one infinitely removed from all that is created. Not, indeed, that we must so represent the independence of God, as that it involves indifference to men, or totally disregards their actions. Scriptures declare that God is dishonoured by our sinfulness, and glorified by our obedience. But we glorify Him without actually rendering Him any service, and we dishonour Him without doing Him any actual injury. I. THE IMPOSSIBILITY THAT MEN SHOULD BE PROFITABLE UNTO GOD. Think of the greatness of God, how inaccessible He is, how immeasurably removed from all created being. Thinking of this, you can scarcely indulge the idea, that the services of any creature, however exalted and endowed, can be necessary to God. If you examine with the least attention, you must see that, supposing God injured by our sin, or advantaged by our righteousness, is the equivalent to supposing our instrumentality necessary in order to the accomplishment of His purposes. II. THE INFERENCES WHICH FOLLOW FROM THIS TRUTH. Note the perfect disinterestedness of God in sending His own Son to die for the rebellious. It cannot be that God redeemed us because He required our services. The only account which can be given of the amazing interposition is, that God loves us; and even this evades, rather than obviates, the difficulty. Remember that, though you can do nothing

for God. He is ready in Christ to do everything for you. (*Henry Melvill, B.D.*)

The doctrine of merit :—It is a matter of no small moment for a man to be rightly informed upon what terms and conditions he is to transact with God, and God with him, in the great business of his salvation. St. Paul tells us that eternal life is the "gift of God." Salvation proceeds wholly upon free gift, though damnation upon strict desert. Such is the extreme folly, or rather sottishness, of man's corrupt nature, that this does by no means satisfy him. When he comes to deal with God about spirituals, he appears and acts, not as a supplicant, but as a merchant; not as one who comes to be relieved, but to traffic. This great self-delusion, so prevalent upon most minds, is the thing here encountered in the text; which is a declaration of the impossibility of man's being profitable to God, or of his meriting of God, according to the true, proper, and strict sense of merit. Merit is a right to receive some good upon the score of some good done, together with an equivalence or parity of worth between the good to be received and the good done. I. IT IS IMPLIED THAT MEN ARE NATURALLY VERY PRONE TO ENTERTAIN AN OPINION OR PERSUASION, THAT THEY ARE ABLE TO MERIT OF GOD, OR BE PROFITABLE TO HIM. The truth of this will appear from two considerations. 1. It is natural for men to place too high a value both upon themselves and their own performances. That this is so is evident from universal experience. Every man will be sure to set his own price upon what he is, and what he does, whether the world will come up to it or no; as it seldom does. 2. The natural aptness of men to form and measure their apprehensions of the supreme Lord of all things, by what they apprehend and observe of the princes and potentates of this world, with reference to such as are under their dominion. This is certainly a very prevailing fallacy, and steals too easily upon men's minds, as being founded in the unhappy predominance of sense over reason. No marvel then, if they blunder in their notions about God, a Being so vastly above the apprehensions of sense. From misapplied premises, the low, gross, undistinguishing reason of the generality of mankind, presently infers that the creature may, on some accounts, be as beneficial to his Creator as a subject may be to his prince. Men are naturally very prone to persuade themselves that they are able to merit of God, or be profitable to Him. II. SUCH A PERSUASION IS UTTERLY FALSE AND ABSURD, FOR IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR MEN TO MERIT OF GOD. Show the several ingredients of merit, and the conditions necessary to render an action meritorious. 1. That an action be not due; that is to say, it must not be such as a man stands obliged to the doing of, but such as he is free either to do or not to do, without being chargeable with any sinful omission in case he does not. But all that any man alive is capable of doing, is but an indispensable homage to God, and not a free oblation; and that also such an homage as makes his obligation to what he does much earlier than his doing of it, will appear both from the law of nature, and that of God's positive command. 2. It should really add to and better the state of the person of whom it is to merit. The reason of which is because all merit consists properly in a right to receive some benefit, or the account of some benefit first done. (1) God offers Himself to our consideration as a Being infinitely perfect, infinitely happy, and self-sufficient, depending upon no supply or revenue from abroad. (2) On the other hand, is man a being fit and able to make this addition? Man only subsists by the joint alms of heaven and earth, and stands at the mercy of everything in nature, which is able either to help or hurt him. Is this now the person to oblige his Maker? 3. That there be an equal proportion of value between the action and the reward. This is evident from the foundation already laid by us; to wit, that the nature of merit consists properly in exchange; and that, we know, must proceed according to a parity of worth on both sides, commutation being most properly between things equivalent. Can we, who live by sense, and act by sense, do anything worthy of those joys which not only exceed our senses, but also transcend our intellectuals? 4. He who does a work whereby he would merit of another, does it solely by his own strength, and not by the strength or power of him from whom he is to merit. III. THIS PERSUASION IS THE SOURCE AND FOUNDATION OF TWO OF THE GREATEST CORRUPTIONS OF RELIGION THAT HAVE INFESTED THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. These are pelagianism and popery. Pelagianism is resolvable into this one point, that a man contributes something of his own, which he had not from God, towards his own salvation. IV. REMOVE AN OBJECTION NATURALLY APT TO ISSUE FROM THE FOREGOING PARTICULARS. Can there be a greater discouragement than this doctrine to men in their Christian course? Answer—1. It ought not to be any discouragement to a beggar to continue asking an alms, and in doing all that he can to obtain it, though

he knows he can do nothing to claim it. 2. I deny that our disavowing this doctrine of merit, cuts us off from all plea to a recompense for our Christian obedience from the hands of God. It cuts us off from all plea on the score of strict justice. But God's justice is not the only thing that can oblige Him in His transactings with men. His veracity and His promise also oblige Him. (*Robert South, D.D.*) *Does religion enrich God?*—These withering questions were addressed to a humiliated man, with the object of crushing him more completely. Eliphaz was, of course, right in defending the justice of the Divine government. But was the argument he used—that man's religion is a matter of indifference to God—a sound one? I. UPON THE SURFACE, THE QUESTIONS ADMIT OF NO ANSWER BUT A NEGATIVE. "Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself?" We cannot conceive of the Deity as other than perfect, self-contained and self-sufficient. His power is omnipotent, and His years eternal. What can man do to enhance such adorable perfections? Will the light of a candle add to the glory of the sunshine at midday? Will a single drop of water perceptibly increase the volume of the ocean? Our Christian activities do not enrich God, as the work of shop assistants enriches their employers. Nor do our religious offerings add to His wealth. All is already His, and of His own do we give Him. The gain is on our side; not God's. We profit by our holiness of character, our Christian zeal, and our religious offerings. Nothing can be more sublimely ludicrous than the patronage which some men accord religion. They give to religious objects in the spirit of monarchs dispensing alms to the needy. They graciously allow their names to be printed as patrons of religious institutions. II. YET, LOOKING AT HIS WORDS AGAIN, WE FEEL THAT THEY MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO PASS WITHOUT QUALIFICATION OR AMENDMENT. They are true to a certain extent, and in that limited degree may be usefully employed. Eliphaz in his laudable attempt to exalt God above the deities of the heathen, who according to the conceptions of their worshippers were enriched or impoverished by their piety or the lack of it, elevated Him to a pinnacle of remoteness and indifference which He does not occupy. In his extremely proper endeavour to magnify God he belittled man, which is both unnecessary and wrong. Is it the case that religion is merely an insurance? Is godliness nothing more than prudence? Do our saintliest serve God only for what they can get? Well, religion is less attractive than it seemed if the struggles that won our admiration and the sacrifices that moved us to tears were only prompted by self-interest. It is an insufficient explanation. Again, is it true, as Eliphaz insinuates, that human righteousness gives no pleasure to God? It is a crushing suggestion. The Eternal is high above you and cares nothing for your little concerns, even for your small virtues and petty victories over sin! It is a crushing suggestion. And surely it is a fallacious one. We may take the good He has given us or we may leave it, He does not care! His eternal calm is unruffled, His ineffable completeness unbroken, by the fortunes of mortal men! "Can a man be profitable unto God? No, he that is wise is profitable unto himself. Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? or is it gain to Him that thou makest thy ways perfect?" Oh, it is a repellent picture. We are prepared to hear that there is a fallacy in it. III. ITS EFFECT IS TO DEMORALISE AND DEBAUCH MAN. And it really does not magnify God. While professing to exalt Him, it lowers Him. Is God too great to notice man? That is not real greatness which can only condescend to notice great affairs. The answer to it lies in the book which records it. We see the Almighty contemplating with satisfaction the uprightness of a man. We see Him defending that uprightness against the malicious insinuations of His own enemy and man's, Satan. A better reply still is furnished by the teaching of Jesus. He revealed God. He was God. And in beautiful similitudes He spoke of the Divine concern for the soul of man and the Divine joy in its salvation. God, if we may reverently say so, has given His case away by the revelation of His fatherhood. We cannot argue upon the ground of majesty, but on this level we are at home. We know how a father hungers for the love of his child. So we can please God: we can wound Him. For love craves a return, and love lies bleeding from indifference. Jesus, yearning over Jerusalem, is the answer in the affirmative to the questions of Eliphaz. But the supreme answer lies not in the teaching of Jesus, convincing though that is, but in Jesus Himself. That answer is final. Is the moral condition of man of no concern to God? Then come with me to Bethlehem, to a stable behind the village inn. Is the soul of man uncared for by God? Then come with me to Calvary. Do you see

that Man dying, amid throes of unutterable agony, on a cross of wood? (*B. J. Gibbon.*)

Ver. 3. **Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous?**—*God's pleasure in man's righteousness*:—To this Eliphaz we cannot take kindly. There is so much in him that reminds us of the Pharisee of our Lord's day. With all his conscientiousness—and it is remarkable what sins against God and our brother are committed under the garb of conscientiousness—he seems to be one of those who "speak wickedly for God." Looking at the argument of the Temanite in this chapter, it is, at best, a piece of sophistry. The words of the text seem humble words, so calculated to move us in the direction of self-repression; but we are not required to build humility upon a lie. 1. This verse is but an expansion of the thought contained in the previous verse, which reads thus, "Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself?" The force of this comparison tends to disarm criticism, for the least taught among Christian people can never think they are doing God the service they are rendering themselves. In those cases in which men think they are in some way doing God a splendid service, their presumption is its own condemnation. But such a thought does not enter Christian believing minds. What are they to say to the challenge of the next verse? Is there not something true within us that rises up against its merciless and terrible conclusion? A man may be far from as profitable to God as unto himself. He must feel that all the weight of obligation is on his side, since God alone is the source of all his goodness and power; and yet he may, I think he must, if he have a spark of the Divine life and light in him, resist so fearful and disheartening a conclusion as that God has no pleasure in his rectitude, and that he is all loss and no gain to God. (1) Such a conclusion is most disheartening to endeavours after goodness. Practically carried into the inner life of men, it would be fatal to that goodness. There can be little faith in a goodness that is not nurtured by love and fed by willing cheerfulness. The difference between a Divine compulsion and the sort of thing called compulsion among men, is that the former is made up of affection, the other of necessity. A Divine compulsion, beginning with love, creates an obedience which becomes more and more congenial and native to the soul of the subject of it. We all need educating in virtue and goodness. Human nature has to be raised and sanctified by the energy of Divine grace. The "righteous" man is the creation of that Divine grace which comes to the aid of the struggling one in his contest with dark, evil forces. And the more successful will he be in that contest, the more clearly he discerns what that Divine force is which is helping him. Most discouraging is it to all endeavours after a better life that we should doubt the pleasure of the Eternal in those endeavours. If we do so, we misjudge our relation to the Infinite. It will be as new life to us when we learn to believe in the words of Jesus about the Father. Against the unfaith of men in this Divine Fatherhood, we have constantly to contend. (2) Such a conclusion is also dishonouring to God. It is against the entire scope and tone of Divine revealings from age to age, up to the day when John, the latest seer of the New Testament, spoke of the God of love. It dishonours Him, because it takes away from Him some of those finer instincts which all men worthy of the name have. We take pleasure in endeavours to please us—else we are scarcely human. We allow for infirmity and frailty; and it were indeed a hard and cruel faith about God to deny Him such instincts. And surely God must be pleased with that work into which He throws most of His own pure soul and Spirit. The more of the Divine self in any one, the truer and more complete the Divine satisfaction. 2. Consider what of truth we can find in these words. (1) It would be vastly mischievous were we to come to look upon that righteousness as our own, and so try to sever the stream from the fount. It is ours only because it is God's gift. All our righteousness is of God. (2) There may be a high-mindedness in Christian service which finds needed correction in the thought that God is not so much served by us as we are served by Him. 3. We need to feel that all the weight of obligations is on our side. When we think of the Divine pleasure and gain, we cannot but think how beneficent that pleasure is. We cannot serve God without a recompense. Yet there are many who shrink from God, as though He were the receiver, instead of the Giver, of all good. They start back from duty as though it would be fatal to their joy. Nothing He commands but for your good. Nothing He orders but for your eternal delight. (*G. J. Proctor.*)

Vers. 5-14. **Is not thy wickedness great?**—*The charge against Job:*—I. Wrong in relation to MAN. In regard to the charge which he here brings against Job, it is worthy of note that whilst most expositors regard Eliphaz as speaking in his own name, others, amongst whom Dr. Bernard, regard him as indicating merely the charges which the Almighty might bring against him. What is the charge that he brings? It is Job's flagrant inhumanity. 1. He was rapacious. 2. He was inhospitable. 3. He was tyrannical. II. Wrong in relation to GOD. "Is not God in the height of heaven? And behold the height of the stars, how high they are! And thou sayest, How doth God know? Can He judge through the thick cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to Him, that He seeth not; and He walketh in the circuit of heaven." His charge here against Job in relation to God, is a denial of the Divine inspection and superintendence of individual man. This error, which he falsely charges on Job, was the leading error of the old Epicureans, and the leading error of deists in all ages. If all men felt God to be in conscious contact with them, idolatry, immorality, dormancy of soul, could not exist. Many causes have been assigned for man's tendency to regard God as remote, such as—(1) The mediatory method of Divine operation. He does not deal directly with man. (2) Man's power of spontaneous action. He is left free, he does not feel the hand of God on the springs of his being. (3) The unbroken regularity of natural laws. Nature shows no changes, indicates no interruption. (4) The disorders of the moral world. But the grand cause is dread of God. Men have sinned, and their guilty consciences invest the Almighty with such attributes of vengeance that they turn away in horror from Him. The language of each man is, "Depart from me, for I desire not a knowledge of Thee." Learn—1. That in natural religion the ill-treatment of our fellow-men is regarded as a great crime. There is no reason to believe that Eliphaz had any revelation from God but that which nature supplies; and yet in his language to Job he expresses in a strong and unmistakable manner his conviction, that to be, not only cruel, but even inhospitable to our fellow-men is wicked. The obligation to be socially sympathetic, loving, and kind, the God of love has written on the human soul. 2. That men often denounce evils in others of which they themselves are guilty. Strong as was the implied denunciation of Eliphaz against unkindness in Job, was he not himself unkind in tantalising him now when he was overwhelmed with suffering, by charges that were utterly false? (*Homilist.*) *Our sins infinite in number and enormity:*—Eliphaz was led to ask this question by a suspicion that Job was a hypocrite. He was sure that Job was a wicked man, so he endeavoured to convince him that this was his character. The text is a proper question to be proposed to all who are ignorant of themselves. We must show the meanings which attach to the terms sin and wickedness in the Word of God. By wicked men the Scriptures mean all who are not righteous; and by sin a violation of the Divine law, which requires us to love God with all our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves. This law branches out into various and numerous precepts, prescribing, with great minuteness, our duties towards all the beings with whom we are connected, and the dispositions which are to be exercised in every situation and relation of life; and the violation and disregard of any of these precepts is a sin. When we do not perfectly obey all God's commands, in feeling, thought, word, or action, we sin. 1. The sin of our hearts, or of our disposition and feelings. The sins of this class alone are innumerable. Yet most men think nothing of them, if they do not gain expression in overt acts. But what the law of God and the Gospel of Christ principally require is right feelings and dispositions. What they chiefly forbid and condemn is feelings and dispositions that are wrong. If, then, we wish to know the number of our sins, we must look first and chiefly at the feelings and dispositions of our hearts. Then we shall soon be convinced that our sins are numberless. 2. The sinfulness of our thoughts. These are the offspring of the mind, as feelings are the offspring of the heart. Men's characters are determined by their thoughts and purposes. If vain, foolish thoughts are sinful, who can enumerate his sins? 3. The sins of the tongue. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. If sin prevails in the heart, it will flow out through the lips. Of every idle word man shall give account. Every idle word then is a sin. Idle words are all that are unnecessary, and which do not tend to produce good effects. How innumerable then are the sins of the tongue. 4. Our sinful actions. Sins of omission and commission. If men's thoughts, words, and feelings are numberless, so are their sins. 5. Our sins are infinite not only in number, but also in criminality. Every sin is, in fact, infinitely evil, and deserving of infinite

punishment. (1) Because it is committed against an Infinite Being, against God, a Being infinitely powerful, wise, holy, just, and good. (2) Because it is a violation of an infinitely perfect law. (3) Because it tends to produce infinite mischief. (4) Because committed in defiance of motives and obligations infinitely strong. Inferences—1. If our sins are thus infinite in number and criminality, then, of course, they deserve an infinite or everlasting punishment. 2. God is perfectly right in inflicting an infinite punishment upon sinners. 3. If it is just to inflict infinite punishment upon impenitent sinners, God is bound by the strongest obligations to inflict it. 4. Hence we see why the atonement made by Christ was necessary. (*E. Payson, D.D.*)

Vers. 12, 13. **Is not God in the height of heaven?**—*God brought near:*—Is there anything that can make God a present God? Bring Him from the height of heaven beyond the stars into conscious contact with the experience of daily life? There is. What? Philosophic reasoning. Correct reasoning on the subject must indeed convince man that if there be a God, He must be everywhere, and, therefore, ever at hand. But men may reach this conclusion, and yet practically regard their God as distant. Will natural science do it? True natural science must connect God with everything. Will scriptural theology do it? (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 15–20. **Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden?**—*The way of the wicked described:*—It is commonly remarked, how little advantage mankind make of each other's experience. This is surely a striking proof of the folly and presumption of our nature. Eliphaz here is reasoning on the principle stated. Though he misapplied the admonition conveyed in his question, the admonition itself is important, for without marking this way of the wicked, how shall we have knowledge of it; and without knowing it, how shall we avoid it? I. SOME PARTICULARS CONCERNING THE WAY OF THE WICKED. 1. The sameness, or oneness, of the way. There are, indeed, many different kinds of sin in which the wicked are living. But they are all turning their backs on the same objects; they are all proceeding in the same direction; they are all tending to the same end. 2. This way is the old way. Eliphaz so called it in the time of Job. It is a way as old as the fall of man. 3. It is a trodden way. This word gives the idea of a way which has been much used and frequented; a beaten road, in which many passengers are always to be found. II. A MORE EXACT DESCRIPTION OF THE WAY ITSELF. By the wicked, in the Bible, are meant all who are devoid of an inward principle of godliness; who, whatever their lives and characters in the sight and judgment of the world may be, are yet in the sight of God without any practical fear and love of Him in their hearts. The way of the wicked is the way of practical ungodliness. Here men are all guilty. They forget God, and walk after the course of this world. III. THE END TO WHICH THE WAY OF WICKED MEN LEADS. Our Saviour says, "It leadeth to destruction." The end resembles that of the sinners in the days of Noah and Lot. Learn, that you may not be an open sinner, and yet you may be walking in the way of the wicked, as you live a mere sensual, worldly life, without any habitual regard to the will and glory of God. (*E. Cooper.*) *The history of wickedness:*—1. It is a history of ancient date. It is an old way—the "track of old." 2. It is a history of terrible calamities. "Which were cut down out of time," &c. There are personal, social, material calamities. 3. It is a history of practical atheism. (1) A guilty conscience makes men dread God. (2) Dread of God makes men hate Him. (3) Hating God prompts men to repel Him. 4. It is a history liable to misinterpretation. Men make misapplication of the history of wickedness—(1) When they conclude that God is indifferent in relation to the moral character of men. (2) When they conclude that, because God does not punish wicked men at once, He will not punish them at all. Yet this history has lessons of great significance. (1) It teaches the vastness of man's power. (2) It teaches the greatness of man's patience. (3) It teaches the energy of human influence. (4) It teaches the magnitude of Christ's work. (*Homilist.*) *The way which wicked men have trodden:*—I. THE WAY ITSELF. Eliphaz calls it an "old way." It is almost as old as the human race, or as the world which they inhabit. In the account of the conduct of the first sinner, we see selfishness, or Eve's preference of herself to God. We see also pride, which produced discontent. We see sensuality, or a disposition to be governed and guided by her

senses, and to seek their gratification in an unlawful manner. We see unbelief, a distrust of God's Word, and a consequent belief of the tempter's suggestions. She could believe the tempter's falsehood. From the conduct of Adam and Eve at the close of the day, we may obtain further acquaintance with the way in which sinners walk. They exhibited sullen hardness of heart, impenitence, and despair of forgiveness. They expressed no sorrow, nor penitence, nothing like brokenness of heart. They made no confession of sin; they uttered no cries for mercy; they expressed no wish to be restored to the favour of their offended Judge. They displayed a self-justifying temper. They showed a disposition to reflect upon God as the cause of their disobedience. In a manner precisely similar have sinners ever since acted. II. ITS TERMINATION. It leads to destruction. That it does so, we might infer from what has taken place in the world. Application—1. Whether some of you are not walking in this way? 2. Should any of you be convinced that you are in this dangerous way, permit me to urge you to forsake it without delay. (*E. Payson, D.D.*) *The old way of the wicked*:—"Hast thou marked the old way?" Antiquity is no guarantee for truth. It was the old way, but it was the wrong way. It was an old way, but they who ran in it perished in it just as surely as if it had been a new way of sinning entirely of their own invention: antiquity will be no consolation to those who perish by following evil precedents. I. THE WAY. First, what it was. There is no doubt that Eliphaz is here alluding to those who sinned before the flood. He is looking to what were ancient days to him. 1. Now this way, in the first place, was a way of rebellion against God. 2. In the next place, the old way was a way of selfishness. 3. The old way was a way of pride. Our mother Eve rebelled against God because she thought she knew better than God did. 4. The old way which wicked men have trodden is a way of self-righteousness. If Abel kneels by the altar, Cain will kneel by the altar also. Beware, I entreat you, for this is the old way of the Pharisee when he thanked God that he was not as other men. 5. The old way which wicked men have trodden was, in the next place, a way of unbelief. Noah was sent to tell those ancient sinners that the world would be destroyed by a flood. They thought him an old dotard, and mocked him to scorn. 6. The old way which wicked men have trodden is a way of worldliness and carelessness and procrastination. What did those men before the flood? They married and were given in marriage till the flood came and swept them all away. Eliphaz says, "Hast thou marked the way?" I want you to stop a little while, and look at that road again, and mark it anew. 1. The first thing I observe as I look into it is, that it is a very broad way. 2. Observe that it is a very popular road. The way downward to destruction is a very fashionable one, and it always will be. 3. It is a very easy way, too. You need not trouble yourself about finding the entrance into it, you can find it in the dark. 4. This old way, if you look at it, is the way in which all men naturally run. For all that, it is a most unsatisfactory road. 5. One thing more, across it here and there Divine mercy has set bars. The angel of mercy stands before you now, and bids you tarry. Why will ye die? II. THE END: "Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflown with a flood." The end of these travellers was not according to their unbelief, but according to the despised truth. They would not believe Noah, but the flood came. Remember this, then, unbelief will not, laugh as it may, remove one jot of the penalty. The flood, like the destroying fire which will come upon ungodly men, was total in its destructiveness. It did not sweep away some of them, but all, and the punishments of God will not be to a few rebels, but to all. It will find out the rich in their palaces, as well as the poor in their hovels. Moreover, it was a final overthrow. The text gives us two pictures, and these two may suffice to bring out the meaning of Eliphaz. First, he says, they were "out down out of time." The representation here is that of a tree with abundant foliage and wide-spreading boughs, to which the woodman comes. Such is the sinner in his prosperity, spreading himself like a green bay tree; birds of song are amongst his branches, and his fruit is fair to look upon; but the axe of death is near, and where the tree falleth there it must for ever lie; fixed is its everlasting state. The other picture of the text is that of a building which is utterly swept away. Here I would have you notice that Eliphaz does not say that the flood came and swept away the building of the wicked, but swept away their very foundations. If in the next world the sinner only lost his wealth or his health, or his outward comforts of this life, it would be subject for serious reflection; but when it comes

to this, that he loses his soul, his very self; then it becomes a thing to consider with all one's reason, and with something more of the enlightenment which God's Spirit can add to our reason. Oh that we would but be wise and think of this! III. THE WARNING: "Am I or am I not treading in that broad way?" "Ah!" saith one, "I do not know." I will help thee to answer it. Are you travelling in the narrow way in which believers in Christ are walking? "I cannot say that," say you. Well, then, I can tell you without hesitation that you are treading in the broad way, for there are but two ways. As for you who confessedly are in the old way, would you turn, would you leave it? Then the turning-point is at yonder cross, where Jesus hangs a bleeding sacrifice for the sons of men. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 21. **Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace.**—*Acquaintance with God*:—I. WHAT IT IS, OR IMPLIES. 1. The knowledge of God's character and attributes. All true religion rests upon correct views of God's character. Many persons assume that they naturally know God; but they do not feel the necessity of going to Scripture to learn the character of God. The mistake arises in part from not distinguishing carefully between the existence and the character of God. You must try your notions of God's character and attributes by Scripture, and see whether they will stand the test. 2. But a man's knowledge may be nothing more than an intellectual knowledge, whilst his heart may be alienated from Him. He may feel no delight in God's character, and pay no heartfelt obedience to His will. 3. In real acquaintance with God, there is communion. This means participation in something (1 Cor. x. 16). Communion also means intercourse, converse (Psa. iv. 4). It is a wonderful thought, but it is true, that there can be, and is, communion between the eternal God and the believer's spirit. You see some things which are implied in acquaintance with God, or knowledge of God's character and attributes as revealed in Scripture, reconciliation of heart to Him, and communion with Him. The first requires the exercise of the understanding; the second, the surrender of the will; the third, purity of heart. What blessing is equal to this of acquaintance with God! II. THE RESULTS. "And be at peace." With reference to Job. "Be happy again." Eliphaz urges Job to acquaint himself with God, so that peace and joy may be restored again to his heart. To how many hearts may such words come home! Eliphaz speaks of other results. "Thereby good shall come to thee." How much there is in that word "good"! No doubt Eliphaz thought of temporal blessings. Look at the blessings of the Christian. Sins blotted out; heart renewed; bondage changed into liberty; the power of sin broken; besetting infirmities overcome; his life made a blessing to others; death robbed of its sting. (*George Wagner.*) *Acquaintance with God*:—"Acquaint." This is a very forceful word; it comes from an old Saxon root, from which we get the word "ken"—to know. The word "cunning" comes from the same root—cunnan, to know. Get to know God—to understand Him. One rendering of the text is, "Acquiesce in God"; another is, "Join yourself to God." In the French Bible you will find that the translation is, "Attach yourself to God," which is pretty nearly the same thing. Join yourself to Him; attach yourself to Him. Fall in, it seems to say, with His ways, and with His methods. (*W. Williams.*) *Acquaintance with God*:—I. EXPLAIN THE NATURE OF ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD. 1. It includes knowledge. 2. It includes friendship. 3. It includes communion. 4. It includes confidence. II. ILLUSTRATE THE BENEFITS THAT RESULT FROM IT. 1. Peace—with God and in our own heart. 2. Good—temporal and spiritual. 3. Now—now or never. (*G. Brooks.*) *Acquaintance with God*:—I. ITS NATURE. Men are not acquainted with God. They like not to retain God in their thoughts. Lay aside your enmity and your dread, and come and learn something of His mercy and loving-kindness. Acquaint yourselves with—1. His infinite holiness. 2. His perfect justice. 3. His boundless mercy. 4. His everlasting purposes. II. ITS BENEFITS. 1. Peace. There is no true peace except from the knowledge of God. 2. Present and future good. Religion's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. Apply—(1) The time of attaining it. Not to-morrow, but now. (2) The means of obtaining it. Devout study of God's Word. Devout attendance at the Supper of our Lord. Intercourse with the Lord's people. Perusal of good and devotional books. Ask continually for the gift of the Holy Spirit. (*C. Clayton, M.A.*) *The blessedness of acquaintance with God*:—I. THE EXHORTATION CONTAINED IN THE TEXT. Naturally, we are ignorant of God;

we are not at peace with God, but at enmity against Him. To acquaint ourselves with God, we must make ourselves acquainted with the revelation which God has made us respecting Himself and His will. We must make a heartfelt and experimental knowledge of Him the object of our unceasing pursuit. We must seek to be at peace with Him, by laying down our rebellion, asking pardon, and imploring the renewing and sanctifying influences of His Holy Spirit. II. THE PROMISE WITH WHICH THIS EXHORTATION IS ENFORCED. "Good shall come unto thee." 1. Thou shalt have that pardon and reconciliation which thou seekest. 2. Every temporal blessing which is really "good" for you shall be secured to you. 3. You shall be satisfied that God hears your prayers, and that His blessing rests upon your undertakings. 4. Your case shall serve as an encouragement to others to proceed in those steps which you have found to lead to such inestimable blessings. 5. Your example, and conduct, and prayers will have a tendency to do "good" to your country, and to bring down God's blessing upon that. 6. The eternal good shall "come to them"—that complete deliverance from all evil, and that complete enjoyment of all "good," which will be their portion for ever. (*John Natt, B.D.*) *Acquaintance with God the best foundation for peace*:—I. THE WAY OF BECOMING ACQUAINTED WITH GOD. There are two kinds of knowledge—speculative and practical, or experimental—resting upon personal acquaintance. Of these two, the experimental is the only solid and satisfactory knowledge: and is as much superior to the ideal as the substance is to the shadow, as the sun in the firmament to a sun painted upon canvas, and as a living man to his picture. The reason of which is that ideal knowledge is not the perception of the things themselves present, but only the forming in our minds the images and pictures of things absent; whereas experimental knowledge is the real perception of the things themselves, present and acting upon us, and communicating themselves and their properties to us. The ideal knowledge which we have of God should excite us to endeavour after the experimental. A penitent sinner, who is sensible of God's mercy in the forgiveness of his sins, who experiences the Divine favour in speaking peace to his soul, has a much better knowledge of the mercy, power, and goodness of God, than all the ideas of these attributes could give him as long as the world lasts. No ideal knowledge can give us either virtue or happiness. There are four ways of becoming acquainted with any person. 1. If he has written anything, to acquaint ourselves therewith. They are generally the truest and liveliest image of the mind. 2. If he be a great person, to get some opportunity of coming into his presence, and to do this as frequently and constantly as we may be permitted. 3. Readily to embrace all opportunities that are offered to us of eating at his table. 4. Living in the house, and conversing with him continually. II. THE ADVANTAGES AND HAPPY EFFECTS OF THIS ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD. These are the greatest and noblest human nature is capable of enjoying—peace and tranquillity of mind; happiness by the exercising and perfecting the noblest faculties of the soul, the understanding, and the will. The supreme happiness must consist in contemplating and possessing, in loving and enjoying the supreme Perfection, who is Beauty and Love itself, and "whom truly to know is eternal life." All happiness consists in loving and possessing the object of our love. (*V. Nalson.*) *Acquaintance with God*:—The three friends of the patriarch Job often reasoned rightly, but on wrong principles and false assumptions. The best thing which natural religion can effect is the putting awful distances between man and God, the representing Deity as so sublimely inaccessible that the creature can only bow reverently down and adore from afar, with trembling of spirit, the mysterious Being who is the arbiter of his destinies. And it is not the province of revealed religion to take off anything from the mysteries of Godhead, nor to diminish that unmeasured separation which reason tells us must stretch between the infinite and the finite. Without bringing God down to our level, revelation shows man that he may be lifted up into communion with God Himself. Our text prescribes what we are bound to call familiarity with God. But the better I am acquainted with God, the more shall I find to wonder at. The precept, "Acquaint thyself with God," would never have found a place amongst the dictates of natural religion. It is not the mere acknowledgment of the existence of God which will cause peace in the human soul. On the contrary, it may be given as a self-evident truth, that until Christ, and the scheme of redemption, through His precious death, are brought under review, the more God reveals Himself, the more will man be disturbed and distressed. Where our acquaintance with God is acquaintance with God in

Christ, the closer the "acquaintance," the greater will be our peace. (*Henry Melvill, B.D.*) *A Divine acquaintance*:—Two things no one will challenge. 1. That most men like to improve their acquaintance, to get familiar with such as show a higher social position, with a similar moral preference and taste to their own. 2. Any such acquaintance, to whom a man may "look up," will be no small factor in giving shape and maturity to his character. The text indicates—I. A DISTANCE, A VARIANCE OF FEELING, BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH. Here non-acquaintance is enmity. Man now is like to the disobedient child. Sin is nothing if it is not a perverted, a wronged, and a wronging relationship—a change on the one side from the natural to the unnatural. There is wrong relationship between heaven and earth. Sin is not only cruel in putting man at a hateful variance with his Divine Father, but it is murderously fatal. It has more than pain, there is peril of perdition. II. HEAVEN DESIRES THE PRESENT AND PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF THE DIFFERENCE. 1. Any estrangement between two who should be friends will always bring the most pain to the one who has the finest and most susceptible nature. 2. The initiative in seeking this re-adjustment has been taken by heaven. At the Cross He halts for audience and restoration. This He makes the one point for all negotiations—a witness of His love, and a challenge for others' love and service. III. THIS SETTLEMENT, WHEN EFFECTED, WILL CERTAINLY BRING TO MAN THE HIGHEST BLESSEDNESS. "Thereby good shall come unto thee." Everywhere, with a fever of greed, men are seeking "good." Sin pardoned is the true good. IV. THE ATTAINMENT OF THIS STATE DEMANDS THE HEARTIEST EFFORTS OF ALL MEN. Surely the dignity of this state makes a claim upon men. To be "at peace with God" will be the noblest, the safest, and the happiest of states. (*Edwin D. Green.*) *Acquaintance with God*:—I. WHY WE SHOULD ACQUAINT OURSELVES WITH GOD. The fact is that our very salvation depends upon our knowledge of God and of our Saviour Jesus Christ. 1. That a better acquaintance with God will develop a more intense love for Him. We find a friend, and the more we study his traits of character and learn the true principles of his friendship, the more intense will become our love for him. 2. A closer acquaintance with God will develop in us a deeper work of grace. Grace and the knowledge of God are always associated in the Bible (Eph. iv. 15; 1 Pet. ii. 2; 2 Pet. iii. 18). 3. In a closer acquaintance with God, our thoughts, and our words, and our very habits of life become assimilated unto the Divine Mind and ways. 4. With our acquaintance with God grows our delight in His service (Psa. i. 1, 2, cxix. 35, 47, 92). II. HOW SHALL WE SECURE THIS ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD? 1. Through His Word. 2. We get acquainted with God by living much with Him in prayer. 3. By persistently submitting our wills to His will. Our friends delight to confer and counsel with us so long as they feel that we are putting their counsels to practical use. 4. We get better acquainted with God by carefully noting our experiences in life. III. WHAT MUST BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF SUCH AN ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD? Such an acquaintance must result—1. In a fixedness of purpose. 2. Proficiency in His service. 3. Constant peace and joy. (*J. C. Jacoby.*) *The peace of knowing God*:—The study of God's nature in the page of revelation is oftentimes abused, so as to give a man not peace, but trouble. But we should be aware that this is not the necessary fruit, nay, that it never need be the consequence at all, of meditation on Gospel truth. Acquaint thyself with God. Thou knowest Him not aright by nature; thou art in need of diligent study, constant prayer, frequent meditation. Thy notions of God are far from being what they ought to be. Take pains to know Him as He is. To know that God made us, and at the same time to feel that we therefore owe to Him our own existence, this is to acquaint ourselves with God. To know of the gift of God's Son as a Saviour from sin, and to know of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter and Sanctifier, this is to acquaint ourselves with God. Then thou shalt be at peace with God and with thyself. And "good shall come unto thee." Both now and hereafter. (*C. Girdlestone, M.A.*) *Acquaintance with God*:—Peace—where does it dwell? There is peace in nature. But is there peace with man? Why has man no peace? Sin is the destroyer of your peace and mine. As sin is alienation from God, the recovery of that peace is only to be sought in deliverance from sin, and in a return to the knowledge and love of Him. I. IN WHAT SENSE ARE WE TO ACQUAINT OURSELVES WITH GOD? To what kind of knowledge does the text refer? Is it required for our peace that we should know Him "as He is"? Shall we strain our puny minds to span the countless ages of the eternity of the past? Surely eternity, self-

existence, omnipotence, infinite and essential wisdom, holiness and love, these are depths which even angels can only "desire to look into." Is it then to know Him in His counsels and ways—to understand His dealings in providence and grace? No. How often have His people to trust and not to trace! How seldom does He vouchsafe to show to them the thing that He does! How then shall man acquaint himself with God? "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." To know God as a reconciled Father in Christ, is saving, sanctifying, comforting, peace-speaking knowledge of God to your souls and mine. It is a knowledge which changes, warms, strengthens and cheers the heart. II. BY NATURE WE ARE NOT THUS ACQUAINTED WITH HIM. We are not talking of an intellectual, but, if I may say so, of a moral, a spiritual, knowledge. Sin must ever involve ignorance of God. The unrenewed heart cannot have the rich, experimental knowledge of the true child of God. Examine well, then, the character of your acquaintance with God, your religious knowledge. III. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE MORE SPIRITUAL ACQUAINTANCE IS TO BE GAINED. Turn to the Bible. See in Jesus of Nazareth, "God with us." IV. THE HAPPY RESULT PROMISED AS ATTENDANT UPON THIS ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD. "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (*John C. Miller, M.A.*) *Peace and good by acquaintance with God*:—These are the words of a heathen thinker. The words are true in substance. They are wise, far-sighted words. This sage made a grand mistake in the application of this truth to his friend Job. 1. Is there such a thing among men as "peace"—a deep and true peace—without any acquaintance with God? Suppose the case of one possessing high intelligence allied with all the ordinary virtues of human life, but who lacks entirely any personal faith in God as a Person. It is useless to approach such men with arguments for the existence of God, or in favour of any of His attributes. For they are in a state which no abstract argument can well reach. We may take them on the side of the text, and ask, "How about peace?" Is his whole nature at peace? He says, "Yes; I have no fear, no trouble, except that which comes by ignorance or inattention to law. Life is not long. I shall soon be in the dust, and that will be an end of me. If we are to live again, we shall be prepared for it when it comes: why should we trouble about the matter now?" Is this answer true? I say it is not. If it be true, then it comes to this, that one man is essentially different from another man. Not merely circumstantially, but in very nature. Any peace a man may have may be calmness, indifference, but cannot be the same thing as comes into a soul, and flows through it, and down into its far depths, as the result of acquaintance with God. Suppose the case of those who have no doubt of the existence of God, but cannot be said, in any true sense, to be acquainted with Him. Are any such at peace? Again the answer is "No." Indeed, such imperfect and partial knowledge of God is practically more disturbing and alarming than complete scepticism. Once allow His existence, and it is impossible ever to put that existence anywhere but in the primary place. If God exists, clearly our relations to Him, and His relations to us, are of first importance. Suppose one convinced of the Divine existence, and yet destitute of any true idea of the Divine character, what is the result? It may be this or that, according to temperament, or circumstances, but it never is "peace." It may be a silent distrust, or a habitual alienation, or a more active antipathy, or an undefined dread, or an awful, but most uncheerful and uncomfortable sense of solemnity, or a settled despondency, or the falling shadow of a black despair; but it never is "peace." Those who are imperfectly acquainted with God look at some of the attributes separately, but never at the centre and essence of the character, where all the attributes meet. They never see that "God is love." The text literally means, "dwell with God." Dwell with Him in the same tent or home. To come to God in Christ is to come home: to enter the tent of the Divine presence. 2. "Thereby good shall come to thee." Good of every kind, and especially of the best kind. In fact, the state itself is the good begun. By far the greatest good that can be done to a man is the making of himself good. This is done by bringing him into intimate acquaintance and reconciliation and friendship with God. No man is good who avoids the society of God. The reconciled soul is the receptive soul, receptive of God, and of His truth and love. This "good" that comes is, in fact, nothing less than all the benefits and blessings of the Gospel. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *Acquaintance with God*:—I. OF ALL COUNSELS THAT A MAN MAY GIVE, OR HIS FELLOW RECEIVE, THERE IS NONE SO IMPORTANT

AS THAT OF CULTIVATING ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD. Acquaintance signifies more than a bare knowledge. Acquaintance with God is included in three particulars. 1. In a spiritual knowledge of the being of God. 2. In a union of will, and a union of way, with that of God. 3. In a perpetual communion with God. II. OF ALL TIMES, SEASONS, AND OPPORTUNITIES, THERE IS NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT TO CULTIVATE ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD. Consider—1. That this matter is important. 2. That there is no time like the present time. 3. That the future is quite uncertain. 4. That the longer a man lives in sin, the farther he goes from God. III. OF ALL THE BENEFITS WHICH MAN RECEIVES, OR GOD BESTOWS, THERE ARE NONE LIKE THOSE BLESSINGS THAT FOLLOW ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD. "Good shall thereby come unto thee." 1. All the good in nature. 2. All good in grace. 3. All the good in glory. How miserable must be the state of that man who has no acquaintance with God. (*T. Jones.*) *On acquaintance with God*:—I. THE PROPER METHODS OF ACQUAINTING OUR OWN SELVES WITH GOD. 1. The first step is to acquire a competent knowledge of His nature, His attributes, and His will. We need not commend an inquiry into the metaphysical essence of the Supreme Being. But a competent knowledge of the moral nature of the Deity is both possible and necessary to us. In nature, and in the Scriptures, God's infinite wisdom and almighty power, His perfect purity and holiness, His justice and faithfulness, His goodness and mercy, His general and particular providence, His determined resolution finally to punish incorrigible wickedness, and to award sincere though imperfect obedience, are set forth with such plainness that the most moderate understanding may gain all requisite intelligence concerning His Divine nature and attributes. God's will, and all that He requires from us, is laid down with equal plainness. 2. A sincere repentance of our past transgressions. This is a necessary consequence of the former step toward an acquaintance with God. The result of our inquiries will be, that He is a Being of the most perfect purity and holiness. All unreasonable and vicious conduct must be offensive in His sight. While we continue in impenitence, we have the greatest reason to be overwhelmed with terror and dismay. But the repentance must be sincere and universal, extending to all the particulars of our duty and God's commands. II. WHEN WE HAVE ACQUIRED AN ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD, WE MUST BE CAREFUL TO PRESERVE AND IMPROVE IT, BY FREQUENT PRAYER AND DEVOTION. Prayer and religious meditation is the proper food of our souls. This maintains that communion with God without which whatsoever is good in us will quickly languish and decay. (*R. Richmond, LL.D.*) *The advice of Eliphaz*:—This is all the three friends could, in substance, say. It is difficult to read the exhortation of another man. We are, indeed, apt to put into all reading our own tone, and thereby sometimes we may do grievous injustice to the authors or speakers whom we seek to interpret. One canon of good reading, however, may surely be this, that when a man so seerlike, so prophetlike as Eliphaz, concluded his controversy with Job, observing the suffering and the sorrow of the patriarch, he would be sure to drop his voice into the music of consolation, and would endeavour, whilst speaking words of apparently legal and mechanical preciseness, to utter them with the tone of the heart, as if in the very sorrow was hidden a gracious Gospel, and as if duty might, by some subtle power, be turned into the most precious of delight. All hortatory words may be spoken with too much voice, with too strong a tone, so as to throw them out of proportion in relation to the hearer, whose sorrow already fills his ears with muffled noises. Let us imagine Eliphaz—eldest of the counsellors, most gracious of the speakers—laying his hand, as it were, gently upon the smitten patriarch, and approaching his ear with all the reverence of affectionate confidence, and giving him these parting instructions. Then the exhortation becomes music. The preacher does not thunder his appeal, but utters it persuasively, so that the heart alone may hear it, and the soul be melted by the plea. May it not be so with us also? We do not need the strong exhortation, but we do need the consolatory appeal and stimulus. You may frighten a man by calling out very loudly when he is within one inch of a brink; the nearer the man is to the precipice, the more subdued, the less startling, should be your appeal: you might whisper to him as if nothing were the matter; you might rather lure his attention than loudly and roughly excite it; and then when you get firm hold of him bring him away to the headland as urgently and strongly as you can. May it not be that some hearts may be so far gone that one rude tone from the preacher would break up what little hope remains? Should we not rather sometimes sit down

quite closely to one another and say, softly, "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace"? think of what all thy life comes to, poor soul, and see if even now, just at the very last, the flickering lamp cannot be revived, and made strong and bright: come, let us pray. Never regard the Gospel as having come roughly, violently, but as always coming like the dawn, like the dew, like music from afar, which, having travelled from eternity, stops to accommodate itself to the limitations of time. Still the exhortation has the strength within it. Speak it as you may, it is the strongest exhortation that can be addressed to human attention. When the tone is softened it is not that the law has given up the pursuit of the soul, has ceased to press its infinite claims upon the trespasser. Do not mistake the persuasion of the Gospel for the weaknesses of the preacher, and do not regard the errors of the preacher as implying in any degree defect on the part of his message. Eliphaz tells Job what he must do; let us read his bill of directions. "Acquaint now thyself with Him." Here is a call to mental action. Job is invited to bethink himself. He is exhorted to put himself at the right point of view. Instead of dealing with social questions and pesonal details, the seer invites the smitten patriarch to betake himself to the sanctuary and to work out the whole solution in the fear and love of God. There are amongst ourselves questions that are supreme and questions that are inferior. Who would care for the inferior if he could solve the supreme, and fill himself with all the mystery of Deity? What are all our inventions, arts, sciences, and cleverest tricks, and boldest adventures into the region of darkness, compared with the possibility of knowing human thought—the power of removing the veil that separates man from man, and looking into the arcana of another soul? But this is kept back from us. We are permitted to dig foundations, to build towers and temples; we are permitted to span rivers with bridges, and bore our way through rocky hills; but we cannot tell what the least little child is thinking about. All other learning would be contemptible in comparison with an attainment so vast and useful. This is the explanation of men spending their days over crucibles, in hidden places, in darkened dungeons, seeking in the crucible for the particular Something that would dissolve everything that was hard, and reveal everything that was dark. This is the meaning of the quest in which men have been engaged for the Sangreal, the philosopher's stone—that marvellous and unnamable something which, if a man had, he would open every kingdom and be at home in every province of the universe. You cannot kill that mysterious ambition of the human heart. It will come up in some form. It is the secret of progress. All this leads to the uppermost thought, namely, that if a man could acquaint himself with God, live with God, would not that be the very highest attainment of all? If he could enter the tabernacles of the Most High, and survey the universe from the altar where burns the Shechinah, what would all other attainments and acquisitions amount to? Yet this is the thing to be aimed at—grow in grace; grow in all life; for it means, in its fruition, acquaintance with God, identification with God, absorption in God, living, moving, having the being in God; taking God's view of everything; made radiant with God's wisdom, and calm with God's peace. Assuming that to be a possibility, how all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory thereof, fade away into the dim distance! How grandly some of the old seers now and again touched the vital point; and how the ages have thrilled with their touch, knowing that at last they had left detail and cloud and mystification, and touched the very pulse of things. Here stands the great truth, the eternal verity: until we have acquainted ourselves with God, by means prescribed in God's own Book, our knowledge is ignorance, and our mental acquisitions are but so many proofs of our mental incapacity. Eliphaz therefore lifts up the whole discussion to a new level. He will not point to this wound or that, to the sore, boil, or blain, to the withering skin, to the patriarch's pitiful physical condition; he begins now to touch the great mystery of things—namely, that God is in all the cloud of affliction, in all the wilderness of poverty, and that to know His purpose is to live in His tranquillity. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *Peace through the knowledge of God*:—Here, if our received version is correct, Eliphaz hits upon one of the profoundest thoughts in religion, the significance and value of which each new step in the revelation of God to men has more and more disclosed. The principle is, that a more true and full knowledge of God is the cure for every phase of human unrest. Spiritual disquiet lies outside of God. He who does not know God as He is at all, lies open to every incursion of religious disquietude; whether through superstitious fear, or through conscience, or through doubt, or

through passion, or through discontent, or through any other of the numberless and sometimes nameless alleys by which disturbance is for ever assailing the souls of men. On the other hand, the more truly and the more fully anyone knows by acquaintance the personal God, the more is he rid of sources of inward dispeace. 1. Of what sort must our knowledge of God be? It is possible to know as a friend by personal intercourse, one whom we are by no means able fully to understand. A little child knows his father; but he does not comprehend, or embrace in his knowledge, the fulness of that father's capacities. It is not through the intellect alone, or best, that the Infinite God is knowable by any creature. It is through the personal affections, through conscience, and through the spiritual faculty of faith. There are three stages to be observed in a man's knowledge of God. (1) Certain true notions respecting the Divine Being and His character must be pre-supposed, before I can approach Him with that personal approach which is the basis of acquaintanceship. (2) Given a fairly correct notion of the almighty and righteous God, whose name is Love, the man must not suffer sin to hold him back from moral intercourse with God, else his knowledge will be only a knowledge about God, not a knowing of God. To worship, to love, and to obey, is the road to real acquaintance with Him. (3) Such a moral acquaintanceship with God ekes out even the imperfection of our intellectual notions regarding Him. Much must for ever remain that we cannot know. Intimacy with a good person breeds confidence, and confidence gives peace. Those who know God as a friend will put their trust in Him. 2. Show, by two or three instances, how God's growing revelation of Himself to man has been followed in experience by a corresponding increase of peace in their souls. Take, for illustration, two items from the Old Testament manifestation of Jehovah to the Hebrew people, and two from the better revelation in His Son, which, as Christians, we enjoy. (1) The fundamental truth, which it took nearly a thousand years to teach the chosen nation, is the unity of God. So entirely has this splendid truth taken possession of the modern world, Christian, Jewish, and Mohammedan—that we absolutely fail to conceive of the ancient heathen habit of thought on the subject. This doctrine of the unity of God brought a beginning of peace to the world's heart. (2) The unrest created by the heathen creed of many gods, with limited powers and over-lapping provinces, was immensely increased by the selfish partiality, venality, and passionateness generally ascribed to the Divine character. To the gods were imputed the passions of men, and of very bad men, too; so that anything was worship which could be supposed to influence a fickle, corrupt, or facile will. This wretched degradation of deity bred dispeace of soul. It is impossible to know the secret mind of one who is unfair, or open to unrighteous influence. I cannot count on his friendship. But Jehovah is just, impartial, consistent. What may be called God's absolute integrity, embracing His truth or faithfulness; His justice, or the equality of His administration and its coincidence with law; and His unchangeableness, as one inaccessible to unfair influence—this is the grand moral discovery of the Old Testament. To such a God, upright men do not appeal in vain. (3) Until God was pleased to make, through Christ, a further disclosure of Himself, we never could be perfectly at peace. Through all pre-Christian religions, and in the religion of every man still who has not acquainted himself with the Gospel of Christ, there ran, and there runs, some unquiet effort to solve the problem of atonement. The idea which rules them all, the only idea possible till God taught us better, is that man has to work on God through some means or other, so as to change repulsion or aversion into favour. This false and heathenish notion is still widespread among us. But it brings no peace. We can never be sure that our effort has succeeded. Expiation does not come by our successful efforts to work on Divine placability, or to deserve Divine grace, or to buy off or beg off Divine resentment. It is God's own act, dictated by His sole charity, wrought by His sole passion. (4) We are led still nearer to perfect peace by a more recent revelation, that of the Third Person. God is the Holy Ghost, who freely, gladly stoops to inform our warring and sinsick souls. With infinite patience He stays by us while we fight or sin. God, the Third Person, broods like a dove of peace over the tumultuous chaos of a passionate heart, glimmers like a star of hope in our blackest night. With Him let us acquaint ourselves. Then we shall have the full repose that follows conquest. (*J. Oswald Dykes, D.D.*) *The highest knowledge and the greatest good:*—Ignorance of God is the secret of all opposition to God. It is impossible for any man to know God and not to love Him. It is our duty, as Gospel ministers, to come with this Divine

message to those who are ignorant of His name. Do not misjudge His character any longer. Do not blaspheme the name that you would bless, if you did but understand the God that it represents. 1. AN EXPOSITION OF THE TEXT. There are two or three translations of this sentence: "Acquaint now thyself with Him," or "Acquiesce in Him"—surrender that will of yours. The first step to salvation is an absolute surrender of the will. Another rendering is, "Join yourself to God." The French translation has it: "Attach yourself to God." Fall in with His ways, and with His methods. This is particularly practical advice to us as Christian workers. But there is a special force in the Saxon word "acquaint," from which we get the word *ken*, to know. Get to know God—to understand Him. Know Him intellectually, for this is the pioneer of all other blessings. We can only become acquainted with God as He reveals Himself. Become acquainted with Him morally. Yield your hearts to Him. Know Him socially by walking with Him. Know God the Son, as well as God the Father. Your acquaintance with Him must begin at the Cross. And know God the Holy Spirit, as a Sanctifier, Comforter, Teacher, yea, as an abiding, tender Guide, and as a Power to help us in our Christian work. II. ENFORCE THIS EXHORTATION. The text speaks to us individually. And it must be acquaintance with Him—with Himself. III. THE PROMISE OF THE TEXT. The first good is, "Thou shalt be established"; the second, "Evil shall be removed from thy dwelling"; the third is, delight in God, and an uplifted face. (*W. Williams.*) *Acquaintance with God*:—I. AN ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD, THE BEST SUPPORT UNDER AFFLICTIONS. The exceeding corruption and folly of man is in nothing more manifest than in his averseness to entertain any friendship or familiarity with God. In all cases where the body is affected with pain or sickness, we are forward enough to look out for remedies. Yet notwithstanding that, we find and feel our souls disordered and restless, tossed and disquieted by various passions, and notwithstanding that we are assured from other men's experience, and from our own inward convictions, that the only way of regulating these disorders is to call off our minds from too close an attention to the things of sense, and to employ them often in a sweet intercourse with our Maker, the Author of our being, and Fountain of all our ease and happiness; yet we are strangely backward to lay hold of this safe, this only, method of cure; we go on still nourishing the distemper under which we groan, and choose rather to feel the pain than to apply the remedy. I. WHAT THIS SCRIPTURE PHRASE IMPLIES. Wherein does the duty consist? We are prone by nature to engage ourselves in too close and strict an acquaintance with the things of this world, which immediately and strongly strike our senses. To check and correct this ill-tendency, it is requisite that we should "acquaint ourselves with God," that we should frequently disengage our hearts from earthly pursuits, and fix them on Divine things. This is only general; it may be useful to mention some particulars wherein it chiefly consists. In order to begin and improve human friendships, five things are principally requisite—knowledge, access, a similitude of manners, an entire confidence and love; and by these also the Divine friendship, of which we are treating, must be cemented and upheld. II. THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO A PERFECT TRANQUILLITY AND REST OF MIND. "And be at peace." Honour, profit, and pleasure, are the three great idols to which the men of this world bow, and one or all of these are generally aimed at in every friendship they make; and yet, though nothing can be more honourable, profitable, or pleasing to us, than an acquaintance with God, we stand off from it, and will not be tempted even by these motives, though appearing to us with the utmost advantage, to embrace it. Can anything improve, and purify, and exalt our natures more than such a conversation as this, wherein our spirits, mounting on the wings of contemplation, faith, and love, ascend up to the first principle and cause of all things, see, admire, and taste His surpassing excellence, and feel the quickening power and influence of it? In what conversation can we spend our thoughts and time more profitably than in this? III. THE MOST PROPER SEASON FOR SUCH A RELIGIOUS EXERCISE OF OUR THOUGHTS IS WHEN ANY SORE TROUBLE OR CALAMITY OVERTAKES US. "Now," when the wise Disposer of all things hath thought fit to pour out afflictions upon thee. At such times our soul is most tender and susceptible of religious impressions, most apt to seek God, to delight in approaching Him, and conversing with Him. The kind and chief design of God, in all His severest dispensations, is to melt and soften our hearts to such a degree as He finds necessary in order to the good purposes of His grace. We are, by nature, indigent creatures, incapable of ourselves to content and satisfy

ourselves; and therefore are ever looking abroad for somewhat to supply our defects and complete our happiness. How can the pious sons and daughters of affliction better employ themselves than in looking up to Him that hath bruised them, and possessing their souls in patience? Let us, throughout the whole course of our lives, take care to make the thoughts of God so present, familiar, and comfortable to us here, that we may not be afraid of appearing face to face before Him hereafter. (*F. Atterbury, D.D.*) *The true source of peace of mind*:—Of all earthly comfort, the firmest basis and the principal constituent is peace of mind. Without this, neither power, nor riches, nor even life itself, can yield any substantial or lasting satisfaction. If our peace of mind be destroyed, all pleasure is destroyed with it. No sufficient remedy was discovered by the efforts of unassisted reason: we may therefore inquire what aid can be derived from Divine revelation. 1. To acquaint ourselves with God, in the sense in which our Scriptures teach, and require the acquaintance, we shall soon perceive to be no difficult task, if we engage in it with zeal and diligence, and take those Scriptures for our instructor and guide. Of the Supreme Being we certainly have not the faculties to comprehend the "Eternal power and Godhead." The misfortune is, we attach ourselves so entirely to the business and the pleasures of our present state, that we are unwilling to turn our thoughts to the greater and better objects of our care. Hence negligence produces many of the effects and mischiefs of ignorance. We must not only make God the subject of inquiry and speculation; we must seriously reflect on the relation in which we stand to this Creator and Ruler of the world, and what His providence is doing every day. In the Bible such laws are prescribed for our conduct, as, if duly observed, would render human life a constant scene of virtue, piety, and peace. More than half our sufferings are the effect of our own misconduct. From the Bible we learn that our present state is the time and place of trial for our faith and conduct. When this life has come to an end, then each will be adjudged to an eternal allotment of happiness or misery, proportioned to his vice or virtue, to his piety or his profaneness. Even this is not the whole of our information and advantages. We are offered, upon our repentance and amendment, the pardon of our sins of error and infirmity, through the merits and mediation of a Redeemer. 2. Of this acquaintance with our God, the declared intention, and the promised effect, are to be at peace—at peace in our own minds. The perplexities of life can only be satisfactorily explained, and the afflictions of life patiently endured, by acquainting ourselves with God, and obtaining this acquaintance by the assistance of his own revelation. It is universally allowed that the human mind is never fully satisfied with what human life can bestow upon us. In the midst even of riches, authority, and honours, some want is still felt, something new is still sought, something better is still desired. Even when we know that we have offended God by the transgression of His laws, when our conscience afflicts us with the sense of guilt and the apprehension of its punishment—under these unhappy circumstances, and most especially under these, to acquaint ourselves with God is the only expedient for us to be at peace. It is, indeed, in the hour of calamity, under the pressure of affliction, that this acquaintance with our God is most necessary, and will most avail us. It is when accident or sickness or poverty has deprived us of worldly comfort or of worldly hope, it is then our trust in Providence, and that only, will support our sinking spirits, speak peace to our minds, and teach us that patient submission which must be at once our duty and consolation. It was under such circumstances that Eliphaz gave to Job the advice of the text. (*W. Barrow, LL.D.*) *God is worthy of confidence*:—Man became alienated from God by the apostasy, and consequently miserable; and peace was to be found again only by reconciliation with Him. There are two great difficulties in the minds of men. The one is, they have no just views of the character and government of God; and the second is, if His true character is made known to them, they have no pleasure in it, no confidence in it. Both these difficulties must be removed before man can be reconciled to his Maker. No small part of the difficulty will be removed if we can show him that the character of God is such as to deserve his confidence. I. THE LIABILITY TO ERROR ON OUR PART IN JUDGING OF THE CHARACTER AND GOVERNMENT OF GOD. The great evil in this world is a want of confidence in God—a want of confidence producing the same disasters there which it does in a commercial community and in the relations of domestic life. The great thing needful to make this a happy world is to restore confidence in the Creator—confidence, the great restorer of happiness everywhere. Now,

man can never be reconciled to God unless this confidence shall be restored. In disputes between you and your neighbour, the great thing for you to do is to restore to his mind just confidence in yourself—to explain matters. This is what is to be done in religion. It is to convince men that God is worthy of confidence. Why should a man wish to cherish any hard thoughts of God without the shadow of reason? In our estimate of God, are we in no danger of being influenced by improper feelings? See four sources of danger on this point. 1. We are in danger of being governed in our views of God by mere feeling, rather than by sober judgment and calm investigation. 2. We are often in circumstances where we are in dangor of cherishing hard thoughts of God. They may make us feel that His government is severe and arbitrary. 3. We always regard ourselves as the aggrieved and injured party. We do not allow ourselves to suppose it possible that God should be right and we be wrong. 4. Back of all this is the fact that we are not pleased with the character of God when it is understood. By nature we have no pleasure in God. All the views of the Divine character which are formed under influences like these are likely to be wrong. II. THE REAL DIFFICULTIES OF THE CASE. Such as a man might find who would wish to see such evidence as would enable him to put unwavering confidence in God. There are many things which such a man cannot understand. Such as, that sin should have been allowed to come into the system formed by a holy God. That misery should come into the universe, and that death, with many forms of woe, has been commissioned to cut down one whole race. That the immortal mind should be allowed to jeopard its infinite welfare. That any should suffer for ever. That since God can save men, and will save a part, He has not purposed to save all. These, and kindred difficulties, meet the mind when we think on this great subject. They are real, not imaginary difficulties. III. THE EVIDENCES THAT HE IS WORTHY OF CONFIDENCE. They are, God Himself as revealed; and the government of God as—1. One of law. 2. Stable and firm. 3. The arrangements of this government tend to promote the welfare of His subjects. 4. They provide for the evils that arise from the violation of law. 5. In the plan of recovery none are excluded. 6. Those who know God's character best are found to repose most confidence in Him. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) *How good comes to man*:—These are strange words to be addressed to a man renowned for piety and integrity! Job and the Almighty were by no means strangers to each other. How comes it, then, that Eliphaz says to Job, "Acquaint now thyself with Him"? God appears to have given him over to Satan for the time being, because that evil spirit had alleged that the piety of Job was maintained only for selfish ends. Dr. Stanley Leathes says: "It may be presumed that Satan challenged the Almighty in the case of Job, and that the Almighty accepted his challange. It must, however, be carefully noted that the reader only, and not the several characters in this discussion, is supposed to be acquainted with this fact: for had it appeared openly at any point of the argument, there would at once have been an end to the discussion. The several speakers were shooting arrows in the dark; the reader only occupies a vantage-ground, in the light afforded by a knowledge of the secret." I. THE FACT OF ESTRANGEMENT. 1. The witness of conscience. That there is more unrest in the world than there is of peace and contentment, few would deny. What is the cause of the dissatisfaction? The popular replies are, "We work at such high pressure. There is so much competition in commercial life that daily toil becomes a daily struggle. There is too much worry, and too little recreation"; &c. &c. But are these replies satisfactory? As a matter of experience, does recreation make for contentment? Do our worries cease as our possessions increase? One thing we know, that humanity is adrift from its God. Unacquaintance with Him explains much of the joylessness and impotence in human life to-day. 2. The witness of the world. To the questions, "Why should there be so much mutual suspicion in men's hearts? Why so much strife?" The world itself bears witness that it has turned away from its Creator and its King. 3. The witness of God Himself. If God calls, there is a need for the call; and He, with lament and sorrow, says to the children of men, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" II. THE ESTRANGEMENT MAY END. "Acquaint now thyself with Him." But what things are necessary to a reconciliation that shall be both just and abiding? There are two ways in which sin may be dealt with. First, to condone it; secondly, to forgive it. The Almighty, being a God of Justice, cannot do the former. We see then that—(1) Reconciliation is based on Divine pardon. (2) Pardon is assured through

the atonement of Christ. III. THE ESTRANGEMENT MAY END NOW. "Acquaint now thyself with Him." But on certain conditions. And they are—1. Repentance. 2. The forsaking of sin. (*F. Burnett.*) *How good comes to man:*—1. THE RESULTS OF THIS ACQUAINTANCESHIP, OR THE EFFECTS OF RECONCILIATION,—"be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee." What is this good which is as the gateway of peace? Is it a gift or an experience? How does it come? Am I but the passive object of the Divine pity? Have I to stand and wait, or to strive and obtain? The enriching of my life with good is God's work; it is also my work. There is a human power in the Divine life. I must arise and return to the Father, ere He can receive me. II. THE POSSESSION OF GOOD IS SEEN IN CONTENTMENT OF MIND. Discontent is more common than contentment. Is there no such thing as a righteous and justifiable ambition? Our text says that by making the acquaintance of God, we become the possessors of good. Material good or spiritual good? Both. The God who graciously invites my friendship, and offers His, is interested in my whole being. With the Bible—the story of man and his God—before us, and the testimony of men around us, we may reply that man, in making the acquaintance of God, is not a loser, but a gainer. Acquaintance with God has opened unto him the gates of peace and prosperity. III. THE POSSESSION OF GOOD IS SEEN IN AN ABUNDANCE OF SPIRITUAL LIFE. This life, that is life indeed, includes—1. Sonship. 2. Joint-heirship with Christ. 3. Daily power for daily need. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 22. **And lay up His words in thine heart.**—*Meditation:*—What is meditation? It is thinking steadily, continuously, repeatedly, on a subject. Surely we can find time to think in this steady way, of your business, your family, your politics, your amusements even? Is it so impossible, then, to think thus of your God? How can you expect to grow in the knowledge of God if you never think of Him? It wants no learning, no singular vigour or acuteness, to think Christian thoughts; but it does want a Christian inclination: and if you have not that, do not blame the subject, but blame yourself. You may be sure that no man is better than he means to be. It is the seeker who finds. Idleness about one's soul often goes side by side with industry in our affairs, and the same person who is careful and troubled about many lesser things, will be seen neglecting the one thing needful. In the way of meditation, we set up defences of piety, taking home common rules, and building them into our secret resolves. God blesses these exercises of meditation, that they may lead us on in goodness, so that what we find true in thinking, we should make come true in acting. The rule runs, "In meditation strive for graces, not for gifts"; that is, do not aim at impressions and emotions only, but try to become a better person, and more Christian in life. Warnings—1. Every light throws a shadow; every virtue is haunted by a counterfeit. Meditation should never lead the fancy into false familiarity with heaven. The good man is, in a humble way, a friend of God, and a child of God, but a child still in minority. 2. Turn the matter of salvation, as the saying is, "with a daily and nightly hand." Thoughts come to us first as strangers; if received, they return as guests; if well entertained, they stay as members of the family, and end as part of our life and self. So bad thoughts grow into oppressors, and good ones into echoes and reflections of heaven. (*T. F. Crosse, D.C.L.*)

Vers. 23-30. **If thou return to the Almighty.**—*Spiritual Reformation:*—I. THE NATURE OF A TRUE SPIRITUAL REFORMATION IS HERE SET FORTH. 1. Reconciliation to God. Men in their unregenerate state are out of sympathy with their Maker. There is an estrangement of soul. 2. Practical regard to the Divine precepts. "Receive, I pray thee, the law from His mouth, and lay up His words in thine heart." Put thy being under the reign of heavenly laws. 3. Renunciation of all iniquity. "Thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles." There is no reformation where sin is cherished, or where it is allowed to linger. 4. Estimating the best things as worthless in comparison with God. "Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brook. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver." II. The ADVANTAGES of a true spiritual reformation, as here set forth. Eliphaz says that if Job would only act out his counsel he should enjoy signal advantages. "Thereby good shall come unto thee." What is the "good" he refers to? He specifies several things.—1. Restoration of lost blessings. "Thou shalt be built up." All thy losses shall be repaired, and the breaches in thy fortune healed. How much

Job had lost! 2. Delight in God. Job had been complaining of the Almighty; and his face was cast down in sadness. 3. Answer to prayer. Prayer is always answered where it leads to a submission to the Divine will; and true prayer always leads to this. 4. Realisation of purposes. Thou shalt form a plan or purpose, and it shall not be frustrated. 5. Power of usefulness. When men are cast down, thou shalt say, "Cheer up." (*Homilist.*) *Standing right with God*:—"Thou shalt have plenty of silver." But, first, the religion such a motive would produce would be worth little. Religion is not, in its nature, external. And the desire of the silver could only bring to an external conformity to the Divine commands. And, second, the motive cannot be urged. The statement of Eliphaz was grounded in a mistaken view of Divine Providence. Gold and silver are given and withheld as the sovereign Lord sees fit; and their distribution follows not the rules of holy obedience. I. THE HORTATORY PORTIONS OF THE TEXT. 1. The belief of Eliphaz was, that Job was a great sinner; and he therefore urges the necessity of returning to God. He was mistaken in his particular views of Job. 2. Returning to God, we shall "acquaint ourselves with Him, and be at peace." The expression implies knowledge and intimacy. 3. Thus standing right with God, a twofold duty devolves on us. (1) Due preparation for practice. "Receive the law from His mouth." Acknowledge Him as supreme Lord. (2) Practice itself. "Put away iniquity,"—have nothing to do with it personally: "from thy tabernacles,"—allow it not in the circle which thou governest. II. BLESSINGS SHALL COME FROM THIS BETTER THAN GOLD AND SILVER. 1. "Good shall come unto thee." God's favour, the light of His countenance,—all that makes the true eternal good of the soul. 2. "The Almighty shall be thy defence": against all real danger. A complete oversight and protection shall be granted thee. 3. "Thou shalt delight in the Almighty": in the thought of what He is in Himself, and to thee; and in His consciously possessed favour. 4. Thou "shalt lift up thy face unto God." Thou shalt not now be ashamed. Thou shalt have a holy, humble, but firm and joyful confidence. Sin makes the man afraid. 5. "Thou shalt make thy prayer unto Him, and He will hear thee." There is permission to enjoy this highest privilege. Pray,—be heard. 6. Thy path shall be truly happy. "The light shall shine on thy ways." Even providential obscurity shall make spiritual light more visible. (*G. Cubitt.*) *Returning to God by conviction and progress*:—In the return of a human soul to God there is decision arising from conviction,—a conviction forced upon the conscience, and will, and reason, and feelings of the heart and mind, from the unanswerable compulsory power of circumstances. With regard to religious conviction as a necessary step to our returning to the Almighty, we may steel our minds against it from many causes; one, say, from the formal custom of hearing sermons. For blended with this kind of hearing may be a self-comparison with the religious teacher himself, and the self-satisfaction which may arise from this comparison. There may stand in the way of this conviction the strong bias of early impressions, of local customs, and of deeply-rooted habits of thought and conception. We may look at religious duties through not only very limited mediums, and therefore partial, but through certain party-coloured ones, and so mistake the broad expansive and glorious character of God's truth by the disfiguring and narrowing influence of bigotry, intolerance, and prejudice. When a man, however, steadily and fixedly sets the eye of his faith upon the Almighty, as the all-absorbing and exclusive end of his religious convictions and decisions, he returns to Him in the spirit of the prodigal. He returns to God with a humble heart, a humble faith, and a humble prayer. As a result of the return of the soul to the Almighty, it shall "be built up." This points to a progress of religious life and experience. There is a power exerted on man's behalf above and independently of himself. It is "Thou shalt be built up," not "Thou shalt build thyself up." The spirit of man assuming the form of a building, in a moral and religious sense, becomes so after the manner of all other structures. It has its foundations in Christ; its gradual rise in the piling up, so to speak, of one virtue upon another, as stone upon stone. But as the earthly building is dependent upon the genius of the architect, so is the spiritual building dependent upon the wisdom and power of the Almighty. We may go where the castle or palace or temple once stood in noble splendour, in proud dignity, and in great strength, but now a crumbling ruin with walls gray with age, battered by the hand of time, or made spectral-like by fire, axe, and sword. But its remaining walls and columns and arches may be restored, strengthened, replenished, and built up again. So with the human soul, its original beauty and grandeur might be defaced by sin,

and all its former promises of endurance might be broken by disobedience; but by the grace and mercy of God it may be built up once more. (*W. D. Horwood.*)

Vers. 26-29. **For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty.**—*An outline of the devout life*:—These words can be raised to a higher level than that on which Eliphaz placed them, and regarded as describing the sweet and wonderful prerogatives of the devout life. So understood they may rebuke, and stimulate, and encourage us to make our lives conform to the ideal here. I. LIFE MAY BE FULL OF DELIGHT AND CONFIDENCE IN GOD. When we "delight" in a thing or person, we recognise that thing or person as fitting into a cleft of our hearts, and corresponding to some need of our natures. Without delight in God there is no real religion. The bulk of men are so sunken and embruted in animal tastes, and sensuous desires, and fleeting delights, that they have no care for the pure and calm joys which come to those who live near God. Above these stand the men whose religion is a matter of fear or of duty or of effort. And above them stand the men who serve because they trust God, but whose religion is seeking rather than finding, it is overshadowed by an unnatural and unwholesome gloom. He is the truly devout man who not only knows God to be great and holy, but feels Him to be sweet and sufficient; who not only fears, but loves. True religion is delighting in God. The next words, "Thou shalt lift up thy face unto God," express frank confidence of approach to Him. The head hangs down in the consciousness of demerit and sin. But it is possible for men to go into God's presence with a sense of peace, and to hold up their heads before their judge. There is no confidence possible for us unless we apprehend by faith, and thereon make our own the great work of Jesus Christ our Lord. II. SUCH A LIFE OF DELIGHTING IN GOD WILL BE BLESSED BY THE FRANKEST INTERCOURSE WITH HIM. Three stages of this blessed communion are possible. First a prayer, then the answer; and then the rendered thank-offering. And so, in swift alternation and reciprocity, is carried on the commerce between heaven and earth, between man and God. The desires rise to heaven, but heaven comes down to earth first. Prayer is not the initial stage, but the second, in the process. God first gives His promise, and the best prayer is the catching up of God's promise, and tossing it back again whence it came. III. SUCH A LIFE WILL NEITHER KNOW FAILURE NOR DARKNESS. To serve God and to fall into the line of His purpose, and to determine nothing, nor absolutely want anything until we are sure that it is His will,—that is the secret of never failing in what we undertake. IV. SUCH A LIFE WILL BE ALWAYS HOPEFUL, AND FINALLY CROWNED WITH DELIVERANCE. Even in so blessed a life as has been described, times will come when the path plunges downward into some valley of the shadow of death. But even then the traveller will bate no jot of hope. The devout life is largely independent of circumstances, and is upheld and calmed by quiet certainty, that the general trend of its path is upward, which enables it to trudge hopefully down an occasional dip in the road. And the end will vindicate such confidence. Continuous partial deliverances lead on to, and bring about, final full salvation. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Delight in the Almighty*:—I. First, here is A DESIRED POSITION TOWARDS GOD. Many men forget God: He is no object of delight to them. Great numbers of men go a stage further: they believe in God, they cannot doubt that there is a Most High God who judgeth the children of men; but their only thought towards Him is that of dread and dislike. I am grieved to add that this principle even tinctures the thoughts of true friends of God: for when they bow before God it is not only with the reverence of a loving child, but with the terror of a slave; they are afraid of Him who should be their exceeding joy. God is still to them exceeding terrible, so that they fear and quake. Even though they are His children, they are not able to lift up their faces unto their own Father. Let us meditate a while upon what is here meant by delighting in the Almighty. 1. The man who experiences this delight is glad that there is a God. We delight to see God in the shadow of every passing cloud, in the colouring of every opening flower, in the glitter of every dewdrop, in the twinkling of every star. 2. To go a step further, the delight of the believer in his God is a delight in God as He really is; for there are in the world many false gods of men's own manufacture. Remember that your own thoughts of what God is are far from being correct unless they are drawn from His own revelation. We would not tone down a single attribute, we would not disturb the equilibrium of the Divine perfections; but we delight in God in all those aspects of His character which are mentioned in His Holy Word. 3. Further,

he that delights in God delights not only in God as He is, but in all that God does, and this is a higher attainment than some have reached. "It is the Lord," said one of old, "let Him do what seemeth Him good." 4. Practically put, this delight in the Almighty shows itself in the Christian when nothing else remains to him. If he be stripped of everything, he cries, "The Lord is my portion." You will see this delight in God exhibiting itself in frequent meditations upon God. "Delight thyself in the Lord." This will give you pleasure in the midst of pain. This will show itself in your life, for it will be a pleasure to do anything to exalt the name of God. I call your attention to the special name by which Eliphaz describes the ever-blessed God: he says, "Delight thyself in the Almighty." Is it not singular that he should choose a term descriptive of omnipotence as the paramount cause of the believer's delight? God is love, and I can readily understand how one might delight himself in God under that aspect; but the believer is taught to delight himself in God as strong and mighty. What a mercy it is that there is a power that makes for righteousness! Surely, when you see omnipotence linked with righteousness and mercy, you will delight yourself in the Almighty. Think also of the Lord's almightiness in the matter of the keeping, preserving, defending, and perfecting of all His people. Now, let us turn with intense satisfaction to the other expression used by Eliphaz: "Thou shalt lift up thy face unto God." What does it mean? Does it not mean, first, joy in God? When a man hangs his head down he is unhappy. Does it not signify, also, that this man is reconciled to God, and clear before Him? How can he look up who is guilty? Does not our text indicate fearlessness? Fear covers her face, and would fain hide herself altogether, even though to accomplish concealment the rocks must fall upon her. May it not also signify expectation? "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." Strive after this sacred peace: delight in the Almighty, and lift up your faces unto God. II. WHEN CAN WE REALISE THIS? 1. First, a man can realise all this when he knows that he is reconciled to God. 2. Yet even this could not effect our delight in God unless there was something else; so there must be, in the next place, a renewed nature. Our old nature will never delight in God. 3. In addition to this, you will delight in God much more fully when the Spirit beareth witness with your spirit that you are born of God. The spirit of sonship is the spirit of delight in God. We shall delight ourselves in God, and lift up our face when we do as Eliphaz here tells us. 1. First, when we live in communion with Him. 2. Then, further, we must, if we are to know this delight, lay up God's words in our hearts (ver. 22). 3. There must be added to this delight in the Word a constant cleansing of the way. "If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles." There must be purification of life, or there cannot be fellowship with the Lord. 4. In addition to this, there must be a constant trust. "Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver" (ver. 25). He who does not trust God cannot delight in Him. You cannot lift up your face to Him while you think Him untrue. A childlike confidence is essential to a holy joy. 5. Let us abide in continual prayer (ver. 27). (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 29. **When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up; and He shall save the humble person.**—*The humble soul the peculiar favourite of heaven*:—I. SOME ACCOUNT OF LOWLINESS AND HUMILITY. Lowliness being a relative grace, we must consider it in a threefold view. 1. With respect to ourselves. It implies low and under-rating thoughts of ourselves. It has in it even a self-abhorrence; but a singleness of heart in the discharge of duty, without vain-glory, or pharisaical ostentation. 2. With respect unto others. This has in it a preferring of others above or before ourselves. A looking upon the gifts and graces of others without a grudge. And an affable, courteous carriage toward all. 3. With reference to God. It implies high and admiring thoughts of the majesty of God. When God discovers Himself, the man sinks into nothing in his own esteem. A holy fear and dread of God always on his spirit, especially in his immediate approaches unto the presence of God, in the duties of worship. An admiring of every expression of the Divine bounty and goodness toward men in general, and toward himself in particular. A giving God the glory of all that we are helped to do in His service. A silent resignation unto the will of God, and an acquiescence in the disposals of His providence, let dispensations be never so cross to the inclinations of flesh and blood. The very soul and essence of Gospel humiliation lies in

the soul's renouncing of itself, going out of itself, and going into and accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as its everlasting all. II. THE HUMBLE SOUL IS THE PECULIAR FAVOURITE OF HEAVEN. This is evident if we consider—1. That when the Son of God was here in our nature, He shewed a particular regard unto such. 2. God has such respect unto the humble soul because it is a fruit of His own Spirit inhabiting the soul. 3. This is a disposition that makes the soul like Christ, and the liker that a person be to Christ, God loves Him aye the better. III. SOME MARKS BY WHICH YOU MAY TRY WHETHER YOU BE AMONG THE HUMBLE AND LOWLY. 1. The lowly soul is one that is many times ashamed to look up to heaven under a sense of his own vileness and unworthiness. He is one that is many times put to wonder that God hath not destroyed him. 3. He is one that is most abased under the receipt of the greatest mercies and sweetest manifestations. 4. He is one that renounces the law as a covenant, and disclaims all pretensions to righteousness from that airth. 5. He is one that has high, raised, and admiring thoughts of Christ, and of His law-abiding righteousness. The humble soul is one that looks on sin as the greatest burden: that values himself of least, when others value him most; that is not puffed up with the falls of others: that is thankful for little, and content and desirous to know God's will, that he may do it. IV. SOME MOTIVES TO PRESS AND RECOMMEND THIS LOWLINESS AND HUMILITY OF SPIRIT. It assimilates the soul to Christ. It is the distinguishing character of a Christian. Consider how reasonable this lowliness and humility of soul is—whether we look to ourselves in particular or the evils of the land or day wherein we live. (*E. Erskine.*) *The ministry of fellow-helpfulness*:—Poverty, anxieties, pain, suffering, oppressions, errors, sins, sadnesses, we move among these day by day. Be we high born or lowly, live we in palace or hut, these experiences greet us, and make their appeal to us. What is to be our bearing in relation to all this? How are we to conduct ourselves amid such surroundings? There are two courses open to us—the selfish and the sympathetic. We may shut ourselves up in a spirit of selfish isolation and say, "Other people's affairs are nothing to me." We have the power so to choose and act. Of course we take the consequences such conduct involves. That we cannot escape. There is, however, the truer, manlier, Christlier course of brotherly sympathy, kindly feeling, sympathetic helpfulness. Going among men cast down by their surroundings and tendencies, their sins and their sorrows, we may say even to those lowest down, "There is lifting up for you." Such a bearing as this is in keeping with all the noblest instincts of our nature. A selfish, unsympathetic man is unnatural. He has got a twist. But we love the unselfish, the sympathetic, the helpful. This spirit and bearing religion ever enforces and promotes. It is a vital part of religion. A selfish Christian is a contradiction. The godly man should be an embodied Gospel of hope wherever he goes. The mission of the Lord Jesus lay along this line. He came to men as the great hope-bringer. He has made the world transcendently richer by the hope-inspirations that pervaded His teaching. Down through the ages, under the same inspiration, Christly-men have moved among their follows as hope-bringers. (*Ralph M. Spoor.*) *Delight in the Lord*:—These words describe the sacred pleasures of piety. I. THE SUBLIMITY OF ITS NATURE. The saints delight—1. In the saving knowledge of God. 2. In the present enjoyment of God. 3. In the future anticipation of God. II. THE DIVINITY OF ITS ORIGIN. "In the Almighty." 1. The Almighty is suited to our capacities. 2. The Almighty is adequate to our necessities. 3. The Almighty is durable as our existence. III. THE TENDENCY OF ITS INFLUENCE. "Thou shalt lift up thy face unto God." The effects which accompany spiritual joy, distinguish it from mere enthusiastic delusion, and demonstrate both the genuineness and efficacy of experimental religion in them that believe. 1. They exercise confidence in God. 2. They enjoy communion with God. 3. They maintain obedience to God. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*)

CHAPTER XXIII.

VERS. 1–6. **Oh, that I knew where I might find Him.**—*The cry for restored relations with God*:—The language of the text is exclusively that of men on the earth,—although it also characterises the state and feelings only of some of the guilty

children of men. Some among the human race have already sought God, and found Him a present help in the time of trouble. The desire expressed in the text is that of one under affliction. It is either the prayer of an awakened sinner, crying and longing for reconciliation, to God, under deep conviction, and full of sorrow and shame on account of it: or the cry of the backslider awakened anew to his danger and guilt, under God's chastisements, remembering the sweet enjoyment of brighter days, and ardently longing for its return. I. IT IMPLIES A PAINFUL SENSE OF DISTANCE FROM GOD. Men of no religion are far off from God, but this gives them no concern. The presence of Christ constitutes the believer's joy, and he mourns nothing so much as the loss of God's favour. Sad and comfortless as the state of distance from God must be to the believer, still he is painfully conscious of his own state, and crying like Job, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" The occasions that most generally give birth to the complaint and cry in the text are such as these. 1. Bodily suffering, or the pressure of severe and long-continued outward calamities, may contribute to enfeeble the mind, and lead the soul to conclude that it is forsaken by its God. The dispensations of Divine providence appear so complex and difficult, that faith is unable to explore them, or hope to rise above them. The mind magnifies its distresses, and dwells on its own griefs, to the exclusion of those grounds of consolation and causes of thankfulness afforded in the many mercies that tend to alleviate their bitterness. In reality God is not more distant from the soul, though He appears to be so. 2. Another and more serious occasion of distance and desertion is sin cherished, long indulged, unrepented of, and unpardoned. This alienates the soul from God. Sin is just the wandering of the soul in its thoughts, desires, and affections from God, and God graciously makes sin itself the instrument in correcting the backslider. The righteous desert of the soul's departure from God, is God's desertion of the soul. God is really ever near to man. "He is not far from any one of us." But sin indulged, whether open, secret, or presumptuous, grieves the Holy Spirit, expels Him from the temple He loved, and cheered by His presence. Let us thank God that distance is not utter desertion. When the misery of separation and distance from God is felt, the dawn of restoration and reconciliation begins. II. AS THE LANGUAGE OF EARNEST DESIRE. When "brought to himself" the backslider rests not satisfied with fruitless complaints, but the desire of his soul is towards his God. It is one thing to be conscious of distance from God, and quite another thing to be anxious to be brought near to Him by the blood of Christ. Conviction of guilt and misery is not conversion. What avails it, to know our separation from God, unless we are brought to this desire and anxiety, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" III. AS THE LANGUAGE OF HOLY FREEDOM. The text is a way of appeal by Job to God concerning his integrity. Though he had much to say in favour of his integrity before men, he did not rest on anything in himself as the ground of his justification before God. His language expresses a resolution to avail himself of the privilege of approaching the Most High with holy freedom and humble confidence, to present his petition. IV. AS THE LANGUAGE OF HOPE. Job could expect little from his earthly friends. All his hopes flowed from another—an Almighty Friend. Those who wait on God, and hope in His Word, will surely not be disappointed. Then never give way to a rebellious spirit. Give not way to languor in your affections, coldness in your desires, indifference as to the Lord's presence or absence, or to feebleness of faith. Let the desires of your soul be, as David's, a "panting after God." (*Charles C. Stewart.*) *The great problem of life*:—This cry of Job is represented to us in this passage as a cry for justice. He has been tortured by the strange mystery of God's providence; he has had it brought before himself in his own painful experience, and from that has been led to look out on the world, where he sees the same mystery enlarged and intensified. He sees wrong unredressed, evil unpunished, innocence crushed under the iron heel of oppression. He does not see clear evidences of God's moral government of the world, and he comes back ever to the personal problem with which he is faced, that he, though he is sure of his own innocence, is made to suffer, and he feels as if God had been unjust to him. He wants it explained; he would like to argue the case, and set forth his plea; he longs to be brought before God's judgment-seat and plead before Him, and give vent to all the bitter thoughts in his mind. "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat! I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments." He feels God's very presence about him on every side, ever present, but ever eluding him; everywhere near, but everywhere avoiding him. "Behold, I go forward, but He is

not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him. On the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him; He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him." It is not his own personal pain that makes the problem, except in so far as that has brought him before the deeper problem of God's providence which he now confronts. Everything would be clear and plain if he could but come into close relations with God, and that is just what meanwhile he cannot attain. "Oh, that I know where I might find Him!" I. In perhaps a wider sense than its original application in the passage of our text, these words of Job are as THE VERY SIGH OF THE HUMAN HEART, ASKING THE DEEPEST QUESTION OF LIFE. Men have always been conscious of God, as Job was, sure that He was near, and sure also, like Job, that in Him would be the solution of every difficulty and the explanation of every mystery. The race has been haunted by God. St. Paul's words to the Athenians on Mars Hill are a true reading of history, and a true reading of human nature; that all men are so constituted by essential nature that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us. It is the deepest philosophy of human history. Even when men have no definite knowledge of God they are forced by the very needs of their nature, driven by inner necessity, to reach out after God. Though, like Job, when they go forward He is not there, and backward they cannot perceive Him. On the left hand and on the right hand they cannot see Him, yet they are doomed to seek Him, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him. Man is a religious being, it is in his blood; he feels himself related to a power above him, and knows himself a spirit longing for fellowship with the Divine. Thus religion is universal, found at all stages of human history and all ages; all the varied forms of religion, all its institutions, all its sorts of worship, are witnesses to this conscious need which the race has for God. Job may assent to Zophar the Naamathite's proposition that finite man cannot completely comprehend the infinite. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?" But this assertion does not disprove the fact of which he is certain, that he has had fellowship with God, and has had religious experiences of which he cannot doubt. All forms of faith are witnesses to man's insatiable thirst for God, and many forms of unbelief and denial are only more pathetic witnesses still of the same fact. Many a denial of the Divine is just the bitter faith that He is a God that hideth Himself. When men come to consciousness of self they come also to consciousness of the unseen, a sense of relation to the power above them. The great problem of life is to find God; not to find happiness, not even by being satiated with that can the void be filled; but to find God; for being such as we are, with needs, longings, aspirations, we are beaten with unsatisfied desire, struck with restless fever, till we find rest in God. The true explanation is the biblical one, that man is made in the image of God, that in spirit he is akin to the eternal Spirit, there is no great gulf fixed between God and man which cannot be bridged over. Man was created in the likeness of God, but was born a child of God. Fellowship is possible, therefore, since there is no inherent incapacity; there is something in man which corresponds to qualities in God. The conclusion, which is the instinctive faith of man, is that spirit with spirit can meet. God entered into a relation of love and fatherhood with man, man entered into a relationship of love and sonship with God. Certain it is that man can never give up the hope and the desire, and must be orphaned and desolate until he so does find God. II. If it be true, as it is true, that man has ever sought God, IT IS A DEEPER FACT STILL THAT GOD HAS EVER SOUGHT MAN. The deep of man's desire has been answered by the deep of God's mercy. For every reaching forth of man there has been the stooping down of God. History is more than the story of the human soul seeking God; in a truer and more profound sense still is it the record of God seeking the soul. The very fact that men have asked with some measure of belief, though struck almost with doubt at the wonder of it, "Will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?" is because God has dwelt with men, has entered into terms of communion. The history of man's attainment is the history of God's self-revelation. It is solely because God has been seeking man that man has stretched out groping hands if haply he might feel after Him and find Him. Faith has survived just because it justifies itself and because it embodies itself in experience. Religious history is not only the dim and blundering reaching out of man's intelligence towards the mystery of the unknown, it is rather the history of God approaching man, revealing His will to man, declaring Himself, offering relations of trust and

fellowship. If Christ has given expression to the character of God, if He has revealed the Father, has He not consciously, conclusively, proved to us that the Divine attitude is that of seeking men, striving to establish permanent relations of devotion and love? He has also given us the assurance that to respond to God's love is to know Him, the assurance that to seek Him is to find Him, so that no longer need we ask in half despair, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" Prayer, trust, worship, self-surrender, never fail of Divine response, bringing peace and heart's ease. When to the knowledge that God is, and is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, there is added the further knowledge that God is love, we receive a guarantee—do we not?—that not in vain is our desire after Him, a guarantee that to seek Him is to find Him. Ah, the tragedy is not that men who seek should have failed to find God, but that men should not seek, that men should be content to pass through life without desiring much, or much striving, to pierce the veil of mystery. It is man's nature to seek God, we have said, but this primitive intuition can be overborne by the weight of material interest, by the mass of secondary concerns, by the lust of flesh and the lust of eye and pride of life. A thousandfold better than this deadness of soul is it to be still unsatisfied, still turning the eyes to the light for the blissful vision; to be still in want, crying to the silent skies, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" But even that need not be our condition. If we seek God, as we surely can, as we surely do, in the face of Jesus Christ, the true picture is not man lost in the dark, not man seeking God his home with palsied steps and groping hands. The true picture is the seeking God, come in Christ to seek and save the lost. (*H. Black, M.A.*) *Man's cry for fellowship with God*:—The provision to satisfy this longing of the soul must involve—I. A PERSONAL MANIFESTATION OF GOD TO THE SOUL. It is not for some thing, but for some person that the soul cries. Pantheism may gratify the instinct of the speculative, or the sentiment of the poetic, but it meets not this profoundest craving of our nature. II. A BENEVOLENT MANIFESTATION OF GOD TO THE SOUL. For an unemotional God the soul has no affinity; for a malevolent one it has a dread. It craves for one that is kind and loving. Its cry is for the Father; nothing else will do. III. A PROPITIABLE MANIFESTATION OF GOD TO THE SOUL. A sense of sin presses heavily on the race. So mere benevolence will not do. God may be benevolent and yet not propitiable. Does then our Bible meet the greatest necessity of human nature? Does it give a personal, benevolent, and propitiable God? (*Homilist.*) *Job looking round for God*:—Job looks round for God, as a man might look round for an old acquaintance, an old but long-gone friend. Memory has a great ministry to discharge in life; old times come back, and whisper to us, correct us or bless us, as the case may be. After listening to all new doctors the heart says, "Where is your old friend? where the quarter whence light first dawned? recall yourself; think out the whole case." So Job would seem now to say, Oh that I knew where I might find Him! I would go round the earth to discover Him; I would fly through all the stars if I could have but one brief interview with Him; I would count no labour hard if I might see Him as I once did. We are not always benefited by a literally correct experience, a literally correct interpretation, even. Sometimes God has used other means for our illumination and release, and upbuilding in holy mysteries. So Job might have strange ideas of God, and yet those ideas might do him good. It is not our place to laugh even at idolatry. There is no easier method of provoking an unchristian laugh, or evoking an unchristian plaudit, than by railing against the gods of the heathen. Job's ideas of God were not ours, but they were his; and to be a man's very own religion is the beginning of the right life. Only let a man with his heart-hand seize some truth, hold on by some conviction, and support the same by an obedient spirit, a beneficent life, a most charitable temper, a high and prayerful desire to know all God's will, and how grey and dim soever the dawn, the noontide shall be without a cloud, and the afternoon shall be one long quiet glory. Hold on by what you do know, and do not be laughed out of initial and incipient convictions by men who are so wise that they have become fools. Job says, Now I bethink me, God is considerate and forbearing. "Will He plead against me with His great power? No; but He would put strength in me" (ver. 6). It is something to know so much. Job says, Bad as I am, I might be worse; after all I am alive; poor, desolated, impoverished, dispossessed of nearly everything I could once handle and claim as my own, yet still I live, and life is greater than anything life can ever have. So I am not engaged in a battle against Omnipotence; were I to fight Almightiness, why I should be

crushed in one moment. The very fact that I am spared shows that although it may be God who is against me, He is not rude in His almightiness, He is not thundering upon me with His great strength; He has atmosphered Himself, and is looking in upon me by a gracious accommodation of Himself to my littleness. Let this stand as a great and gracious lesson in human training, that however great the affliction it is evident that God does not plead against us with His whole strength; if He did so, He who touches the mountains and they smoke has but to lay one finger upon us—nay, the shadow of a finger—and we should wither away. So, then, I will bless God; I will begin to reckon thus, that after all that has gone the most has been left me; I can still inquire for God, I can still even dumbly pray; I can grope, though I cannot see; I can put out my hands in the great darkness, and feel something; I am not utterly cast away. Despisest thou the riches of His goodness? Shall not the riches of His goodness lead thee to repentance? Hast thou forgotten all the instances of forbearance? Is not His very stroke of affliction dealt reluctantly? Does He not let the lifted thunder drop? Here is a side of the Divine manifestation which may be considered by the simplest minds; here is a process of spiritual reckoning which the very youngest understandings may conduct. Say to yourself, Yes, there is a good deal left; the sun still warms the earth, the earth is still willing to bring forth fruit, the air is full of life; I know there are a dozen graves dug all round me, but see how the flowers grow upon them every one; did some angel plant them? Whence came they? Life is greater than death. The life that was in Christ abolished death, covered it with ineffable contempt, and utterly set it aside, and its place is taken up by life and immortality, on which are shining for ever the whole glory of heaven. Job will yet recover. He will certainly pray; perhaps he will sing; who can tell? He begins well; he says he is not fighting Omnipotence, Omnipotence is not fighting him, and the very fact of forbearance involves the fact of mercy. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *How to find God*:—There are many senses in which we may speak of "finding God"; and in one or other of these senses it may be we have all of us yet need to find Him. 1. Some there are who will confess at once that they are at times—not always, not often perhaps, but sometimes—troubled with speculative doubts about God's existence. So many thoughtful, earnest men around them seem to regard it as an open question whether the problems of nature may not be solved on some other hypothesis. 2. Others dislike controversy, and would rather not enter upon the question whether they have found God. These are Christians, and the first article of their creed is, "I believe in God." 3. Some are ready timidly to confess that again and again they have found their faith in God's presence fail them, when they have most needed it. 4. A happier group, by a well-ordered life of devotion, and daily attendance on the ordinances of the Church, are keeping themselves near to God. And yet even these may have a misgiving that they are growing too dependent on these outward helps for the sustaining of their faith. Job's words may well awaken an echo in all our hearts. "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" There is comfort in the fact that holy men of old felt this same desire to find God in some deeper sense than they had yet attained to. If they felt it, we need not be unduly distressed if we feel it also. How then are we to seek to find God? Intellectually or otherwise? Not to mere intellect, but to a higher faculty, the moral and spiritual faculty. When we speak of knowing a thing intellectually, we mean that we know it by demonstration of sense or reason. When we speak of knowing a thing morally or spiritually, we mean that we either know it intuitively or take it on trust. We do not mean that the evidence in this latter case is less certain than in the former; it may be far more certain. Scepticism in religion is simply that failure of faith which is sure to result from an endeavour to grasp religious truths by a faculty that was never intended to grasp them. But how am I to know what is a Divine revelation, and what is not? He who is in direct correspondence with God, holding direct intercourse with God, will not need any further evidence of God's existence. If any here would find God, let him first go to the four Gospels, and try to see clearly there what Christ promises to do for him. Then let him take this promise on trust, as others have done, and act upon it. And if he perseveres, he will sooner or later most surely find God. (*Canon J. P. Norris, B.D.*) *The universal cry*:—When Job uttered this cry he was in great distress. That God is just is a fact; that men suffer is also a fact; and both these facts are found side by side in the same universe governed by one presiding will. How to reconcile the two, how to explain human suffering under the government of a righteous

Ruler, is the great problem of the Book of Job. It is a question which has occupied the thoughts of the thinking in every age. The form in which it presents itself here is this,—Is God righteous in afflicting an innocent man? The friends say there are just two ways of it. Either you are guilty or God is unjust. It is not so much the character of Job that is at stake as the character of God Himself; the Almighty Himself stands at the bar of human reason. The patriarch felt assured that there was a righteous God who would not afflict unjustly, and he cries, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" Obviously he was not ignorant of the Divine Being, not ignorant of His existence, but ignorant how He was to be approached. I. THE CRY OF THE HUMAN SOUL AFTER GOD. Notice the object of the cry. It is for God. It goes straight to the mark, right over all lower objects and minor aims. He felt he had come to a crisis in his life, when none but God could avail. Give me God, and I have enough. When Job uttered this cry he unconsciously struck the keynote of universal desire. It is the cry of the human race after God. It is the instinctive cry of the human soul. Nature told men that there was a God, but it could not lead them to His seat. The sages went to philosophy for an answer, but philosophy said, "It is not for me." In view of this fruitless search, a question might be started, a question easier to ask than to answer,—Why did God keep Himself and His plans hidden from mankind so long? This is one of the secret things that belong to God. We cannot tell, and we need not speculate. II. THE GOSPEL ANSWER TO THE TEXT. Christ in human form satisfies the longing of the human spirit. He is Immanuel,—God with us. You will find the Father in the Son, you will find God in Christ. This cry may come from a soul who has never known God at all, or it may come from one who has lost the sense of His favour and longs for restoration. In either case the cry can be answered only in Christ. Have you found God? If you will take Christ as your guide, He will lead you up to God. (*David Merson, B.D.*) *The soul's inquiry after a personal God*:—It is characteristic of man to ask questions. Question asking proceeds from personal need, curiosity, or love of knowledge, either for its own sake or its relative usefulness. We feel that we are dependent upon others for some direction or solution of difficulties; hence we ask for direction or instruction, because the limited character of our nature, and our dependence upon one another demand it. There are questions man asks himself, in his secret communion and examination with and of himself; there are some he asks of the universe; but the greatest and gravest are those he asks direct of God in sighs and supplications both by night and day. The sentence of the text is a question which the soul, in its search after God, continually asks; which is one of the greatest questions of life. I. THE NEED OF THE SOUL OF A PERSONAL GOD. The human soul ever cries for God. It never ceases in its cry, and is weary in its search and effort in seeking the absolute reality and good of life. The soul needs an object to commune with, and this it finds in a Divine personality, and nowhere else. The soul asks, Where is the living One? The soul needs security, and that is not to be found according to the language of conviction but in a personal God. The soul seeks unity, hence it seeks a personal God. II. THE SOUL IN SEARCH AFTER A PERSONAL GOD. So near is the relation between conviction of the need of God, and the search after Him, that in the degree one is felt, the other is done. The soul is not confined to one place, or one mode of means in the search. III. THE PERPLEXITY OF THE SOUL IN ITS SEARCH FOR THE PERSONAL GOD. The perplexity arises partly from the mystery of the object of search. IV. THE SECRET CONFIDENCE OF THE SOUL IN THE PERSONAL GOD WHOM IT SEEKS. There is a general confidence in God's mercy and in His all-sufficiency. (*T. Hughes.*) *Craving for God*:—These words are the utterance of a yearning and dissatisfied soul. The words were put into the mouth of Job, the well-known sufferer, whose patience under accumulated calamities is proverbial. Perhaps Job was not a real individual, but the hero of a majestic poem, through which the writer expresses his thoughts on the world-old problem that suffering is permitted by a good God to afflict even the righteous. Nevertheless, the writer may have had some special sufferer in his eye. No man without experience could have drawn these sublime discussions from his own fancy. They reflect too truly the sorrows and perplexities of human hearts in this life of trial. This man cries out, almost in despair, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" Find whom? God, the Almighty and Eternal, the Maker and Ruler of all. What a longing! What a search! In the mere fact of that search the downcast soul proclaims its lofty nature. And whoever is prompted by his needs and sorrows to cherish this

desire, is raised and bettered thereby. I. THE SEARCH FOR GOD. Among the acts possible to man only, is that he alone can search for God. Strange are the contrasts which human nature exhibits. Language cannot describe the elevation to which man is capable of rising—the lofty self-devotion, the quest for truth, above all, the earnest search for God. Of all the many things men seek, surely this is the noblest, this search for God. II. THE SEARCH FOR GOD UNAVAILING. This is an exclamation of despair about finding God. It seems to be Job's chief trouble that he cannot penetrate the clouds and darkness which surround his Maker. III. THE SEARCH FOR GOD REWARDED. The deep, unquenchable craving of frail, suffering, sinful men to find their Maker, and to find Him their friend, is met in Jesus Christ. (*T. M. Herbert, M.A.*) *Oh that I knew where I might find Him!*—As these words are often the language of a penitent heart seeking the Saviour, Comforter, and Sanctifier, inquire—I. WHO ARE THE CHARACTERS THAT EMPLOY THIS LANGUAGE? 1. The sinner under conviction. 2. Believers in distress. 3. Penitent backsliders. II. POINT OUT WHERE THE LORD MAY BE FOUND. 1. In His works, as a God of power. 2. In providence, as a God of wisdom and goodness. 3. In the human breast, as a God of purity and justice. 4. In the ordinances of religion, as a God of grace. It is chiefly on the throne of mercy that He is graciously found. III. FROM WHAT SOURCES YOU DRAW ARGUMENTS. 1. From His power. 2. His goodness. 3. His mercy. 4. His truth. 5. His impartiality. 6. His justice. The text is the language of sincere regret; restless desire; guilty fear; anxious inquiry; willing submission. (*J. Summerfield, A.M.*) *Man desiring God*:—God comes only into the heart that wants Him. Do I really, with my whole heart, desire to find God, and to give myself wholly into His hands? Do not mistake, if you please. This is the starting-point. If you be wrong at this point my lesson will be taught entirely in vain. Everything depends upon the tone and purpose of the heart. If there is one here, really and truly, with all the desire of the soul, longing to find God, there is no reason why He should not be found, by such a seeker, ere the conclusion of the present service. How is it with our hearts? Do they go out but partially after God? Then they will see little or nothing of Him. Do they go out with all the stress of their affection, all the passion of their love,—do they make this their one object and all-consuming purpose? Then God will be found of them; and man and his Maker shall see one another, as it were, face to face, and new life shall begin in the human soul. Let me say, truly and distinctly, that it is possible to desire God under the impulse of merely selfish fear, and that such desire after God seldom ends in any good. It is true that fear is an element in every useful ministry. We would not, for one moment, undervalue the importance of fear in certain conditions of the human mind. At the same time, it is distinctly taught in the Holy Book that men may, in certain times, under the influence of fear, seek God, and God will turn His back upon them, will shut His ears when they cry, and will not listen to the voice of their appeal. Nothing can be more distinctly revealed than this awful doctrine,—that God comes to men within certain seasons and opportunities, that He lays down given conditions of approach, that He even fixes times and periods, and that the day will come when He will say, "I will send a famine upon the earth. Not a famine of bread, or a thirst of water, but of hearing the Word of the Lord." When men are in great physical pain, when cholera is in the air, when smallpox is killing its thousands week by week, when wheat fields are turned into graveyards, when God's judgments are abroad in the earth, there be many who turn their ashen faces to the heavens! What if God will not hear their cowardly prayer? When God lifts His sword, there be many that say, "We would flee from this judgment." And when He comes in the last, grand, terrible development of His personality, many will cry unto the rocks, and unto the hills to hide them from His face; but the rocks and the hills will hear them not, for they will be deaf at the bidding of God! I am obliged, therefore, you see, as a Christian teacher, to make this dark side of the question very plain indeed; because there are persons who imagine that they may put off these greatest considerations of life until times of sickness, and times of withdrawment from business, and times of plague, and seasons that seem to appeal more pathetically than others to their religious nature. God has distinctly said, "Because I called, and they refused; I stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; I will mock at their calamity, I will laugh at their afflictions, I will mock when their fear cometh—when their fear cometh as desolation, and judgment cometh upon them as a whirlwind! Then they will cry unto Me, but I will not hear!" Now, lest any man should be under the impression that he can

call upon God at any time and under any circumstances, I wish to say, loudly, with a trumpet blast, There is a black mark at a certain part of your life; up to that you may seek God and find Him,—beyond it you may cry, and hear nothing but the echo of your own voice! How then does it stand with us in this matter of desire? Is our desire after God living, loving, intense, complete? Why, that desire itself is prayer; and the very experience of that longing brings heaven into the soul! Let me ask you again, Do you really desire to find God, to know Him, and to love Him? That desire is the beginning of the new birth; that longing is the pledge that your prayers shall be accomplished in the largest, greatest blessing that the living God can bestow upon you. Still it may be important to go a little further into this, and examine what our object is in truly desiring to find God. It may be possible that even here our motive may be mixed; and if there is the least alloy in our motive, that alloy will tell against us. The desire must be pure. There must be no admixture of vanity or self-sufficiency; it must be a desire of true, simple, undivided love. Now, how is it with the desire which we at this moment may be presumed to experience? Let me ask this question, What is your object in desiring to find God? Is it to gratify intellectual vanity? That is possible. It is quite conceivable that a man of a certain type and cast of mind shall very zealously pursue theological questions without being truly, profoundly religious. It is one thing to have an interest in scientific theology, and another thing really and lovingly to desire God for religious purposes. Is it not perfectly conceivable that a man shall take delight in dissecting the human frame, that he may find out its anatomy and understand its construction; and yet do so without any intention ever to heal the sick, or feed the hungry, or clothe the naked? Some men seem to be born with a desire to anatomise; they like to dissect, to find out the secret of the human frame, to understand its construction and the interdependence of its several parts. So far we rejoice in their perseverance and their discoveries. But it is perfectly possible for such men to care for anatomy without caring for philanthropy; to care about anatomy, from a scientific point of view, without any ulterior desire to benefit any living creature. So it is perfectly conceivable that man shall make the study of God a kind of intellectual hobby, without his heart being stirred by deep religious concern to know God as the Father, Saviour, Sanctifier, Sovereign of the human race. I, therefore, do not beg you to excuse me in the slightest degree in putting this question so penetratingly. It is a vital question. Do you seek to know more of God simply as a scientific theological inquirer? If so, you are off the line of my observations, and the Gospel I have to preach will hardly reach you in your remote position. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *Job's thoughts concerning an absent God*:—Whether there ever was such a being as a speculative atheist, it may not be easy to determine; but there are two classes of atheists which are very easily found. There are some who are atheists by disposition. There are also practical atheists. I. JOB'S CONDITION. "Even to-day is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning." In some this murmuring and repining is a natural infirmity; they seem to be constitutionally morbid and querulous. In others this is a moral infirmity, arising from pride and unbelief and discontent, against which it becomes us always carefully to guard. II. JOB'S DESIRE. "Oh that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat!" He does not express the name of God. Here we see an addition to his distress; he was now in a state of desertion. God can never be absent from His people, as to His essential presence, or even as to His spiritual presence. But He may be absent as to what our divines call His sensible presence, or the manifestation of His favour and of the designs of His dealings with us. This greatly enhances any external affliction. For the presence of God, which is always necessary, is never so sweet as it is in the day of trouble. It is a sad thing to be without the presence of God; but it is far worse to be senseless of our need of it. The desire after God arises from three causes. 1. The new nature. Persons will desire according to their conviction and their disposition. 2. Experience. When they first sought after God, they felt their need of Him. 3. A consciousness of their entire dependence upon Him. They feel that all their sufficiency is of God. Observe, in the case of Job, the earnestness of his desire. III. HIS RESOLUTION. 1. He says, "I would order my cause before Him." Which shows that the Divine presence would not overpower him, so as not to leave sense, reason, and speech. 2. He says, "I would fill my mouth with arguments." Not that these are necessary to excite and move a Being who is love itself; but these are proper to affect and encourage us. 3. He says, "I

would know the words which He would answer me, and understand what He would say unto me." In general, a Christian wishes to know the Divine pleasure concerning him. You will attach little importance to prayer, if you are regardless of God's answer to it. IV. HIS CONFIDENCE AND EXPECTATION. The power of God is great. Notice the blessedness of having this power employed for us. "He will put strength in me." How dreadful must it be for God to "plead against a man by His great power." (*William Jay.*) *Job's appeal to God*:—Taking the Book of Job as a whole, it may be called a dramatic epic poem of remarkable merit, in which the author graphically discusses the general distribution of good and evil in the world, inquiring whether or not there is a righteous distribution of this good and evil here on earth, and whether or not the dealings of God with men are according to character. Job was saved from consenting to the conclusions of the three friends, through the consciousness of personal integrity and the confidence of his heart in a loving God. Job's struggle was desperate. Those long-continued days and weeks were a trial of faith beyond our estimate. The question was not whether Job would bear his multiplied afflictions with a stoical heroism, but whether he would still turn to God, would rest in the calm confidence of his heart that God would be his justification and vindication. We now look at this storm-tossed man in his extremity, and discover him—I. ANXIOUS TO FIND HOW HE CAN GET HIS CAUSE BEFORE GOD FOR ARBITRATION. Job illustrates what ought to be true of every man. We should be anxious to know what God thinks of us, rather than what men think of us. We should remember that One is to be our Judge who knows our heart, before whom, in the day of final assize, we are to appear for inspection, and whose recognition of our integrity will insure blessedness for us in the great hereafter. II. WE DISCOVER JOB CALMLY CONFIDENT THAT GOD'S DECISION OF HIS CAUSE WILL BE JUST. He does not imagine for a moment that God will make mistakes concerning him, or that Omnipotence will take advantage of his weakness. III. IN GREAT PERPLEXITY, BECAUSE HE SEEMS TO BE EXCLUDED FROM THE TRIAL WHICH HE SEEKS. The lament of this man here is painful and mysterious. Job's hope had been that God would appear somewhere. But all is night and silence. This is human experience caused by human infirmities. Life is a season of discipline, a season of education and evolution. IV. WE FIND JOB CALM IN THE ASSURED WATCHFULNESS OF GOD OVER HIM, AND IN HIS CONFIDENCE OF ULTIMATE VINDICATION. Here is supreme faith in the all-knowing and finally delivering God. Job's faith is the world's need. (*Justin E. Twitchell.*) *Where God is found*:—This Book of Job represents a discussion upon God's providential relations to the world, and shows how the subject perplexed and baffled the minds of men in those early days in which it was written. God, in the book, does not give the required explanations; but, pointing out the marks of His power, wisdom, and goodness, in His natural works, leaves His hearers to the exercise of a pure and simple trust. With reference to the loss of God's presence, over which men mourn in our day—this longing to find God and to come unto His mercy-seat, which is so widespread and so unsatisfied—we must not treat it with reproof due only to moral delinquency or religious indifference; but do our best to furnish direction which reason and conscience will approve. Call to mind the circumstances under which men have been thrown into all this doubt and perplexity. Then we shall find it is not that they have been intellectually brought into a position in which it is impossible to believe in Divine communion; but that the special system with which the forms of Divine communion have, during the last few centuries, been associated, has broken down, and left men without a perfect basis for their faith, and without an intellectual justification of the act of Divine communion. If you feel this to be true, if under the sense of the worthlessness of those systems of divinity which your conscience even more than your understanding rejects, you are yet longing for Divine communion, I have now to assert that God is to be found, not through systems of divinity, or processes of logical thought, but by the simple, childlike surrender of the soul to those influences which God, through all the objects of truth, goodness, beauty, and purity, exerts directly on it. The sense of God's presence is obtained through the pure and quiet contemplation of Divine objects. "To seek our divinity merely in books and writings is to seek the living among the dead." It is only of the knowledge of God in His relations to ourselves that I speak. In our knowledge of God two elements are necessarily mingled. 1. There is the feeling which is excited within us when we come preparedly into contact with what is Divine. The soul feels God's presence, however He may

be named, and with whatever investiture He may be clothed. But then the understanding interprets the devout feeling Divine objects awaken, by representing God under such forms as its culture enables it to think out. God has appointed many objects through which He makes His revelation directly to the soul. Everything in the natural and moral world, which greatly surpasses man's comprehension or attainments, becomes the medium through which God speaks to the soul, touches its devout feeling, and so reveals Himself. You may say, "It is not feeling I want, but a justification of my feeling; a reconciliation of my feeling with the facts science, history, and criticism have taught me." Nay, it is feeling, intense, irresistible feeling, of God's presence with us and in us that we need. No thinking can give you back the God you have lost; it is in feeling, the feeling awakened by coming into contact with God, that alone you can find Him. There is, however, one condition—a man must come with a pure heart, a free conscience, and a purpose set to do God's will. (*J. Cranbrook.*) *Job's spiritual sentiments*:—These words exhibit a pattern of the frame of spirit habitually felt, in a good degree, by every child of God, while he is in the posture of seeking for the presence of God, and for intimate communion with Him. I. THE DIFFERENT SPIRITUAL SENTIMENTS IMPLIED IN THIS HOLY EXCLAMATION. Here is—1. A solemn appeal from the unjust censures of men, to the knowledge, love, and faithfulness of God, the supreme Judge. Apostasy from God hath rendered mankind very foolish and erroneous judges in spiritual matters. The more of God there is in any man's character and exercises, the more is that man exposed to the malignant censures, not only of the world at large, but even of Christians of an inferior class. For the weakest Christians are most forward to go beyond their depths, in judging confidently of things above their knowledge. Against assaults of this kind the children of the Most High have a strong refuge. The shield of faith quenches the fiery and envenomed darts of calumny, misrepresentation, and malice. 2. An intended bold expostulation with God, in respect of the strangeness and intricacy of His dealings with His afflicted servant. It is one of the hardest conflicts in the spiritual life, when God Himself appears as a party contending with His own children. Job could discover no special reason for God's severity against him. His faith naturally vents itself in the way of humble, yet bold expostulation. 3. A perplexing sense of distance from God. Renewed souls have such perceptions of God as are mysterious to themselves and incredible to others. When God seems to hide His face, an awful consternation, confusion, dejection, and anguish are the consequence. This situation is the more perplexing when, as was Job's case, there is felt a very great need for the presence of God, and when all endeavours to recover it seem to be vain. Then the conclusion is sometimes rashly drawn by the people of God, "My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God." But in all these afflictions of His people, the Lord Himself is afflicted. 4. Job's exclamation expresses most vehement desires after the spiritual presence of God. 5. What is particularly to be attended to is the nature of the access to God which Job desired. He was in pursuit of the most near and intimate communion with God. II. BRING HOME THE WHOLE OF THESE SENTIMENTS. 1. Such instances of deep and sober spiritual exercise furnish a convincing proof of the reality of religion, and of the certainty of the great truths with which the power of religion is so closely connected. 2. The things which have been treated of give us a view of the nature as well as of the reality of religion. 3. Such characters as that of Job carry in them the condemnation of various classes of people. 4. This subject may be applied for the encouragement of the upright. (*J. Love, D.D.*) *The believer under affliction*:—Job was justly chargeable with a disposition to self-justification, though he was not guilty of that insincerity, hypocrisy, and contempt of God which his precipitate and unfeeling friends alleged against him. This self-approving temper God took means to correct. One of the methods He used was, hiding His face from him, and leaving him to feel the wretchedness and helplessness of this state of spiritual desertion. The text may be regarded as mirroring the state of one suffering under a conscious absence of God, who longs for the returning smile of His reconciled countenance. I. THE DEEP, PAINFUL, AND DISTRESSING FEELING WHICH THESE WORDS BRING BEFORE US. The language of the text is not the language of one possessing either a false security or a real and solid peace. There is a peace which disturbs the soul, a treacherous calm, the harbinger of the tempest. There is a rest which is not a healthy repose, but the torpor of one over whose members there is stealing the unfelt effects of that lifeless inactivity which so

often precedes a second death. Those who are the victims of this fatal insensibility see no danger, and therefore fear no evil. They apprehend no change, and so prepare against no danger. How different is the state implied in the text! The mind, aroused from its carelessness, finds itself wretched and miserable, poor and blind and naked. It knows no peace; it has no comforter. "Oh that I know where I might find Him!" is the language of such a spirit in the hour of its dimness and darkness and perplexity. The language is even more truly descriptive of the feeling of one who, having known the grace of God in truth, has lost his sense of the Divine favour, and walks in heaviness under the chastening hand and frowning countenance of his Heavenly Father. II. THE ARDENT DESIRE. The first symptom of returning health and soundness in the mind is that restlessness which urges the soul to flee again unto its God. Satan has recourse to various artifices for the purpose of diverting the desires into another channel. When God is absent from you, do not rest until He return to you, as the God of your salvation. III. HOLY RESOLUTION. "I would order my cause before Him." There is an important sense in which a sinner may order his cause before God; and there are irresistible "arguments" which he is authorised to advance, and which he is assured will be favourably received. Combined with self-abasement, there should be confidence in the mercy of that God to whom you so reverently draw nigh. Alas! how many there are who will not give themselves the trouble earnestly to desire and diligently to seek the Lord! (*Stephen Bridge, A.M.*) *Pleading with God*:—God hath chosen His people in the furnace of affliction. The greatest saints are often the greatest sufferers. I. WHERE SHALL I FIND GOD? Where is His mercy-seat? Where doth He graciously reveal Himself to those who seek Him? I know that I may find Him in nature. The world, the universe of worlds, are the works of His hands. We may find Him in the Bible, in the secret place of prayer, and in my own heart. II. HOW SHALL I APPROACH HIM? Sinner that I am, how shall I order my cause before a righteous and holy Judge? Prayer is the appointed method, the duty enjoined upon all, the universal condition of forgiveness and salvation. Why is prayer made the condition of the blessing? Because it is the confession of my need, and the declaration of my desire; the acknowledgment of my helpless dependency, and the expression of my humble trust in His almighty goodness. But all prayer must be offered through the mediation of God's beloved Son. And we must come with sincerity. III. WHAT PLEA MUST I EMPLOY? Shall I plead the dignity of my rank, or the merit of my work, or the purity of my heart? I will plead His glorious name, and His unspeakable gift, and His great and precious promises. I will plead the manifestation of His mercy to others, and the numberless instances of His grace to myself. IV. AND WHAT ANSWER SHALL I RECEIVE? Will God disregard my suit? No. "He will put strength in me." He will show me what is in my favour; suggest to my mind additional and irrefutable arguments. "I shall know the words that He will answer me." (*J. Cross, D.D.*) *Job's appeal to God*:—This passage opens with a statement of Job's dissatisfied condition of mind (vers. 1, 2), followed by a wish that he might find God and defend himself before Him (vers. 3–7); and it concludes with a lament that he is not able to do so (vers. 8–10). In thinking over this passage, remember two things—1. The abstract question of the possibility of any man being absolutely innocent in the sight of God is not raised here. Men are divided into two great classes—those who (however imperfectly) seek to serve God and do right, and those who live in selfishness and sin. The former class are called the righteous. In the relative sense, Job's claim as to his own character was true. 2. We are not to find in Job, as he is here exhibited, a model for ourselves when we are afflicted. Try to separate in Job's condition those things in which he was right from those things in which he was wrong. He was right—1. In his consciousness of innocence. 2. In using his reason on the great problem of suffering. 3. In wanting to know God's opinion of him. 4. In his desire to be just before God. 5. In holding fast to his belief in God. 6. Job believed in justice as an essential element in the character of God, even though he did not see how God was just in the present instance. Job was wrong—1. In his imperfect theory of suffering—wrong, that is, in the sense of being mistaken. 2. In his restless desire to know all the reasons for God's dealings with him. 3. In wanting to have God bring Himself down to a level of equality with him, laying aside His omniscience, and listening, as though He were only a human judge, to Job. 4. And Job was plainly wrong in his impatient feeling towards God (ver. 2). (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*)

Ver. 6. Will He plead against me with His great power?—*Job's confidence in God:*—The idea of a God of power is common to all religions. Job felt that underneath all the mysteries of life there is a Divine righteousness. When any godly man feels that, he can bear a great deal. It is useless shutting our eyes to the great difficulties there are in human history, and indeed in every individual life. We cannot always say that we feel God to be good and wise; but we know Him to be so; and that is all that is required of our faith. I. LIFE IN ITS PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT. In one sense prophecies must fail. We cannot prophesy, from the career and circumstances of the grown man, what the coming days will bring with them, or how they will affect him. The one matter we are sure of is that God will not plead against the souls that love Him. The immediate exercises of the Divine will in providence are as wisely employed as the mediate ones through natural laws. The future can unfold nothing that is not quite as much the work of Divine goodness as of Divine power. II. GOD IN HIS FATHERLY CHARACTER. The more we understand our own nature in its nobler aspects, the better should we understand God's relation to His children. If it were not for our human relationships, how could we understand the relationship of God to us? The parental relation is common to all nations. Will a parent plead against his child? Will the Great Father do what the earthly father will not? III. GOD IN HIS ALMIGHTY CHARACTER. "With His great strength." That is all the more reason that He should be delicate, tender, considerate, and kind. The strength of God, if we meditated upon Him apart from His moral perfections, might lead us to the worship, not of a Father, but of infinite power. IV. THE HEART IN ITS EMPHATIC No! An emphatic answer that. There are some things that the heart decides at once, and this is one of them. "Has God forgotten to be gracious?" Let us answer at once, and "No." V. LIFE IN ITS HIDDEN SPRINGS. "He would put strength in me." This is what we want. Not absence of temptation or trial. The springs of life, fed by God, need feeding in proportion to the very strain and exercise of our inner life. The Christian who has to struggle up the Hill Difficulty, and who passes through those experiences that tend to exhaust his forces, has much need of the grace and strength of God. VI. LIFE IN ITS PAST HISTORIES. We find this truth in experience as well as in the Bible. The ancestry of godliness is not a vain thing. The spiritual escutcheons of our families have symbols of moral victory in them. VII. LIFE IN ITS RETRIBUTIVE ASPECTS. Here we come to a positive instead of a negative view of the text. Will God plead against us if we live in sin and guilt, neglectful of Christ, and the great salvation? How can He do otherwise? (*W. M. Statham.*)

Vers. 8–10. Behold, I go forward, but He is not there.—*Obscurity of the Divine working:*—The perplexities felt by Job on this and kindred problems were not greater or more harassing than they are to us. Our advanced position in revelation, in knowledge, in experience, relieves us of no embarrassment felt by men of ancient times with regard to this greatest of all mysteries—the mystery of God as He dwells within Himself, and of the methods in which He governs the worlds of men and things. They seemed to dwell in God's universe, while He did not always appear to dwell in their individual world. The world's ripest religious thought is to-day what it was at the beginning of time,—a bright abyss into which men look "by faith, not by sight." All things are contained in God: He is uncontained in all. All things reveal God: God is unrevealed in all. "Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him." There is a presence; but it is veiled. There is activity; but it is silent. I. THE ACTIVITY OF THE DIVINE WORKING. "On the left hand, where He doth work." And we have but to open our Bible to find how all through its pages this great truth runs as the soul of its teaching. Events which are held to be quite independent of all special causation, the Bible puts into the hand of God. "He maketh the sun to shine." "He sendeth the rain." "He maketh the grass to grow." "He giveth snow like wool." "He holdeth the winds in His fist." "The lightnings go before Him." "Fire and hail, snow and vapour," and the "stormy wind fulfil His word." All material forces, as they are set into action and get their interplay in the management of the worlds, are the servants of God and do His bidding; and they are forces only so far and so long as they are the channels of His will. A change in the direction of the latter, a suspension in the purposes of God,—and all material activities perish. Personal endowments, which we count innate and constitutional, are His gifts.

"There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." Talents, whether of the body or the mind, are distributed by Him. "He holdeth our soul in life." "He teacheth man knowledge." "Genius is His gift; poetry His inspiration; art His wisdom." The skill to govern, the heroism to defend, the science to construct and adorn a nation's life are conferred by Him. "He teacheth" man's "hands to war," and his "fingers to fight." There is running through every part of the inspired volume a profound recognition of law; but it is law into which there is inserted the ceaseless activity of a Divine volition. A causeless causation, a self-originating, self-acting law is unknown in nature; as it is non-existent in the creed of those ancient men to whom God revealed the earliest transcript of His thoughts. This activity of the Divine presence brings human life, with all its interests, very close to God. It makes each one of our own concernments real and very precious in its relation to Him. The individual is never slighted, can never be overlooked, is never forgotten in the magnitudes and the multiplicities of the Divine care. Amidst the play of His magnificent thoughts as these embrace the universe of things, His eye is set upon the one as upon the all, upon the atom as upon the mass. While the magnitudes and the multiplicities of worlds and systems are within the sweep of His plan, that plan takes in the obscurest individual, the most insignificant event. How this is, how it can be, we know not. "Behold, He that keepeth Israel, shall neither slumber nor sleep." "Put Thou my tears into Thy bottle: are they not in Thy book?" If from these general statements we pass on to those that are more specific in their details, the same truth still more impressively comes into view. Afflictions are not arbitrary visitations. They are never a lawless or a purposeless infliction. They are, in some of their visitations, resistless as the lightning's flash, and as insatiable as the grave. Now, the Bible tells us that, in some significant sense, all these afflictions come from God. However apparently accidental, and without any order in their known antecedents, they all have a parentage in the providence of God; and they are all made tributary to a purpose. "He woundeth, and His hands make whole." He chastiseth, and He rebuketh. "Thou, O God, hast proved us: Thou hast tried us. Thou broughtest us into the net; Thou laidest affliction upon our loins." They are neither accidents, nor necessary appendages, nor arbitrary adjuncts of our nature or condition as men. They are methods of training, modes of correction, admonitory whispers, wise teachings in the dealings of God with us as fallen, as sinful men; and so far they are fraught with the kindest intentions, and minister to most important and salutary ends. God does not create evil. He does not necessitate suffering. He works it into His plan, and uses it for good. Death, avowedly the most impressive and terrible of all our afflictions, and coming upon us in the most unanticipated surprises of time and place and mode and victims, is claimed as the supernatural visitation of God. "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up." "It is appointed unto men once to die." Whenever it comes, however it comes—whether it be by disease or accident, in youth or in age, at sea or on land—death is the appointment of God, and comes at His bidding; and the time, the place, the method are to be accepted and submitted to as being separately in His hand, and determined by His will. No man ever slips by stealth out of time, or appears unexpectedly in his Maker's presence. "The keys of death and of hell" are in the hands of the Lord of Life. So on the grander scale of national visitations. "His eyes behold, His eyelids try the children of men." "He changeth the times and the seasons: He removeth kings, and setteth up kings." "He enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again." When a great nation is suddenly crippled in its resources, or blighted in its harvests, or wasted by the pestilence; when fires or floods carry havoc and death among a people; or war lays waste a peaceful territory, leaving only "its rills of blood and drifts of bones" where once the homestead bloomed in wealth and beauty; still the demand is, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" Are the politics of nations only a great chess-board on which conflicting politicians play their little games of ambition, while God is out in the distance, unconcerned in the petty strife? Nay; through all these strifes and tossings of human pride and ambitious cupidity, there runs the thread of a Divine purpose, permitting all, holding all, guiding and subordinating all to a determinate end. II. THE OBSCURITY OF THE METHODS OF THIS WORKING. "Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; . . . He hideth Himself, that I cannot see Him." 1. There

are reasons, depths and mysteries, in the methods of the Divine working, into which we cannot look; causes in which that working originates, and purposes which it intentionally subserves, past our finding out. How, through all this maze of human things, is the Divine will a creative force? We cannot tell. Sometimes, as if through the small chinks in the interplay of events, as by a sunbeam sifted through a rift in the clouds, we seem to get a momentary glimpse of the Actor and His plan. "The Lord uttereth His voice,"—and we can scarcely doubt whose voice it is, or what is the message it conveys. But it is not always thus. It is not frequently so. And least of all is it so with the sufferings of God's people. However clear our views, however firm our convictions of the rectitude and wisdom and goodness of God may be, events are constantly taking place that confound all our reasoning; and while they tax severely our submission, they impose a heavy tribute upon our faith. "The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet." "He giveth not account of any of His matters." A silence, unbroken as the grave—absolute, awful, infinite—seems to mock the agony of the sufferer, without the solace of a momentary relief. "We wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness." 2. One cause of this obscurity is, undoubtedly, to be found in ourselves, in the imperfect instruments with which we seek to gauge the purposes of God. I do not mean in the limitation of our human powers, making it impossible for the keenest scrutiny to pierce into those abysses of gloom in which God is surely and silently working; but in our want of a spiritual temper, the absence of a moral affinity between ourselves and God, which so surely puts us at a distance from Him, and so leaves the highways of His providence incomprehensible to us. Our unlikeness to the Divine nature is, I think, one of the main barriers which shut out the light from the sufferer's eye. We do not see so far or so clearly into some of the Divine dealings with us as we might do, or as God intends we should do, just because the range of our spiritual eyesight is limited by some inward blur or film. Faith is the soul's supersensuous eye; but when it is darkened by the distempers of sin, it is like a broken lens in a telescope, it fractures and distorts the image. In these matters it is with our spiritual senses very much as it is with the man who seeks to get a bold and commanding view of nature's scenery; almost everything depends on the position we occupy. To those on the mountain-top the light comes the earliest, and with them it lingers the longest. The air is purer; the range of vision is wider: while the skies without a cloud seem dark and distant to those down beneath the shadows in the valley. And so, doubtless, it is in the scope and power of that spiritual analysis by which we seek to understand the darker mysteries of providence. We lack sympathy with the great Operator in the intrinsic excellency of His being; and this puts remoteness upon our position and dulness upon our perception, as we seek to penetrate His policy in dealing with us. "We see through a glass, darkly." Hence the remoteness in which men habitually think of God. The unvisioned eye sees Him only as a distant presence, a cold and silent spectator on the outermost confines of nature; or as utterly outside of His own world of men and things. God is so far off that our voice cannot reach Him, His hand cannot reach us; and though His arrows fly swift and terrible as the lightnings in their fiery tracks through space, they do, somehow, seem without a purpose. God reigns over the world; but we do not see how He governs it. On the other hand, the purified eye, the soul made clean from sin, pierces the gloom with a quick, intelligent gladness, that brightens everything, even the dark and sorrowful, into light and beauty. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant." Likeness to God, loyalty to conscience, trust in goodness, obedience to truth,—these unseal the eyelids of the soul, and flood with meaning the purposes of the Divine will. 3. The comprehensiveness of the plan on which providential enactments transpire, must of necessity entail obscurity in many of its details. "We are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon the earth are a shadow." Our little world is but an atom of the great whole of men and things. The great whole of men and things is but an atom in the wholeness of the Divine plan. That plan must embrace all time and place; all worlds, with their inhabitants; and all events, with their issues. It takes in time; but then it takes in also eternity. Hence, first, events are never single. They have their antecedents, and their consequents. They may be the offspring not of one antecedent, but of many. To the all-embracing mind

of Omniscience, each passing event of to-day must intertwine with all the events of yesterday; as these will in turn embrace all other events in giving birth to those of to-morrow. So with the race of man. "We are all links in the great chain which winds round the two axles of the past and the future." "We who live," says Comte, "are ruled by the dead." Here, then, is one of our grand mistakes in seeking to understand the ways of God. We are in too great a hurry to decipher passing events. We look for reasons too close to ourselves, too isolated and specific in their range; and so we seek results too immediate in time. While the Supreme Mind contemplates the whole of life in each link, and the whole of each separate link in the one chain, we narrow the great drama to one solitary act, and that beginning and closing in ourselves. We overlook the past, which to many of us may hold the secret of those very events whose occurrence overwhelms or distracts us in the present; and we shut out the future as well as the past; and, yet, both the past and the future may sustain some immediate but inscrutable relation to the mystery of the suffering present. "God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are His ways our ways." What can we,—what can angel minds know of this strange problem which providence holds for solution? 4. Then, the moral purposes which some, possibly many, of our darkest experiences are intended to accomplish, must not be left outside of the causes which perplex us. The response, "What I do thou knowest not now," may indicate a mercy not less than a necessity. Light, making clear the purpose, might defeat the end. "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." "Tribulation worketh patience." By these moral purposes we mean the sum-total of religious gain that afflictive visitations are intended to secure—first, to the individual sufferer; then, to those with whom he may be more immediately related; and lastly, to the universal good. All human events, of whatever order, under whatever apparent exceptions, are to be construed by the Christian man according to that rule, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God"; or by a more distributive threefold rule, containing, first, the negative assurance, that "there shall no evil touch" him; secondly, the positive pledge, that "no good thing shall be withheld from him"; and thirdly, the constructive, all-embracing promise that "all things" shall "work together for" his "good." This threefold promise is the statute law, the blessed triune charter, under which the Christian lives; nor is any event ever suffered to befall a good man, but one, or both, or all three of these great laws come into benignant operation. This is the providence of grace. And it is in the methods through which these laws come out in their action, that one source of our perplexity not unfrequently reveals itself. Even when the vision is the clearest, it is often impossible to see which first, and sometimes how at all, these several promises are being manipulated in the interests of the individual man. Sometimes the end proposed is not related immediately to the means. As in the case of Joseph and Job, Daniel and Esther, the end to be reached appears wholly out of the way of the method employed. Then, the good contemplated in some dispensations of providence is not single, but manifold. In the history of Joseph, the afflictions of which he was the immediate victim had a mission backwards into his own family circle, and forwards into the Egyptian court, and so onward through all the world's future history in its preparation through the Jewish nation for the incarnation and redemption of Christ,—results these, all of which seem to us incongruous and immeasurably distant in their relation to the "coat of many colours," and the exile and slavery in Egypt; yet, to God, they were all braced into a consistent and instant present, the last link parallel with the first, the first coincident with the last. The ploughshare of the destroyer goes crashing through the centre of a household, upturning suddenly its very foundations, and in the ghastly wreck extinguishes a whole spring-time of youthful hopes in a father's grave. Do you ask, Why all this? Why does God hide His purpose, and robe His presence in clouds and darkness even from those who love Him? The answer, sufficient for us, is, That our manhood may be trained to trust. We grow strong by endurance. If we knew all beforehand, there would be no room for faith, for submission, for the balancing of motives. If we knew as God knows, we should be as God. But we are infants, being trained. Patience is the fruit of trial. Our faith is born in struggle. 1. Here then is, first, a rebuke to our petulance. It says, "Be still, and know that I am God!" We are in the dust before Him. "Our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatso-

over He hath pleased." What can a child, on the scaffolding of some unfinished colossal pile of architecture, know of the skill and purpose of its construction? And what are we but baby builders in the plan of God,—ephemeral insects, whose life is a leaf in the forest of worlds! 2. Let us see how this present obscurity ministers to hope. The darkness which now envelops the Christian's path, and which for the reasons we have shown must continue to envelop it, creates, as it justifies, the expectation that hereafter, in this or in some other state, light will arise out of obscurity, and we shall see as we are seen, and "know even as also" we are "known." It cannot be that the limitations, the disappointments, the chafings of a bitter unrest are to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Some of the sorrowful chapters of life may be made clear even on this side of the screen. 3. Still more fully, still more tenderly, this assurance of light takes in the future world. "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." There are profundities in creation which from the beginning of time have been struggling to get into expression, and have not spoken yet. And there are mysteries in our human life—events, epochs, dispensations—whose cloudy advent in time will constitute apocalyptic visions for our studies through eternity. "The times and the seasons the Father hath put in His own power." In the wide uplands and glorious expanse of the eternal life, God will surely tell thee, thou poor, solitary sufferer, why thou wast left alone, without a sheltering hand or a counselling voice, when in the inexperienced days of youth thou neededst them the most. (*J. Burton.*) *The unseen God "declared":*—This passage represents to us a gracious soul, sighing and seeking anxiously after more personal and peculiar intercourse, and even most intimate fellowship with its God, and therefore is made to feel painfully the silence, the reserve, and the secrecy, which, as the God of nature and providence, He so inviolably adheres to. 1. It might relieve us, if God were to reveal Himself, even in any degree, to any one of our external senses. But He never now condescends to discover Himself even thus far to the inhabitants of our world. Consequently it is not unreasonable for us all to dread that there may be some judicial reason why God is so hiding Himself from our knowledge. 2. This suspicion appears to be confirmed in some measure, or to a certain modified extent, by our happening to know that there is at least one other world where the same God has other worshippers, from whom He never did hide Himself. There may be many more such worlds than one. 3. There was a time when it was far otherwise with this world. At one time it was so much liker heaven, as that the Lord did in those days speak with a human voice to the man whom He had then just newly created, like unto Himself in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over all the inferior creatures whom he saw around him. 4. It tends to aggravate our quite natural and just suspicion, when we consider that God, who is now so hiding Himself from all the careless, will not always, nor even will He much longer continue to hide Himself from any one of us. Relief alone comes, when awakened to a sense of sin, we are led to turn to the Only Begotten of the Father. He hath revealed Him. (*John Bruce, D.D.*) *Searching for God:*—This man seems to be condemned by the moral order of the world, and yet knows that he is innocent. A man in such an awful strait as this may be expected to utter bold words. But Job does not array himself against God. He rather arrays God against God. The God he seems to see against the God he desires to see, but cannot. It is the God within Job that protests against a credal God without. But Job's mistake lay in being angry because he could not get the full vision of God at once. He wanted it immediately. It is only by a long and hard struggle that we can get the vision of God. We must gain the sunny uplands where His face is seen by noble and untiring spiritual effort. There is no short and easy path to the sunlit sky. Further, when Job was challenging God to try him, Job was not aware that God was even then trying him; that in that very perplexity, in that very hiding of God, in that very darkness and conflict, through which Job was then passing, God was already sitting in judgment on him, and proving his life, to see whether it would come forth from the fire as gold. I. THE GREAT SEARCH FOR GOD WHICH EVERY TRUE LIFE MUST UNDERTAKE. The search must proceed, for there is no true life without the knowledge of God; and there is no full life without the satisfying knowledge of God. The true knowledge of God can only come through struggling. This will appear on the following two considerations. 1. A true knowledge of God is inward living heart knowledge. And—2. The true knowledge of God is progressive know-

ledge. But the truest man in the world may enter into seasons of very great perplexity. God is larger than our thoughts, and grander than our creeds. They cannot express the fulness of God. II. THE GUARANTEE OF THE SUCCESS OF THIS STRUGGLE TO FIND GOD. "He knoweth the way that I take." The search for God depends on an inner knowledge of God; and we have the paradox, that we do know God, and yet are searching for Him. We know when we have found Him, for He is in our deepest life as an ideal. If our hearts are true, if our lives are sincere and pure, we have the guarantee that we shall at length see God in the fulness of His glory. III. THE PURPOSE AND ISSUE OF THIS GREAT STRUGGLE. The struggle which is necessary to find God and truth is a test of our character. Truth requires a struggle, the constant use of our best energies. Infidelity is the laziest thing in the world, but it is by heart sweat that truth is found. The struggle to find God preserves the "truth of the life." Life is preserved by progress, and progress involves conflict. Life is movement, stagnation is death. This struggle not only preserves the truth of the life, it purifies and develops it. This is my message—See that you struggle to find God. While you are searching, remember to be true. And search on. (*John Thomas, M.A.*)

Ver. 10. **But He knoweth the way that I take.**—*The good man's way:*—A Christian in trouble should seek comfort in himself. His chief comfort lies in his relation to God. Only sincerity Godward makes such a statement as this possible. I. THE GOOD MAN'S WAY. 1. It is the way He chooses for me. 2. It is the way of obedience to His will. 3. It is the way His Son trod. 4. It is the way of self-sacrifice for others. II. GOD'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE GOOD MAN'S WAY. 1. He knows it; for He knows all. 2. He knows it with a sympathetic interest. 3. He knows it when the path is darkest and roughest. 4. He knows whither it leads. III. THE OUTCOME OF A GOOD MAN'S TRIALS. 1. God sees the discipline to be essential. 2. He fixes its limits. 3. He guarantees the beneficial result. 4. This will be precious and bright in its end. (*I. E. Page.*) *Whither goest thou?*—Job could not understand the way of God with him; he was greatly perplexed. But if Job knew not the way of the Lord, the Lord knew Job's way. Because God knew his way, Job turned from the unjust judgments of his unfeeling friends, and appealed to the Lord God Himself. I. DO YOU KNOW YOUR OWN WAY? So far as your life is left to your own management, there is a way which you voluntarily take, and willingly follow. Do you know what that way is? Do you know where you are going? "Of course," says one, "everybody knows where he is going." You are steaming across the deep sea of time into the main ocean of eternity: to what port are you steering? The main thing with the captain of a Cunarder will be the getting his vessel safely into the port for which it is bound. This design overrules everything else. To get into port is the thought of every watch, every glance at the chart, every observation of the stars. The captain's heart is set upon the other side. His hope is safely to arrive at the desired haven, and he knows which is the haven of his choice. He would not expect to get there if he did not set his mind on it. What is it you are aiming at? Are you living for God? or are you so living that the result must be eternal banishment from His presence? If you answer that question, allow me to put another: Do you know how you are going? In what strength are you pursuing your journey? Is God with you? Has the Lord Jesus become your strength and your song? Are there any here who decline to answer my question? Will you not tell us whither you are going? Is anyone here compelled to say, "I have chosen the evil road"? The grace of God can come in, and lead you at once to reverse your course. But are you drifting? Do you say, "I am not distinctly sailing for heaven, neither am I resolutely steering in the other direction. I do not quite know what to say of myself"? But can you say, "Yes, I am bound for the right port"? It may be that your accents are trembling with a holy fear; but none the less I am glad to hear you say as much. II. Secondly, IS IT A COMFORT TO YOU THAT GOD KNOWS YOUR WAY? Solemnly, I believe that one of the best tests of human character is our relation to the great truth of God's omniscience. It is quite certain that God does know the way that you take. The Hebrew may be read, "He knoweth the way that is in me"; from which I gather that the Lord not only knows our outward actions, but our inward feelings. He knows our likes and dislikes, our desires and our designs, our imaginations and tendencies. The Lord knows you approvingly if you follow that which is right. God knows your way, however falsely you may be represented by others.

Those three men who had looked so askance upon Job, accused him of hypocrisy, and of having practised some secret evil; but Job could answer, "The Lord knoweth the way that I take." Are you the victim of slander? The Lord knows the truth. The Lord knows the way that you take, though you could not yourself describe that way. Some gracious people are slow of speech, and they have great difficulty in saying anything about their soul affairs. Another great mercy is, that God knows the way we take when we hardly know it ourselves. There are times with the true children of God when they cannot see their way, nor even take their bearings. Once more, remember that at this very moment God knows your way. He knows not only the way you have taken and the way you will take, but the way you are now choosing for yourself. III. Thirdly, DO YOU MEET WITH TRIALS IN THE WAY? Out of the many here present, not one has been quite free from sorrow. I think I hear one saying, "Sir, I have had more trouble since I have been a Christian than I ever had before." These troubles are no token that you are in the wrong way. Job was in the right way, and the Lord knew it; and yet He suffered Job to be very fiercely tried. Consider that there are trials in all ways. Even the road to destruction, broad as it is, has not a path in it which avoids trial. Then, remember, the very brightest of the saints have been afflicted. We have, in the Bible, records of the lives of believers. Trials are no evidence of being without God, since trials come from God. Job says, "When He hath tried me." He sees God in his afflictions. The devil actually wrought the trouble; but the Lord not only permitted it, but He had a design in it. Besides, according to the text, these trials are tests: "When He hath tried me." The trials that came to Job were made to be proofs that the patriarch was real and sincere. Once more upon this point: if you have met with troubles, remember they will come to an end. The holy man in our text says, "When He hath tried me." As much as to say, He will not always be doing it; there will come a time when He will have done trying me. IV. Fourthly, HAVE YOU CONFIDENCE IN GOD AS TO THESE STORMS? Can you say, in the language of the text, "When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold"? If you are really trusting in Jesus, if He is everything to you, you may say this confidently; for you will find it true to the letter. This confidence is grounded on the Lord's knowledge of us. "He knoweth the way that I take": therefore, "when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." This confidence must be sustained by sincerity. If a man is not sure that he is sincere, he cannot have confidence in God. If you are a bit of gold and know it, the fire and you are friends. Once more he says, "I shall come forth as gold." But how does that come forth? It comes forth proved. It has been assayed, and is now warranted pure. So shall you be. After the trial you will be able to say, "Now I know that I fear God; now I know that God is with me, sustaining me; now I see that He has helped me, and I am sure that I am His." How does gold come forth? It comes forth purified. O child of God, you may decrease in bulk, but not in bullion! You may lose importance, but not innocence. You may not talk so big; but there shall be really more to talk of. And what a gain it is to lose dross! What gain to lose pride! What gain to lose self-sufficiency! Once more, how does gold come forth from the furnace? It comes forth ready for use. Now the goldsmith may take it, and make what he pleases of it. It has been through the fire, and the dross has been got away from it, and it is fit for his use. So, if you are on the way to heaven, and you meet with difficulties, they will bring you preparation for higher service; you will be a better and more useful man; you will be a woman whom God can more fully use to comfort others of a sorrowful spirit. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Sustaining consciousness of the soul in sorrow:*— I. THAT THE GREAT GOD WAS FULLY COGNISANT OF HIS INDIVIDUAL TRIAL. "He knoweth the way that I take." Wherever I am, at home or abroad, in solitude or society, "He knoweth," &c. He knows the way I take—the way my thoughts take, my feelings take, my purposes take. But what support is there in the knowledge of this fact? 1. God's knowledge of the individual sufferer is associated with the profoundest love. "As a father pitieth his children," &c. 2. His knowledge is associated with an almighty capacity to help. The other sustaining fact of which he was conscious was—II. THAT THE GREAT GOD WAS MERCIFULLY USING HIS TRIALS AS DISCIPLINE. "When He hath tried me." Why does He try by affliction? 1. Not that He has any pleasure in our suffering. "He doth not afflict willingly," &c. Nor—2. That He may discover what is in our hearts. He knows all about us. But He does it—1. In order

to humble us on account of our sins. 2. In order that we may feel our dependence on Him. 3. In order that we may commit ourselves entirely into His keeping. III. THAT THE GREAT GOD WOULD TURN HIS PAINFUL DISCIPLINE TO HIS ADVANTAGE. "I shall come forth as gold," &c. "Tribulation worketh patience," &c. But how does affliction benefit? 1. It serves to raise our appreciation of the Bible. 2. It serves to develop the powers of the mind. David's afflictions brought out some of the most brilliant of his psalms. 3. It serves to develop the spiritual life. 4. It serves to detach us from the world. It gradually breaks down the materialism in which the soul is caged, and lets it flee into the open air and light of spiritual realms. (*Homilist.*) **When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.**—*Confidence in God under affliction:*—The very life of religion is communion with God. Everything short of this is mere formality or superstition. Observe—I. JOB'S DIGNIFIED APPEAL TO THE DIVINE KNOWLEDGE. Charged with being disingenuous and deceitful, Job meekly but firmly refers to Him who "tries the heart and the reins." "He knoweth the way that I take." This expression implies—1. Consciousness of integrity. The way he took was the way of truth, in opposition to error, deceit, and falsehood; the way of holiness, in opposition to sin; the way of faith, in opposition to self-dependence. 2. A persuasion of Divine superintendency. "He knoweth." Job speaks of it as a fixed and settled principle in the Divine economy, that He knows, because He superintends, all the ways of His people. 3. Entire satisfaction with the Divine judgment. In the estimate which men form of our character, they may be misled by ignorance, or warped by prejudice. But with Him this is impossible. II. JOB'S ENLIGHTENED VIEW OF THE DIVINE CONDUCT. "When He hath tried me." This refers either to that scrutiny which he so much desired, or to the affliction with which he was so painfully exercised. Apply this trial—1. To your faith. So the apostle applies it. To believe that God designs mercy while He inflicts punishment, and to rest satisfied that He will fulfil His covenant, when He seems to be annulling it, is indeed a trial of faith. 2. To your love. That this should be strong and glowing, when your peace is undisturbed, is not surprising. The more painful and protracted the affliction, the more strong and decided the trial. 3. To your resignation. For the exercise of this feeling, affliction is absolutely necessary. It implies a state of things opposed to our wishes. Resignation is the yielding of a will subordinated to the will of God. 4. To the grace of patience. Patience waits for deliverance, and refers the time, the manner, and the degree, to Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. For patience the name of Job has become proverbial. III. JOB'S CHEERFUL EXPECTATION OF THE DIVINE GOODNESS. "I shall come forth as gold"—proved, purified, and declared. Learn, from this subject—1. The special design of all the diversified afflictions with which the people of God are exercised. Is it not a design of which you must cordially approve? 2. Your special duty in affliction. To commit your way, and, in the exercise of faith and resignation and patience, to refer your cause to Him. 3. What should be your special concern if delivered from affliction? To ascertain if the result correspond with the design. (*Essex Remembrancer.*) *The crucible of experience:*—The greatness of the Book of Job, that which won for it from Carlyle the eulogium that it is the finest thing ever written with pen, consists in the clear light it throws upon human trial and its issues. It is a unique manual upon faith, not in a proposition, but in life itself, because life is in the hands of God and represents

> "Machinery just meant
> To give thy soul its bent,
> Try thee, and turn thee forth sufficiently impressed,"

as Browning, with his glorious optimism, has said. It teaches us a faith as deep as life, and makes man a sovereign in the world by inspiring him with an indescribable trust in the order of things. To those who seriously study the drama of Job, nothing becomes more clear than the fact that it would be complete without its ending. Job might have died under his affliction. He might have succumbed after hearing the testimony embodied in my text. He would have passed to his rest a greater, stronger man than he was before his trials came upon him. He would have completed his career, bequeathing a healthier influence to posterity, leaving a more valuable legacy in the world, than he would have bestowed apart from trial. The Bible, with its high and healthy idea of manhood, recognises this fact, and sets it forth with great clearness. When dealing with the goods

we come to possess and enjoy, it frequently reminds us that we brought nothing into the world, and will take nothing from it, except character; that the only legacy we can leave, determining its use according to our desires, is the legacy we leave through character. How true this is! We may be born to affluence only to live in idleness. We may amass wealth by toil, but we cannot control its uses among those who come after us. We have no determining influence in the matter. But it is different with the influence we radiate through character. The thoughts we think, the testimony we bear, the influences we exert, give us a hold upon life—a sovereignty therein that death cannot loosen. Browning, with fine spiritual insight, has called the world our university, and has thus signified that from stage to stage of our life we go towards the graduation of the soul. It is a Christian idea enforced by genius. In learning it we achieve the victory of spirit. Our soft and luxuriously materialistic age builds on happiness without that highest good of men and women. In any kind of adversity it cries out, where is God? and voices the cry of the fool. But the world is our university. Christ was crowned on the Cross, and we are all crowned as we share and accept the Cross. It is the condition of triumph. It is only when we are tried that we come forth as gold. Trial plays a large and beneficent part in life. It comes to us all very early. 1. It comes into the life of the young man and the woman just entering the world when their education is completed and their responsibility has begun. Up to the day of their departure from home their parents have fended for them, they have been nourished and protected and helped. They have received all the care bestowed upon them as a matter of course. And when they steer clear of the dear old home, the day which dawns upon them seems bleak and unpropitious. The mother's tenderness is left, the father's advice is eliminated; they enter a world of strangers. They realise that they must depend upon themselves. Clouds gather upon the sky of their imagination, although these may be dispersed by worth. And just because that fact is true, those launched may realise that their new day is making them. Before it has long dawned they may have proved upon the pulses of their experience that they have begun to think, that they know what prudence is, not by reading about it, but by developing the virtue; by trial they know what life is, not by dreaming about it, but by endeavouring it. That experience involves trial, yet it is that which is amply justified in its issue. It gives an air of decision to us. It calls our manhood and womanhood into a new dignity. But darker days follow, which must also be measured according to the standard of a worthy faith. There are, for instance, those days when the old home is broken up, when those at its head are called into the unseen, and a desolation is made around us; when they constitute a fellowship our imagination cannot picture, but our hearts must ever affirm. It is an indescribable loss to have to sacrifice the reverend members of a true home. And yet we are not to be pitied. In such conditions God opens up a new opportunity for us. He teaches us initiative. All the seriousness, all the wisdom, all the tenderness in our natures are evolved. We become ministers to men and women, not by choice, but by necessity. When this experience is granted to men and women, their thoughtful contemporaries remark that while God is making a desolation about them He is at the same time endowing them with grandeur of character. And again the words are verified, "He knoweth the way that I shall take; when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." The trials to which I have alluded are entirely good. It is good that we should have to go out into the world and learn responsibility by fighting for ourselves. It is good that one generation should pass and another inherit the problems of its representatives. The forms of trial which I have noticed so far are altogether good; but there are other forms. Many have to battle with adversity; some have to bear the burden of sickness; others have to experience ingratitude, and yet the issue of these forms of trial is still good rather than evil. We may say so without any shallow optimism. There is benefit in adversity, in whatever form it may reach us. Shakespeare, with his clear insight and large outlook, has said, "Sweet are the uses of adversity." And Seneca has spoken words that deserve to be written in gold on this point: "No man knows his own strength or valour but by being put to the proof. The pilot is tried in a storm, the soldier in a battle, the rich man knows not how to behave himself in poverty. He that has lived only in popularity and applause knows not how he would bear infamy and reproach. Calamity is the occasion of virtue, and a spur to a great mind. Very many times a calamity turns to our advantage, and great ruins have made way to great glories. Prudence and religion are above accidents, and draw

good out of everything. Affliction keeps a man in use and makes him strong, patient and hardy. God loves us with a masculine love and turns us loose to injuries and indignities. He takes delight to see a good and brave man wrestling with evil fortune, and yet keeping himself upon his legs when the whole world is in disorder about him. No man can be happy that does not stand firm against all contingencies, and say to himself in all extremities, 'I should have been content if it might have been so and so, but since it is otherwise determined, God will provide better.'" How wise and strong these words of the Stoic are. It is a stern world in which we live, even although it is kind. The price of free rational life is suffering up to man; and even in humanity itself, through lower to higher natures; while the justification of suffering is progress. "What made you a Skald?" says a king in one of Ibsen's plays, to a poet. "Sorrow, sire," the Skald answered. Adversity only baffles us for the moment, and when we struggle with it, we find that we have been baffled to fight better. All the best men and women of whom we read in former generations, and all the best men and women we know in our own generation, have battled bravely with life, and have gained character in the struggle, have proved, upon the pulses of their experience, the wisdom of Shakespeare's words, that the uses of adversity are sweet. They have no quarrel with life. But there is another form of trial, that which comes to us through sickness, when it seems laid like a kind of fetter upon the mind. Our generation is resonant with the echoes of cheap pessimisms, and perhaps nothing is regarded as justifying these more than human suffering. Why does it exist in the world at all? Where is God? What is the good of life? So we read, so we hear. But the significant thing is that the people who so speak and write are not the sufferers themselves—not even when they have the gift of genius, with its great capacity for suffering. They show to us invariably, how sublime a thing it is to suffer and be strong. Who illustrated this fact better than the late Louis Stevenson, in his brave fight with encroaching death? He of all men had good reason to affirm that this is of all the worst possible world. Yet of this very tendency he writes in one of his inimitable essays: "We are accustomed, in these days, to a great deal of puling over the circumstances in which we are placed. The great refinement of many poetical gentlemen has rendered them practically unfit for the jostling and ugliness of life, and they record their unfitness at a considerable length. Young gentlemen, with three or four hundred a year of private means, look down from a pinnacle of doleful experience, on all the grown and hearty men who have dared to say a good word for life." Stevenson suggests that the pessimists of our day are not the children of sorrow, but rather epicures of their own emotions, who prate of a sorrow which they have not known. Sorrow is silent. Sorrow is a fast of God's own appointing, and when men and women really enter upon it, they can say with Christ, "Thy will be done." They know that God is trying them in order that He may turn them forth as gold. There is the trial of ingratitude. That seems hardest of all to bear. To do good and call forth evil instead of responsive sympathy. To love, but yet in vain: that nearly breaks the heart. So we say. But is it really so? Does it not really make the heart? The late Principal Caird, in his lectures on the fundamental ideas of Christianity, finds in the distinctive Christian doctrines sanction for the thought that "in the nature of God there is a capacity of condescending love, of boundless pity and forgiveness, yea, with reverence be it said, of pain and sorrow and sacrifice for the salvation of finite souls; a capacity which has been and could only be revealed and realised through the sorrow and sin of the world." It is profoundly true, man's need is God's opportunity. And it is true in human as in Divine relations. Those who have vexed us most, those who have tried us in the hardest sense, have often enabled us to realise ourselves in a way we could not have done had they not crossed our path. And these testimonies are verified in the action of our Lord and His great apostle. It was when the agony of Gethsemane and the bitterness of the Cross were drawing near, when He knew that men had rejected Him, that our Lord said His Father loved Him because He laid down His life. It was of Israel, from which he was an outcast on account of his apostleship, and by whose representatives he was persecuted daily, that Paul said, "I could wish that myself were accursed for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites." Under the influence of these testimonies, and in the light of these facts, we learn that even the ingratitude which wounds love, makes man, and enables him to bear witness to that deepest and grandest element in his experience which Shelley recognised when he called him the Pilgrim

of Eternity. And that also is growth. Under such experiences man is still tried, that he may come forth as gold. How much we owe to men who have been tried in life, and who have proved worthy under their tests! The lords of literature have been in the crucible of experience. Dante's immortal work is the epic of the Middle Ages, and is full of winged words and seminal thoughts which stimulate our spirits, and fructify in us still. It grew out of the experience of a man of sad, lone spirit, the son of mental pain. The lords of literature have been tried that they might come forth as gold. But these immortals are not the only beings who have been refined and perfected in the crucible of experience. We can find those who have benefited in this way in every walk of life. The picture of the radiant young man or woman full of unspoiled powers, and surrounded by unused opportunities is fascinating. But it pales before the picture of the man or woman fashioned more grandly in the stress of life; and sometimes when, in awful cases, ministrant men and women are needed, people who can say the right word to the anguished and give them peace, or who can lift the suffering out of pain, you shall note that they are those with faces lined with sufferings which are past, and full of peace that has been conquered. These are the final argument, that in the crucible of experience we are tried that we may come forth as gold. They stand round Christ, the Head of our humanity, and augment that river of life which, having its origin in His transcendent sacrifice, streams through our religion, our philosophy, our literature, and our life, and brings the healing of the nations. As we consider them, as the light of their witness falls across our path, faith in life is generated in our hearts. Thus in the power of God we rival nature. The heavens declare God's glory, and the firmament showeth forth His handiwork from season to season. The stars shine in winter and summer, before and after the storm. So they provoke the men and women who tell their number, and who weigh them, to behave. That is the rôle of the lords of life, and Christ came, and abides among us, that we might assume it and triumph therein. Life should not impoverish but enrich us. Through all its vicissitudes there should be abounding and abiding glory in the firmament of our experience. (*F. A. Russell.*)

God's deeper good:—During the week that has passed since our service of last Sunday morning, more than one friend of mine has spoken to me about the teaching which was given from this pulpit. One of them half jocularly addressed me in this fashion: "Did I truly understand you to say that you could wish for your friends' adversity rather than prosperity? Because, if so, I cannot say that that is what I should wish for you, or, indeed, for any of human kind; and were I endowed with omnipotence I certainly should not employ what you call 'God's evil' as an experience for the righteous." My friend's statement contains a good deal of what is common or popular feeling in respect to that insoluble subject, the mystery of evil; but as his particular statement contains so much that the ordinary right-living man feels to be a just statement of his perplexity in regard to God's dealings with him, I must return to that subject this morning. To begin with, I must say that my general statement that for my friends I could wish adversity rather than prosperity ought, perhaps, to be differently phrased. Then I am sure there would be no difference of opinion between me and any one present. I would rather state it thus,—For my friend I could rather wish the fruit of adversity when adversity achieves its highest in the human soul. Let me put to you a rhetorical question, the answer to which will be in your mind and heart as I put it. Suppose you had to live your life over again, there is not one of you who would wish to live through just the same set of experiences as you have already had. You could wish that the dark days and the times of deep sorrow might not come again, but I am perfectly sure that you would wish you might have the results of those experiences, without the history. Then I think we are agreed to say that the best we could wish for our friend is that which we actually know from experience comes only hand in hand with adversity, that adversity succeeds in achieving the highest, though we might not wish for him the pain of the adversity itself. If I were endowed with omnipotence, my friend, your pathway would always be fair; and yet if adversity were the necessary price to pay, and if I knew it must be paid for making you the noble man you are, then I would let adversity come upon you with all its might. But the objection of my friend strikes deeper. It amounts to this—God's ways are inexplicable. It is the righteous and not simply the guilty that have to suffer as the world is now organised. We could understand His dealing if the inevitable sequence of wrong-doing were pain, but we fail to understand it when the righteous man suffers equally and

indiscriminately with the guilty. Moreover, is it not often that God's sternness causes moral harm rather than moral good? I understand the feeling that is behind an utterance of that kind. It means this—If I were God I would make the world differently. There, I think, I have stated our friend's real meaning with perfect frankness. Now, allow me to say that when we talk about evil as an intruder, we are, in nine cases out of ten, obscuring the issue which is really present to our mind. Good has not yet come. Evil is relative, negative, primitive. Our experience of what is evil is our conception of an absent good, and the fact that we can see a thing is evil is in some way a promise of a coming good. Let us leave it there. Your generous impulse to say if you had the power evil would be excluded from the world, is really some sort of prophecy of what God intends to do. Now, there has never been given a good and sufficient answer to this urgent question of the human heart. It is the old, old theme, the theme from the Book of Job from which I have taken my text this morning. But I venture to think, though no complete answer has ever come, the answer is that submission to the will of God introduces us to a harmonious experience. Observe the theme of the book from whence our wondrous text is taken. Job, the central character, appears as a righteous man who is yet a sufferer; but he is not a sufferer for any worthy cause for which a man might be glad to suffer, nor apparently is he a sufferer giving any striking testimony on behalf of a noble cause. Many such testimonies have been given, and have robbed martyrdom of its agony. But Job is made a sufferer without seeing why, and is it any wonder that he feels that his suffering cannot be a punishment for his offences? He asserts his own righteousness, not in any arrogant fashion, and not as though God had no fault to find with him. He says, "This sternness in God's dealing with me cannot be the fruit of my own wrongly lived life." His friends defend God and say that Job is being righteously chastised; and the writer of the book, one of the oldest books in the Bible, has it before him to show that the righteous man, though afflicted, is more righteous than those who defend God's judgments upon him. Job's reply and its wonderful insight are expressed in the words of the text, "He knoweth the way that I take," what does human judgment matter to me? He knoweth the way that I have been living, uprightly, in the fear of God, dealing honourably with men. Then Job says that he had lived righteously, and his pain was in no sense his own desert. "He knoweth the way that I am taking with my life; when He hath tried me, my innocence shall shine out." I am not sure whether we are entitled to read into the text that Job's faith rose to a higher altitude there and affirmed that "as the outcome of what God hath done I shall be a better man, a deeper nature, nobler, stronger, wiser." Perhaps he did not mean that, but it is at least open to that interpretation to say that he did. "When He hath tried me, not only will my innocence shine out as gold and show that God is not punishing me, but rather fashioning me; not only will mine innocence shine out, but my nobleness will be beaten out and gained and won." Now we will never get any nearer to the solution of the problem of what we have called "God's evil," and which I now call "God's deeper good," than that. Here I pause to read to you an experience, the experience of a young man, it is true, but not, I venture to think, a crude one. Humanity at its highest, I mean its highest point of spiritual knowledge, has never got higher than this, which is from Mr. John Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, and the passage from which I quote is one of Arthur Hallam's letters written to his friend Mr. Gladstone when both were at Oxford. Mr. Morley, commenting on it lower down, says that of course it is a young man's way of looking at an old problem, but you will admit that he got very near the solution of the problem. "The great truth which, when we are rightly impressed with it, will liberate mankind, is, that no man has a right to isolate himself, because every man is a particle of a marvellous whole; that when he suffers, since it is for the good of that whole, he, the particle, has no right to complain, and in the long-run, that which is the good of all will abundantly manifest itself to be the good of each. Other belief consists not with theism. This is its centre. Let me quote to this purpose the words of my favourite poet. It will do us good to hear his voice, though but for a moment." Then he quotes from Wordsworth's "Excursion" the lines well known probably to every one as well as to myself—

"One adequate support
For the calamities of mortal life
Exists—one only: an assured belief

That the procession of our fate, howe'er
Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
Of infinite benevolence and power,
Whose everlasting purposes embrace
All accidents, converting them to good."

I know not whether Mr. Morley could himself subscribe to that, but from words of his own, used later in the book, I almost feel that he could. He is speaking of Mr. Gladstone's view, I think, of the work of Napoleon, and comparing it with that of worthier servants of destiny. He says, "Our work is to use the part given us to use, to use the parts that go to make up the life, and to use them with a feeling of the whole." Now that is the point that I wish to emphasise most expressly in your hearing. We do not live for ourselves. I am quite of those who think that if God's only purpose in the disciplining of mankind were to produce noble character we might be fairly entitled to say to Him, "Then you might have produced it in some other way." God could. It is not beyond His power. God could make a noble man without sending him through the furnace. But if it be true that we are only a little corner in the life of the universe, living not our own, but the life of the whole, and if it be true that we are living, not simply for ourselves but for God, it adds a dignity to our conception of our destiny. And, though I preach confidently in this way an optimism, I trust I do not preach it superficially or crudely. I do not preach an optimism because I ignore the dangers and the possibilities of a pessimism, nor because I possess no acquaintance with the darker side of life, but the optimism of the Christ is mine. Did Jesus ever act or speak as though He would ignore the seamy side of existence? We lesser beings, following feebly and haltingly in the steps of Jesus Christ, must try to see with His eyes even from our Calvary when it comes, and it is not Calvary all the time, and to believe, nay to be sure that in our Father's hands are all our ways. God will care for the least as for the greatest. We are not only instruments in His hands, every one of us is also an end. I would add to this one or two reflections with which I close. 1. The first is that if you could see things as they really are, there would be no trouble, nor care, nor fear left in your experience. It is just because you cannot see that these things seem to dominate your life. Faith is eminently reasonable in that it lifts the soul to an altitude whence it can take a calm and wide view of existence as a whole. Faith is an approximation to seeing things as they are. Life to many of us seems like a dream. In a dream we take a distorted view of realities which in our waking life do enter into our experience, but not as we dream them. It is the limitation that makes the mystery, the limitation in greatest part it is which is the failure. 2. Then I would say also this—pain is not an end in itself. That is the mistake of asceticism. When it is misapprehended it crushes men and does them harm. Pain is simply a means to an end, and its culmination must be joy if God is just. Pain is not the end, it is only the beginning, it is the creaking of the door as it is opened into heaven. We are helping God, do not let us forget that for a moment, and our consciousness of helping Him begets a harmony here and now. We are not left unto ourselves all the time. Some of our best service is done by suffering. But lest I leave you with a morbid impression in your mind, I would remind you of this, that struggle and discipline and battle and defeat sometimes do not take interest from life at all, they add zest to it. We ought to be thankful that God gives us the opportunity of playing the hero, of being a man; and we feel somehow—although we cannot make it clear in syllogistic fashion, for there is something higher than logic—day by day, in the small things as well as in the great things of life, we feel somehow that the universe is rightly organised, and victory is made possible in Godlike fashion for the children of God. Now, before I close I want to make you feel that what I am saying is real—I know it is, but I never could demonstrate this, and never will be able to do it. When we get down to the deeper good we find it is always purchased, as the highest Christian experience is and always has been, by the willing acceptance of the Cross. Let every man say as he thinks of God's dealings with him to-day, "'He knoweth the way that I take,' and mean to take. I cannot see, yet I will be true. He knoweth all the time. He shall find me pure gold. I will be true to the best He has shown me, I will not fail my Heavenly Friend. 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.' And He will not destroy, 'for the Lord is mindful of His own.'" (*R. J. Campbell, M.A.*)

On affliction:—1. The best saints have in them a mixture of dross. 2. Trials,

and sometimes fiery trials, are necessary to separate the dross from the gold. God has various methods of trying mankind. 3. The prospect of being benefited and brightened by affliction, reconciles believers to the severest of trials. "Tribulation worketh patience." "Patience worketh experience." "Experience worketh hope." It may be that we are so often afflicted, because we have so much dross, that requires the fire, and many times a fierce fire, to separate it from the metal. (*S. Lavington.*) *The purification of the mind by troubles and trials*:—The afflictions of life, though often grievous enough in themselves, become much more so by that state of doubt and perplexity into which the mind of the sufferer is brought by them. He is tempted to despair, as thinking God has forsaken him; or to impiety, as imagining there can be no God who governs the world in wisdom and righteousness. In such a case, a wrong notion of human life is at the bottom of those desponding and murmuring thoughts, which arise in our hearts, on finding ourselves encompassed and oppressed by a larger share than ordinary of its cares and troubles. We look not forward as we ought to do. This life is no more than a preparation for another. There is no need to prove that this life is a state of trial. In general, we sink under temptation, because we do not sufficiently accustom ourselves to expect, and are therefore unprepared to encounter it. With this idea—that the present life is a state of trial—firmly impressed upon our minds, we should then stand armed for the fight, and by Divine assistance be enabled to overcome. Of the temptations or trials to which we are subject, some proceed from without, and others from within. The world endeavours at one time to seduce, at another to terrify us from the performance of our duty. Another source of trouble and uneasiness is that produced by the cross tempers, untoward dispositions, and other failings of those about us. Other trials have their origin from within, from the frame, or constitution either of body or mind. Either sickness or melancholy. Time would fail to enumerate all the different temptations that arise in our minds. They are as many and as various as our different passions and propensities, each of which will, at times, strive for the mastery, and all of which are to be kept, with a strong and steady hand, in due subordination and obedience. (*J. Horne.*) *Saints compared to gold*:—I. GOLD IS GENERALLY FOUND BURIED IN THE EARTH, mixed with sand or other material, and therefore requires to be dug out and separated from those materials. So Christians have been taken out from the elements of this world. They have been hewn from nature's quarry by the hammer of God's Word and made separate (Eph. ii. 1, &c.). II. GOLD, THOUGH REGARDED AS A PURE METAL, HAS YET SOME DROSS IN IT. At the same time, there is not any metal more free from dross and rust than gold. Christians, though holy and precious to God, are not without sin; there is some dross of corruption in the best of them. III. GOLD IS REFINED IN THE FIRE, by which it is rendered pure, solid, and strong. Christians are put into the fire, or furnace of affliction, to purge and to refine them from their dross (Zech. xiii. 9; 1 Pet. iv. 12, 13; 1 Pet. i. 7). IV. GOLD IS PRECIOUS. It is esteemed the most valuable on earth. Hence things of very great value are in the Scriptures represented by gold. Christians are a precious people, the excellent ones in all the earth. God esteems them as His portion. V. GOLD IS VERY PLIANT. You may bend and work it as you please. So are Christians. God having infused His grace into their hearts, they have hearts of flesh; and God, by putting them into the fire, makes them more resigned and teachable, while others rebel and repine. VI. GOLD, THOUGH IT BE FREQUENTLY PUT IN THE FURNACE, LOSES NOTHING BUT THE DROSS. The fire purifies it and cannot destroy its precious nature. However fierce and raging the flames, gold retains its excellency. So the people of God endure the trial. They are not burned up or consumed in the furnace of affliction, though heated sevenfold. VII. GOLD IS OFTEN FORMED INTO VESSELS for the pleasure, honour, and use of princes. So God forms His people for most excellent service—vessels of honour to hold the treasure of the Gospel, to communicate it to others (2 Cor. iv. 7), and are stewards of the Gospel. VIII. TO OBTAIN GOLD, men endure much fatigue, losses, sacrifices, &c. So Jesus Christ endured great pain and loss for His people. He laid down His life for them. IX. GOLD IS USEFUL. It is that by which we obtain what is essential for life, &c. So Christians are useful—in their families, neighbourhood, to the world at large. They seek the salvation of sinners and the glory of God. The purposes of God, in reference to the diffusion of His glory in the world, will not be effected without them. (*Homiliet.*)

Vers. 11, 12. **My foot hath held His steps.**—*The fair portrait of a saint:*—Job has, in this part of his self-defence, sketched a fine picture of a man perfect and upright before God. He has set before us the image to which we should seek to be conformed. I. INSPECT THIS PICTURE OF JOB'S HOLY LIFE. 1. Job had been all along a man fearing God, and walking after the Divine rule. His way was God's way. He knew no rule but the will of the Almighty. This is a great point to begin with; it is, indeed, the only sure basis of a noble character. 2. Consider Job's first sentence. "My foot hath held His steps." This expression sets forth great carefulness. He had watched every step of God to put his foot in it. He had observed the steps of God's justice, that he might be just; the steps of God's mercy, that he might be pitiful and compassionate; the steps of God's bounty, that he might never be guilty of churlishness, or want of liberality; and the steps of God's truth, that he might never deceive. He had watched God's steps of forgiveness, that he might forgive his adversaries; and His steps of benevolence, that he might also do good and communicate, according to his ability, to all that were in need. Job had laboured to be exact in his obedience towards God, and in his imitation of the Divine character. There is no holy walking without careful watching. The expression here has something in it of tenacity; he speaks of taking hold upon God's steps. Many Orientals have a power of grasp in their feet which we appear to have lost from want of use. An Arab in taking a determined stand, actually seems to grasp the ground with his toes. Dr. Good renders the passage, "In His steps will I rivet my feet." So firm was his grip upon that holy way which his heart had chosen. The way of holiness is often craggy, and Satan tries to make it very slippery, and unless we can take hold of God's steps we shall soon slip with our feet, and bring grievous injury upon ourselves, and dishonour to His holy name. To make up a holy character, there must be a tenacious adherence to integrity and piety. Again, to make a holy character, we must take hold of the steps of God in the sense of promptness and speed. Easterns say of a man who closely imitates his religious teacher, "his feet have laid hold of his master's steps," meaning that he so closely follows his teacher that he seems to take hold of his heels. It is a blessed thing, when grace enables us to follow our Lord closely. You know what came of Peter's following afar off; try what will come of close walking with Jesus. Three things, then, we get in the first sentence—an exactness of obedience; a tenacity of grip upon that which is good; and a promptness in endeavouring to keep touch with God, and to follow Him in all respects. Consider the second sentence. "His way have I kept." Job had adhered to God's way as the rule of his life. When he knew that such and such a thing was the mind of God, either by his conscience telling him that it was right, or by a Divine revelation, then he obeyed the intimation, and kept to it. Keeping to the way signifies not simply adherence, but continuance and progress in it. He had not grown tired of holiness, nor weary of devotion, neither had he grown sick of what men call straitlaced piety. I like a man whose mind is set upon being right with God. Give me a man who has a backbone. The third clause is, "And not declined." He had neither declined from the way of holiness, nor declined in the way. Some turn from God's way to the right hand, by doing more than God's Word has bidden them do. They invent religious ceremonies, and vows, and bonds, and become superstitious. Turning to the left is being lax in observing God's commandments. He had shunned omission as well as commission. Job had not begun by running hard, and then got out of breath and flagged. One more sentence remains. "Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips." As he had not slackened his pace, so much less had he turned back. You can turn back, not only from all the commandments, and so become an utter apostate, but there is such a thing as backing at single commandments. You know the precept to be right, but you cannot face it; you look at it, but go back, refusing to obey. Job had never done so. Going back is dangerous. We have no armour for our back, no protection in retreat. Going back is ignoble and base. II. HOW JOB CAME BY THIS CHARACTER. Note Job's holy sustenance. God spoke to Job. "The words of His mouth." What God had spoken to him he treasured up. Job lived on God's Word. He esteemed it more than his necessary food. Not more than his dainties only, for these are superfluities, but more than his necessary food, which a man esteems very highly. The natural life is more than meat, but our spiritual life feeds on meat even nobler than itself, for it feeds on the bread of heaven, the person of the Lord Jesus. Remember, then, that you cannot be holy unless you do in secret live upon the

blessed Word of God, and you will not live on it unless it comes to you as the Word of His mouth. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 15. **When I consider, I am afraid of Him.**—*God's displeasure a source of fear*:—Notwithstanding the general evenness of Job's temper, and his quiet submission to Divine providence, there were two things which touched him more sensibly than all the other circumstances of his afflictions. That God should seem so much displeased with him, as to single him out as a mark to shoot at, when he was not conscious to himself of any such impiety to deserve it, according to the common method of His providence. And that his friends should call in question his sincerity in religion, and suspect him guilty of hypocrisy and secret impiety; because they concluded that such signal calamites could hardly fall upon any man that was not guilty of some such great crime towards God. The words of the text may be understood—I. WITH RESPECT TO JOB'S APPREHENSION OF GOD'S DISPLEASURE AGAINST HIM. He declares his firm resolution never to let go his confidence in God, whatever became of him; but the presence which troubled him was the great appearance of God's displeasure. 1. What made Job so afraid of God when he considered, seeing he insists so much on his own integrity? Doth not this seem to lessen the comfort and satisfaction of a good conscience, when such an one as Job was afraid of God? We reply that mankind ought always to preserve an humble and awful apprehension of God in their minds. And that from the sense of the infinite distance between God and us. Moreover, the best of mankind have guilt enough upon them to make them apprehend God's displeasure under great afflictions. Job's friends insist much upon this, that God may see just cause to lay great punishments upon man, although they may not see it in themselves. But God may not be so displeased with such persons as lie under great afflictions, as they apprehend Him to be. This was the truth of Job's case. In the hardest condition good men can be cast into, they have more comfortable hopes towards God than other men can have. Two things supported Job under all his dismal apprehensions. The reflections of a good conscience in the discharge of his duties to God and man; and the expectation of a future recompense, either in this world or in another. . . . What apprehensions of God may we entertain in our minds, when even Job was "afraid of Him"? None ought to look upon God as so terrible, as to make them despair; and men ought to have different apprehensions of God, according to the nature and continuance of their sins. II. WITH RESPECT TO JOB'S VINDICATION OF HIMSELF FROM THE UNJUST CHARGE OF HIS FRIENDS. As though he were a secret hypocrite, or a contemner of God and religion, under a fair outward shew of piety and devotion. Job declares the mighty value and esteem he had for the laws of God; and the fear of God in him came from the most weighty and serious consideration. Two things are implied—1. That men's disesteem of religion doth arise from the want of consideration; from their looking on religion as a matter of mere interest and design, without any other foundation: and from the unaccountable folly and superstitious fears of mankind, which make them think more to be in it than really is. Although the principles of religion in general are reasonable enough in themselves, and the things we observe in the world do naturally lead men to own a deity, yet when they reflect on the strange folly and superstitious fear of mankind, they are apt still to suspect that men, being puzzled and confounded, have frighted themselves into the belief of invisible powers, and performing acts of worship and devotion to them. But this way of reasoning is just as if a man should argue that there is no such thing as true reason in mankind, because imagination is a wild, extravagant, unreasonable thing; or that we never see anything when we are awake, because in our dreams we fancy we see things which we do not. Application—The more men do consider, the more they will esteem religion, and apply themselves to the practice of it. Two things may be commended—1. To consider impartially what is fit for men to do in religion. 2. To practise so much of religion as upon consideration will appear fitting to be done. God infinitely deserves from us all the service we can do Him. And we cannot serve ourselves better than by faithfully serving Him. (*E. Stillingfleet, D.D.*) *On the effects of consideration*:—Job here declares, in language of great sublimity, the unsearchableness of God. It was not a hasty glance at the character of God which gave rise to the fear which the patriarch expresses. His fear was the result of deep meditation, and not of a cursory thought. Deep meditation brought under review many attributes of the Almighty, and there was much in these attributes to perplex and discourage. It

may have been only the unchangeableness of God which, engaging the consideration, excited the fears of the patriarch. But we need not limit to one attribute this effect of consideration. That the fear or dread of God is the produce of consideration; that it does not therefore spring from ignorance or want of thought; this is the general truth asserted in the passage. A superstitious dread of a Supreme Being is to be overcome by consideration; and a religious dread is to be produced by consideration. The absence of consideration is the only account that can be given of the absence of a fear of the Almighty. It is not by any process of thought that the great mass of our fellow-men work themselves into a kind of practical atheism. Man is answerable for this want of consideration, inasmuch as it is voluntary, and not unavoidable. The truths of revelation are adapted according to the constitution of our moral capacity, to rouse within us certain feelings. By fixing our minds on these truths we may be said to insure the production of the feelings which naturally correspond to them. 1. See how the fear of God is produced by considering—1. What we know of God in His nature. We know how powerful a restraint is imposed on the most dissolute and profane, by the presence of an individual who will not countenance them in their impieties. So long as they are under observation they will not dare to yield to impious desires. There is nothing so overwhelming to the mind, when giving itself to the contemplation of a great first cause, as the omnipresence of God. It is not possible that the least item of my conduct may escape observation. The Legislator Himself is ever at my side. The more I reflect, the more awful God appears. To break the law in the sight of the Lawgiver; to brave the sentence in the face of the Judge; there is a hardihood in this which would seem to overpass the worst human presumption. It is not the mere feeling that God exercises a supervision over my actions, which will produce that dread of Him which Job asserts in our text. The moral character of God vastly aggravates that fear which is produced by His omnipresence. We suppose God just, and we suppose Him merciful, and it is in settling the relative claims of these properties that men fancy they find ground for expecting impunity at the last. However on a hasty glance, and forming my estimate of benevolence from the pliancy of human sympathies, I may think that the love of the Almighty will forbid the everlasting misery of His creatures, let me consider, and the dreamy expectation of a weak and womanish tenderness will give place to apprehension and dread. The theory that God is too loving to take vengeance will not bear being considered. The opinion that the purposes of a moral government may have been answered by the threatening, so as not to need the infliction, will not bear to be considered. 2. The connection between consideration and fear will be yet more evident, if the works of God engage our attention; His works in nature and in redemption. There is nothing which, when deeply pondered, is more calculated to excite fears of God than that marvellous interposition on our behalf which is the alone basis of legitimate hope. God in redemption shows Himself a holy God, and therefore do I fear Him. (*Henry Melvill, B.D.*). *Of the fear of God*:—In this chapter Job gives a noble description of the sense he had upon his mind of the invisible omnipresence and omniscience of God. To a man of virtue and integrity, the consideration of this great truth is a solid ground of real and lasting satisfaction. Take the expression of the text as containing this general and very important proposition,—that the fear of God is the result of consideration, attention, and true reason; not of empty imagination and vain apprehension. By the "fear of God" is understood, not the superstitious dread of an arbitrary and cruel Being, but that awe and regard which necessarily arises in the mind of every man who believes and habitually considers himself as living and acting in the sight of an omnipresent Governor, of perfect justice, holiness, and purity; who sees every thought as well as every action; who cannot be imposed on by any hypocrisy, who, as certainly as there is any difference between good and evil, cannot but approve the one and detest the other; and whose government, as certainly as He has any power at all, consists in rewarding what He approves, and punishing what He hates. This fear of God is the foundation of religion. The great support of virtue among men is the sense upon their minds of a supreme Governor and Judge of the universe. The ground of this fear is reason and consideration. 1. As to the ground and foundation of religion. That there is an essential difference between good and evil, man clearly discerns by the natural and necessary perception of his own mind and conscience. 'Tis not a man's particular timorousness of temper, nor tradition, nor speculation, that makes him see when he is oppressed or defrauded, that these actions are in their own nature unrighteous, and the person

who is guilty of them worthy of punishment. Laws do not make virtue to be virtue and vice to be vice, but only enforce or discourage the practice of such things. 2. As religion and superstition differ entirely in their ground and foundation, so do they likewise in their effects. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Religion makes men inquisitive after truth, lovers of reason, meek, gentle, patient, willing to be informed. Superstition makes men blind and passionate, despisers of reason, careless in inquiring after truth, hasty, censorious, contentious, and impatient of instruction. Religion teaches men to be just, equitable, and charitable toward all men. Superstition puts men on undervaluing the eternal rules of morality. (*S. Clarke, D.D.*)

Ver. 16. **God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me.**—*God the softener of the heart*:—This is not a Jewish idea. The dispensation of Moses was a religious state, in which the harder features of the Divine countenance were brought to light, and by which the severer characteristics of the Divine nature were developed before the people, rather than their opposites. The ideas with which the dispensation familiarised their minds were more especially those of justice, judgment, retribution, and punishment. To speak of the softening of the heart, and to ascribe, as Job doth, the process and the operations by which it is softened unto God, must project our thoughts to other days which the "prophets and kings" have "desired to see," but, except by faith, "did not see them." It directs us to "the days of the Son of Man"; it leads us to think of the humanity of God, with all its consequent and concurrent tendernesses towards our own. Hardness of heart or spiritual insensibility is no isolated evil. It hath a numerous progeny. Hardness of heart, let it take what shape it will, is something to be prayed against. There is a moral ossification of the heart, as well as a physical. The Pharisees of our Lord's day were thus morally diseased. These hard bones, these intractable sinews of a perverse disposition and a rebellious will, these "horns of the ungodly," must be broken, dissolved, ground to powder. Let it not be supposed that this softness of heart can be any reproach to us, or is in any way derogatory to moral and intellectual manliness. Our nature cannot be too tender so long as it is not weak. The sensibility of woman, joined with the intellect of man, would not render us too sensitive. Piety is softness of heart, tenderness of affection, sensitiveness of conscience to Godward. But how does God make the heart soft? He doth it by the influence of His Holy Spirit. This is so obvious as to need no proof. But the Spirit useth different means, and operateth upon us in a variety of ways, not only through the particular channels which He hath ordained, but in all manner of ways. Some other methods may be mentioned. 1. God maketh the heart soft by the influence upon us of the natural world. 2. By His Holy Word. This is an agency whereby the Spirit of God more peculiarly worketh upon the soul; and the natural objects to which the Word is compared show how softening its influences are. Dew; showers; small rain; snow; honey out of a rock; all which similitudes bespeak its tender, melting, mollifying power. 3. By the discipline of life. Trouble is a mighty mollifier of the heart. Trouble prepareth us for the sympathies of Nature and the consolations of God's Word. Next to the Lord Jesus it is humanity's best friend, and the more as it is no man's flatterer. (*Alfred Bowen Evans.*) "*God maketh my heart soft*":—Prosperity is often a curse, adversity is often a blessing. Observe the advantages of affliction. Confine attention to the softening of the heart. 1. The Scriptures speak of the hardness of the heart as the cause of impenitence and unbelief. Suppose that you were offered, on the one hand, temporal prosperity with a stony heart, or temporal prosperity with a new and softened heart, what would be your choice? If you are in adversity it may be that God saw prosperity to be dangerous for you. It is the Almighty that troubleth you. Thank Him for having troubled you. Pray Him to soften your heart wholly. 2. Since God certainly designs affliction for your profit, have a care that you do profit by it. 3. How are we to profit by affliction? To this end, we must repent us truly of our sins past, and resolve, by God's grace, to abandon them. Our good resolution must not be impulsive and evanescent, it must be deliberate and decided, in order that it may be permanent. God has promised to help us, and He alone can give us the strength to succeed; but He requires a concurrent will. If you would profit by affliction, you must be "instant in prayer," and diligent in the study of God's Word. Learn, then, to look at affliction in the true light, and from a Christian point of view. It is designed by God to make your heart soft. (*James Mackay, B.D.*)

CHAPTER XXIV.

VERS. 1-25. **Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty.**—*Great crimes not always followed by great punishment in this life:*—I. GREAT CRIMES HAVE PREVAILED ON THE EARTH FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES. Amongst the crimes specified in this chapter there is—1. Theft. There were those who stole from others their lands and flocks, and robbed the widow and orphan of their food and clothing (vers. 2-8). There is—2. Cruelty. "They plucked the fatherless from the breast," made "men groan out of the city." There is—3. Murder. "The murderer, rising with the light, killeth the poor and needy." There is—4. Adultery. "The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight," &c. The fact that these crimes prevailed in Job's land and times implies—1. That in those distant scenes and times the same standard of morals existed that we have. They esteemed theft, cruelty, murder, and adultery wrong; so do we. 2. That in those distant scenes and times men had the same sinful propensities as they have now. II. THAT ALTHOUGH THE GREAT GOD IS COGNISANT OF THOSE CRIMES HE DOES NOT ALWAYS VISIT THEM WITH PUNISHMENT IN THIS LIFE. Job begins with the question, "Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know Him not see His days?" The meaning is, Why, since crimes are not hidden from the Almighty, do not His friends see His judgments? He shows that these great criminals fare as well here, both in life and death, as others. Why is this? Not because the Almighty is ignorant of their crimes, or because their crimes are not abhorrent to His nature. Whatever the cause, the fact is undeniable; and this fact Job brings out here to refute the doctrine of his friends, namely, that great suffering implies great crime. (*Homilist.*) *Consideration for others:*—"I would rather be a year or two longer in effecting my purposes than reach them by trampling on men's hearts and hearths." (*J. Ruskin.*)

Ver. 12. **Men groan from out of the city.**—*The groans of the city:*—The truth is, man as he walketh upon the surface of the earth, seeth but the surface of its inhabitants. Well is it that we see no more. Were we able to go under the surface, though it were but slightly, our knowledge might make us go mad. It ought to do so. The thought is terrible in its wonder, and astonishing in its terror of the knowledge which the "God of the spirits of all flesh" necessarily hath of the mighty aggregate of the earth's depravities,—embracing in His boundless vision every iniquity that is, or ever was, meditated or executed, from the first entry of evil into the sphere of His dominions, to the last accent of defiance that shall be hurled at His throne. The shudder of such a thought sometimes affrighteth saintly souls. It seems here to have been laying hold of the patriarch. His plea is that, though men "groan in the city," God, the judge of all, appears at present to be calling none of these to account for their misdeeds. With one of the moderns we might exclaim, "It is very startling to see so much of sin with so little of sorrow" (Dr. Arnold). But is Job altogether sceptical as to their punishment? Far from it. He is leaving Eliphaz to the inference, that if his reasoning be correct that a man must be guilty because he is afflicted, these evil-doers must be innocent because they are not afflicted. Did we, however, know the world as it is, not as it seems,—could we go under the surface of society,—we might become acquainted with secrets of wickedness of which some of the wicked never dreamed, and with torments the existence of which the virtuous would scarcely believe. What misery would be revealed, where we see only the emblems of delight! Yea, what an empire of spiritual death in a universe of natural and artificial life! The patriarch's description of the city is as true and as fearful in its truth at this hour as in the day that he uttered it. As true of London or Paris now as of Babylon or Nineveh of old. The city is a place "from out of which men groan, and the soul of the wounded cry out." "The whole creation," through the apostasy of man, is represented by the great apostle as "groaning"; but the city being ever a vast concentration of guilt, what is true of the whole earth is pre-eminently true of it. In the city, transgression is a species of item—an enormous sum, indeed, in its daily concerns. All great cities are guilty of great sins. Those who inhabit the city are denizens of a place in which every day and every night multiplied iniquities are all but sure to be perpetrated, as surely as night and day succeed each other. Dreadful in the city are the groans of conscience. True, the world looks gay and thoughtless. Bright

eyes and merry lips offer their enchantments on every side. Notwithstanding, it will be found that the awful verities of the eternal state have a stronger hold upon the majority of men than is generally imagined. Amongst the groans of the city are the groans of such as have dishonoured a Christian profession by open offences; groans these which for years may be without response but their own echoes; wounds inconceivably painful, blushing as they do with the crimson tide of God's Lamb "crucified afresh." Among these groans of the city are the groans of saintly men and holy women for the sins of those around them. Think of the world as it is, and withhold from it a groan, if you can. Hence doth the Christian groan in spirit for the sins of the world; being afflicted for Christ, as Christ was afflicted for him. (*Alfred Bowen Evans.*)

Ver. 13. **Rebel against the light.**—*Light used figuratively*:—Light may be considered in two ways. Either properly or figuratively. 1. We may understand the text of light in a proper sense, and some insist chiefly on that. They rebel against the very light of the sun, or the ordinary daylight. Wicked men love darkness; they hate even natural light, the light of the sun, because it seldom serves, but often hinders, their occasions. 2. Take light figuratively for the light of knowledge. So it is more true that wicked men rebel against it. The light rebelled against is rather an internal light, that light which shines into the soul, than that which shines to the eye; and there is a twofold internal light, against which wicked men may be said to rebel. (1) The light of nature, or natural internal light; there is a light of the natural conscience, which every man carrieth about him, concerning good and evil, or what is to be done and what is to be left undone. (2) There is a light of Divine revelation, which shines into the soul from the Scriptures or written Word of God. Divine truths inspired and dictated by the Spirit of God are there written as with the beams of the sun. Yet the wicked man rebels against the clearest and fullest discoveries of the mind of God. 3. Some understand by the "light" here, God Himself, who is light. The very reason why the light of nature and the light of reason are rebelled against, is because the former hath somewhat of God in it, and the latter much of God in it. For as God is light, so all light is of God. (*Joseph Caryl.*) *Rebelling against the light*:—These evidently had the light, and this should be esteemed as no small privilege, since to wander on the dark mountains is a terrible curse. Yet this privilege may turn into an occasion of evil. Most of us have received light in several forms, such as instruction, conscience, reason, revelation, experience, the Holy Spirit. The degree of light differs, but we have each received some measure thereof. Light has a sovereignty in it, so that to resist it is to rebel against it. God has given it to be a display of Himself, for God is light; and He has clothed it with a measure of His majesty and power of judgment. Rebellion against light has in it a high degree of sin. It might be virtue to rebel against darkness, but what shall be said of those who withstand the light? resisting truth, holiness, and knowledge? I. DETECT THE REBELS. Well-instructed persons, who have been accustomed to teach others, and yet turn aside to evil; these are grievous traitors. Children of Christian parents who sin against their early training; upon whom prayer and entreaty, precept and example are thrown away. Hearers of the Word, who quench convictions deliberately, frequently, and with violence. Men with keen moral sense, who rush on, despite the reins of conscience which should restrain them. Lewd professors who, nevertheless, talk orthodoxy and condemn others, thereby assuredly pronouncing their own doom. II. DESCRIBE THE FORMS OF THIS REBELLION. Some refuse light, being unwilling to know more than would be convenient; therefore they deny themselves time for thought, absent themselves from sermons, neglect godly reading, shun pious company, avoid reproof, &c. Others scoff and fight against it, calling light darkness, and darkness light. Infidelity, ribaldry, persecution, and such like, become their resort and shelter. Persons run contrary to it in their lives; of set purpose, or through wilful carelessness. Walking away from the light is rebelling against it. Setting up your own wishes in opposition to the laws of morality and holiness, is open revolt against the light. Many presume upon their possession of light, imagining that knowledge and orthodox belief will save them. Many darken it for others, hindering its operations among men, hiding their own light under a bushel, ridiculing the efforts of others, &c. All darkness is a rebellion against light. Let us "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." III. DENOUNCE THE PUNISHMENT OF THIS REBELLION. To have the light removed. To lose

eyes to see it even when present. To remain unforgiven, as culprits blindfolded for death, as those do who resist the light of the Holy Spirit. To sin with tenfold guilt, with awful wilfulness of heart. To descend for ever into that darkness which increases in blackness throughout eternity. IV. DECLARE THE FOLLY OF THIS REBELLION. Light is our best friend, and it is wisdom to obey it; to resist it is to rebel against our own interest. Light triumphs still. Owls hoot, but the moon shines. Opposition to truth and righteousness is useless; it may even promote that which it aims to prevent. Light would lead to more light. Consent to it, for it will be beneficial to your own soul. Light would lead to heaven, which is the centre of light. Light even here would give peace, comfort, rest, holiness, and communion with God. Let us not rebel against light, but yield to its lead; yea, leap forward to follow its blessed track. Let us become the allies of light, and spread it. It is a noble thing to live as light-bearers of "the Lord and Giver of Light." Let us walk in the light, as God is in the light; and so our personal enjoyment will support our life-work. Light must be our life if our life is to be light. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Hatred of the light:*—The devil fears the light, and this is one reason why we should keep it always burning. A governor of the Bahamas, who was about to return to England, promised to do his best to procure from the Home Government any favour the Colonists might desire. And what think you was their unanimous reply: "Tell them to tear down the lighthouses—they are ruining the Colony." The men were wreckers, and they hated the light! And the devil so hates the light that he would tear down every spiritual lighthouse in the land if he only could. (*Sunday Circle.*)

Ver. 17. **The terrors of the shadow of death.**—*Death:*—Scripture speaks of death in two ways. Job calls death "the King of Terrors." Of a saint and martyr it is said, "He fell asleep." I. WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES DEATH TERRIBLE? 1. It is the rending asunder of what God has joined together. Body and soul. What life is, and what death is, we know by marked outward signs; but what the soul is, whence it comes, whither it goes, who knoweth, except so far as God has taught us? 2. It is the passage to judgment. "After this the judgment." 3. It is the breaking up of all we love, and desire, and care for here. II. Turn to the other side of the picture—WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES DEATH PEACEFUL? 1. The body and spirit shall again be joined. "In Christ shall all be made alive." 2. The judgment will be the "judgment-seat of Christ." Judgment is terrible where sin is; but sin washed away in the blood of the Cross has no sting, no terror left. 3. The Christian's treasure is above, his hope is full of immortality. Death to the Christian is the sure and certain hope of a better life. (*Alfred Pott, B.D.*)

Ver. 23. **Yet His eyes are upon thy ways.**—*God observes the ways of the wicked,* to call them to account for them. We have here a threefold act of providence about wicked oppressors, whom yet God suffereth to prosper. 1. That God's eye is upon them, to mark all their debordings. 2. That after their exaltation for a little while, they are cut off. 3. That yet this is done but in an ordinary way, as befalls all others. As the tops of the ripe ears of corn are cut down and gathered in. Learn—(1) Outward safety is in itself a mercy. Therefore men ought to improve this mercy aright, and should be sensible of their ill-improvement thereof, when they are deprived of it. 2. Safety is from God, and gifted by Him. No man can secure himself without God. 3. God in His long-suffering and indulgence may set the wicked in safety for a time, for a snare upon them. 4. It is a plague upon the wicked that they rest and secure in the enjoyment of outward mercies. 5. It is, in particular, a plague upon the wicked, that their outward security and safety quiets all their fears, so that they have no doubt of God's favour, or of their own good estate, so long as they are in such a condition. 6. God does not give safety to wicked men because He approves of them or seeth not their wickedness; but He hath an eye upon them all the while, and particularly notices how they abuse these providences. 7. Albeit the Lord be not still punishing the wicked, yet this is sad, that He is still observing and marking all their ways, to call them to account for them in a day of reckoning. (*George Hutcheson.*)

CHAPTER XXV.

VERS. 1–6. **Dominion and fear are with Him.**—*Ideas of God and man* :—I. MOST EXALTED IDEAS OF GOD. He speaks of Him—1. As the head of all authority. "Dominion and fear are with Him." 2. As the maintainer of all peace. "He maketh peace in His high places." Who maintains the order of the stellar universe? He is peaceful in His own nature, and peaceful in all His operations. 3. As the commander of all forces. "Is there any number of His armies?" What forces there are in the universe, material, mental, moral! 4. As the Fountain of all light. "Upon whom doth not His light arise?" He is the Father of lights. 5. As the perfection of all holiness. "How then can man be justified with God?" In this chapter Bildad gives—II. MOST HUMBLING IDEAS OF MAN. He represents him—1. As morally degenerate. "How can he be clean that is born of a woman?" 2. As essentially insignificant. He is a "worm." How frail in body! He is crushed before the moth. How frail his intellectual powers! Morally he is "without strength." Conclusion—1. The glorious light of nature. There is no reason to believe that Bildad had any special revelation from God. 2. The unsatisfactoriness of religious controversy. What has been the effect of all the arguments on Job? Not correction of mistakes, but great irritation and annoyance. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 4. **How then can man be justified with God?**—*On justification* :—I. WHAT JUSTIFICATION IS. The being accounted righteous though we are not so. When brought into a justified state we are treated as if we were altogether righteous. Whose is this righteousness? Whence is it derived? Not from ourselves or any remaining excellence in human nature. We must be accounted righteous, and justified with God, by other merits than our own. It is to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that we are indebted. II. HOW A MAN CANNOT BE JUSTIFIED. 1. Not by repentance. 2. Not by amendment of life. 3. Not by our sincerity. 4. Not by any works whatever of our own. III. HOW ALONE HE CAN BE JUSTIFIED. We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Why does faith alone, faith without works, justify us? Because faith is the only medium by which we can receive Christ. IV. WHY A MAN CAN BE JUSTIFIED IN NO OTHER WAY THAN THE WAY IN WHICH HE IS JUSTIFIED. 1. It is God's determination that "no flesh shall glory in His sight." 2. God has determined that His Son alone shall be exalted in the justification of a sinner. 3. It is God's determination to magnify His name and word above all the philosophy and traditions of men. 4. It is a merciful God's gracious determination to afford grounds of the most abundant consolation to the humbled and believing sinner. (*W. Mudge, B.A.*) *An all-important question* :—I. THE ALL-IMPORTANT QUESTION WHICH OUR TEXT PROPOSES. "How can man be justified with God?" It is a matter of some consequence to stand well with our brethren, to bear what is called a good character before our fellow-men; but to stand right with God is a point on which our heaven depends. II. THE DIFFICULTIES IT SUGGESTS. 1. The extreme holiness of God. The text says that there is not in any of the shining orbs of heaven, there is not to God the beauty that we see. So it is also with respect to moral excellency and spiritual perfection. Characters that we call shining actions that we count pure, exalted, are not in His eyes what they are in ours. In this Book it is said God "chargeth His angels with folly," and "the heavens are not clean in His sight." How can man be justified before that God who is so pure, so holy, so requiring—who sees dimness in the moon, imperfection in the stars, folly in His saints? 2. Then another difficulty is the extreme unholiness of man, his miserable baseness and corruption. Man is here called a worm. It is the very proverb in our lips for weakness and for helplessness; a thing that every foot may crush. But look at the place—the dunghill—where the worm is found. Look at its vile habits and propensities. It is the emblem of spiritual baseness and corruption. Man is spiritually vile in the sight of the most holy God. Put the two statements of the text together. God so holy that the very moon and stars have no glory in His eyes. Man so polluted that the filthy worm which crawls upon the dunghill is considered a just emblem of his case and character. Then how can man be justified with God? III. THE ONLY WAY IN WHICH SO DIFFICULT A QUESTION CAN BE ANSWERED. The Gospel supplies it. In Christ alone is the

question entirely satisfied. The answer is ready—by coming unto Jesus; by casting the whole soul upon the Saviour's merits; by ceasing from that hopeless work of endeavouring "to establish our own righteousness," and by submitting ourselves unfeignedly to that which Christ hath wrought for us. Are we doing this? Are we making Christ the "Lord our Righteousness," by looking only unto Him for recommendation in the sight of God? (*A. Roberts, M.A.*) *Justification* :—1. The natural man builds his hope of justification at the day of final reckoning on the law. The moral law contains the sum of our duty toward God and toward man. If the law give life, it can do so only to those who fulfil it in all its requirements. The law is exceeding broad. We stop not to inquire whether it is possible for human strength to fulfil the law even in its letter, but we ask you to reflect whether you have fulfilled it in its spiritual extent. Many, finding that they cannot be justified by a law thus spiritual in its nature and extensive in its requirements, go about to establish a righteousness of their own upon a ground just as untenable. They conceive that a law of such perfection is fitted only to perfect, sinless creatures; and that to beings imperfect, and in their nature now inherently and habitually sinful, it must relax its strictness, and lower its requisitions, and accept of sincere, instead of complete obedience. But this is absurd as well as unscriptural. Do the laws of human governments vary with the endless variety of their subjects whose social relations they are appointed to direct? The laws of heaven cannot stoop, because they are founded upon the immutable basis of their truth and rectitude. 2. Repentance is the next ground to which the sinner betakes himself in the persuasion that though the law of itself cannot give life, yet with this addition it may do so. But is there anything in repentance, when considered by itself, which can really form a ground of hope to the violater of the law? To the eye of reason, apart altogether from revelation, there certainly is not. The law is broken, and sorrow for its breach no more repairs the evil, than sorrow for an injury done to a fellow-mortal actually repairs that injury. Repentance does nothing of itself to repair the breach which has been made by transgression. Our repentance, so far from annulling law, can only be regarded as a testimony, on our part, of the justice of the Lawgiver in demanding that atonement which blood only can supply. The sinner has no ground in revelation for supposing that repentance of itself can atone for transgression. 3. A vague dependence on the mercy of God. Can anything be conceived more impious or evidently delusive than such a hope as is here entertained? What idea must they form of the character of God when they can derive from it an excuse for past and a motive for future wickedness? Has God no attributes but those of mercy and goodness, or are the other parts of His character negatived by these? 4. The true answer is given by Jehovah. We are "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Christ is the fountain of all our hopes. By the perfect obedience of His life He has magnified and even honoured the law, which had been dishonoured by man's transgression; He has satisfied its justice by the death of the Cross. (*J. Glasson.*) *Man contending with God* :—Bildad in this place doth not speak of justification in that strict Gospel sense as it imports the pronouncing of a man righteous for the sake of Christ, or as if he supposed Job looked to be pronounced righteous for his own sake. Bildad speaks of justification here, as to some particular act; as for instance, if any man will contend with God, as if God had done him some wrong, or had afflicted him more than there was need, is he able to make the plea good, and give proof of it before the throne of God? There is a fourfold understanding of that phrase, "with God." 1. If any man shall presume to refer himself to the judgment of God, shall he be justified? In this sense it is possible for a man to be justified with God; and thus Job was justified by God at last against the opinions and censures of his three friends. 2. To be justified with God is as much as this. If man come near to, or set himself in the presence of God, shall he be justified? Man usually looks upon himself at a distance from God; he looks upon himself in his own light, and so thinks himself righteous; but when he looks upon himself in the light of God, or as one that is near to God, will not all his spots and blemishes then appear? 3. Can man be justified with God? That is, if man compare himself with God, can he be justified? One may compare himself with another, and be justified. But how can man be just or righteous compared with God, in comparison of whom all our righteousness is unrighteous, and our very cleanness filthy? 4. To be justified with God is against God. That is, if man strive or contend with God, in anything, as if God

were too hard and severe towards him, either by withholding good from him, or bringing evil upon him, can man be justified in this contention? Will God be found to have done him any wrong? Taking the words in a general sense, observe that man hath nothing of his own to justify him before God. There are two things considerable in man. His sin, and his righteousness. All grant man cannot be justified by or for his sins; nor can he at all be justified in or for his own righteousness. And that upon a twofold ground. (1) Because the best of his righteousness is imperfect; and no imperfect thing can be a ground of justification and acceptance with God. (2) All the righteousness wrought by man is a due debt. How can we acquit ourselves from the evil we have done by any good which we do, seeing all the good we do we ought to have done, though we had never done any evil? When we have done our best we may be ashamed of our doings, we do so poorly. There is, however, a twofold justification. The justification of a man in reference to some particular act, or in his cause. And the justification of a man in his person. When Job said, "I know that I shall be justified," his meaning was, I shall be justified in this case, in this business. I shall not be cast as a hypocrite (for he always stood upon, and stiffly maintained his integrity); or I know I shall be justified in this opinion which I constantly maintain; that a righteous man may be greatly afflicted by God, while in the meantime He spareth the unrighteous and the sinner. A man may have much to justify himself by before God, as to a controversy between him and man; for he hath nothing at all to justify himself by, as to his state before God. (*Joseph Caryl.*) *Accusations silenced*:—The Jews have a legend that Satan accuses men day and night the whole year round, except on the day of atonement, and then he is utterly silenced. The legend becomes fact in the atonement of Christ. This silences the accuser ever, for it is "God that justifieth," and who can condemn? They (the saints) "overcome by the blood of the Lamb."

Ver. 6. **Man, that is a worm.**—*The worm*:—1. With peculiar emphasis we may say of the worm, it is "of the earth earthy." Springing out of it, boring into it, and feeding on it, or on that which grows upon it,—it is a singular image of man, who was formed out of the dust of the ground, and is destined to return to it, and who, alas! feeds on it. All men may not be equally represented by that which belongs to the extremely gross in character. 2. In the naturally repulsive character of a worm we have an illustration of sin. The only thing that repels God from man is sin. To man's weakness, ignorance, poverty, and sorrow, the Creator can and does graciously draw near; but from man's sin He recoils. What sin is to God, it should be to us—a repulsive thing—that which we should hate and flee from. 3. The carrion-worm and canker-worm afford us an illustration of the injurious character of man as a sinner. What are the ravages of war but the dread results of human carrion-worms revelling in human blood? What are the restless activities, passions, and pursuits of men, but the ceaseless gnawing of pride, envy, ambition, lust, anger, malice, deceit, and suchlike things—the canker-worms of the soul, and the carrion-worms of the body? 4. Learn a lesson of humility from the different classes and pursuits of worms. Some are great and some small; some attractive and some unsightly. 5. Worms are not without their use in the world, and some—such as silkworms—are of great value. (*Anon.*)

CHAPTER XXVI.

VERS. 1-14. **But Job answered and said.**—*The transcendent greatness of God*:—I. God appears incomprehensibly great in THAT PORTION OF THE UNIVERSE THAT IS BROUGHT UNDER HUMAN OBSERVATION. 1. In connection with the world of disembodied spirits. "Dead things are formed from under the waters and the inhabitants thereof. Hell is naked before Him, and destruction hath no covering." 2. In connection with this terraqueous globe. "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing." "It is evident that the true figure of the earth had early engaged the attention of men, and that occasionally the truth on this subject was before their minds, though it was neither brought into a system nor sustained there by sufficient

evidence to make it an article of established belief." 3. In connection with the starry universe. "By His Spirit He hath garnished the heavens." W. Herschell observed one hundred and sixteen thousand stars pass the feeblest telescope in one quarter of an hour. But what are they? Only a few drops to the ocean. II. INSIGNIFICANT COMPARED WITH THOSE PARTS THAT ARE UNDISCOVERED IN IMMENSITY. "Lo, these are parts of His ways; but how little a portion is heard of Him? but the thunder of His power who can understand?" Conclusion—1. God's greatness is not inconsistent with His attention to little things. 2. God's greatness is a vital subject for human thought. No subject is so soul quickening. No subject is so humbling. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 7. **And hangeth the earth upon nothing.**—*The basis of the great realities:* —That is the startling and sublime conception of the sacred poet, that the earth is sustained by impalpable and spiritual energies. But if you go to the mythology of the Hindoo, you find that the earth rests on the back of an elephant, and that the elephant stands on a tortoise! Now these two ways of looking upon the stability of the earth penetrate the whole world of thought. One great school of men finds that the basis of all things is spiritual; another school finds that the basis of all things is material. Says one, the life of the universe is supernatural; says the other, we can only trust a tangible and material foundation. There in nature, as Job says, "He hangeth the earth upon nothing." He says that the basis of the world is invisible and metaphysical; in a word we say in this place that the ultimate factor in nature is spiritual; that out of the spiritual arose the visible; that the spiritual holds the visible together; that the spiritual governs the visible and directs it to some intelligent and noble goal. We say, not the sensational, not the material, but the visible universe, hangs on nothing —on the unseen power of the spiritual God. You go to some sceptical men to-day and ask them, What holds this earth up? Why the imponderables, the ethers, the electricities, the galvanisms, the gravitations—the elephant and tortoise! Go and ask them where all the flowers came from. There was a time when there was not a single plant on the planet. Where did they all come from? Well, they say, if you go back far enough, you go back to a meteor stone which brought from other planets the germs of vegetable life and beauty. If you go far enough back! Only you see, it is not far enough back, it is the tortoise again! You go to the physiologist and ask him where physical life, animal life comes from? He says, if you want to explain animal life you must go back to—what? Odic forces, nervous energy! Oh no, no, no, it is not far enough back; it is stopping once more at the elephant and tortoise. And that is exactly what we in the Church refuse to do. We won't stay here, but we will go with the sublime philosophy of the text, to the living God. And we believe that at last the things that are seen rest upon the wise and eternal will of God, over all blessed for ever. When these men say that everything is to be explained by natural laws, natural causes, natural sequences, we believe in natural laws, natural causes, natural sequences. But before all changes, all states, all stages, we must find the Prime Mover, and, as to all the rest, all the secondary causes, the will of God works through them all, to His high and wonderful purpose. Go to the sceptical biologist to-day, and he says, if you want to explain organisation you must go back, and you will find that the organisation of to-day is based upon simple organisation in the primitive epoch. In other words, you are to go back and to find the microscopical tortoise in the primitive mud. You go to a sceptical astronomer and ask what keeps the universe up. "Oh," he says, "one star hangs upon another." Very good. And they all hang upon the topmost star. Everything is dependent upon the central sun. In other words, your central sun is the transfigured tortoise. Go to the sceptical geologist and say, "What do things rest upon?" He says, "The earth you walk upon rests upon the carboniferous epoch." "Yes, and what does that rest upon?" "That rests upon the Devonian." "Very good; and what does that rest on?" He says, "That rests on the Silurian." "And what does that rest on?" "That rests on the cosmical dust." A lively tortoise! We hold the tortoise and the elephant are very good as far as they go; but they do not go far enough. And you have never gone far enough, whilst you keep to secondary causes, whilst you keep to intermediary forces. You can never find rest for the intelligent soul, until at the back of the physical universe, with its interdependencies and its evolutions, you find the God who made and ruled it, and is bringing it through the

ages to some wise and magnificent consummation. I say, let us, in these days of materialism, keep well this before the world—"In the beginning God," the first cause, God in whom all things are held together; God who directs everything to a noble and adequate consummation. You know, where I live, the speculative builder has turned up, and he has built a row of houses opposite to my modest cottage. I had a grand time when I went to live there. I had the sky, and the sunrise, and the sunset, and the procession of the clouds, and the colours of the spring, and the glory of the summer. I never dared to speak of it, lest my landlord should put up my rent! If he had made me pay for all that, he would have wanted a fine fee. But in comes the speculative builder, and puts up this row of horrid bricks and mortar. And now the only glimpse I get of the violet sky is in a puddle in the street. I never see the splendour of the sunset, except a stray gleam in a window-pane. As for the growths of the summer, the only relics I now see are two smutty, smutty growths in a little plot that they poetically call my garden! They call it London Pride that grows there. But if London is proud of it, it shows the humility of the metropolis! Now what I want you to see is this: that just as the bricks and mortar have shut out nature, so nature herself may become so much dead brick and mortar to shut out the greater world that is back of it. Men stop with the visible, and they forget the unseen and eternal universe, of which this world is but a theatre of images and shadows. Now find another illustration of the text in society. If God is the ultimate factor in nature, God is once more the ultimate factor in society. "He hangeth the earth upon nothing." He hangeth civilisation upon nothing. Now there, again, you find the objector comes in. He says, Oh, you believe everything rests in society upon a spiritual basis. Yes. Well, I don't; I believe that society is built upon instincts, upon utilities, upon governments. The elephant and tortoise again! What are the three great words in the world to-day touching civilisation? "Liberty, equality, fraternity?" Let us drop that legend and take up these which come nearer to the point—sympathy, righteousness, hope. Society is held together, it advances by the power of these three words. If you come to look at them, they are all metaphysical. Sympathy—What a power sympathy is in civilisation! The home, society are held together by it. Go to the materialist, and he says, Society is held together by hooks of steel. What are they? The policeman's handcuffs, that is it. How is society held together? By the hangman's noose. Coercion, penalties, punishments—society rests there! Society does not rest there. One of the great factors is that wonderful thing you call love that has been working obscurely in the world from the beginning to this hour. Forbearance, unselfishness, disinterestedness, gratitude, love. Oh, says the utilitarian, hang the earth upon the thick cart-rope of coercion. He hangeth civilisation upon the fine silken thread we call love. And to-day in society, love plays the same part that gravitation plays in the physical universe. Righteousness. What is righteousness? Oh, says the utilitarian, righteousness is a coarse fibre,—self-interest. That is the sustaining force of righteousness. What is the force which sustains righteousness? It is spiritual. "God hangs the heavens upon the finest wires," say the ancients; and morality depends upon faith and love. If you want a guarantee for morality, what is the great guarantee which the New Testament gives? That the love you feel to the world's Saviour will prompt your obedience to the world's Lawgiver. Hope. There is another great word that moves and sanctifies society. If it were not for hope, the nation would wither, civilisation would wither. And the hope of the world is at last the confidence of men in an unseen but a faithful God. And so, in civilisation as in science, the great forces that mould, and sustain, and inspire, and perfect, are not gross materialism and mean utilities, but they are in fine threads, noble feelings, and these threads sustain the whole fabric of civilisation. And therefore in the Church, you know, we seem really nobody. If you get a statesman, he has got an army at his back. If you get a magistrate, he has got a lot of policemen at his back. If you get a merchant, you get the Bank of England at his back—more or less! But we in the Church have no political mastery. When we lay down a law, we cannot call in the policeman. We have none of the forces of bread and gold. What have we got in the Church? Well, I say this, the Church is the master of the forces that mould society, that is all. The Church is the master of those great emotions of sympathy, of sentiment, of righteousness, of hope. Never you be troubled because you think the Church has a somewhat isolated and spiritualised

and apparently uninfluential situation. It is the spiritual that governs society. I must show you how the text is illustrated in the Church. "He hangeth the earth upon nothing." Religion—what is religion? Religion means a bond, a spiritual bond, between my soul and my Maker, and my salvation hangs where the earth hangeth and where salvation hangs, on the Word of God in Jesus Christ; there and only there. You are wrong again, says the objector, and he begins to call in the elephant and the tortoise. Says he, What about the Church? Your salvation rests on the Church, its services, sacraments, its spiritualities. Don't you see it is resting (and I speak with great respectfulness) our salvation upon the elephant and the tortoise, instead of going back to the spiritual God and His truth, love, and grace, and these only? My salvation depends upon my personal fellowship with my living Lord. He hangeth the earth, not upon the coarse thread of historic continuity, but upon the fine thread of the spiritual past. My salvation does not hang upon a connection with the ceremonial Church. There they fix me up with the visible, mechanical, ceremonial Church. It is like a man who believes the earth wants shoring up. Not a bit of it. I can do with certain of these things and I can do without them. I am not bound to the visible ceremonial Church. Hangs my salvation on the simple Word in Jesus Christ, and there is the vital truth for you and for me. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth, for He seeketh such to worship Him." "He hangeth the earth upon nothing," and it hangs well. Fasten yourself to the same thread and you shall not find that you will be confounded. (*W. L. Watkinson.*)

Ver. 8. **He bindeth up the waters in His thick clouds.**—*Water, and its wonderful transportation by clouds:*—The average quantity of aqueous vapour, or water held in the air, is estimated to be 54,460,000,000,000 tons. The annual amount of rainfall is estimated to be 186,240 cubic miles. If this rain were at any one moment equally spread over the land portion of the globe, it would cover all the continents with water three feet deep. Reflect now that water in its natural state is 773 times heavier than air. And now suppose that you had never heard or conceived of the principle of evaporation, and that you were required to lift up this vast mass of 54,460,000,000,000 tons of water one mile, two, three, four or five miles high into the air, and keep it suspended there. Well, what man, or all mankind combined cannot do, or begin to do, God did on that second day of creation, and does daily. Water as vapour occupies 1600 times larger space than water as liquid. Hence, water as vapour is lighter than air, and naturally ascends. That is the whole secret. How manifold are the works of God. (*G. D. Boardman.*)

Ver. 9. **He holdeth back the face of His throne, and spreadeth His cloud upon it.**—*The cloud upon the throne:*—Aided by Divine revelation, the researches of man have done much and well in tracking out the footprints of Deity, in exploring His hidden works, and leading us through nature up to that God whose glory is thus dimly shadowed forth, and upon whom nature depends for all its laws, its continuance and well-being. But after all, there is still around the throne of God a cloud so dense that it cannot be pierced by the keenest eye of the most assiduous investigator, and defies all the daring powers of the most gifted intellect. How insignificant do we appear in the presence of the Infinite, the Incomprehensible! I. THE TRUTH TO BE ILLUSTRATED. The figurative language of the text seems to have reference to the mystery which surrounds the throne of God as the seat of His universal empire. 1. In reference to the kingdom of creation, it must be acknowledged that the mind of man has discovered much that is vast and sublime. It has discovered what are called the laws of gravitation. But who can define the precise nature of this gravitation? Is it not a name given to something, the effects of which are manifest, but whose real and essential nature is unknown? We go to the patriarchal hills, and explore the bosom of the earth, and discover further illustration of the text. There is something here which baffles all man's powers to explain. Look at that living mystery of all mysteries which we carry about with us; consider the mechanism of the human frame, and the moral constitution of our nature. Who can trace the connection that subsists between mind and matter; how is it that the physical frame is subject to the volitions of mind? 2. In reference to the kingdom of God's moral government, and the dispensations of an overruling providence. As a general rule,

vice brings along with it its own scourge, and virtue its own reward; yet in how many instances are we staggered with perplexity, when we see the profane and the ungodly among the most prosperous in temporal matters, whilst the man who fears God, and pursues his honest avocation with persevering industry, is often bound round with sorrow as with a garment, and disastrous events come upon him in quick succession. 3. In reference to the kingdom of grace. At every step we find ourselves encompassed with inscrutable mystery, whether we consider the doctrines taught, the objects embraced, or the change produced. II. THE CONSOLATION SUGGESTED. It is not one opposing power holding back the throne of another, and spreading a cloud upon it with some vindictive design. It is the King Himself holding back His own throne, and Himself covering it with a cloud. God is seated upon the cloud-wrapped throne, not merely as universal Governor, but in the more endearing character of a Father. All things are working together for good under the superintendence of Him who sitteth upon the throne. These considerations should tend to check the despondent repinings in which we are so often disposed to indulge. The cloud is spread upon the throne now; but let us trust God where we cannot trace Him; only let us live by faith in His Son; and soon the cloud will pass away before our beatific vision; soon shall we see the King in His beauty, on His throne dismantled of the cloud, smiling with a Father's warmest love. We shall then acknowledge with grateful hearts—He did all things well. (*W. J. Brock, A.B.*)

Ver. 14. **Lo, these are parts of His ways.** — *The veil partly lifted:* — The least understood Being in the universe is God. Blasphemous would be any attempt, by painting or sculpture, to represent Him. Egyptian hieroglyphs tried to suggest Him, by putting the figure of an eye upon a sword, implying that God sees and rules, but how imperfect the suggestion. When we speak of Him, it is almost always in language figurative. He is "Light," or "Day-spring from on high," or He is a "High Tower," or the "Fountain of Living Waters." After everything that language can do when put to the utmost strain, and all we can see of God in the natural world and realise of God in the providential world, we are forced to cry out with Job in my text, "Lo, these are parts of His ways; but how little a portion is heard of Him? but the thunder of His power who can understand?" We try to satisfy ourselves with saying, "It is natural law that controls things, gravitation is at work, centripetal and centrifugal forces respond to each other." But what is natural law? It is only God's ways of doing things. At every point in the universe it is God's direct and continuous power that controls and harmonises and sustains. What power it must be that keeps the internal fires of our world imprisoned—only here and there spurting from a Cotopaxi, or a Stromboli, or from a Vesuvius putting Pompeii and Herculaneum into sepulchre; but for the most part the internal fires chained in their cages of rock, and century after century unable to break the chain or burst open the door. What power to keep the component parts of the air in right proportion, so that all round the world the nations may breath in health, the frosts and the heats hindered from working universal demolition. What is that power to us? asks some one. It is everything to us. With Him on our side, the reconciled God, the sympathetic God, the omnipotent God, we may defy all human and Satanic antagonisms. We get some little idea of the Divine power when we see how it buries the proudest cities and nations. Ancient Memphis it has ground up, until many of its ruins are no larger than your thumb-nail, and you can hardly find a souvenir large enough to remind you of your visit. The city of Tyre is under the sea which washes the shore, on which are only a few crumbling pillars left. By such rehearsal we try to arouse our appreciation of what Omnipotence is, and our reverence is excited, and our adoration is intensified, but, after all, we find ourselves at the foot of a mountain we cannot climb, hovering over a depth we cannot fathom. So all those who have put together systems of theology have discoursed also about the wisdom of God. Think of a Wisdom which can know the end from the beginning, that knows the thirtieth century as well as the first century. We can guess what will happen; but it is only a guess. Think of a Mind that can hold all of the past and all the present and all the future. We can contrive and invent on a small scale; but think of a Wisdom that could contrive a universe! Think of a Wisdom that was able to form, without any suggestion or any model to work by, the eye, the ear, the hand, the foot, the vocal organs. What we know is overwhelmed by what we do not know. What the botanist knows about

the flower is not more wonderful than the things he does not know about the flower. What the geologist knows about the rocks is not more amazing than the things which he does not know about them. The worlds that have been counted are only a small regiment of the armies of light, the hosts of heaven, which have never passed in review before mortal vision. What a God we have! All that theologians know of God's wisdom is insignificant compared with the wisdom beyond human comprehension. The human race never has had, and never will have enough brain or heart to measure the wisdom of God. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" So, also, all systems of theology try to tell us what is omnipresence, that is God's capacity to be everywhere at the same time. So every system of theology has attempted to describe and define the Divine attribute of love. Easy enough is it to define fatherly love, motherly love, conjugal love, fraternal love, sisterly love and love of country, but the love of God defies all vocabulary. I think the love of God was demonstrated in mightier worlds, before our little world was fitted up for human residence. Will a man, owning 50,000 acres of land, put all the cultivation on a half acre? Will God make a million worlds, and put His chief affection on one small planet? Are the other worlds, and larger worlds, standing vacant, uninhabited, while this little world is crowded with inhabitants? No, it takes a universe of worlds to express the love of God! Go ahead, O Church of God! Go ahead, O world! and tell as well as you can what the love of God is, but know beforehand that Paul was right when he said, "It passeth knowledge." Only glimpses of God have we in this world, but what an hour it will be when we first see Him, and we will have no more fright than I feel when I now see you. It will not be with mortal eye that we will behold Him, but with the vision of a cleansed, forgiven, and perfected spirit. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Parts of His ways:*—The man who said that was not left comfortless. Sometimes in our very desolateness we say things so deep and true as to prove that we are not desolate at all, if we were only wise enough to seize the comfort of the very power which sustains us. He who has a great thought has a great treasure. A noble conception is an incorruptible inheritance. Job's idea is that we hear but a whisper. Lo, this is a feeble whispering: the universe is a subdued voice; even when it thunders it increases the whisper inappreciably as to bulk and force: all that is now possible to me, Job would say, is but the hearing of a whisper; but the whisper means that I shall hear more by and by; behind the whispering there is a great thundering, a thunder of power; I could not bear it now; the whisper is a Gospel, the whisper is an adaptation to my aural capacity; it is enough, it is music, it is the tone of love, it is what I need in my littleness and weariness, in my initial manhood. How many controversies this would settle if it could only be accepted in its entirety! We know in part, therefore we do prophesy in part; we see only very little portions of things, therefore we do not pronounce an opinion upon the whole; we hear a whisper, but it does not follow that we can understand the thunder. There is a Christian agnosticism. Why are men afraid to be Christian agnostics? Why should we hesitate to say with patriarchs and apostles, I cannot tell, I do not know; I am blind, and cannot see in that particular direction; I am waiting? What we hear now is a whisper, but a whisper that is a promise. We must let many mysteries alone. No candle can throw a light upon a landscape. We must know just what we are and where we are, and say we are of yesterday, and know nothing when we come into the presence of many a solemn mystery. Yet how much we do know! enough to live upon; enough to go into the world with as fighting men, that we may dispute with error, and as evangelistic men, that we may reveal the Gospel. They have taken from us many words which they must bring back again, when rationalism is restored amongst the stolen vessels of the Church, agnosticism also will be brought in as one of the golden goblets that belongs to the treasure of the sanctuary. We, too, are agnostics: we do not know, we cannot tell; we cannot turn the silence into speech, but we know enough to enable us to wait. Amid all this difficulty of ignorance we hear a voice saying, What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter: I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now: if it were not so, I would have told you,—as if to say, I know how much to tell, and when to tell it. Little children, trust your Lord. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *Limited knowledge of the Creator:*—The works of God should lead us to God Himself. Our study of the creature should be to gain a clearer light and knowledge of the Creator.

There are many expressions and impressions of God upon the things which He hath made, and we never see them as we ought, till in them we see their Maker. A critical eye looks upon a picture, not so much to see the colours or the paint, as to discern the skill of the painter or limner; yea, some (as the apostle speaks in reference to spirituals) have senses so exercised about these artificials that they will read the artist's name in the form and exquisiteness of his art. An Apelles or Michael Angelo needs not to put his name to his work, his work proclaims his name to those who are judicious beholders of such kind of works. How much more (as the Psalmist speaks), "that the name of God is near, do His wondrous works (both of nature and providence) declare" to all discreet beholders! That which the eye and heart of every godly man is chiefly upon, is to find out and behold the name, that is, the wisdom, power, and goodness of God in all His works, both of creation and providence. It were better for us never to enjoy the creature, than not to enjoy God in it; and it were better for us not to see the creature, than not to have a sight of God in it. And yet when we have seen the most of God which the creature can show us, we have reason to say, how little a portion is seen of Him! And when we have heard the most of God that can be reported to us from the creation, we have reason to say, as Job here doth, "How little a portion is heard of Him?" (*Joseph Caryl.*) *Our ignorance of God*:—The true knowledge of God is founded in a deep sense of our ignorance of Him. They know Him best who are most humble that they know Him no better. In this chapter Job celebrates the power and wisdom of God as manifest in the works of creation. I. HOW LITTLE A PORTION DO WE KNOW OF HIS BEING. That there must be some intelligent, independent, first cause of all created nature is most certain. This first Being must subsist necessarily, or by a necessity of nature. But have we any idea what that means? If He be necessarily existent, He must be eternal. But a Being subsisting of Himself from all eternity, surpasses the utmost stretch of our imagination. If God necessarily exist, He must be omnipresent, or present in all places. But what idea can we form of the Divine immensity? II. THE MANNER OF GOD'S EXISTENCE AS MUCH EXCEEDS ALL OUR COMPREHENSION AS THE NECESSARY PROPERTIES OF IT. How can we suppose that it should not? If Scripture does not explain to our understanding the peculiar mode or manner of His existence, or a distinction of subsistence in the Divine essence, why should the mystery of it be a stumbling-block to our faith, when in the world of nature we are surrounded with mysteries which we readily believe, though no less incomprehensible? III. HOW LITTLE WE KNOW OF THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS. Both His natural and moral perfections leave our thoughts labouring in the research infinitely behind. What those perfections are, as subsisting in a limited degree in creatures we know, but what they are as existing without limits, or to the utmost extent in God, we know not. 1. When our minds are once satisfied and established in the doctrine of the Divine perfections, let no difficulties or objections that may arise from our contemplation of the works of nature, or the ways of providence, be suffered to weaken our faith therein. 2. When we are speaking of the Divine attributes we commonly say they are infinite, that is, they have nothing to limit, obstruct, or circumscribe them, or that they extend to the utmost degree of perfection. 3. The attributes of God are sometimes divided into His communicable and incommunicable attributes. By the former are meant His moral perfections; such as His wisdom, holiness, goodness, &c., which in various degrees He communicates to His creatures. By the latter are understood those attributes which are appropriate to Deity; such as absolute independence, self-sufficiency, eternity, immensity, and omnipotence, which are in their own nature incommunicable to any finite subject. IV. HOW LITTLE DO WE KNOW OF THE WORKS OF GOD. How few of them fall under our observation! Look at the minute animal work; at what is revealed by the microscope. Look at the great world; or at the finished mechanism of our body. How astonishing the union of two such opposite substances as flesh and spirit. V. HIS WAYS OF PROVIDENCE ARE AS UNSEARCHABLE AS HIS WORKS OF POWER. Whilst His thoughts and views are not as ours, but infinitely more extended, it is no wonder that there should appear to us inextricable mysteries in the course of His providential conduct. VI. HOW LOW AND DEFECTIVE IS OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORD OF GOD. In a revelation that comes from God, it might reasonably be expected that we should meet with some hidden truths or sublime doctrines which surpass our understandings. (1) How humble we should be in view of our ignorance. (2) Speak of God with the profoundest rever-

ence. (3) Be thankful for what we know of God, and try to increase it. (*J. Mason, A.M.*) *On the incomprehensibleness of God*:—Under the dispensation of the new covenant, a clearer knowledge of the Divine nature and properties was vouchsafed. Yet still the things of heaven are raised far above the level of mortal faculties. If God under the law made darkness His pavilion, He dwells under the Gospel in inaccessible light. I. THE INCOMPREHENSIBLENESS OF GOD AS IT RELATES TO HIS GENERAL NATURE. Who can comprehend His distinct personality, combined with His diffused omnipresence? What clear and distinct notion does man entertain of eternity? Nor can we form a more accurate notion of unbounded space. God is omnipotent. But God cannot destroy His own nature. God cannot obliterate space. God cannot act wickedly. What is this omnipotence which is fettered with so many "cannots"? God is a Spirit. But what does man know of Spirit? God is omniscient. But how can we reconcile this with the contingent and optional conduct of men as moral and free agents? II. TO HOW SMALL AN EXTENT WE CAN COMPREHEND GOD'S MORAL ATTRIBUTES. Wisdom, Justice, Holiness, Mercy. If God be holy, why did He permit the existence of vice? If He be merciful, wherefore did He permit the existence of suffering? If He be just, whence the promiscuous distribution of good and evil observable, with little respect to merit or demerit, in this world? How many such questions might be asked! Inferences—1. How exceedingly petulant appear the cavils of infidelity! 2. In those matters of faith wherein we possess no analogy to assist our power of comprehension, it will be well to rest satisfied with the authority of Scripture. 3. In our present inability to comprehend the Divine nature, we seem to possess the valuable earnest of a future state of being. Oh, the exquisite and endless pleasures which the full comprehension of Divinity will impart to the unfilmed understanding of man! (*Johnson Grant.*) *The mystery of Providence*:—The patriarch, extolling the majesty and might of Jehovah, adduces various exhibitions of His power in the natural world. The meaning of Job is, "These manifestations of the Deity, grand and imposing as they are, present but a very inadequate display of His character and works. They are, as it were, but a breathing of His power." It is the feeling of every devout philosopher engaged in the researches of natural science, "These are parts of His ways." When he meets with difficulties, therefore, which baffle his sagacity, he modestly refers them to his own ignorance, satisfied that there must be principles or facts, as yet undiscovered, that will explain them. It is the sciolist who draws sweeping conclusions from scant premises. It will do much to save science from repeating its mistakes, to keep in mind that in its profoundest researches into the arcana of nature it sees but "parts of His ways who made and governs all." What is here affirmed of creation is no less true of His providence. Providence comes home to us all. It has to do with everyone's affairs at every moment of life. Who does not feel that this whole dispensation under which we live is a mystery? We come into being heirs of a depraved nature. The world is a scene replete with temptation, and filled with suffering. Sin, sorrow, and death range over every part of it. The mystery which enfolds this whole condition of things deepens when we consider the character of the Supreme Being. It seems, at first view, to be incompatible with His moral perfections. We are all pressed with these moral difficulties. It is a tangled web which we cannot unravel. Sometimes, in meditating on it, our faith almost gives way. If there be any method of removing or mitigating these trials, we ought to know it. Take the text as equivalent to the declaration of the apostle, "We know in part." To take this world by itself, dissevered from its relations to the great scheme of providence, and from its own past and future, is to consign ourselves to atheism and despair. To contemplate it as a part, and an infinitesimal part of a "stupendous whole," will relieve even its darkest features, and assist us in believing that, although "clouds and darkness are round about Him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne." "These are parts of His ways." There is a prime truth presented in these last words. We are not to escape from the perplexities of our position by denying that the Divine government extends to this moral chaos around us. Whatever is, is by His direction or permission. All these inequalities of our condition proceed according to a purpose. It is chaos only to our limited and imperfect vision. It is something to be assured of this. If these events are but "parts of His ways," both reason and religion forbid us to judge of them as though they were the whole of His ways. As parts of God's ways, we can so far understand as to perceive that it is what it is because we

are what we are. We may not attempt to penetrate the Divine counsels and inquire why this order of things was established in preference to any other. But since it is established, we cannot fail to see that it expresses in a most emphatic manner God's hatred of sin. And it is adapted to supply the very training which we need. We are under the discipline of temptation. (*Henry A. Boardman, D.D.*) *The Jubilee of Science in* 1881:—I endeavour to point out the direct religious bearings of some of the main discoveries achieved within fifty years. Half a century ago it was generally held that every living thing, whether animal or plant, from the lichen on the wall to the cedar of the forest, from the crawling worm to the king of beasts, and man the crown of all, was called into existence by an instantaneous fiat, just as we see them now. All Nature was looked upon as a gigantic stationary stereotype, the handiwork indeed of God, who stood outside of it, and had done so since creation's dawn. In presence of that Nature, as the performance of a Divine artificer, men wondered and worshipped indeed; but to a large extent their worship was ignorant, and the wonder vacant. Our admiration lacked intelligence, our awe was a blank dismay. But Darwin and Wallace arose like prophets in our midst, and at the bidding of their voice chaos gave place to order, darkness made way for light. People who call themselves, and think themselves, and are, according to their light, religious, tell us, forsooth, that this theory of development is not demonstrated, is not proven, is a mere hypothesis. Of course it is a mere hypothesis. Everything is a mere hypothesis that attempts to give a philosophical explanation of Nature. Every effort to piece together, in a consistent whole, the isolated facts of experience, is a mere hypothesis. But the theory of separate creation is likewise a mere hypothesis. The question is, which hypothesis is the more reasonable? To accept this theory of evolution demands an act of faith. Every intellectual judgment is an act of faith. And just in proportion as it is earnest and sincere, and bends before the majesty of reason, and is a genuine endeavour to read a meaning into life and destiny, it is a religious act. There used to be a time when it was held religious to believe in miracles, in a stoppage or reversal of the quiet course of Nature. The more prodigies and marvels, the more inexplicable things a man could accept, or a book recount, the more religious that man or book was supposed to be. But the more God is recognised in order, in unbroken sequence and succession, in continuous cause and effect, in religious reason and persistent purpose, the more will piety recoil from everything that is miraculous; the more averse will be our reason and our faith—which is but reason's confiding or imaginative side—to harbour the thought of the preternatural, the subternatural, the supernatural. It was supposed that the human race appeared all of a sudden on the scene some six thousand years ago, a few centuries more or less after the disappearance of the extinct mammalia. But modern science carries back the existence of man one hundred thousand years, and even that is but a portion of the time during which some high authorities consider we have traces of the race. What are the religious lessons of this high antiquity of man? Do not Judaism and Christianity assume quite other proportions in our eyes, in relation to the entire humanity, than when it was believed that they, together with the light vouchsafed the patriarchs, constituted a revelation coeval with the lifetime of mankind? In all these cases, and in many more, it would be easy to show that the ascertained facts of science are valuable, and fraught with religious and theological worth; not only because they give the lie direct to many an ancient preconception, and many a narrowing prejudice, but because they open a wide and legitimate door to authorised flights of imagination and reasonable faith. The Bible will not lose its charm, nor its lessons their sanctity, because better understood, and more justly valued, than of old. (*E. M. Geldart, M.A.*) **The thunder of His power.**—*A discourse upon the power of God*:—The text is a lofty declaration of the Divine power, with a particular note of attention—"Lo!" Doctrine. Infinite and incomprehensible power pertains to the nature of God, and is expressed in part in His works. Though there be a mighty expression of Divine power in His works, yet an incomprehensible power pertains to His nature. His power glitters in all His works, as well as His wisdom. I. THE NATURE OF THIS POWER. 1. Power sometimes signifies authority. But power taken for strength, and power taken for authority, are distinct things. The power of God here is to be understood of His strength to act. 2. Power is divided ordinarily into absolute and ordinate. Absolute is that power whereby God is able to do that which He will not do, but is possible to be done. Ordinate is that power whereby God doth that which He hath decreed to do. These are

not distinct powers, but one and the same power. 3. The power of God is that ability and strength whereby He can bring to pass whatever He please, whatever His infinite wisdom can direct, and whatever the infinite purity of His will can resolve. Power, in the primary notion of it, doth not signify an act, but an ability to bring a thing into act. 4. This power is of a distinct conception from the wisdom and will of God. They are not really distinct, but according to our conceptions. We cannot discourse of Divine things, without absolutely some proportion of them with human, ascribing unto God the perfections, sifted from the imperfections, of our nature. In us there are three orders—of understanding, will, power; and accordingly three acts—counsel, resolution, execution; which, though they are distinct in us, are not distinct in God. 5. As power is essentially in God, so it is not distinct from His essence. Omnipotence is nothing but the Divine essence efficacious *ad extra*. It is His essence as operative. 6. The power of God gives activity to all the other perfections of His nature; and is of a larger extent and efficacy, in regard of its objects, than some perfections of His nature. 7. This power is infinite. A finite power is a limited power, and a limited power cannot effect everything that is possible. The objects of Divine power are innumerable—not essentially infinite. God can do infinitely more than He hath done, or will do. (1) Creatures have a power to act about more objects than they do. (2) God is the most free agent. Every free agent can do more than He will do. (3) This power is infinite in regard of action. In regard to the independency of action. It consists in an ability to give higher degrees of perfection to everything which He hath made. As His power is infinite, extensive, in regard of the multitude of objects He can bring into being, so it is infinite, intensive, in regard of the manner of operation and the endowments He can bestow upon them. (4) This power is infinite in regard of duration. 8. The impossibility of God's doing some things is no infringing of His almightiness, but rather a strengthening of it. Some things are impossible in their own nature. Such as imply a contradiction. Some things are impossible to the nature and being of God. Some are impossible to the glorious perfections of God. He cannot do anything unworthy of Himself. II. REASONS TO PROVE THAT GOD MUST NEEDS BE POWERFUL. 1. The power that is in creatures demonstrates a greater and an inconceivable power in God. Nothing in the world is without a power of activity according to its nature. All the power which is distinct in the creatures must be united in God. 2. If there were not an incomprehensible power in God, He would not be perfect. 3. The simplicity of God manifests it. 4. The miracles that have been in the world evidence the power of God. III. HOW HIS POWER APPEARS—IN CREATION, IN GOVERNMENT, IN REDEMPTION. 1. In creation. (1) His power is the first thing evident in the story of the creation. (2) By this creative power God is often distinguished from all the idols and false gods in the world. How doth the power of God appear in creation? The world was made of nothing. The creation of things from nothing speaks an infinite power. The power appears in raising such variety of creatures from this barren womb of nothing. (3) God did all this with the greatest ease and facility. Without instruments. By a word; a simple act of His will. Note also the appearance of this power in the instantaneous production of things. 2. In government. God decreed from eternity the particular ends of creatures, and their operations respecting those ends. As there was need of His power to execute His decree of creation, there is also need of His power to execute His decree about the manner of government. All government is an act of the understanding, will, and power. This power is evident in natural government, which consists in the preservation of all things, propagation of them by corruptions and generations, and in a co-operation with them in their motives to attain their ends. In moral government, which is of the hearts and actions of men. And in gracious government, as respecting the Church. 3. In redemption. This is the most admirable work that ever God brought forth in the world. This will appear—(1) In the person redeeming. (2) In the publication and propagation of the doctrine of redemption. (3) In the application of redemption—in the planting grace; in the pardon of sin; in the preserving grace. IV. USES. 1. Of information and instruction. If incomprehensible and infinite power belongs to the nature of God, then Jesus Christ hath a Divine nature, because the acts of power proper to God are ascribed to Him. Hence may also be inferred the deity of the Holy Ghost. Works of omnipotency are ascribed to the Spirit of God. 2. The power of God is contemned and abused. Contemned in every sin; in distrust of God; in too great fear of man; and by trusting in ourselves. Abused when we make use of it to justify contra-

dictions; by presuming on it, without using the means He hath appointed. This doctrine is full of comfort, and it teacheth us the fear of God. (*S. Charnock.*) *The power of God*:—I. THE NATURE OF GOD'S POWER. Power sometimes signifies authority; here it signifies strength. 1. The power of God is that ability or strength whereby He can bring to pass whatsoever He pleaseth, whatsoever His infinite wisdom can direct, and the unspotted purity of His will resolve. 2. The power of God gives activity to all the other perfections of His nature. As holiness is the beauty, so power is the life of His attributes in their exercise. 3. This power is originally and essentially in His nature. The power of God is not derived from anything without Him. 4. Hence it follows that the power of God is infinite. Nothing can be too difficult for the Divine power to effect. II. WHEREIN THE POWER OF GOD IS MANIFESTED. 1. In creation. 2. In the government of the world. (1) In preservation, or natural government. (2) In moral government. The restraint of the malicious nature of Satan. The restraint of the wickedness of man. (3) In His gracious government. In the deliverance of His Church. In effecting His purpose by small means. In the work of our redemption. Note the Person redeeming; the progress of His life; His resurrection. Note the publication of it. The power of God was manifested in the instruments; and in the success of their ministry. Conclude—1. Here is comfort in all afflictions. Our evils can never be so great to distress us as His power is to deliver. 2. This doctrine teaches us the fear of God. "Who would not fear Thee?" (*Skeletons of Sermons.*)

CHAPTER XXVII.

VERS. 1-10. **Moreover Job continued his parable.**—*Points in Job's parable*:—I. A SOLEMN ASSEVERATION. "As God liveth." The words imply a belief—1. In the reality of the Divine existence. Whilst some deny this fact, the bulk of the race practically ignore it. 2. In the awfulness of the Divine existence. There is a sublime awfulness in the words "As God liveth." 3. In the severity of the Divine existence. "Who hath taken away my judgment, and the Almighty who hath vexed my soul." As nature has winter as well as summer, so God has a severe as well as a benign aspect. 4. In the nearness of the Divine existence. "The spirit of God is in my nostrils. His breath is my life." II. A NOBLE DETERMINATION. "My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit. God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me; my righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live." What does he determine? 1. Never to swerve from rectitude. "Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me; my righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go." Whatever happens to me, I will not play the false, I will not be insincere. No one can rob me of my integrity. 2. Never to vindicate wickedness. Job has so many times alluded to the prosperity of the wicked that he is apprehensive he may be suspected of envying their lot, and wishing to be in their place. Great is the tendency of some men to vindicate wickedness in connection with wealth and worldly power. III. A WEIGHTY REFLECTION. "What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him?" The writer reflects here upon the wicked men of wealth, and he concludes—1. That in death they will have no hope. 2. That in trouble they will have no answer to their prayers or delight in God. Conclusion—(1) The greatest reality outside of us. What is that? God. All else is shadow. (2) The greatest worth inside of us. What is that? Virtue, or what is here called "integrity," "righteousness." (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 2. **The Almighty hath vexed my soul.**—*A vexed soul comforted*:—The word "who" was put into this verse by the translators, but it is not wanted; it is better as I have read it to you, "The Almighty hath vexed my soul." The marginal reading is perhaps a more exact translation of the original: "The Almighty hath embittered my soul." From this we learn that a good man may have his soul vexed; he may not be able to preserve the serenity of his mind. There is a needs-be, sometimes, that we should be "in heaviness

through manifold temptations." Even to rivers there are rapids and cataracts, and so, methinks, in the most smoothly flowing life, there surely must be breaks of distraction and of distress. At any rate, it was so with Job. It is also clear, from our text, that a good man may trace the vexation of his soul distinctly to God. It was not merely that Job's former troubles had come from God, for he had borne up under them; when all he had was gone, he had still blessed the name of the Lord with holy serenity. But God had permitted these three eminent and distinguished men, mighty in speech, to come about him, to rub salt into his wounds, and so to increase his agony. Advancing a step further, we notice that, in all this, Job did not rebel against God, or speak a word against Him. He swore by that very God who had vexed his soul. See how it stands here: "As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment, and the Almighty, who hath vexed my soul." He stood fast to it that this God was the true God, he called Him good, he believed Him to be almighty; it never occurred to Job to bring a railing accusation against God, or to start aside from his allegiance to Him. Now go another step, and notice that this embittering of Job's soul was intended for his good. The patriarch was to have his wealth doubled, and he therefore needed double grace that he might be able to bear the burden. When that end was accomplished, all the bitterness was turned into sweetness. I. First, I shall speak upon A PERSONAL FACT. Many a person has to say, "The Almighty hath embittered my soul." 1. This happened to you, perhaps, through a series of very remarkable troubles. 2. It may be, however, that you have not had a succession of troubles, but you have had one trial constantly gnawing at your heart. 3. I hope that it has become saddened through a sense of sin. 4. It may be that this is not exactly your case, but you are restless and weary. 5. Beside all this, there is an undefined dread upon you. "The Almighty hath embittered my soul." II. From this personal fact of which I have spoken I want to draw AN INSTRUCTIVE ARGUMENT, which has two edges. 1. If the Almighty —note that word "Almighty"—has vexed your soul as much as He has, how much more is He able to vex it! Now turn the argument the other way. 2. If it be the Almighty who has troubled us, surely He can also comfort us. He that is strong to sink is also strong to save. III. Here is A HEALTHFUL INQUIRY for everyone whose soul has been vexed by God. 1. The inquiry is, first, is not God just in vexing my soul? Listen. Some of you have long vexed Him; you have grieved His Holy Spirit for years. Well, if you vex God's people, you must not be surprised if He vexes you. 2. Another point of inquiry is this: What can be God's design in vexing your soul? Surely He has a kind design in it all. God is never anything but good. Rest assured that He takes no delight in your miseries. You forgot Him when everything went merry as a marriage peal. It may be, too, that He is sending this trial to let you know that He thinks of you. 3. May it not be also for another reason—that He may wean you entirely from the world? He is making you loathe it. I think I hear someone say, "As the Almighty hath vexed my soul, what had I better do?" Do? Go home, and shut to your door, and have an hour alone with yourself and God. That hour alone with God may be the crisis of your whole life; do try it! "And when I am alone with God, what had I better do?" Well, first, tell Him all your grief. Then tell Him all your sin. Hide nothing from Him; lay it all, naked and bare, before Him. Then ask Him to blot it all out, once for all, for Jesus Christ's sake. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 3-6. **Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me.** — *Moral courage*:—It is the aim of all men to secure happiness. As to the course they think best adapted to secure this they differ most widely, and as to what constitutes real happiness the most different opinions are entertained, yet the desire for that which each considers to be happiness is universal. Physical courage is common enough all over the world, but moral courage is a rare phenomenon. Before the fear of being thought foolish, our moral courage relaxes and melts away as snow before the sun. If you make a stand for a principle, society regards you as some abnormal specimen of humanity. They are not the greatest martyrs who die a martyr's death, but they who have the moral courage to live a martyr's life for conscience and for duty. But the lack of moral courage is visible everywhere about us. It infests and poisons every trade and every profession; and moral cowardice abounds in the very last place where it should be met with—the Church. Whether deficiency in moral courage is with us a national failing

or not, is difficult to determine. Undeniably there is a grievous want of it around us. Hardly anyone will go out of his way in the interest of abstract truth, or cry down and fight a wrong by which he does not suffer directly and personally. (*D. P. Faure.*) *Holding fast integrity* :—We cannot command the smiles of fortune or the friendship of men. But in defiance of every external event we may, with Job, "hold fast our integrity, and not let it go so long as we live." To explain and recommend this excellent disposition I illustrate its influence upon taste, sentiments, and conduct, and the happy effects which result from it. 1. In opposition to prejudice and bigotry, it implies a prevailing love of truth. To rise entirely above the influence of prejudice is not allotted to human nature, in our present state of ignorance and imperfection. Integrity cannot secure the mind entirely from prejudices, but it will diminish their number and force, and dispose the man who is under its influence to renounce them when they are discovered. It redounds to the credit of a man's understanding to have made choice of sound principles upon first deliberation. But it is no less an evidence of a manly and independent mind to relinquish the opinions it has already espoused, when they stand in opposition to the unchangeable laws of truth and righteousness. 2. In opposition to show and affectation, integrity consists in adhering to nature and simplicity. The manners of every individual must, in some degree, be formed upon the examples and fashions of the surrounding multitude. But this may be truly asserted, a man of integrity will not be the first to invent or imitate any custom that departs from simplicity and nature, and consists only in ceremony and false refinement. Through his predilection for simplicity, his religion will have nothing of affectation, but will be sincere and substantial. He does not assume the profession of it with any selfish end. He is but little solicitous about the praise of men. His attention is principally directed to the culture of inward piety and goodness. 3. Integrity implies a love of justice in opposition to fraud and dishonest dealing. The character I am describing, is superior to the influence of mercenary, grovelling motives. The man of deep-rooted integrity, by the irresistible and pleasing impulse of his heart, is at all times preserved from the most distant approach to fraud and dishonesty. 4. In opposition to disguise and hypocrisy, the character under review is open, bold, and pleased to be seen in its true colours. The consciousness of personal guilt engenders a suspicion of others, and makes the men who are tainted with it study the natural accomplishments of concealment and dissimulation. (1) Integrity is the surest road to truth. A man of integrity not only looks up through a clear medium to the bright rays of the divinity, but also in his own nature and temper he perceives genuine, though faint and imperfect, lineaments of the image of God. (2) The disposition of integrity has a powerful influence in nourishing and confirming all the graces of the Christian character. Sincerity and uprightness of conduct are the best security for the performance of every social duty. (3) The virtue of integrity, from the intercourse which it establishes between God and the soul, and its moral influence extending to every branch of character, does, in a peculiar manner, inspire a man with a good conscience and an unshaken trust in the protection of heaven. (*T. Somerville, D.D.*) *Uprightness in life and death* :—"Till I die." This thought pervades a large portion of this book. Sometimes as a welcome thought, "I would not live always." At others, as a thing which is inevitable: "When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return." To a Christian, death is a widely different thing from what it was to Job. Christ has abolished death. His disciples can say to death, "Where is thy sting?" Job resolves that his retrospect from his deathbed shall not reproach him with insincerity, unfaithfulness, falseness to his convictions. I. ALL MEN WILL WISH TO DIE IN LOVE AND CHARITY WITH THEIR NEIGHBOURS. 1. When we are angry—perhaps vindictive—the reason is as much from the consideration of the future as out of resentment for the past. 2. Few men would speak words of anger—especially of resentful anger—if they thought they were last words. 3. It is a natural impulse, when bidding farewell to the world, to ask for pardon, and to grant it. All this is admirable and excellent. But—II. IT IS EQUALLY DESIRABLE THAT MEN SHOULD BE TRUE AND JUST AND UPRIGHT IN BOTH LIFE AND DEATH. 1. Love without righteousness is no true love—does not really bless. 2. But difficulties in the way of strict fidelity. (1) Seems to be inconsistent with love and kindness. An error, but a very natural one. Hence we keep back words which honesty to our convictions would bid us speak. (2) Is

an apparent assumption of superiority from which we shrink. (3) Is a kind of challenge to others to scrutinise our own conduct. For these and other reasons men are often silent when they ought to speak; sometimes say smooth things when they ought to be stern. 3. No one can doubt, however, that a real friend is one who is perfectly sincere. (1) In dealing with our faults, as well as (2) In acknowledging our good qualities. III. AN IMPORTANT CAUTION. (*W. R. Clarke, M.A.*) *Peace of conscience*:—In these words we cannot but observe what a mighty satisfaction the good man takes in the peace of his conscience, and the performance of his duty, and the steadiness of his resolution, never to be frightened out of it by any temptation or discouragement whatsoever. In the want of all the good things he had formerly abounded with, it was Job's comfort to remember that he had enjoyed them innocently, and employed them faithfully. It was not for any notorious provocation of his God, or injury to his neighbour, that they were come upon him. He had confidence in his integrity, and boldly durst look up to God Himself, and maintain his ways before Him. Show the wisdom of this resolution, of holding fast our integrity; and never letting it go upon any prospect or temptation whatsoever. The tracks and footsteps of our duty are all along as plain and as legible as we can wish; and if we will but follow them, will lead us on as strait and as direct a path as we can go. So that the very windings and turnings through which unfaithfulness wanders, are enough to convince us that it mistakes its course, and instead of carrying us, as it pretends, a shorter way, is losing sight apace of happiness, and insensibly making on to misery. The first step of these men proceeds upon mistake. They falsely divide their duty from their interest, the two things in the world of all others most strictly inseparable. Every man is so far happy as he is virtuous, and miserable as he is vicious. Upon this foundation it is that the happiness of God Himself is conceived to stand. Had the devil himself but "held fast his integrity," he had been happy still; nor can he ever destroy the happiness of man, but by persuading him to that by which he lost his own. God has given us a more secure possession of our integrity than of any one thing in the world besides that we can call our own. The wisdom of holding it fast, and never letting it go, will appear from the following considerations. 1. In parting with our integrity, we let go that, without which prosperity itself can never make us happy. There is not a greater mistake than the common notion of the happiness of the wicked in this life. How many false exceptions against Providence, and discouragements from virtue, has it sometimes started in the best of men! Even in the seeming equality of His distributions to the wicked and the good, God has made a very sensible distinction, and done abundantly enough to justify the conduct of His providence and the wisdom of our integrity. God punishes the wicked with those very blessings He admits him to partake of. "Envy not the glory of the sinner, for thou knowest not what shall be his end." Nay, thou knowest not so much as how it fares at present with him. 2. Because we let go that which being once gone, affliction needs must render us insupportably miserable. Nothing is more certain in the life of a man than a share in the troubles that inseparably accompany it. Yet how few make any provision for what nobody can avoid. So long as the world runs smoothly on their side, on they travel, thoughtless and secure, never considering that though it is fair and sunshine now, the weather soon may change, and a storm they little dream of may break suddenly upon them. The wise man, who builds upon the sure foundations of his own integrity, stands unshaken and secure. Afflictions may dash and spend themselves upon him, but his hope and confidence "may not be removed, but standeth fast for ever." The spirit of a man will go a long way towards sustaining his infirmities. 3. He that lets go his integrity, parts with that which alone can avail him in the day of judgment. Whatever hopes a man may have of carrying on an interest in this world, by acting contrary to his duty, no man was ever weak enough to imagine it could be of any service to him in another. How bold and fearless will they who have kept their integrity stand before the dread tribunal, secure of being justified in their trial, and clear when they are judged. (*Pawlet St. John, A.M.*) *Holding fast our righteousness*:—Job had lost almost everything else, but he still held fast his righteousness. His wealth and his honour, his flocks and his herds, his sons and his daughters, his health and his home, had all been lost, but still he retained his integrity. I. RIGHTEOUSNESS IS A MAN'S TRUE TREASURE, AND HE SHOULD HOLD IT FAST AT ANY COST, AND NEVER LET IT GO. It is not the wealth which a man has, or the honour

and greatness which he attains, or the success which he wins in business and professional life, which makes him truly rich, but the holy and Christlike character which he builds up. It is to the upright that there ariseth light in the darkness; it is those that have clean hands and a pure heart and that have not lifted up their soul unto vanity, that shall receive the blessing of the Lord. The promises of God and the blessings of His salvation are all attached to character, and not to the accident of birth or training, of position or wealth, so that character is the thing of value in the judgment of God. Nay, all other kinds of wealth will be left behind, and will find no place in the eternal world. For, as St. Paul reminds us, "We brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." The gateway of death is so strait that before we can pass through we must be stripped of everything except our character. II. But while righteousness is a man's true treasure, THIS TREASURE IS OFTEN ASSAILED AND PUT IN JEOPARDY. 1. The manifold trials of life make it difficult to hold fast one's righteousness. 2. Then, further, not only suffering but perplexity and doubt make it hard to hold fast our righteousness. These were the chief cause of difficulty in the case of Job. There are some who to-day find it hard to believe in God and freedom and immortality, and if these things be denied where is there any basis for righteousness of life? 3. Then, again, we must remember that there are manifold forms of temptation which assail men in their business and their pleasure, in their hours of leisure and their hours of toil, in the home and in the office, on Sundays and on weekdays. III. But now let me remind you in closing that A MAN CAN HOLD FAST HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, however fiercely it may be assailed. We have heard so much in recent years of heredity and environment and solidarity that we are in danger of overlooking the power and prerogative of the individual will. We can abhor that which is evil and cleave to that which is good. We can resist the devil that he may flee from us; we can draw near to God that He may draw nigh unto us. (*G. Hunsworth, M.A.*) **My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.**—*Of an unreproaching heart:* —I. THE STATE OF MIND OR HEART WHICH IS NECESSARY TO PREVENT OUR BEING REPROACHED BY OURSELVES. As men are endowed with a sense of moral good and evil, of merit and demerit in their own affections and actions, they are by nature a law to themselves, and have the rule of right, and the standard of worth and excellence, engraved on their minds. They approve or condemn themselves according as they find their affections and actions to agree with the law of their nature. What are the worthy, amiable, and becoming affections, the prevalence of which constitutes that good state of heart which frees us from inward anguish and remorse, and all the pains of self-condemnation, and which gives us the delight, joy, and assurance which flow from the approbation of our consciences? They are such as these,—reverence, love, gratitude, dependence, submission, and resignation, with respect to the great Author and Governor of all things. Probity, truth, justice, meekness, and kindness toward men; a love of the public, and a regard to the common interest of the world; a moderation of our lower desires and passions; and a cultivation of the higher faculties. These dispositions have an intrinsic excellence and loveliness in them. As these virtues and dispositions prevail in very different degrees in the hearts of men, so the pleasure, satisfaction, and peace which they find in their reflections upon their inward frame, are likewise very different and unequal. Where the motions of the soul towards virtue are all free and lively, intense and vigorous, and withal uniform, permanent, and fixed, the man enjoys the most perfect satisfaction and peace. II. THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING OUR HEARTS ALWAYS IN THIS STATE. As the power of moral discernment, or our natural conscience of good and evil, is the principle of virtue, and the guide of life in us, so it is likewise the great cause and spring of our happiness. Integrity, or a sincerely and uniformly good frame of heart, must certainly be allowed to be the most felicitating, or the most replete with true happiness. This consciousness gives us a sense of our possessing an intrinsic solid dignity and merit, and being in a state the most becoming and honourable to rational agents. The pleasures derived from this source are permanent, and do not depend on any uncertain, external objects. A man who is calm and serene within, will be but little moved with those evils which are incident to everyone in the course of this frail, uncertain life. And these inward pleasures are also the life of all our other enjoyments. III. RULES FOR ATTAINING THIS STATE OF HEART. 1. Consider the several pursuits and actions in which we allow ourselves, whether they are really such as our con-

sciences approve. 2. Frequently review and examine the state of our minds, that we may find out our defects, and know what progress we are making. 3. We should correct our errors, and make up our defects, as far as we can, by sincere repentance. And we should derive new strength to ourselves by the exercise of a serious and humble devotion. Reflections—1. See the inestimable value of integrity of heart, and the testimony of a good conscience. 2. See how groundless those fears and perplexities are, which so often disturb the minds of sincere persons. 3. See the presumption of those sinners who speak peace to themselves, when there is no foundation laid for peace to them, in the temper and disposition of their hearts. (*J. Orr, D.D.*)

Ver. 8. **For what is the hope of the hypocrite?** — *The character and hope of the hypocrite:*—I. THE CHARACTER OF THE HYPOCRITE. By a hypocrite we understand not a self-deceiver, but a deceiver of others. To himself his real character is known, as it is also to God, the Judge of all; but it is hid from his fellow-men, who are deceived by his plausible profession and fair speeches. The word implies that, like an ancient stage-player, he acts under a mask, and personates a character which does not properly belong to him. The mask he wears is a form of godliness, and the part he acts is that of a religious man. His religion is only a counterfeit. 1. The hypocrite is a person whose outward conduct, upon the whole, is irreproachable in the sight of men. 2. His true character is far from coming up to the requirements of the Gospel. He is one whose heart is not right with God. His heart is unchanged, unrenewed, unsanctified, destitute of faith and humility, and without the love and fear of God. 3. The hypocrite does all his works to be seen of men. It is not God that he seeks to please. Self is the idol which he worships, and to which his incense is burned. 4. The hypocrite is partial and formal in his obedience. His obedience has respect only to some of the Commandments. The principle by which he is actuated is earthly and grovelling, leading him to seek only to have glory of men. Such a man has no portion in the life to come; he has no treasure in heaven. II. THE NATURE OF HIS HOPE. Job takes for granted that the hypocrite may gain by his profession. He may, in many respects, succeed in obtaining the object of his wishes or the reward he covets. But what is his hope when God taketh away his soul? Consider —1. The foundation on which his hope rests. 2. The author of his hope. Not God, but Satan. 3. The effects it produces. Then let us examine ourselves by this test. There are some who do not go so far even as the hypocrite. Even he pays some deference to religion. What character do we bear? Let us beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Avoid hypocrisy and cultivate sincerity. Be Christians, not merely in name, but in reality. Build your hope on Christ alone, counting Him to be your greatest gain. (*D. Rees.*) *A warning to hypocrites:*—I. THE FEARFUL NATURE OF RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY. With all His mildness, gentleness, and compassion, we yet find Christ thundering against the hypocrite. There is a class of men who make a profession of religion which they know to be false. These are the persons whom the Redeemer denounces. A religious profession is undoubtedly an excellence, but this is the honest avowal of the religion that is already in the heart; taking care, that as the hypocrite hides his sins under a cloak, we should not hide our religion under a cloak, but should honestly avow that Saviour whom we profess to believe on in secret. Now that which is uttered and avowed before all the world, because we have it in secret, is surely a different affair from a mere profession that is allied to an attempt to impose upon men, and setting the omniscience of God at defiance. II. VAIN ARE ALL WARNINGS GIVEN TO HYPOCRITES, BECAUSE HYPOCRISY HARDENS THE HEART. See the case of Judas. We ought to be made of glass, that every man may see what is our real character. We are more transparent than crystal before the eyes of the eternal God. The sin of false profession infatuates the mind, hardens the heart, and keeps a man always forming such false reasonings and conclusions that they lead at last to the most manifest overwhelming of him with his own crimes and with God's judgment. III. HOW VAIN ARE ALL THE THINGS ON WHICH THE HYPOCRITE PLACES HIS HOPE WHEN GOD ARISES TO JUDGMENT. A man may accustom himself to falsehood until he makes lies his refuge, and can scarcely distinguish between the most gross imposition upon himself and sincere safe dealing. When men accustom themselves to a system of deceit, they get perfectly bewildered and know not that which a child would have known and expected. IV. A LIFE OF HYPOCRISY IS LIKELY TO END IN A DEATH OF

IMPENITENCE. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; the prayer only of the upright is God's delight. We dare not think that a man, after living a life of hypocrisy, need only utter a few prayers and all is safe and well. True prayer is alone the prayer of true penitence. (*James Bennett, D.D.*) *The hypocrite's hope*:—The teaching of the text may be summed up in this plain proposition—the hypocrite's hope. How happy soever he may seem from it for a while, will leave him miserable when God shall take away his soul. I. TO WHOM THE CHARACTER OF AN HYPOCRITE BELONGS. The word suggests, "one who acts in a play," representing another person rather than his own. Transferred to religion, it is used to denote such as have put on a form of godliness, and would pass for saints, but are not in reality what they seem. The Hebrew word comes from one that signifies a cloud, as their wickedness is covered; or as they are painted over with another colour, hiding their natural one, that it may not be known. Thus an hypocrite is a real enemy to God, outwardly acting as one of His children. Open his character. 1. An hypocrite is one that pretends to have entirely devoted himself to God, when he has not, but divided his heart between God and the world; and so God has no interest in him at all. It is the whole heart God calls for, and He will have nothing less. 2. He is one that professes a regard to the will of God, as the reason, and to the glory of God as the end, of what he does in religion; when, in the meantime, he acts from other springs, and for lower and selfish ends. 3. He is one that takes more pains to appear outwardly religious than to be really so, between God and his own soul. A true Christian is as solicitous about his heart as about his life. But this is not the hypocrite's concern. If he has a fair outside, he is little careful how matters stand within. 4. He is one that, in religious duties, puts God off with bodily service, whilst the heart is unengaged and left out. 5. He is partial and uneven in his obedience to God, and in his walk with Him. II. SUCH MAY HAVE A HOPE WHICH THEY MAINTAIN AS LONG AS THEY LIVE. It is strange that in souls so unsafe this hope should be so long kept up. It is owing to such things as these—1. To wretched ignorance of themselves, through neglecting to look into their own hearts. 2. To their not attending to the extent and spirituality of the law, as to what it requires of them, and how far they come short of obedience to it. 3. To the favourable apprehensions others may have of them. 4. To comparing themselves with open sinners, or more loose professors. 5. To the length they may go as to the attainment of what looks like grace. III. WHAT HYPOCRITES MAY BE SAID FOR A WHILE TO GAIN. It is supposed that some advantage they aim at, and may also reach. 1. By the part they act, they may gain more of the world. 2. They may gain the esteem and applause of men, and have the reputation of being eminently holy and religious. 3. They may gain a sort of peace in their own minds. 4. They may hereupon gain a smooth passage through the world, and an easy going out of it. 5. They may have a pompous funeral, and be well spoken of when they are dead. IV. THE VANITY AND EMPTINESS OF THE HYPOCRITE'S HOPE AND GAIN, AND THE CERTAINTY AND DREADFULNESS OF HIS MISERY WHEN GOD TAKETH AWAY HIS SOUL. 1. What is the hope of the hypocrite? A hope without ground, without fruit; and a hope that will not hold before the Judge. 2. What is the gain of the hypocrite? It is unsuitable to his soul, his better part. It is bounded within this present life, and can accompany him no further. Then take up with no hope but such as will stand you in stead when God shall take away your soul. (1) Not the hope that is built upon a mere profession, how specious soever. (2) Not a hope that is built upon excellent gifts and attainments. (3) Not a hope that is built upon external reformation. (4) Not a hope that is built upon the good opinion of others. (5) Not a hope that is built upon what we enjoy or suffer as to the present world. (6) Not a hope that is built upon Church privileges; but a hope that has the mercy of God in Christ for its ground, and the promise of God for its warrant. (*D. Wilcox.*) *The hypocrite's hope*:—I. TO WHOM THE CHARACTER IN THE TEXT APPLIES. To all those who, in the concerns of religion, act a different part to what they really are. Particularly it applies—1. To those who pretend entire devotedness to God, while their hearts are divided (Psa. xii. 2). 2. Who profess a regard to the will of God as the reason, and His glory as the end, of what they do in religion; while, at the same time, they act from other springs, and for lower and selfish ends (Matt. vi. 1). 3. Who are more careful to appear outwardly religious, than to be really so between God and their own souls (Matt. xxiii. 27, 28). 4. Who put God off with bodily service, while the heart is not engaged in it (Isa. xxix. 13;

John iv. 24). 5. Who are partial in their obedience to God, while the real Christian says Psa. cxix. 128. II. THE HOPE AND THE GAIN OF SUCH A CHARACTER. 1. Their hope relates to a future state of blessedness. 2. It is groundless, without a solid foundation (Col. i. 27). 3. It is fruitless. See the Christian's hope, 1 John iii. 3. 4. It will be cut off (Matt. vii. 23). And this false hope is generally owing—1. To ignorance of themselves; their own hearts. 2. To want of attention to the extent and spirituality of the law of God (Rom. vii. 9). 3. The favourable opinion others have of them. 4. Comparing themselves with open sinners, or lukewarm professors (Luke xviii. 11). 5. The length they go, as to the exercise of what appears to be grace; abstaining from many sins; practising many religious duties, &c. As to their acquisitions; they may gain—1. More of this world. 2. The esteem and applause of men. 3. A false peace (Rev. iii. 17). 4. A smooth passage through life. 5. A pompous funeral. But, behold—III. THE DREADFUL END OF SUCH; expressed in these words, "When God taketh away his soul." 1. His soul, his immortal part, which he has deceived and ruined. 2. God will take it away; whose power there is no resisting; from whose presence there is no escape. 3. He will take it away; perhaps with violence (Prov. xiv. 32), always in displeasure. 4. Take it away from present gains and hopes, to real misery, and to the greatest share of it. To all this he is continually liable, and at no time safe from it. While he is crying, Peace, peace, sudden destruction is coming upon him. Improvement—1. Seriously examine as to your own character. "Judge yourselves, that ye be not judged." 2. Dread nothing more than the hypocrite's hope, and frequently look to the foundation of your own. 3. Bless God if you can give a reason for the hope that is in you; but do it with fear and trembling; the final judgment is not yet over. 4. Do nothing to sink your hope, or fill you with overwhelming fear. Think often what you hope for, whom you hope in, and of the ground you hope upon; and thus prepare for the fruition of your hope in eternal glory. (*T. Hannam.*)

Vers. 9, 10. **Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him?**—*The privations of godlessness:*—I. HE HAS NO REFUGE IN TROUBLE. When "trouble cometh upon him" he cannot cry unto God with any hope of being heard and answered (ver. 9). What shall we think of the man who, in the ordering of his life, does not take trouble into his account? He is like the captain who sets sail upon the sea without readiness for a storm, or the general who goes out into the open unprepared to meet the enemy. To be unprovided for it is to be cruelly negligent of one of our greatest needs. But what refuge has the godless man in trouble? Can he hide himself in God as in a sure rock? To the godly man the nearness (Psa. xxiii. 4), the sympathy (Psa. xxxi. 7, ciii. 13, 14; Heb. v. 15), and the delivering grace of God (Psa. xci. 15, cxxxviii. 7) are of priceless value. But the godless man only remembers God to be troubled by the thought that, having forsaken Him in prosperity, he cannot claim His succour on the dark day of adversity. Yet is there here one qualifying truth. It may be that trouble brings the unholy man to God in penitence, to Jesus Christ in faith and self-surrender. Then he may cry, and he will most surely be heard; but then he is a "godless" man no longer. II. HE HAS NO HOPE IN DEATH. What is his hope "when God taketh away his soul"? As there is uncertainty as to the measure and the character of our trouble, so is there also as to the time of our death. But there is no uncertainty as to the fact of its coming. III. HE HAS NO JOY IN GOD. "Will he delight himself in the Almighty?" Job evidently thinks that the true man might and should do that. It is an advanced and elevated thought. To delight in God—not merely to look for favours from Him, but to find our heritage in Him, in all that He is in Himself and in all that He is to us; in—(1) Our sense of His near presence with us; in (2) Our realisation of His close relationship to us as our Divine Father; in (3) Our keen appreciation of His watchful care of us, and of His acceptance of our every act of obedience and submission; in (4) Our joy in the fellowship we have with Him in His glorious work of redeeming love. Of course the godless man misses this mark entirely. He has no conception of it, much less any participation in it. IV. HE LIVES WITHOUT THE PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER. Will the godless man "call upon God at all times"? The value of prayer is twofold. 1. It is a constant source of blessing to our heart and life. To live in daily, even hourly communion with God must be a spiritual condition charged with highest good, must exert an elevating and purifying influence upon us of the finest order and of the greatest strength.

2. It is our one resource in special need. How great is the destitution of that man's spirit, who, when his heart is breaking, cannot go unto Him who binds up the broken heart, and heals the wounded spirit! In the face of all these privations, what a poor thing is "the gain" of the godless. (*The Thinker.*) **Will he always call upon God?**—*The hypocrite discovered:*—A hypocrite may be a very neat imitation of a Christian. He professes to know God, to converse with Him, to be dedicated to His service, and to invoke His protection; he even practises prayer, or at least feigns it. Yet the cleverest counterfeit fails somewhere, and may be discovered by certain signs. The test is here—"Will he always call upon God?" I. WILL HE PRAY AT ALL SEASONS OF PRAYER? Will he pray in private? Or is he dependent upon the human eye, and the applause of men? Will he pray if forbidden? Daniel did so. Will he? Will he pray in business? Will he practise ejaculatory prayer? Will he look for hourly guidance? Will he pray in pleasure? Will he have a holy fear of offending with his tongue? Or will company make him forget his God? Will he pray in darkness of soul? Or will he sulk in silence? II. WILL HE PRAY CONSTANTLY? If he exercises the occasional act of prayer, will he possess the spirit of prayer which never ceases to plead with the Lord? We ought to be continually in prayer, because we are always dependent for life, both temporal and spiritual, upon God. Always needing something, nay, a thousand things. Always receiving, and therefore always needing, fresh grace wherewith to use the blessing worthily. Always in danger. Seen or unseen danger is always near, and none but God can cover our head. Always weak, inclined to evil, apt to catch every infection of soul sickness, "ready to perish" (Isa. xxvii. 13). Always needing strength, for suffering, learning, song, or service. Always sinning. Even in our holy things sin defiles us, and we need constant washing. Always weighted with other men's needs. Especially if rulers, pastors, teachers, parents. Always having the cause of God near our heart if we are right; and in its interests finding crowds of reasons for prayer. III. WILL HE PRAY IMPORTUNATELY? If no answer comes, will he persevere? If a rough answer comes, will he plead on? Does he know how to wrestle with the angel, and give tug for tug? If no one else prays, will he be singular, and pray on against wind and tide? If God answers him by disappointment and defeat, will he feel that delays are not denials, and still pray? IV. WILL HE CONTINUE TO PRAY THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE OF LIFE? The hypocrite will soon give up prayer under certain circumstances. If he is in trouble, he will not pray, but will run to human helpers. If he gets out of trouble, he will not pray, but quite forget his vows. If men laugh at him, he will not dare to pray. If men smile on him, he will not care to pray. 1. He grows formal. He is half asleep, not watchful for the answer. He falls into a dead routine of forms and words. 2. He grows weary. He can make a spurt, but he cannot keep it up. Short prayers are sweet to him. 3. He grows secure. Things go well, and he sees no need of prayer; or he is too holy to pray. 4. He grows infidel, and fancies it is all useless, dreams that prayer is not philosophical. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The hypocrite detected by his prayers:*—By the word hypocrite, Job meant every one whose religion is merely nominal—*i.e.* every insincere and inconsistent professor—all who are not in practice what they are in profession. The emphasis in text place on the second question, "Will he always call upon God?" It is implied that he will sometimes; it is denied that he will always. So perseverance in prayer, the persisting in prayer under all variety of circumstances, is given as a test by which to try the sincerity, the reality of religion. The man whose religion is of the heart, prays always; any other, who has but the outside of religion, will pray, but not always, only on some contingency. There is an instinct in our nature which prompts man to prayer, even if you keep out of sight the tendencies derived from a Christian education. We may ask whether the mere formal prayers of those whose religion is a name, should be called prayers at all; for, unless the heart go along with the lip, there is undoubtedly nothing of acceptable petition. There must be true religion, the religion of the heart, religion ingrained in the inner man, before there can be the true calling upon God always. All prayer supposes a sense of wants to be supplied, and a consciousness that the supply must come from God. There may be a praying by fits and starts. Under particular circumstances, all men feel wants. There is not a habit of prayer, except as there is a constant sense of wants, requiring a constant supply. There is a close connection between the two parts of the text. It is because he does not "delight himself in the Almighty," that the hypo-

crite or the formalist will not "always call upon God." There is here a very broad and a very important difference between the real and the nominal Christian. With the gift, the nominal Christian is satisfied. Nothing can satisfy the real and sincere Christian but God Himself. (*Henry Melvill, B.D.*) *The hypocrite's inconstancy in prayer explained:*—The term hypocrite, as here used, comprehends every insincere, self-deluding professor of religion, though not supposed to act a part for the purpose of imposing on others. 1. It is supposed that such a person may for a time observe the practice of prayer. Prayer, on certain occasions, appears to be almost an instinct of nature. But if prayer is the voice of nature in the hour of extremity, still more may it be expected from those who live under the light of revelation. As prayer is merely an instrumental duty, it may be more or less spiritual and earnest. 2. The chief want of the hypocrite is the want of constancy and perseverance in this sacred exercise. Consider why those who are unconverted in heart are thus essentially defective. (1) They want the Spirit of God, "which is the Spirit of grace and supplications." (2) The hypocrite does not delight in God. Those in whom we take delight we frequently approach; those in whose converse we find no pleasure, we avoid. (3) Hypocrites do not feel their wants. The poor in spirit, who feel their spiritual wants, are the true disciples of Christ. (4) Hypocrites neglect prayer because they cannot reconcile its exercise with the practice of sin. Sin repented is an urgent incentive to prayer; but sin indulged is the quenching of the spirit of prayer. (5) The prayers of the hypocrite tend to their own extinction. In such prayers there is no principle of vitality. Such a person merely wants to gain a smooth opinion of his state, a false peace. The hypocrite would have his wound healed slightly. (*R. Hall, M.A.*) *The hypocrite:*—I. A MELANCHOLY FACT EXPRESSED. That the hypocrite will not always, that is habitually, pray. He lives in the total neglect, if not of the external acts, yet certainly of the spirit of prayer. Desire impetuously moves in every channel but that which might lead him to heaven. Why? 1. Because his heart is not in the business of religion at all. Untouched, unsanctified, unrenewed. 2. Because he is experimentally a stranger to those views of the Divine character which render devotion a delight. "Will he delight in God?" Intimating that a man must delight in God, before he can habitually desire communion with Him. 3. Because the progressive influence of sin assumes a predominant and prevailing ascendency. 4. Because he is judicially resigned to hardness and impenitence of heart. II. A SOLEMN WARNING, TACITLY PRESENTED. 1. Consider the danger and guilt of such a state. It is the symptom of something bad—omen of worse. It warrants most humiliating inferences as to our spiritual state. If we do not cry, we do not feel. Guard against the first symptoms. It inflicts a grievous loss; it is the forerunner of a heavy doom. 2. See how far the miseries of the ungodly extend. God will not answer their prayers in trial. "Because I called," &c. Even in prosperous hours there is no security. In the fulness of sufficiency—straits. He looked for much, but, &c. 3. See how long the doom of the ungodly lasts. For ever. God takes away the soul. 4. Anticipate the fearful disclosures of the last day. 5. Contrast with them the Christian's hope. (*The Evangelist.*) *The hypocrite:*—There are often impressions of a religious kind made upon the mind which are of a very fleeting nature. This is often stated, and abundantly exemplified in Scripture. A melancholy catalogue. This is very natural, and to be expected. 1. The incentives to sin are not always equally violent, so that there is often a season for reflection. 2. A feeling of fear is occasionally awakened, and prompts to outward acts of devotion. 3. The conscience is sometimes roused into a kind of paroxysm, after the commission of some great sin, &c. 4. A species of sentimentality is sometimes cultivated, which fills up the intervals between gross worldliness. 5. In revenge upon the world which has disappointed them, men sometimes, for a season, practise austerity. 6. At stated sacramental seasons men are often unusually devout. 7. Under the most just views of Divine truth, some for a while act, and then fall away. 8. Affliction. As the test and sample of such religious declension, we shall at present look only to the habit of prayer. The restraining of prayer is one of the first and surest indications of a departure from God. The restraining of prayer is one of the main causes of religious declension. But in the text, it is not spoken of as showing that the heart has backslidden from God, but that the individual is a hypocrite. The truth of this text may easily be made apparent. The hypocrite does not continue in prayer. I. BECAUSE HE HAS NOT THE SPIRIT OF SUPPLICATIONS. 1. The Spirit produces intensity

in prayer. 2. In like manner, and for like reasons, He causes perseverance in prayer. 3. He who has not the Spirit, shows neither intensity nor perseverance. II. BECAUSE HE HAS NO ABIDING SENSE OF SPIRITUAL WANTS. III. BECAUSE HE NEITHER UNDERSTANDS NOR VALUES THE BLESSINGS PROMISED IN CHRIST. IV. BECAUSE BY IT HUMAN ESTEEM CANNOT BE ALWAYS OBTAINED. 1. The hypocrite is concerned about his standing among men (John v. 44). 2. Everything is trifling which affects it not. 3. Hence there is social, though often no secret prayer. V. BECAUSE HE DOES NOT FIND TIME AND OPPORTUNITIES. VI. BECAUSE GOD'S FELLOWSHIP IS NOT RELISHED. 1. The believer—God. The hypocrite—ordinances. 2. Ordinances disliked, because they suggest God. (1) Recent guilt. (2) Thinks well of himself. (*James Stewart.*)

Vers. 11–23. **I will teach you by the hand of God.**—*God's treatment of wicked men:*—Looking at Job's lecture or address, we have to notice two things. I. ITS INTRODUCTION. The eleventh and twelfth verses may be regarded as an exordium; and in this exordium he indicates two things. 1. That his arguments are drawn from the operations of God in human history. "I will teach you by the hand of God." 2. That the facts of human history are open to the observation of all. "Behold, all ye yourselves have seen it." II. ITS DOCTRINE. The doctrine is this, that punishment will ultimately overtake wicked men, however much, for a time, they may prosper in the world. "He gives back," says a modern writer, "to his three friends the doctrine which they had fully imparted to him." 1. That great wickedness often prospers for a time in this life. 2. That though it may, it must be followed by terrible punishment. Conclusion—(1) This address of Job's is worthy of the imitation of religious teachers. (2) It shows that worldly prosperity is neither a test of character, nor a safeguard against punishment. (*Homilist.*) *Zophar's missing speech:*—There has been much diversity of view in regard to the remainder of this chapter. The difficulty is that Job seems here to state the same things which had been maintained by his friends, and against which he had all along contended. This difficulty has been felt to be very great, and is very great. It cannot be denied that there is a great resemblance between the sentiments here expressed, and those which had been maintained by his friends, and that this speech, if offered by them, would have accorded entirely with their main position. Job seems to abandon all which he had defended, and to concede all which he had so warmly condemned. Dr. Kennicott supposes that the text is imperfect, and that these verses constituted the third speech of Zophar. His arguments for this opinion are—1. That Eliphaz and Bildad had each spoken three times, and that we are naturally led to expect a third speech from Zophar; but, according to the present arrangement, there is none. 2. That the sentiments accord exactly with what Zophar might be expected to advance, and are exactly in his style; that they are expressed in "his fierce manner of accusation," and are "in the very place where Zophar's speech is naturally expected." But the objections to this view are insuperable. They are—(1) The entire want of any authority in the manuscripts, or ancient versions, for such an arrangement or supposition. All the ancient versions and manuscripts make this a part of the speech of Job. (2) If this had been a speech of Zophar, we should have expected a reply to it, or an allusion to it, in the speech of Job which follows. But no such reply or allusion occurs. (3) If the form which is usual on the opening of a speech—"And Zophar answered and said"—had ever existed here, it is incredible that it should have been removed. But it occurs in no manuscript or version; and it is not allowable to make such an alteration in the Scripture by conjecture. Wemyss, in his translation of Job, accords with the view of Kennicott, and makes the verses 13–23 to be the third speech of Zophar. For this, however, he alleges no authority, and no reasons except such as had been suggested by Kennicott. Coverdale has inserted the word "saying" at the close of verse 12, and regards what follows to the end of the chapter as an enumeration or recapitulation of the false sentiments which they had maintained, and which Job regards as the "vain" things (ver. 12) which they had maintained. In support of this view, it may be alleged—(1) That it avoids all the difficulty of transposition, and the necessity of inserting an introduction, as we must do, if we suppose it to be a speech of Zophar. (2) It avoids the difficulty of supposing that Job had here contradicted the sentiments which he had before advanced, or of conceding all that his friends had maintained. (3) It is in accordance with the practice of the speakers in this book,

and the usual practice of debaters, who enumerate at considerable length the sentiments which they regard as erroneous, and which they design to oppose. (4) It is the most simple and natural supposition, and, therefore, most likely to be the true one. (*Albert Barnes.*)

Vers. 16, 17. **Though he heap up silver as the dust.**—*Hoarding :*—I. THE WICKED HOARDING THEIR WEALTH. They "heap up silver as the dust." As a rule, this is the grand work of wicked men on the earth. On it they concentrate all their energies; to it they devote all their time. II. THE HOARDED WEALTH OF THE WICKED COMING INTO THE HANDS OF THE GOOD. "The just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver." 1. This is partially taking place now every day. Wicked worldlings die, and the righteous get possession of their wealth. 2. This will be the case universally, one day. All the wealth amassed by wicked men shall fall into the hands of the Christly. If the wicked man is blessed with children, punishment may come from that quarter. The sword and famine may deprive him of them; and so desolate will he become that all his sorrowing friends shall be buried. If wicked men are blessed with great riches, their wealth shall fall into the hands of the good. "He may prepare it, but the just shall put it on." That if the wicked man is blessed with houses they will not stand. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 23. **Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place.**—*Hissed off the stage :*—This allusion seems to be dramatic. The Bible more than once makes such allusions. Paul says, "We are made a theatre or spectacle to angels and to men." It is evident from the text that some of the habits of theatre-goers were known in Job's time, because he describes an actor hissed off the stage. The impersonator comes on the boards and, either through lack of study of the part he is to take or inaptness or other incapacity, the audience is offended, and expresses its disapprobation and disgust by hissing. "Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place." My text suggests that each one of us is put on the stage of this world to take some part. What hardship and suffering and discipline great actors have undergone year after year that they might be perfected in their parts, you have often read. But we, put on the stage of this life to represent charity and faith and humility and helpfulness—what little preparation we have made, although we have three galleries of spectators, earth, and heaven, and hell! Have we not been more attentive to the part taken by others than to the part taken by ourselves, and, while we needed to be looking at home and concentring on our own duty, we have been criticising the other performers, and saying "that was too high," or "too low," or "too feeble," or "too extravagant," or "too tame," or "too demonstrative," while we ourselves were making a dead failure and preparing to be ignominiously hissed off the stage. Each one is assigned a place; no supernumeraries hanging around the drama of life to take this or that or the other part, as he may be called upon. No one can take our place. We can take no other place. Neither can we put off our character; no change of apparel can make us any one else than that which we eternally are.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

VER. 1. **A place for gold where they fine it.**—*Refining the gold :*—"There is a place for the gold where they fine it." This line from the Book of Job—so strong in its monosyllables—describes a spiritual as well as a chemical process. Over and over again in the Bible godly character is described by the happy simile of gold. It would be easy to run out the points of resemblance. All nations, from the polished to the savage, have agreed in regarding it the most beautiful of metals. It typifies the "beauty of holiness." It is an imperishable metal. When they opened the tomb of an old Etrurian king, buried twenty-five centuries ago, they found only a heap of royal dust. The only object that remained untouched by time was a fillet of gold which bound the monarch's brow. So doth true godliness survive the havoc of time and the ravages of the grave. Gold

is the basis of a solvent currency; and genuine fear of God is the basis of all the virtues which pass current among humanity. The essence of all piety is obedience to God. It is the eternal law of right put into daily practice. Too much is said in these days about the æsthetics of religion and its sensibilities. Religion's home is in the conscience. Its watchword is the word "ought." Its highest joy is in doing God's will. (*T. L. Cuyler, D.D.*)

Ver. 6. **And it hath dust of gold.**—*How to turn everything to gold:*—This chapter in Job describes with all a poet's force and beauty the miner's life in its loneliness, its dangers, and its triumphs. In those old days men endured the toil, and faced the dangers, to win the hidden gold, or precious stones. And from then till now men have ever been eager to find gold. The passion for gold is one of the strongest in the human heart. It has done much to shape the world's history. It has given us new arts, new sciences, and new industries. It has made solitary places populous, and filled empty lands with busy multitudes. Why is gold so coveted? For one thing, it is very rare. Gold has many properties peculiar to itself. And it is very durable. The principal reason of the high esteem for gold, is because it is the chief means of exchange between buyers and sellers. Some things, precious as it is, gold cannot buy. It cannot buy wisdom, knowledge, or goodness. Its possession means power to acquire all worldly good. Happiness cannot be bought with gold. The secret I am going to tell you is,—How to turn everything into gold. Not in a literal sense. Some people, though poor, are as happy as if all gold was theirs. Their purses may never be very full, but their hearts always are of faith and love. They are always bright, and have a cheery smile and a kindly word for all in trouble. Such people have found the secret of turning everything to gold. What is the secret? Paul says, "I have learned, in whatever state I am, therewith to be content" He had learned so to love the Heavenly Father's will, so to trust Him, that all care and fear and darkness had fled out of life, and left it touched with perpetual golden light. And that is the secret that all men know who can turn things to gold. Love Christ, and follow Him, and you will have discovered the secret—how to turn everything to gold. (*James Legge, M.A.*)

Ver. 10. **His eye seeth every precious thing.**—*Every precious thing:*—These words refer to the miner who digs for the treasure hidden in the earth. He finds the vein of silver, and the place for the gold. But if man's eye sees the precious things, let us think how God sees them. I. HE SEES THE PROMISE AND POSSIBILITY. There are many things of which, at a glance, men can see the worth; things that proclaim themselves loudly. Some things only the genius can see. The gold is in the quartz, but invisible. And what a poor thing is humanity! How hard it is to find in many people any promise of any goodness, any possibility of any worth. But lo! our God bends over us, and to Him this humanity is infinitely precious. To Him it is a pearl of great price, for which He hath given all, that He may purchase it for His own. This is the glory of our God; this is the meaning of His salvation—that He sees in humanity an infinite worth, that which He can uplift and beautify and transform into His own very image and likeness. II. HE SEES THE EFFORT AND WILL, WHERE OTHERS SEE ONLY THE POOR RESULT. God does not measure what we bring to Him, He weighs it. He knows what it cost. III. HE SEES THE GREAT RESULT, WHERE WE SEE BUT THE PROCESS. God sees for Joseph the throne of Egypt; the sceptre of that great nation is in his hand. But what does Joseph see when carried off by the Midianites? Thus is it ever that God sees the glorious result when we see but the dreary processes. He hears the joyous shout of harvest home, where we have only the chill earth and the darkness of the grave. This is our safety and our blessedness—to give ourselves to Him who knows how to turn us to the best account, and to let Him have His own way with us perfectly. (*Mark Guy Pearse.*)

Vers. 11, 12. **The thing that is hid bringeth he forth to light.**—*The religious uses and limitations of science:*—I. THE RELIGIOUS USES OF SCIENCE. "The thing that is hid man bringeth forth to light." Some think there is nothing but antagonism between science and religion. It is obvious that the science which traces out the mind of God in nature ought to be affianced to the faith which discerns the inner grace of His heart, and will, and character. 1. Science is helping to create a perfect environment for men, and so is the sister and help-

meet of the religion which seeks to create a perfect character in them. There is a very close connection between character and environment. 2. Science has a religious use, inasmuch as it reveals more fully the Divine power, and wisdom, and goodness in nature. 3. Science has a religious use, inasmuch as it tends to establish the unity and supremacy of God. These are cardinal articles of our creed. Science has proved the unity and uniformity of nature, and so has confirmed the great doctrine that there is only one living and true God. II. THE LIMITATIONS OF SCIENCE. It cannot take the place of religion, nor are its revelations all that the deepest heart of man most needs and desires. Scientific methods do not touch the sphere of spiritual facts. Some of Job's words sound like a prophecy of modern, agnostic teachings. Science has its own sphere, in which its method is valid and its authority supreme. But there is another sphere in which the conscience and the spirit are the organs of observation. Let us accept with devout thankfulness the riches which science is bringing us. But let us never forget that it cannot bring us to the secret place of the Most High, or quench our deepest thirst for peace, and purity, and fellowship with God. The way to these blessings is the way of moral obedience and spiritual communion through love with God in Christ. (*W. T. Bankhead, M.A., B.D.*)

Vers. 12–28. **But where shall wisdom be found?**—*The speculative difficulties of an inquiring intellect solved by the heart of practical piety*:—Two things are prominently developed in this chapter—Man's power and his weakness; his power to supply the material necessities of his nature, and his weakness to supply his mental cravings. I. EVERY INQUIRING INTELLECT HAS DIFFICULTIES WHICH IT IS ANXIOUS TO REMOVE. Two classes of intellectual difficulties—those connected with the physical realm of being, and those connected with the moral. The former class are pressing upon scientific men. The latter class by those who think on moral subjects. The difficulties in the moral department press far more heavily and fearfully on the heart of man than those in the physical. II. THAT THE PRINCIPLE WHICH REMOVES THOSE DIFFICULTIES CAN NEITHER BE PURCHASED BY WEALTH NOR ATTAINED BY INVESTIGATION. A search for it in the domain of inanimate nature would be useless. So would a search for it in the domain of life, or in the domain of departed souls. (Death, *Sheol.*) III. THE HEART OF PRACTICAL PIETY YIELDS A SATISFACTORY SOLUTION OF ALL PAINFUL, INTELLECTUAL DUTIES. 1. This is asserted by one who understands what wisdom is. 2. This is proved by the nature of the case. (1) By sustaining in the mind an unshaken and cheerful trust in the great Disposer of all things. (2) By sustaining the consciousness that what we understand not now, we shall know hereafter. (3) By clearing away from the mind those feelings which prevent the intellect from understanding spiritual things. (4) By giving the soul a ruling sentiment kindred to the primary impulse of God. Piety, then, is the *Wisdom*. the solvent principle. (*Homilist.*) *The religious use of wisdom*:—What is this grace of wisdom, and why is it so highly exalted? 1. Wisdom, as described in the Bible, is that eager desire of knowledge which rests unsatisfied so long as a corner of darkness is left unexplored; that passion for learning which, like the fleets of Solomon, penetrated into the furthermost regions of the then known world, and brought back from the furthermost shores the stores of natural history. A spirit of inquiry may, no doubt, become frivolous and useless. But that is not its heaven-born mission. 2. The religious idea of wisdom is the exercise of "practical judgment and discretion"; "a wise and understanding heart to discern between good and bad"; the capacity for "justice, judgment, and equity." No doubt wisdom is not in itself goodness. The Proverbs are not the Psalms, Solomon was not David. But wisdom is next door to goodness, and religion leans upon her. How much mischief has been wrought because men have refused to acknowledge that common-sense is a Christian grace. What a new aspect would be put upon the idleness, the selfishness, the extravagance of youth, if we could be taught to think not only of sinfulness, but of its contemptible folly, if we could be induced, not only to confess how often we were miserable sinners but also how often we have been miserable fools; what a great security for human welfare if we were to set ourselves not only to become better, but wiser, not only to gain holiness and virtue, but, as Solomon says, to get wisdom, get understanding; to pray that He who giveth liberally and upbraideth not, would in addition to His other blessings "give us wisdom." (*Dean Stanley.*) *Culture and religion*:—By culture we mean that condition of the instructed and trained

intellect which is the result of education, refinement, and large acquaintance with the facts of nature and history. By religion we understand that personal relation to the supreme King, and that character of moral and spiritual quality which for us is Christian, and depends upon faith in the Gospel as its spring, and obedience to the law of Jesus Christ as its directing and controlling force. The relations which these sides of human action may bear to each other can never be of slight importance. Some maintain that they are antagonistic. It is said the ages of faith are not the times of intelligence. Learning causes religion to dwindle. But history shows that the epochs of man's progress, when there is a larger force, and a more vigorous vitality, are marked by stimulus, not only to the intelligence and learning of the human mind, but also to the faith, and corresponding character of the human heart. Illustrate from the period of the revival of learning and letters. Was not this epoch also the revival of a truer faith? If learning was revived, surely also the Gospel of Jesus Christ found a new life. There was a further quickening of intellectual life in the eighteenth century. But was it not the age of Whitefield and Wesley? And what have we seen in our own time? We boast its intelligence. But it is the day of evangelism, and nowhere is such form of religious life more strong than in the centres of learning. 1. Religion is itself a means of mental discipline. One of the first objects of study which religion furnishes is the nature of the human soul itself. It is very difficult to mark the boundary where the philosophy of the mind is separated from the religion of the spirit. Religion is historic, and no man can rightly yield himself to the influence of religion without tracing the progress of Christian doctrine and the development of the Church. And what a history has been this ecclesiastical, this dogmatic history of two millenniums. This historical knowledge which religion furnishes leads us to that solitary figure whose shadow has been cast over every century since its appearance among men. Religion begins and ends with us with the knowledge of Jesus Christ. What object of human thought can afford such discipline, such inspiration, such directing, as His life and work? History is only the commentary on Christ. The events of every age only start from Him, and lead to Him again. We have left unto the last the greatest thought of all which religion presents. Whom do we worship? Whom do we seek? Who is the ultimate end of all Christian endeavour, all religious belief, all devout living? It is God—the Supreme, the Infinite, the necessary Being, source of all life, regulator of all movements, spring of all creation, the first, the last, the beginning and the end of universal being. No science can take us beyond the threshold of His abode. The relation of man to God includes the deep enigmas of sin and evil, the large speculation of freedom, necessity, responsibility, and law. It is no wonder that the philosophers of the schools called theology the Queen of the Sciences. 2. The other side of the relation which religion bears to mental cultivation, is that protective and medicative influence which it can exert, so as to guard against or remedy the evils, in peril of which an exclusively mental exercise always lies. (1) Religion corrects the tendency of culture to ignore the limits of man's power. If the mind be concerned only with objects of nature, the facts and laws of the external world, and the purely phenomenal presentations of the human intellect itself, it is in great danger of not perceiving the lines beyond which its advance is absolutely barred. (2) Another peril is the pride and self-valuation which mere intellectual cultivation sometimes occasions. This is a moral vice, a fault of character, an imperfection of the heart. The wise man must be humble. True learning is to learn what we cannot know. Faith, and worship, and adoring love for ever keep the human heart in the ready and loyal acknowledgment of its God. (3) Another peril is social, affecting the educated man as he is viewed in relation to his fellows. A learning that is nothing but intellectual tends to make us forget our brotherhood. There is nothing more selfish than culture. There is a scorn in learning of which every man lies in danger. The only corrective is religion. In her courts we stand upon a common ground. (*L. D. Bevan, D.D.*)

The search after wisdom:—The wisdom which man is concerned to acquire must be a wisdom which will stand him in stead throughout eternity. I. THE ABSTRUSENESS AND MARVELLOUSNESS OF HUMAN DISCOVERIES. The natural philosopher is engaged in a search; and many of his discoveries are attended with very beneficial results to the world at large. Let us ascertain, then, whether *he* has discovered the pearl of price for which we seek. In the investigation of nature men display an energy and perseverance which is well worthy of a nobler cause.

But there is no rest, no peace, no satisfaction in this quest. It is of its very nature to be restless. II. THERE IS AN IMPASSABLE LIMIT WHICH HUMAN DISCOVERIES CANNOT GO BEYOND. The field of providence baffles us at the outset. Nature affords us no light whatever in solving the secrets of the Divine dispensations. III. "WHENCE COMETH WISDOM?" Shall our search after it be always fruitless? The seat of wisdom is, was, and ever has been, the bosom of God. Of Him we must learn it, if we would learn it at all. His Word shall set every mind at rest, shall disclose to us what that true wisdom is, which is the sphere of man, and in which we may acquiesce. "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom." To depart from evil is the wisdom of wisdoms, the highest, the only true wisdom. (*E. M. Goulburn, D.C.L.*) *The inestimable value of true wisdom, or religion*:—A man without religion is not wise; not so wise as he ought to be; nor so wise as he could be. It is religion that teaches a man to act worthily towards different objects—to call them by their proper names. It is religion that teaches a man to take the greatest care with the most precious things. It is religion that teaches a man how to give the best time to the most important work. It is religion that teaches a man to strive most to win the approval of Him who has it in His power to do most. It is religion, in a word, that fits a man to enter heaven. (*David Roberts, D.D.*) *The secret of wisdom*:—Why is wisdom so far harder to find than anything else? Why can man read every other riddle of nature except the one riddle that fascinates him? Nothing here can escape his scrutiny; nothing can bar his advance. Look at hi , the chapter says, as he digs and mines and searches and sifts and purges the dross with fire, and gathers in the assorted wealth. Look at the track where he unearths his silver, and at the furnace where he refines his gold. And yet, in spite of all this practical supremacy, this masterful intimacy over nature, is he at all nearer to the discovery of her ultimate secret? Can he dig up the truth as he can a diamond? Can he buy it in the market for coral? Nay, what avail his pearls and rubies? Somehow the secret is ever eluding him. Just when men seem nearest to it, it slips from out of their clutch. Nature is for ever suggesting it, yet for ever concealing it. The sea, which had seemed to be murmuring it aloud in its dreams, now says, "It is not in me"; the depth, which had enticed us into its brooding wonder, now says, "It is not with me." Somehow they all stop short. "This is a path which no bird knows; the eye even of the vulture has never seen it; the wild beasts have never trodden it; the young lions pass not by that way; it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the birds of the air." So the Book confesses. Ah! how that ancient experience repeats itself in us to-day. Never was the contrast more vivid or more crushing than now between the astounding practical efficiency of our scientific handling of earth's material treasures, and the futility of our search for the inner secret. Still, the spectacle of nature spreads out before us its intimate invitation to come and take possession; there is no recess that we may not penetrate; no height and depth that we cannot enter. It makes itself ours, and we feel ourselves its master. We stand amazed at our own supremacy. No obstacles defeat us, no perils terrify. Down into the deep bowels of the earth we sink our shafts; over all its seas we send our fleets; our furnaces blaze, and our factories roar. How dauntless our search; how sublime our capacity, our patience, our persistence! But one thing remains as far off, as elusive as ever. Upon one discovery we cannot lay our hand. There is a point where our mastery suddenly droops; our cunning fails us, and our courage and our self-confidence drop away from under us. We snatch at what we fancied to be the thing which we desired to find, and our fingers close on emptiness. Where is it gone? Why cannot we hold it—this wisdom, this spiritual secret, this reality of things? Ah, yes, why indeed? Did we suppose that we should come upon it, hid in some mine with the sapphires and the dust of gold? Did we hope to dig it up one day? Nay, not by any such road can we arrive at wisdom; not in that fashion is it captured. The spiritual purpose, the inner reality of things is of another kind. Not by faculties such as these that our practical efficiency brings into play shall we apprehend it—"Seeing that it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the birds of the air." Practical skill, obviously, ludicrously fails us. But practical science, the science of experimental discovery, cannot that help us? It is our very organ of discovery: cannot it discover wisdom? Alas! Here, too, we find that the very exercise of those scientific faculties by which our astounding triumphs have been achieved excludes and banishes our chance of arriving by these methods at the secret of

reality. The more we know that way, the less we arrive. The spread of our science, in which we have shown ourselves so masterful, so victorious, is won at the cost of intellectual limitations which prohibit our apprehension of the one thing that we desire to know. Science has carried us further off from the secret than we were before we were scientific. It has made more evident how elusive that secret is. We stare hopelessly out at stars so remote that the light which can travel ninety-three millions of miles to the sun in eight minutes takes hours and days and years even to arrive. And far beyond those stars again a million others spread away in swarms of tangled haze. Where are we in such a universe? What is man? How can he count? What intercourse can hold between him, in his terrible minute insignificance, and it in its unimaginable vastness? How dare he thrust himself in with all his ludicrous emotions, and his absurd desires? What does that vast world know of him in its icy aloofness; there, in that unplumbed and immeasurable abyss? Back we sink to look within; but is it more hopeful, our in-look there? The dear familiar face of the earth has disappeared under the siftings of physical science. And what frightens us is that all this mechanical universe into which we are scientifically introduced omits us, ignores us, goes on without us. That which is our real life,—our thought, our will, our imagination, our affection, our passion, these cannot find themselves there; they cannot be expressed in terms of mechanism. Practical science says, "It is not in me"; organised science says, "It is not in me." Where shall wisdom be found; is there any other road of search? Where is there a better promise of arrival? Well, there is an offer, which I think carries us a long way nearer than physical science. It is that of art. In the creative impulse, in the imaginative emotion kindled at the sight or sound of beauty, we have that which seems to open the door into the secret of existence, into the mind with which nature was made. Nature explains itself to us best as a majestic spectacle, as a living effort that finds its joy in being what it is. That is what all nature cries to us. Life teems, life dances, life sings: it is a glory just to be alive. Is not that the truth at which the sons of God shouted in the first morning of creation? The earth was so superb a fact; it stood as a picture; it grew like a poem, and it moved like music. God found His joy in flinging out His power in all this radiant majesty; He loved it for being alive, for being the expression of His love. And that joy of God in sheer existence passed into all things to become their soul. We need not inquire here for what ulterior end they were made, or what use they serve. It is so difficult to discern what will come of it all. But why ask? Enough that they are what they are. To live is to suffice; to live is to be intelligible; to live is to be justified. If only the world is content to rejoice in being what it is, it has attained. "Oh, all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord! Praise Him and magnify Him for ever." This cry of praise can sweep in so much that otherwise might perplex or distress us in the making of the world. Its hardships, its trials, its sufferings, may yet pass into the great hymn. Fire and hail, though they burn and break, yet are what they are, and as such, even as we suffer under them, we are glad to praise the Lord and magnify Him for ever. The poet, the musician can suggest to us how the deeper pains of the great human tragedy may take a new meaning under the glamour of art, and can yield, under the pressure of high imagination, a sweeter, richer mystery of joy. Yes, in the passion of the artist we are close upon our secret, we are knocking at the door, as it were. Yet who can dare rest satisfied with that solution; who will stop there? Indignantly our hearts repudiate it. We cannot be as those who, like Goethe, could regard the universe as the material for a work of art. Music, poetry, may indeed be able to suggest to us that sorrow and love and death are not all in vain; they may wring a bitter-sweet joy out of hardness. And yet, and yet, we dare not go round London streets to-day and say, "Be comforted; you are part of the eternal tragedy; you lend pathos to the human drama. Your sorrows rise into songs, your woes are gathered up into the great orchestral symphony of time. Men and women are so far more interesting when they suffer than when they succeed. If only you could see and feel it, your trouble leads to the final peace, even as the discords in a piece of musical development that crash so harshly on the ear are essential to the perfect close into which they gently resolve themselves." No, that will not do; that cannot be our Gospel for the poor and the heavy laden. Where, then, shall it be found? Where, really, is the place of understanding? What is our last word? Is it not the same as that which is given in the Book of Job? "The fear of the Lord

—that is wisdom; to depart from evil—that is understanding." The moral life holds for us the central secret of reality. The moral life is our act of communion with the power that is at the heart of things. In it we arrive; by it we get home. A hundred problems may lie around us unsolved; we may have to walk in blindness amid a world that we can make nothing of. We may be utterly unable to account for the origin of things, or to interpret their purpose, or to foresee their end. But for all this we can afford to wait; for, deep at the core of our being we have that in us which holds us fast shut within the very light of life, within the very eternity of God. His will—that will in which the worlds move and are in being—closes round our will; His love—that love which is the fount of all creation and the end of all desire—folds itself about our little trembling flame of love. We are His; He is ours. Surrendered to the law of His life we are at peace within the very secret of all secrets. Some day we shall know and see and understand. Then the amazing purpose will unveil itself, and we shall sing our "Hallelujah, Amen." But enough if now, blind though we be, and impotent and staggered, we yet can be aware that He, whom we possess, and who desires us, is Himself the sole supreme reality of all that exists, that He is Lord and God of all, that He will at last be all in all. By surrender to Him, by obedience to Him in His fear, lies our only present wisdom—a wisdom which holds in it the promise and the pledge of all other wisdom that can be. This is the mystery of the conscience, of the will, of the heart, of the fear of the Lord. Through it, and through it alone, can man make good his entry within the veil, within the light. This faith in the moral law is being sorely tried to-day, just because the vast disclosures of science seem to carry us further and further away from a world in which moral purposes prevail. The world of infinite mechanism which is opened out to us, reaching far away into appalling distances beyond our power even to imagine, at work within in a minuteness of scale which paralyses our reason, wears the air of something altogether non-moral. There seems to be no bond that holds between it and our purposes and convictions. Where are we? What significance have we? What importance dare we attribute to our tiny actions? Ah! how difficult to uphold our belief that all these rolling suns are as mere dust in the balance over against a Commandment pronouncing, "Thou shalt," "Thou shalt not." They cannot be weighed against a sin. The soul has that in it which outweighs them all. How difficult; yet that is our faith. "The fear of the Lord," we say, "that is wisdom." Can we hold it fast? Will we live and die in it? Will we utter it aloud, and stand by it in the face of all the million suns? No; the guidance, the assurance that we need must be strong, decided, masterful, absolute, if it is to bear up against the terrible counter-pressure. A voice must speak which never wavers, a voice which holds in it the very sound of authority, a voice which cannot be gainsaid. And therefore, to supply this authoritative momentum, a Babe has been born into the world, through whom such an appeal as that can reach us. He will live and He will die to verify the fear of the Lord as man's one and only wisdom. Through His lips man may know, with a certainty which no counter-experience can ever shake, that it is worth while to lose the whole world, if only he can save his soul; truth and righteousness and purity are the sole treasure that he can lay up for himself in Heaven —that he had better pluck out his right eye than gain through it a lustful pleasure —that he had better be drowned with a millstone round his neck in the depths of the sea than do a hurt to the least of God's little ones. In the sweat of blood, in the sacrifice of the Cross, He will exhibit the unconquerable splendour of the dedicated will at the price of all that life can offer. And, moreover, He who asserts that supremacy of the moral interest is one who, by His very nature, proclaims that man, concentrating himself upon this unique moral interest, and letting all go on its behoof, finds himself one with the eternal reality of things, one with the ultimate life, one with the Father of all flesh; for He who so dies to all but the moral command is Himself the One in whom God sums up all creation. You are not, therefore, asked to despise or to condemn the wonderful world disclosed by science or revealed by art; you are not asked to think little of that vast universe, with its rolling spheres, because there is set before you, here on earth, this sole and supreme purpose—to fear God and to hate evil. For in this moral issue lies the secret of the entire sum of things; and the pure will of Jesus is the will on which all existence is framed. Win there, and you will win everywhere; win there in the moral struggle, and behold, "All things are yours, things in heaven, things in earth, and things under the earth." All, all

at last will be yours! you hold the secret of power—"For you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." But, remember, you must win there or you are lost, whatever else you may win. That is our Gospel. And here in this arena there is no one who, in Christ, may not win. Your life may become a victory. Yes; even for you, who feel, perhaps, so terribly beaten by the pressure of a hard world. (*Canon Scott Holland.*)

Ver. 17. **And the crystal cannot equal it.**—*The crystal exact*:—In the first place I remark that religion is superior to the crystal in exactness. That shapeless mass of crystal against which you accidentally dashed your foot is laid out with more exactness than any earthly city. There are six styles of crystallisation, and all of them divinely ordained. Every crystal has mathematical precision. God's geometry reaches through it, and it is a square, or it is a rectangle, or it is a rhomboid or, in some way, it hath a mathematical figure. Now religion beats that in the simple fact that spiritual accuracy is more beautiful than material accuracy. God's attributes are exact. God's law exact. God's decrees exact. God's management of the world exact. Never counting wrong, though He counts the grass-blades and the stars, and the sands and the cycles. His providences never dealing with us perpendicularly when those providences ought to be oblique, nor lateral when they ought to be vertical. Everything in our life arranged without any possibility of mistake. Each life a six-sided prism. Born at the right time; dying at the right time. There are no happen-sos in our theology. If I thought this was a slipshod universe I would go crazy. God is not an anarchist. Law, order, symmetry, precision. A perfect square. A perfect rectangle. A perfect rhomboid. A perfect circle. The edge of God's robe of government never frays out. There are no loose screws in the world's machinery. It did not just happen that Napoleon was attacked with indigestion at Borodino, so that he became incompetent for the day. It did not just happen that John Thomas, the missionary, on a heathen island, waiting for an outfit and orders for another missionary tour, received that outfit and those orders in a box that floated ashore, while the ship and the crew that carried the box were never heard of. The barking of F. W. Robertson's dog, he tells us, led to a line of events which brought him from the army into the Christian ministry, where he served God with world-renowned usefulness. It did not merely happen so. I believe in a particular Providence. I believe God's geometry may be seen in all our life more beautifully than in crystallography. Job was right. "The crystal cannot equal it." (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

Vers. 20, 21. **Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living.**—*Mystery and dogma*:—It is the dogmatism of science that stands in the way of the much-needed reconciliation, even more than the dogmatism of theology. Nothing is so hostile to mystery as dogmatism. The sense of mystery is the sense of vastness, indefiniteness, grandeur. The moment you come with your dogmas to measure and explain everything, that moment the mystery, the vastness, the grandeur, begin to vanish. Rightly understood, the facts of science and the facts of theology point us on to something infinitely greater and more mysterious than the dogmas by which we try to explain, and in explaining, too often imprison and dwarf them. Yet we must have dogmas both in theology and science. No progress, no tradition, is possible without them. We must learn to use them without abusing them. (*D. I. Vaughan, M.D.*)

Ver. 28. **Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom.**—*The wisdom of being religious*:—"To fear the Lord" and to "depart from evil" are phrases which the Scripture useth in a very great latitude to express to us the sum of religion and the whole of our duty. I. IT IS USUAL TO EXPRESS THE WHOLE OF RELIGION BY SOME EMINENT PRINCIPLE OR PART OF IT. The great principles of religion are knowledge, faith, remembrance, love, and fear. The sum of all religion is often expressed by some eminent part of it. As "departing from evil," "seeking God." II. THE FITNESS OF THESE TWO PHRASES TO DESCRIBE RELIGION. For the first, "the fear of the Lord," the fitness of this phrase will appear if we consider how great an influence the fear of God hath upon men to make them religious. There are two bridles or restraints which God hath put upon human nature—shame and fear. Fear is the stronger. For the second phrase, "departing from evil," the fitness of it to express the whole duty of man will appear if we consider the

necessary connection that is between the negative and the positive part of our duty. He that is careful to avoid all sin, will sincerely endeavour to perform his duty. The proposition in the text is that religion is the best knowledge and wisdom. Make this good. 1. By a direct proof of it. (1) Religion is the best knowledge. It is the knowledge of those things which are in themselves most excellent; and also of those things which are most useful and necessary for us to know. (2) To be religious is the truest wisdom. Because it is to be wise for ourselves, and it is to be wise as to our main interests. 2. By endeavouring to show the ignorance and folly of irreligion. All that are irreligious are so upon one of these two accounts. Either because they do not believe the foundations and principles of religion, as the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and future rewards, or else because though they do in some sort believe these things, yet they live contrary to this their belief. The first sort are guilty of that which we call speculative, the other of practical atheism. Speculative atheism is unreasonable upon five accounts. (1) Because it gives no tolerable account of the existence of the world. (2) Nor does it give any reasonable account of the universal consent of mankind in this apprehension, that there is a God. (3) It requires more evidence for things than they are capable of. (4) The atheist pretends to know that which no man can know. (5) Atheism contradicts itself. Speculative atheism is a most imprudent and uncomfortable opinion, because it is against the present interest and happiness of mankind, and because it is infinitely hazardous and unsafe in the issue. The practical atheist is likewise guilty of prodigious folly. 3. The third way of confirmation shall be, by endeavouring to vindicate religion from those common imputations which seem to charge it with ignorance or imprudence. Chiefly these,—credulity, singularity, making a foolish bargain. Then wouldest thou be truly wise, be wise for thyself, wise for thy soul, wise for eternity. Resolve upon a religious course of life. (*J. Tillotson, D.D.*) *The wisdom of fearing the Lord*:—The fear of God, that is recommended by our religion, supposes that we have just and proper notions of the Divine attributes and of the Divine providence and government. Our fear of Him will naturally be a fear of offending against Him. The fear of the Lord will readily excite a sincere and ardent desire to become acquainted with all the various truths which the Almighty has revealed to the children of men. The fear of the Lord will dispose men to worship Him, and that with their whole soul, their mind, their strength. The fear of the Lord is a powerful restraint on the evil passions and corrupt inclinations of men. The fear of the Lord will excite men to the faithful performance of all their various duties to God and to their fellow-men. Religion teaches that the best ends we can pursue are the glory of God, the perfection and happiness of your nature. Religion alone conveys to us that wisdom which dispels the darkness and ignorance of those things which essentially belong to our peace. The course of life which religion recommends is friendly to peace of mind, to contentment with the state we are in, to health of body, to length of days, to the vigorous exercise of all our faculties, and consequently to the full enjoyment of all the external blessings of providence. (*W. Shiels.*) *The nature of true wisdom*:—The many mistakes into which men fall in passing through life, arise from false views of our present state. This life is frequently considered as a separate and independent state of things, as if it were entirely unconnected with the future. Hence arise innumerable errors respecting the nature of true wisdom. Scripture rectifies our mistakes. It answers the question, What is wisdom? Real religion is wisdom. View it. I. IN ITS INWARD PRINCIPLE. "The fear of the Lord." Not the fear that is excited by the apprehension of evil. Not slavish but filial fear. The reverence of a dutiful child. It is ever accompanied by love, joy, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost. II. IN ITS VISIBLE FRUITS. "Departure from evil." By evil is here meant sin—every desire, and word, and action which we have reason to believe is displeasing to Almighty God. The Scriptures uniformly represent the renouncing of sin as a necessary and certain effect of the fear of God. Are we to understand that those who possess this principle, uniformly and constantly depart from all evil; so that they are entirely free from sin, and never at any time fall by the force of temptation? The state of perfect purity and absolute conformity to the will of God is never fully attained on this side the grave. Still there is a great and wide difference between the characters of those who fear God and of those who fear Him not. III. IN ITS EXCELLENT CHARACTER. To fear the Lord is wisdom; to depart from evil is "understanding." True wisdom is only to be found in such principles and such conduct as will lead to true happiness. The question

there is, Wherein consists true happiness? Ask the religious man where he has found it. (*J. S. Pratt.*) *Wisdom of a religious course of life*:—1. Certain it is that the whole body of moral and religious laws are the laws of the wise and good Legislator of the world, whose design in imparting to us our being was doubtless to communicate a portion of His happiness and to improve it to the utmost capacity of our nature. The Divine wisdom is our security that our paths shall terminate in peace. 2. In order to vindicate the wisdom of a religious conduct it may not be improper to obviate a prejudice too commonly propagated and too easily received, namely,—That the felicities of the next world are not to be obtained according to the strict terms of Christianity, without renouncing the enjoyments of the present. The merciful Author of religion has not dealt thus hardly with mankind. Religion prohibits only those specious but destructive evils which the passions of mankind have dressed up in the disguise of pleasure; those irregular pursuits in which no wise man would ever place his happiness or could ever find it. God, who has filled the earth with His goodness and surrounded us with objects which He made agreeable to our nature, cannot be supposed to require us to reject His bounty, and to look on them all as on the fruit of that tree in paradise, which was pleasant to the eye but forbidden to be tasted. Be the pleasures of vice what they may, there is still a superior pleasure in subduing the passions of it; for it is the pleasure of reason and wisdom; the pleasure of an intellectual, not a mere animal being; a pleasure that will always stand the test of reflection, and never fails to impart true and permanent satisfaction. 3. The wisdom of a religious conduct may appear from its being the sure foundation of that peace of mind which is the chief constituent of happiness. The conditions of human life will not permit us to expect a total exemption from evils. Religion will indeed bring us internal peace of mind, but cannot secure us from external contingencies. Religion will not reverse the distinctions of station which Providence has appointed. It will not secure us from the passions of others. Religion is not less friendly in its influence on social than on private life, and is equally conducive to the happiness of the public and of individuals. All the virtues that can render a people secure and flourishing, all the duties that the best political laws require as necessary or conducive to the public tranquillity, are enjoined by our religion. Were the practice of religion generally to prevail, men would escape more than half the evils that afflict mankind. 4. The wisdom of a religious life may hence appear, because such a conduct is infinitely preferable, infinitely more prudent and secure, when we take futurity into consideration. Upon the whole, the good man enjoys superior happiness in this world, and in the next stands alone, without any rival, in his hopes and pretensions. (*G. Carr.*) *The whole of duty*:—When we find in this and so many other places of Holy Scripture, the fear of God put to express the whole of our duty, and so many good things said of it, one may justly suspect the truth of what some men, with too much boldness, have advanced, as if that obedience which proceeds from a principle of fear were altogether to be condemned, and will be of no account in the sight of God. Surely if the fear of the Lord be wisdom, the reasoning of these men must be folly. Perfect love casteth out fear, but it is the fear of men, not of God. Observe also that religion is described to us in the text by such expressions as plainly suppose it to be something practical. It consists not merely in a set of notions and opinions which may possess the head without touching the heart, but it is something which sways and influences the affections, and flows out into action, and gives life and grace, consistency and regularity to the behaviour. The fear of the Lord, to which the character of wisdom is here applied, must be supposed to show itself in the happy fruits of a well-ordered, pious, prudent, upright conduct. The fear of the Lord must be supposed to mean such a religious awe and reverence of the Divine Majesty, such a prevailing sense of God upon our minds, as will effectually incline us to obey Him in the course and conduct of our lives. 1. That is wisdom which the wisest men agree in, and pronounce to be so. The wisest men of all ages have agreed to recommend a life of religion and virtue. The best and wisest of the philosophers always were engaged on the side of religion, diligently inculcating the fear and worship of the Deity, according to that imperfect light and knowledge of Him which they could attain to by the force of reason; and pressing upon men the practice of all moral duties. 2. That is wisdom which all our observation and experience of the world does evidently confirm to be so. As experience has been always reckoned the best mistress and best guide to truth, whatsoever comes thus proved and recommended to us for wisdom, ought in all reason to be allowed to

be so. And this, upon a fair and equal computation, we shall find to be on the side of religion. The Book of Ecclesiastes is no other than a demonstration of the wisdom of a religious life from observation and experience of the world. A very little experience of the world will convince us of the uncertainty of all things here below. But the happiness of the other life shall exceed our utmost expectations. 3. That is wisdom which in all occurrences whatever, and in every state of life, makes a man satisfied with himself, and of which no man ever yet found reason to repent. This is the peculiar privilege of a virtuous and religious course of life. Who ever saw reason to repent or be uneasy because he had discharged his duty, because he had made it his great care and endeavour to live in the fear of God, and a diligent observance of His commands? 4. That is wisdom which, in the final issue and event of things, will most certainly appear to be so. That must needs be the wisest course a man can take which not only tends to bring him peace and satisfaction for the present, but secures to him a portion of happiness hereafter, and that the most complete and lasting happiness, even for ever and ever. When we consider the fear of God and the practice of our duty in this light, and compare it with its contrary ungodliness and vice,—when we reflect on the blessed reward of the one, and the sad ways of the other; we must be lost to all sense of good and evil if we are not fully convinced of the truth of the text. (*C. Peters, M.A.*) *The fear of the Lord* :—Can man attain the highest wisdom, the highest state of excellence, without a revelation from God? When man is set before us as possessing powers and capacities which may be said to conquer nature, how comes it to pass that the intellectual development is not equalled by moral elevation? He is described after all as not having found wisdom. Science may give knowledge, but cannot attain wisdom. Whence, then, this mystery of inconsistency, this riddle of greatness and littleness, of good and evil? Man is not in the state in which he was made. He is a ruined monument of a once noble creature. Can fallen man purchase wisdom? He may acquire wealth, but he cannot put a price upon wisdom. The fearful lesson of history gives emphasis to the word of God as to the moral degradation which has marked man in every age. Personified wisdom is seen in the person of Christ. In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom. What is the adaptation of man to receive what God is pleased to reveal? God communicates the wisdom; man receives it, appreciating and sympathising with the Divine mind, and this capability of reception existed from the very first. What is man's proper position and duty in consequence of this Divine communication? (*J. C. Cadman.*) *What is wisdom* :—1. Wisdom is not learning. We constantly observe how much a man may know, and yet what a fool he may be. 2. Wisdom is not cleverness, though it is often mistaken for it, especially by the young, who are apt to give to a certain kind of intellectual ability a great deal more of admiration than it deserves. What we want for our practical guidance is the wisdom of the judge. If we look on practical wisdom as that which guides us to the line of conduct best calculated to secure our happiness, it must undoubtedly be wise to secure the favour of Him who is infinite in power, and whose rewards are eternal. When we turn to the New Testament we find a basis for Christian ethics very different from that of the most enlightened selfishness. The spring of our actions must be love to Christ, and likeness to Christ the model of perfection at which we must aim. And what was the character of Christ? "Christ pleased not Himself." He came to benefit; mindful only of the great object for which He had come, and to seek and to save them which were lost. Christ pleased not Himself, so let every one of you please his neighbour for his good to edification. Here is the paradox of Christianity. Wisdom teaches us to provide for our happiness in the most enlightened way; but here we have what seems quite a different rule; seek not your own happiness at all; live and work for the happiness of others. The key to the paradox is found in our Lord's words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." If you want to know what are the fruits of that which is a higher and warmer thing than mere virtue, real love for others, such as that of which our Redeemer's earthly life is the highest pattern, we need only imagine His example followed by a single individual. It is eminently true of love, "Give, and it shall be given unto you." (*J. Salmon.*) *Where is wisdom found?*—Many are running to and fro, and knowledge is increased. Many are opening to us the wonderful paths of science. But after all we still come back to the question, "Where shall wisdom be found?" Where shall we gain that which can fully satisfy us, that which can bring us to God, and make us glad with the light of His countenance?

Wisdom is an inward possession, a spiritual treasure. Its seat is not in the head, but in the heart; not in the mind, but in the affections and the life. Though knowledge is power, it is not all-sufficient. The desire for knowledge is good. Wisdom, though of heavenly origin, is yet granted us to be exercised on earth. The way to attain it is to "fear God, and keep His commandments." This includes the departing from evil. 1. How all-important is it for the young to grasp this Divine principle, and to act upon it at once. One of the difficulties of youth is the fear of your companions. You are called by God's own voice to set your face steadily against this. The boy who is wanting in moral courage becomes in manhood a moral coward. Again, if you do not fear God night and day, you will be led into ways of impurity which may taint your whole life, and make you miserable for years. The fear of God will be needed to break us off from bad habits. 2. Those who are older ought to be giving heed more and more to this great saying of God, which is not too high for any of us, and which every one of us can act upon if he will. Let each of us devote ourselves to the daily practice of this heavenly wisdom, rooted in the fear of the Lord. We shall never repent that self-devotion, that life-long devotion, that life-long education, that holy discipline of love. (*G. E. Jelf, M.A.*) *The search for wisdom*:—There is nothing that man doth more earnestly pursue and hunt after than wisdom and understanding; and there is nothing that God is more desirous that he should obtain. And yet such is the obstinacy of our will, and the perverseness of our nature, that when God shows us the true wisdom, and the way to it, we will not follow His directions, but seek for it according to our own fancy, where it is never to be had. The devil overthrew our first parents by persuading them to aspire to a greater measure of knowledge than God had thought fit to bestow upon them; and he hath all along made use of the same temptation to the ruin of their posterity. Those who, one would think, should be the best able to resist his temptations (I mean the "learned"), are oftentimes most easily foiled by him. Their great learning and parts, most excellent endowments, which might be very serviceable to God's glory and the good of His Church, he persuades them to abuse in the maintaining of wrangling disputations, and unnecessary (sometimes dangerous) controversies. In this text, and chapter, Job's three friends are very bold, and foolishly positive in their assertions concerning God's decrees. As if they had been of God's privy council, had stood by Him, and thoroughly understood the whole design of His providence in afflicting so severely His servant Job, they presently conclude him to be a most grievous sinner. All this Job hears and endures with patience. He was sensible enough that God had afflicted him, and he knew too that it was not for his hypocrisy, but for some secret end best known to His infinite wisdom; and therefore he inquires not after it, but labours to perform his own duty, and to receive evil from the hand of God, if He sends it to him, as well as good, and patiently to bear whatsoever burden He lays upon him. This is all the wisdom he aspires to; he meddles not with God's secret council, nor searches after the knowledge which he knew was "too wonderful for him." God understands the way of wisdom, and He only understands it; and He will have none else to understand it, or meddle with it. I. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE "FEAR OF THE LORD"? The fear peculiar to wicked men is not wisdom, but folly and madness—it is sin. Some men so fear God as that they will endeavour to abstain from gross and scandalous sins; but not out of any true love they have for God, or any hatred they bear to sin, but merely out of self-interest, that they may escape that vengeance which they know will one day be executed upon the ungodly. This fear is not in all men a sin; it is in some a virtue, and if it be not the wisdom here in the text, yet it is at least a good step toward the obtaining of it. Nay, this fear of God's wrath is so far from being unlawful, that it is absolutely necessary. The true fear is such as proceeds from love, it is indeed nothing else but love, not of ourselves, as the former fear, but of God, as the only object that can deserve our affections. This grace may be styled indifferently either fear or love. This is the fear which supported Job under his mighty afflictions. II. WHAT IT IS TO "DEPART FROM EVIL." Or sin; the only thing in the world which we can properly call evil. For everything is good that God hath made. To depart from this evil of sin in the name and fear of the Lord, is the greatest wisdom that man is capable of. But then we must be sure to do it in the fear of the Lord. (1) This departing from evil in the fear of the Lord is our greatest wisdom, because it will deliver us from the greatest evil, both here and hereafter—from sin and hell. This fear secures us from all other fears whatsoever. (2) This wisdom procures for

us the greatest good. (3) This, of itself, is sufficient to make us eternally happy. (*Samuel Scattergood, M.A.*) *True wisdom* :—"The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom," because it, and it alone, secures the truest happiness for man, both here and hereafter. It does this—I. By the REMOVAL OF THE MANY MORAL HINDRANCES TO MAN'S HAPPINESS. The burden of sin. A guilty conscience. Moral defilement (Rom. v. 1-5). II. By the RESTORATION OF THE SOUL TO ITS PRISTINE STATE OF PURITY AND LIKENESS TO GOD (Eph. iv. 24; Col. iii. 10). It creates new tastes—tastes for sublime, exalted, noble, holy things. III. By its real TENDENCY TO SECURE EVEN TEMPORAL GOOD under ordinary circumstances. It inculcates sober, honest, industrious habits, and everything that helps men to advancement in life. IV. By the CONSOLATION IT AFFORDS UNDER ALL THE UNAVOIDABLE TRIALS AND SORROWS OF THE PRESENT LIFE. 1. Consolation in the thought of the present active Providence of God (Matt. x. 29-31; Heb. xii. 8-11). 2. Consolation afforded by the gracious presence and action of the Holy Spirit (John xiv. 16, 17). 3. Consolation realised in the assurance of a Divine purpose for good in all these troubles (Rom. viii. 28). 4. Consolation in the prospect of the glorious inheritance for which these troubles tend to fit us (2 Cor. iv. 16-18; John xiv. 1-3). 5. By the assurance it thus gives of dwelling in the light of God for ever (Psa. xvi. 11; Luke xii. 32; Matt. xiii. 43; Rev. xxii. 3-5). (*Homiletic Magazine.*)

CHAPTER XXIX.

VER. 2. **Oh, that I were as in months past.**—*The fluctuations of a religious life:* —I. THEIR PREVALENCE. Ebbs and tides of feeling are common to all life, good or bad. Religious moods are as frequent, as uncertain, and as unmanageable as any other moods, and under given conditions are absolutely beyond our control. To force ourselves up into a high state of spiritual feeling is a matter we can't always do. Important occasions do not always find us with the necessary power, however we may have laboured for it. There is spring and summer, autumn and winter, in nature; in fact, everything in nature suggests that we must have our pauses and rests, that it is impossible to continue in one strain of thought or action without cessation or change. Beware of passing sweeping condemnations on yourself, or on others, in moments of spiritual dearth. II. THE GENERAL CAUSES OF RELIGIOUS FLUCTUATION. 1. Take the constitutional. (1) To begin with the physical. Any defect in the vital digestive organs will change the whole course of a man's religious life. His variations, unaccountable tossings and reelings and fitfulnesses, are in very many cases the result entirely of some physical infirmity. (2) Or it may be mental. It is wonderful how our emotions and susceptibilities are bound up with our intellectual nature. It is the brain, the bodily organism, that gives identity, distinction, character to all our life. In one sense the material is simply an instrument of the spiritual nature; but in another, and a very important sense, it is the ruling and dominating element, as far as our emotions, feelings, and experience are concerned—the spiritual taking all its complexion from the material. The wavering that may be seen in one, when another is prompt to act, is just because the intellect very frequently keeps the will in restraint. Some people act on impulse, not on reason, on probabilities that a sound and vigorous mind would not dare to trust. (3) But again, our experience varies a good deal from another point of constitutional infirmity, and that is the moral point of view. One of the great mysteries of life is the inequalities of moral perceptions that are found in the world, irrespective of the grace of God. One man's natural tendencies all lie towards sin; and right feeling and right doing is a perpetual conflict. No wonder if he is often overwhelmed with despair. 2. Providential, *i.e.* causes beyond our own control, not set in motion by our wish or desire, or by our negligence—and of all the heroes mentioned in the Bible, none suffered more in this respect than Job. When Providence inflicts wounds, sends you sorrow, don't dream your heaviness of soul is an indication of a faithless heart. God is testing, sifting you. Have faith; all is well; grace is not yielding to sin. When it must be winter in your soul don't you try to make it summer. "Whom the Lord loveth He," &c. 3. Characteristic. And—(1) amongst these is an inordinate expectation of assist-

ance from others, which in some people amounts to nothing more nor less than a radical misconception of what religion really is. If life is to be great, noble, blessed, it must grow out of sacred independence. Religious feeling, growth, power, are not developed by the caresses and fondnesses of our friends. Your own resources are better than all other resources put together, of whatever kind or nature. Until you can get the nature of the sturdy oak, that welcomes alike the cold of winter and the piercing heat of summer, you will be in a fluctuating condition all the days of your life. Like a weather-glass, as far as spiritual things are concerned. (2) A characteristic cause of our rising and falling religious life is this, depending too much upon the efficacy of spasmodic effort. 4. The vital or radical causes, which, after all, are the real causes. They are (1) The attempt to be religious without the religious principle; the attempt to lead a new life without a new nature, very much prevailing now, but with very fatal consequences. Lives these full of secret sin. (2) Is the case where there has been a genuine conversion, but where the fire has burnt out, and there is nothing left but the form of godliness, and not the power. (3) Is the case where there is a real connection with the life of God, but so feeble and fitful, that the believer is tossed about by every wind and doctrine. III. THE REMEDY for this inconstancy, this fluctuation. 1. Give yourself up to a very frequent and searching self-examination before God. 2. You must be more faithful in the details of your religious life. Little things grow to big things. 3. You must be more constant in your attendance upon the means of grace, more particularly the special ordinances of God's house; but— 4. High and supreme above every other precaution and remedy, you must ever keep your heart open to the light of heaven and the grace of God; and then, whatever may be your hindrances, your drawbacks, your constitutional infirmity, or your spiritual afflictions, they shall all yield to the strength of your faith in God. (*T. E. Westerdale.*) *Spiritual fluctuation*:—There is no sadder or more depressing condition than that in which we look back regretfully to better days and happier hours. This undertone of lamenting sorrow makes the cry of Job pathetic. He had seen better days. Because he measured God's favour by the amount of worldly prosperity given him, he concluded God, measurably at least, had forsaken him. It was a mistaken standard by which to judge God, still it was his standard. We are interested in the experience of Job so far as it is an illustration of spiritual experience. Our spiritual or religious life, like our physical, is subject to fluctuations. There are causes and remedies for such a fluctuating spiritual condition. I. INQUIRE UNTO THE CAUSES. 1. Physical causes. It is hard to tell how many of our spiritual fluctuations are due to our bodies. The mind and the soul have controlling power over the body; but it is just as true that the body rules them. The body is the channel of our noblest emotions and our deepest sorrows. Since the body has its effect upon the spirit, it is to be religiously guarded and cared for. 2. The mind. Its varying moods affect every other portion of our lives. Its powers, distorted by sin, carry us hither and thither. It is true religion appeals to and reaches the mind as well as the heart, the reason as well as the emotions; but the wilful wanderings and ever-restless questionings of the mind too often lead it from safe moorings. The thoughts we entertain; the kind of reading we select; the habits of judgment we cultivate—all have their effect upon our hearts. 3. Providential causes. Circumstances in which we are placed, and over which we have no control, seem to change often our entire outlook. It was so with Job. It is comparatively easy to be spiritually-minded as long as all goes well, but trouble often turns the poor weak heart from its refuge, and makes the sky look dark. 4. People too often live on too low a spiritual plane. We do not live up near enough to God. There is communion and fellowship with God that is neglected and forsaken. Men live on a plane constantly growing lower, and then wonder why their faith is not as clear, their hearts are not as warm, and their spirits as glowing as in former days: why heaven seems further away the nearer they come to eternity. They imagine God has changed, while the change is all in them. Spiritual lowlands will be sure to tell on spiritual life. II. INFERENCES IN CONNECTION WITH THIS SUBJECT. 1. Let no Christian conclude that because he has been subject to such changes, therefore he has lost religion and lost favour with God. This was one of Job's troubles. Religion is something deeper than our feelings, and far more comprehensive. It finds its basis not in our varying moods nor changing emotions, but in the unchanging Word and provisions of God. 2. There must be a higher standard of life than mere feeling. If emotions were

the gauge of our religious life, we could never be quite sure of our spiritual standing. There were times of depression and exaltation on the human side of the life of the Saviour. All through His chequered experience the one great principle of action was that He might do the will of God. The highest standard put before us is not our fluctuating emotions, but our earnest doing God's will. III. REMEDIES FOR THIS SPIRITUAL FLUCTUATION. 1. Frequent strict self-examination. 2. Close attention paid to the details of life. 3. Practical activity. God wants us to work and do for Him whether we feel like doing so or not. 4. Let the windows of the soul be kept constantly open toward heaven. The Saviour did that. All availing strength comes from above. (*Francis F. West.*) *Painful retrospects:*—Humanity is a brotherhood, and the language of Job finds response in many a pious heart. I. DECLENSION IS THE FIRST THOUGHT SUGGESTED BY THESE WORDS. This may have been scarcely perceptible, for as spiritual life is developed not by violent moods, not by spasmodic impulses, but gradually; as its influx is like the inflowing of the tides, so spiritual declension is gradual—it does not register itself, it is comparatively unconscious. Still, there are specific causes out of which it is produced. 1. Religious speculation. It will not do to tamper with compass or chart. What shall prevent a vessel from drifting out of its course if the needle has been made to deflect from its true position? Bible truths should be held inviolable—not that there should be unreasoning and blind acceptance of religious beliefs, but there are certain truths commended to us which are beyond controversy. 2. The cares of the world. These are fruitful causes of spiritual declension. It was no wonder that Peter would fain remain on Tabor's summit with Christ. Under a tropical sun, nursed by the balmy air, rich and luscious fruits easily ripen; so, near the Throne, in moments akin to the hour of transfiguration, Christian graces rapidly develop; but the hourly contact with the busy world, its anxieties and distractions, are apt to be prejudicial to piety and to warp the Christian character. 3. Neglect of the means of grace. These are commended, not arbitrarily. They are the laws of the spiritual life—essential conditions of growth. II. SOLICITUDE IS A HOPEFUL INDICATION. It is a sign of spiritual life. The Church at Laodicea was charged with indifferentism. "I would ye were either cold or hot." III. THE DESIRE MAY BE FULFILLED. (*John Love.*) *Job's regret and our own:*—I. Let us begin by saying that regrets such as those expressed in the text are and ought to be very BITTER. If it be the loss of spiritual things that we regret, then may we say from the bottom of our hearts, "Oh, that I were as in months past." It is a great thing for a man to be near to God; it is a very choice privilege to be admitted into the inner circle of communion, and to become God's familiar friend. Great as the privilege is, so great is the loss of it. No darkness is so dark as that which falls on eyes accustomed to the light. The man who has never enjoyed communion with God knows nothing of what it must be to lose it. The mercies which Job deplored in our text are no little ones. 1. First, he complains that he had lost the consciousness of Divine preservation. He says, "Oh, that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me." There are days with Christians when they can see God's hand all around them, checking them in the first approaches of sin, and setting a hedge about all their ways. 2. Job had also lost Divine consolation, for he looks back with lamentation to the time when God's candle shone upon his head, when the sun of God's love was, as it were, in the zenith, and cast no shadow; when he rejoiced without ceasing, and triumphed from morning to night in the God of his salvation. "The joy of the Lord is our strength." Moreover, Job deplored the loss of Divine illumination. "By His light," he says, "I walked through darkness," that is to say, perplexity ceased to be perplexity; God shed such a light upon the mysteries of Providence, that where others missed their path, Job, made wise by heaven, could find it. There have been times when, to our patient faith, all things have been plain. 4. Moreover, Job had lost Divine communion; so it seems, for he mourned the days of his youth, when the secret of God was upon his tabernacle. Who shall tell to another what the secret of God is? II. But, secondly, let me remind you that these regrets are NOT INEVITABLE; that is to say, it is not absolutely necessary that a Christian man should ever feel them, or be compelled to express them. It has grown to be a tradition among us, that every Christian must backslide in a measure, and that growth in grace cannot be unbrokenly sustained. There is no inherent necessity in the Divine life itself compelling it to decline, for is it not written, "It shall be in him a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life"? And there is no period

of our life in which it is necessary for us to go back. Assuredly, old age offers no excuse for decline: "they shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing: to show that the Lord is upright." III. But now I am compelled to say that the regrets expressed in our text are exceedingly COMMON, and it is only here and there that we meet with a believer who has not had cause to use them. It ought not to be so, but it is so. The commonness of this lamentation may be somewhat accounted for by the universal tendency to undervalue the present and exaggerate the excellence of the past. Then, again, regrets may in some cases arise from a holy jealousy. The Christian, in whatever state he is, feels his own imperfection much, and laments his conscious shortcomings. And, let me add, that very often these regrets of ours about the past are not wise. It is impossible to draw a fair comparison between the various stages of Christian experience, so as to give a judicious preference to one above another. Consider, as in a parable, the seasons of the year. There are many persons who, in the midst of the beauties of spring, say, "Ah, but how fitful is the weather! These March winds and April showers come and go by such fits and starts, that nothing is to be depended upon. Give me the safer glories of summer." Yet, when they feel the heat of summer, and wipe the sweat from their brows, they say, "After all, with all the full-blow of beauty around us, we admire more the freshness, verdure, and vivacity of spring. The snowdrop and the crocus, coming forth as the advance guard of the army of flowers, have a superior claim about them." Now, it is idle to compare spring with summer; they differ, and have each its beauties. Be thankful each of you for what you have, for by the grace of God you are what you are. After making all these deductions, however, I cannot conceive that they altogether account for the prevalence of these regrets; I am afraid the fact arises from the sad truth that many of us have actually deteriorated in grace, have decayed in spirit, and degenerated in heart. IV. Since these regrets are exceedingly common, it is to be feared that in some cases they are very sadly NEEDFUL. Are there not signs of declension, that some of us might, with but a very slight examination, discover in ourselves? Is not brotherly love, in many Christians, very questionable? V. But I must pass on to observe that these regrets BY THEMSELVES ARE USELESS. It is unprofitable to read these words of Job, and say, "Just so, that is how I feel," and then continue in the same way. If a man has neglected his business, and so has lost his trade, it may mark a turn in his affairs when he says, "I wish I had been more industrious"; but if he abides in the same sloth as before, of what use is his regret? If he doth not seek to be restored, he is adding to all his former sins this of lying before God, in uttering regrets that he does not feel in his soul. VI. These regrets, when they are necessary, are very HUMBLING. During the time we have been going back we ought to have gone forward. What enjoyments we have lost by our wanderings! What progress we have missed. Alas, how much the Church has lost through us! for if the Christian becomes poor in grace, he lessens the Church's wealth of grace. VII. These regrets, then, are humbling, and they may be made very PROFITABLE in many other ways. First, they show us what human nature is. Learn again to prize what spiritual blessings yet remain. This should teach us to live by faith, since our best attainments fail us. VIII. These regrets OUGHT NOT TO BE CONTINUAL: they ought to be removed. Go back to where you started. Do not stay discussing whether you are a Christian or not. Go to Christ as a poor, guilty sinner. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Comfort for the desponding*:—I. First, there is a COMPLAINT. How many a Christian looks on the past with pleasure, on the future with dread, and on the present with sorrow! 1. The first is the case of a man who has lost the brightness of his evidences. 2. Another phase of this great complaint, which it also very frequently assumes, is one under which we are lamenting—not so much because our evidences are withered, as because we do not enjoy a perpetual peace of mind as to other matters. "Oh," says one, "Oh, that I were as in months past! for then whatever troubles and trials came upon me were less than nothing." 3. Another individual, perhaps, is speaking thus concerning his enjoyment in the house of God and the means of grace. "Oh," says one, "in months past, when I went up to the house of God, how sweetly did I hear!" 4. There are some of us who lament extremely that our conscience is not as tender as it used to be; and therefore doth our soul cry in bitterness, "Oh, that I were as in months past!" "When first I knew the Lord," you say, "I was almost afraid to put one foot before another, lest I should go astray." 5. There are some of us who

have not as much zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of men as we used to have. II. But now we are about to take these different characters, and tell you the CAUSE AND CURE. 1. One of the causes of this mournful state of things is defect in prayer; and of course the cure lies somewhere next door to the cause. You do not pray as you once did. Nothing brings such leanness into a man's soul as want of prayer. 2. Perhaps, again, you are saying, "Oh, that I were as in months past!" not so much from your own fault as from the fault of your minister. 3. But there is a better reason still that will come more home to some of you. It is not so much the badness of the food, as the seldomness that you come to eat it. 4. But frequently this complaint arises from idolatry. Many have given their hearts to something else save God, and have set their affections upon the things of earth, instead of the things in heaven. We have perhaps become self-confident and self-righteous. If so, that is a reason why it is not with us as in months past. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 12. **Because I delivered the poor that cried.**—*The use and application of wealth and authority*:—These words naturally lead us to reflect on the noble use and improvement this venerable person made of his former prosperity; to consider our own duty as represented to us in his example; and the proper objects of our compassion. I. The PROPER USE AND APPLICATION OF WEALTH AND AUTHORITY. The distinctions which arise from power and subjection, from riches and poverty, from ease and affliction, appear so unequally and irregularly divided among men, and with so little regard to moral reasons, that by some superficial observers they have been formed into an objection against the wisdom and justice of God. But they execute a wise and regular scheme of providence; are necessary to preserve the order and economy of human society, and unite and endear mankind to one another. Wealth and authority must be acknowledged to distinguish us only as superior servants, appointed by our common Master, to do justice in the family and give everyone their meat in due season. We are not to imagine these favours are indulged us merely for our own sakes, to enable us to live in splendour and ease. The poor have a right and property in the abundance of those who are better supplied. Neither is any man farther justified in engrossing and hoarding up the common bounties of heaven, than may consist with this claim. These pleas of natural reason and justice religion has enforced with the authority of a positive command. With regard to the object, we are to observe, that both the obligations of the duty, and the measures prescribed to it, are under some limitations; for though our benevolence is required to be universal, yet our abilities are confined to a much narrower compass, and therefore oblige us to choice and distinction in the external applications of our charity. The motives that should prevail with us to comply with these great obligations, laid on us by justice and our religion, are that inward joy and complacency which flow back upon the soul from acts of mercy and liberality; and above all, those inestimable rewards which the Gospel has taught us to expect from these duties; pardon of sin here, and the eternal treasures of heaven hereafter. II. THE WORDS ALLOW US TO TAKE SOME INFERIOR VIEWS INTO THE ACCOUNT. While we are employed in the exercise of beneficence and charity, we appear in the venerable character of substitutes of God, commissioned by Him to reach down and distribute His blessings among our fellow-subjects. On the returns of gratitude from the objects of our charity, and from the world who are witnesses of it, we are permitted to reflect with pleasure as a present encouragement designed by God to excite and reward our virtue. The other motive here proposed for our encouragement, the blessings of those whom we relieve, is in its nature properly religious; derives all its force from a conviction of our dependence on Providence, and the efficacy of human prayers. (*J. Rogers, D.D.*) *Eyes to the blind*:—That is not egotism. It is not the utterance of a puffed-up spirit. Egotism is too frequently the child of the shallows. Rarely, if ever, does it issue out of a deep and troubled heart. Egotism flourishes best where profound sorrow is least known. And here is a man who is overwhelmed with sorrow. Death has darkened every window in his home, and he is burdened with the weight of an almost intolerable grief. This is no place in which to find light, egotistical speech. Whatever words this man may speak will be crushed out of him by the very burden of his grief. It is a man going into his yesterdays to find some solace for the sorrow of to-day. He is calling upon memory to provide a little heart's ease for his present bitter distress. Thrice happy the man who can call such memories to help him in the hour of his distress! "The poor that cried," and "the fatherless," and "those ready to perish," and

the "widow" and the "lame" and the "blind" still make their appeals in the land, and it is true to-day as ever that the only Christian response is the one that was made by the patriarch Job. I have noticed that controversy about the distressed and the unfortunate is often regarded as a substitute for their relief. Abstract discussions often result in misty speculations which only obscure one's personal duty. It is often the case that controversy abounds where sympathy should reign. Again and again we find this illustrated in the experiences of our Lord. You find controversialists discussing the abstract question why such and such a man was born blind, while the blind man himself was soliciting practical aid. I believe that there is a vast amount of suffering and distress which might be effectually checked by some rearrangement of our social and economic conditions. I do not think that in these matters legislation is altogether impotent. At any rate, we can see to it that legislation puts a premium upon virtue, and not upon vice. But when legislation has done its utmost, misfortune will still be with us. In the presence of these things, surrounded by them on every side, what is the Christian attitude? The attitude of the patriarch Job. Christianity is a gospel of compassion and practical help, and to be devoid of these things is to be altogether an alien from the commonwealth of Israel. This is not new. The youngest child in this assembly could tell us that Christianity without helpfulness is a great absurdity. But while we all know these things, the danger is that we have got the right ideas without the correspondingly right feelings. It is so easy to be orthodox in mind but heterodox in heart; to have Christian ideas, but non-Christian feelings. Our Christianity may be intelligent but not sympathetic. What we want is the orthodox feeling united to the orthodox thought. How is this to be attained? I do not think we shall ever have a really deep feeling for our fellow-sufferers until we have deeply suffered too. You begin to pray for the sailors when your own boy is on the deep. When you have a crippled child what a heart you have for the maimed! It sometimes seems as though God cannot draw us together in common feeling without taking us through a common sorrow. There is nothing so welds hearts together. I know of nothing more pathetic in the life of Browning than the reconciliation of himself and the great actor Macready. They had been close and intimate friends, but for some trifle or other they quarrelled, and each went his own way, and for years their helpful intercourse was broken. Then came a great trouble. About the same time they lost their wives, and a little while after, as each was walking out in his loneliness in a quiet way in a London suburb, they suddenly met face to face, and Browning, with a great burst of emotion, seized his old friend's hand, and said, "Oh, Macready"; and Macready, with an aching heart, replied, "Oh, Browning." That was all they could say to each other, and in the fires of a great and common grief the two severed lives were welded again. But if we have not been deepened by suffering, we can do something to deepen ourselves. Let us get face to face with realities. First of all we can remember the old trite commonplace that "truth is stranger than fiction." We can find more pitiful things to weep over in any one street in this city than in all the works of fiction which may issue from the press in the course of the year. I don't know what Christ will have to say to people who weep over their novels, but who never weep over the great cities as He did because of their distresses and their woes. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *Sympathy should be practical*:—An Italian coastguard officer reported a shipwreck to his Government in these words: "We saw the wreck, and we attempted to give every assistance possible through the speaking-trumpet. We shouted ourselves quite hoarse, and notwithstanding which next morning twenty corpses were washed ashore." A well-known Scotch professor used to tell this story, and add: "Too much of our benevolence is of the speaking-trumpet variety, and even this we boast about. The Samaritan of the New Testament represents the benevolence of which the world stands in greatest need." *Piety and riches*:—I. THE TEXT SHOWS THE NATURE OF A TRULY RIGHTEOUS AND POWERFUL CHARACTER, AIDED BY GREAT SECULAR POSSESSIONS. Job was very rich; he was also very pious 1. His impartial justice. 2. His broad charity. 3. His timely assistance of the needy. 4. His exemplary leadership. In all these we see a truly powerful and noble character. Piety, charity, justice, grandly blended and exemplified. We see at least that there is no incompatibility between a holy character and vast secular wealth. II. THE TEXT SHOWS THAT THE MOST PERFECT PIETY IS NO SECURITY AGAINST THE LOSS OF GREAT SECULAR ABUNDANCE. Wealth may go, but piety shall remain. III. THE TEXT SHOWS THAT THE RICH PIOUS MAN, BEING IN DANGER

OF LOSING HIS WEALTH, SHOULD, WHILE HE POSSESSES IT, USE IT WISELY. This should inspire us—1. To promptitude and liberality in our gifts; and 2. To a right discretion of the objects we support. It would be difficult to estimate such a life as is here set forth. A rich good man abounds with resources of good in every direction of God's glory and the welfare of man. And if so be that the wealth be taken from us, we never lose our piety, which is the far greater possession. (*Thomas Colclough.*)

Ver. 13. **The blessing of him that was ready to perish.**—*The blessedness of doing good:*—I. JOB HAD THE BLESSING OF THOSE READY TO PERISH. 1. A man may be ready to perish through adverse circumstances. 2. Or by some imminent danger and peril to which he is exposed. 3. In such cases men of pure benevolence interpose to save the poor unhappy wretch who is ready to perish. 4. How many in the moral world are ready to perish by their sins and iniquities. The blessing of him who is ready to perish comes on the man who relieves the needy, rescues them that are exposed to danger, and who converteth a sinner from the error of his ways. II. JOB HAD CAUSED THE WIDOW'S HEART TO SING FOR JOY. 1. Widows are placed in very distressing circumstances. 2. Often she has a large family left to her care. 3. The world is ever ready to take advantage of a desolate widow. 4. Job was kind to widows in the days of his prosperity. His conduct was generous and noble, and worthy of a great and good man. Let us imitate the example of Job. Inferences—(1) Acts of benevolence are good proofs of a renewed heart. (2) Those who are kind to others will be abundantly repaid. (3) In the day of judgment works of mercy will be brought forward as evidences of piety. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *Rescue the perishing:*—I. AN URGENT NECESSITY. "Ready to perish." Oh that we all might go to the help of the poor, who are ready to perish in the midst of the ocean of drunkenness, misery, and wretchedness. There is a want of sympathy. We find it in all classes. Men are perishing about us for want of the power of the Gospel. II. AN ASSURED RECOMPENSE. There is a sure recompense, if you will do God's bidding. Be an enthusiast. Seek out the perishing people, and risk yourselves in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. III. A PERSONAL ENJOYMENT. There has been One who, in order to save you, gave Himself. Let your blessing come upon Him as you stand in faith at the foot of the Cross. This personal enjoyment can only come to us when we are true Christians. (*William Birch.*)

Vers. 14–17. **I put on righteousness.**—*Ad magistratum:*—When others do us open wrong, it is not vanity, but charity, to do ourselves open right. And whatsoever appearance of folly or vain boasting there is in so doing, they are chargeable with all that compel us thereunto, and not we. It was neither pride nor passion in Job, but such a compulsion as this, that made him so often proclaim his own righteousness. It seemeth Job was a good man, as well as a great; and being good, he was by so much the better, by how much he was the greater. The grieved spirit of Job uttered these words for his own justification; but the blessed Spirit of God hath since written them for our instruction; to teach us, from Job's example, how to use that measure of greatness and power which He hath given us, be it more, or be it less, to His glory and the common good. We have to learn the principal duties which concern those that live in any degree of efficiency or authority. Those duties are four. I. A CARE, AND LOVE, AND ZEAL OF JUSTICE. This is the chief business of the magistrate. "I put on righteousness, and it clothed me." The metaphor of clothing is much used in the Scriptures in this notion as it is applied to the soul, and things appertaining to the soul. We clothe ourselves either for necessity, to cover our nakedness; for security or defence against enemies; or for state and solemnity, for distinction of offices and degrees. Job's words intimate the great love he had unto justice, and the great delight he took therein. And it is the master-duty of the magistrate to do justice, and to delight in it. He must make it his chief business, and yet count it his lightsome recreation. Magistrates may learn from the examples of Job, of Solomon, and of Jesus Christ Himself. Justice is a thing in itself most excellent; from it there redoundeth much glory to God; to ourselves so much comfort, and to others so much benefit. II. COMPASSION TO THE POOR AND DISTRESSED. Men's necessities are many, and of great variety; but most of them spring from one of these two defects, ignorance, or want of skill; and impotence, or want of power: here signified by blindness and lameness. A magistrate can

be "eyes to the blind," by giving sound and honest counsel to the simple. He can be "feet to the lame," by giving countenance and assistance in just and honest causes; and "father to the poor," by giving convenient safety and protection to those in distress. The pre-eminence of magistrates consisteth in their ability to do good and help the distressed, more than others. As they receive power from God, so they receive honours and service and tributes from their people for the maintenance of that power. God hath imprinted in the natural conscience of every man notions of fear, and honour, and reverence, and obedience, and subjection, and contribution, and other duties to be performed towards kings, magistrates, and other superiors. Mercy and justice must go together, and help to temper the one the other. The magistrate must be a father to the poor, to protect him from injuries, and to relieve his necessities, but not to maintain him in idleness. He must make provision to set him on work; and give him sharp correction should he grow idle, dissolute, or stubborn. III. PAINS AND PATIENCE IN EXAMINATION OF CAUSES. "The cause which I knew not, I searched out." In the administration of justice the magistrate must make no difference between rich and poor, far or near, friend or foe. The special duty imposed on magistrates is diligence, and patience, and care to hear, and examine, and inquire into the truth of things, and into the equity of men's causes. Truth often lieth, as it were, in the bottom of a pit, and has to be found and brought to light. Innocency itself is often laden with false accusations. IV. STOUTNESS AND COURAGE IN EXECUTION OF JUSTICE. "I brake the jaws of the wicked." Job alludes to savage beasts, beasts of prey; types of the greedy and violent ones of the world. For breaking the jaws of the wicked there is required a stout heart and an undaunted courage. This is necessary for the magistrate's work and for the maintenance of his dignity. Inferences—1. Of direction; for the choice and appointment of magistrates according to the above four properties. 2. Of reproof; for a just rebuke of such magistrates as fail in any of these four duties. 3. Of exhortation; to those who are, or shall be magistrates, to carry themselves therein according to these four rules. (*Bishop Sanderson.*) *Sermon on the election of a Lord Mayor*:—Job's reflections on the flourishing estate he had once enjoyed did at the same time afflict and encourage him. I. WHAT A PUBLIC BLESSING A GOOD MAGISTRATE IS: a blessing as extensive as the community to which he belongs; a blessing which includes all other blessings whatsoever that relate to this life. The benefits of a just and good government to those who are so happy as to be under it, like health to vigorous bodies, or fruitful seasons in temperate climes, are such common and familiar blessings that they are seldom either valued or relished as they ought to be. II. THE OUTWARD MARKS OF DISTINCTION AND SPLENDOUR WHICH ARE ALLOTTED TO THE MAGISTRATE. Of these the robe and diadem, mentioned by Job, are illustrations. It was intended thus—1. To excite the magistrate to a due degree of vigilance and concern for the public good. The magistrate was made great, to inspire him with resolutions of living suitably to his high profession and calling. 2. To secure the magistrate's person, in which the public tranquillity and safety are always involved. 3. To ensure that the magistrate is had in due estimation and reverence by all those who are subject to him. It is in the civil government, as in the offices of religion; which, were they stript of all the external decencies of worship, would not make a due impression on the minds of those who assist at them. The solemnities that encompass the magistrate, add dignity to all his actions, and weight to all his words and opinions. 4. To aid the magistrate to reverence himself. He who esteems and reverences himself will not fail to take the truest methods towards procuring esteem and reverence from others. III. THE DUTIES OF THE MAGISTRATE. The chief honour of the magistrate consists in maintaining the dignity of his character by suitable actions, and in discharging the high trust that is reposed in him, with integrity, wisdom, and courage. Reputation is the great engine by which those who are possessed of power must make that power serviceable to the ends and uses of government. The rods and axes of princes and their deputies may awe many into obedience; but the fame of their goodness, and justice, and other virtues will work on more; will make men not only obedient, but willing to obey. An established character spreads the influence of such as move in a high sphere, on all around and beneath them. The actions of men in high stations are all conspicuous, and liable to be scanned and sifted. They cannot hide themselves from the eyes of the world as private men can. Great places are never well filled but by great minds; and it is as natural to a great mind

to seek honour by a due discharge of a high trust, as it is to little men to make less advantages of it. A good magistrate must be endued with a public spirit, and be free from all narrow and selfish views. He must impartially distribute justice, without respect of persons, interests, or opinions. Courtesy and condescension is another happy quality of a magistrate. Bounty also, and a generous contempt of that in which too many men place their happiness, must come in to heighten his character. Of all good qualities, that which recommends and adorns the magistrate most, is his care of religion; which, as it is the most valuable thing in the world, so it gives the truest value to them, who promote the esteem and practice of it, by their example, authority, influence, and encouragement. (*F. Atterbury, D.D.*)

Ver. 15. **I was eyes to the blind.**—*Self-multiplication*:—Are not my eyes my own? No, nothing is your own; and until you get that truth driven into your very soul you cannot be a Christian. May not a man do what he will with his own? Yes, when he gets it. Your hand is not your own, so what about the little thing that is in it? The greater includes the less. Not a hair upon your head is your own, not a breath in your body is your own; the blood of Christ bought you every whit and every fibre, or He bought none of you. If a man has vision he holds that vision for the sake of him who has none. That is the New Testament law of property. Every man who has need of your help you can make part of yourself, and by a transmigration of souls, which has nothing to do with the old fables of metempsychosis, you can take other men into you, put yourselves into other men, and live the public life, the life philanthropic, without many people knowing much about it. Does he give nothing who is eyes to the blind, who reads the small print for those whose eyes are dim? They say, we can make out these large letters, but what is all this small writing? Is it nothing to read the Bible to a person whose eyes are failing and who cannot any longer see the sweet revelation of God in dim type? Is it nothing to sit for an hour beside some poor solitary soul on a Sunday evening and read to that soul words from heaven? Does he who does this do nothing because his name does not appear in this list or in that? The difficulty which all men have to contend with is that they cannot get away from their own little narrow conceptions of what things are. If you do not do exactly as I do and when I do it, then the enemy suggests to me that you are doing nothing, whereas you may be doing ten thousand times more than it ever entered into my imagination to conceive it possible for a man to do. Thus—There are some persons who cannot get away from the idea that unless a ministry be associated with thousands upon thousands of conversions it is doing nothing. Blessed be God, they are not judges, they are only critics. Does he do nothing who stimulates the whole humanity that is in a man? Does he do nothing who makes the coward say, "God help me to be brave, and when the enemy comes in again I will stand up against him with full-toned strength"? Do not attempt to write another man's subscription list for him. Every man shall give account of himself to God. Enough! God is love. There are others who cannot get away from the idea that unless you have endless organisations, a whole tumult of mechanisms, you are doing nothing. Does the blind man play no part in all this wondrous drama of love? Why, the blind man should never forget who it was that led him across the thoroughfare. Even a blind man is not exempted from gratitude; even the man who has been helped ought to remember the man who assisted him; even God sits that He may receive our tributes of thankfulness,—need of them He has none, but He knows it is good for us to cleanse our selfishness by allowing to be poured through it our streams of gratitude. Have you recognised all the men who were eyes to you? I fear not. Who was eyes to you in business, when you were a young man, and could see very little? Who was that strong man with the piercing eyes that saw miles beyond the line where your vision failed, and who said to you, Thus and thus lie the horizon of destiny and the sphere of commercial possibility? You profited by that man's eyes and that man's guidance: what have you done for him? Are you aware that some of his children are in difficulties? Do you know that his widow would be almost happy if she had but one pound a week more than she has? Do you know that that man, then so good and strong, has not a gravestone to mark where his bones lie? You might put up one and write upon it, "He helped me, he was eyes to me; but for that man whose body lies here I should have died in the night-time without ever having seen the light"; and that Bible passage men

might read, and reading might begin to feel, and feeling might begin to pray, and praying might begin to help other young men. Who was it that counselled you when you were in difficulty? But what money value attaches to good counsel? Who cares to pay for ideas? Pay for bricks and stones, iron pillars and gaslight and painted glass, but never, saith the miser, pay for soul, mind, blood, the fury of high inspiration. Many men do not see the blind, or they would help them. Shall I tell you why many men do not see the blind? The answer is, because they do not look for them; and it is amazing how much you can miss if you never look for it. There are souls that are telling this lie to themselves, namely, Now, if only I had the opportunity I could do a good deal, but people that need this sort of help never seem to come in my way: no doubt there are many deserving cases in the world if one only knew them. How dare you go to rest in darkness after telling that falsehood? Out upon such hypocrisy! This I am prepared to say, that some of us have larger opportunities of seeing than other men have. That is of necessity true: but the other men ought to say to those who have the larger outlook, Spend this money for me; I would give it with my own hand if I knew the cases, but you have larger opportunities of seeing them: spend two hundred pounds a year for me. Think of a man having his ten thousand, fifteen, twenty thousand a year, and never making any man who has large vision of society his treasurer or his trustee. Let us remember that there is other blindness than that of the body. Here is the larger field, here is scope for genius and sympathy and prayerfulness and love. "I was eyes to the blind"—the ignorant; I taught them their letters, I gave them the key of knowledge, I showed them how to read a little for themselves, and then I gave them a book or two; and now they are reading and mentally growing; they are thinking deeply upon practical questions, and are themselves teaching other people to read. "I was eyes to the blind"—to those who were labouring in the darkness of superstition, thinking of omens, and being frightened by suggestions of spectral presences; not the great spirituality which fills the universe with the Holy Ghost, but afraid of witch and demon and imp and fairy: for them I purged the air, I made them feel that the air was a great wind of health from heaven, meant to rejuvenate men, to make men young and cheerful, glad with a solemn merriment; and now they are telling other people that God is light, God is love, and that they who fear the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ have nothing else to fear, for they stand in the light of love. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) "*Eyes to the blind*":—I. THE PECULIARLY DEPENDENT CONDITION OF THE BLIND. 1. As to spiritual things, the blind are peculiarly dependent. In spiritual things all men are dependent. Sometimes blindness is sent in judgment. How many are the books which the blind do not possess. From how many objects of sight the Scripture draws lessons of faith. These must be more difficult to the blind than to others. 2. As to temporal things. So few professions and trades the blind can follow. II. THE DUTY AND MODE OF BECOMING EYES TO THE BLIND. It is our duty to study the mind of God towards the blind, and to pray, and to endeavour with His help, to be like-minded, according to our opportunity. As to mode, this will apply to individuals. All should maintain the sincerest sympathy, all should be ready to give their practical help; but different individuals may help in different ways. (*John Hambleton, M.A.*) *Job's social goodness*:—Job was evidently a common friend and benefactor, a lover of mankind, one that cheerfully employed his time, his labour, and his substance in promoting the welfare and happiness of others. I. JOB WAS "EYES TO THE BLIND." This is commonly understood of intellectual blindness, of those whose minds are darkened. Being eyes to them must consequently mean the enlightening those dark minds by the beams of knowledge and instruction. This figurative sense of the words need not exclude the literal one. The loss of eyesight is so touching a calamity, so irksome and comfortless a state, as to raise compassion in some breasts not apt to be much affected by other objects. The rational powers of a man, which is the inward eyesight, may be blinded by sin, by ignorance, or by distraction. II. JOB WAS FEET TO THE LAME. Soundness of body, and a hale constitution, with all the limbs entire, and capable of exerting their respective functions, is all the inheritance the great number of mankind is born into. Hard indeed is their lot, and very severe the dispensation under which they are fallen, who have neither bread to eat, nor hands wherewith to work for it; who are sorely maimed and crippled in their limbs, racked with tormenting pains, or wasted with lingering diseases. For such, special hospitals are provided. III. JOB WAS A FATHER TO THE POOR. He had too enlarged and

generous a soul to let his bounty flow merely in the channel of his family. He is in this a very noble pattern for imitation. (*Andrew Snape, D.D.*) *Happy memories of past usefulness*:—The most beautiful invention of the poet Dante is not his picture of Beatrice, nor of Francesca, but his description of the river Eunoe, in whose waters having been immersed, one recalls at once all the good actions and thoughts of his past life. Long before the time of Dante, the poets of the heathen world had sung about a stream called Lethe, in which if one plunged he forgot the sorrows of the past. The one was the outgrowth of heathen, the other of Christian thought. The heathen could hope for nothing better than oblivion. Complete forgetfulness was all the sinful heart dared hope for. But Christianity not only points with hope to the future, but sanctifies the past. It fills men's lives with kindly deeds and blessed memories, never to be forgotten. And in the eternal future, God's children with memory quickened will praise Him for the past. (*D. Swing.*)

Ver. 16. **I was a father to the poor.**—*A father to the poor*:—The text is part of Job's noble vindication of himself from a charge of hypocrisy and impiety. So far was Job from considering the poor as made for him, so far from neglecting and oppressing them, that his wealth and its attendant influence prompted him to become their advocate, to befriend the friendless, and to attempt the relief of every species of human distress. I. THE PATERNAL CHARACTER, AS IT RESPECTS THE POOR. It includes—1. A real and an affectionate concern for the poor. So far was Job from considering the poor as made for his aggrandisement, to do him homage, to wait his nod, that he saw and respected himself in them; made their cause his own, entered into their afflictions, and had a heart to feel for all their wants and sorrows. 2. Well-digested schemes, and well-directed endeavours, to promote, under God, their temporal and eternal good. There can be no true charity, among the affluent, without liberality. This fallen world opens a widely extended field for the exercise of every compassionate and benevolent principle in the heart. The paternal character has a relation to the bodies of the poor, as that of a father to the bodies of his immediate offspring. More important are the souls of the poor. II. RECOMMEND AND URGE THE PATERNAL CHARACTER, AS IT RESPECTS THE POOR. An argument might be brought from the very constitution of human nature. A principle of self-love is common to us all. The paternal character is more Divine, more Godlike, than anything else within the reach and ability of man. It makes that very use of talents and advantages which God designed. The character enters into the main and substantial part of Christianity. Solid comfort and felicity will ever result from it. (*N. Hill.*) *A father to the poor*:—Such a man is surely one of the most useful friends to virtue, to religion, and to society. The two principal branches of paternal care are provision and instruction. A serious and benevolent attention to the cause of the poor is a necessary part of the character of every one who acts upon principle, either as a Christian or a man, of every one who values either the civil or religious constitution of this country. "The righteous considereth the cause of the poor," because he considereth them as partakers of the same nature, and children of the same Father with himself. The righteous looks into himself, and from thence learns to show compassion to others. His nature prompts him to this benevolent office; his reason inculcates it; his conscience approves it; his condition of life empowers him to fulfil it. What is led to by the principles of reason and morality, is brought home to his bosom by the declarations of the Gospel. The infirm, the industrious, and the lazy, make up the great body of the poor. The infirm claim our pity to relieve them; the industrious our attention to employ them; the lazy our resolution to force them to labour. Difficulties occur in the modelling of all schemes for the provision of the poor, from that discretionary power which must unavoidably be allowed in the execution of them. Difficulty again arises from that prevalence of luxury which we see tempts all persons to live above the rank which they hold in the society. Instruction is the second part of a father's care. The subject of instruction for the poor is the Christian religion as established in this kingdom. The principles of the Gospel cultivate the general interests of civil society. (*Archbishop Hay Drummond.*) *On beneficence*:—1. By the exercise of compassion and kindness to our fellow-creatures, we fulfil the intention of providence. The blessings of life are distributed in very different proportions to different classes of men. The division of mankind into rich and poor is not the effect of any particular political institution. It is altogether unavoidable in the course of human

affairs. All that society has to do is to secure to the industrious the fruits of their virtuous labours. This division of mankind into rich and poor ought not to be considered as a subject of regret. There are many salutary effects which it seems well fitted to produce. It furnishes an opportunity for the exercise of human virtue, in an infinite variety of situations; it keeps alive the spirit of industry, by holding out to the industrious the hope of rising to distinction; it improves the human condition, by rendering the exertions of every individual, in his own particular sphere, more conducive than they would otherwise be to the general happiness of society. But, in this imperfect state, inequalities frequently appear, which call for the interposition of the generous. Disasters sometimes arise, which no prudence or industry can prevent. The pressure of bodily distress often makes the hands of the diligent to hang down. Hence arises a new relation; a relation between the fortunate and the miserable. Let both parties be instructed in their duty. Whatever you possess, you owe to the bounty of your Maker. You are the depositaries of His bounty, not absolute disposers. You are not at liberty to squander His gifts, as your own caprice or passion may dictate; but are required to fulfil the purpose of the Giver. In few situations are men destitute of the means of contributing to the happiness of their fellow-creatures. God has not left the wretched without resource. He has ordained that compassion should be the balm of misery. The selfish, indeed, seem to behold in the whole world no being but themselves. For them alone the sun arises, the dews descend, and the earth yields its increase. Such were the sentiments of the hard-hearted Nabal. 2. The exercise of our compassion and kindness to our brethren is one of the best expressions of our piety to God. What shall we render to the Lord for all His mercies? God is Himself exalted above the reach of our most perfect services; our goodness doth not extend to Him. Our brethren are placed within the reach of our beneficence, and our charity to them is piety to our Maker. No fervours of religious affection will atone for the want of charity. Your alms must ascend with your prayers as a memorial before God. 3. By the exercise of compassion and kindness to our fellow-creatures, we promote our own happiness. Benevolence is a source of pleasure. Compare the benevolent with the selfish in every situation of life. Place them in affluence, and observe how they differ. Place them in adversity, and see how they differ. Let disease come to the man who has shown no compassion to his brethren. How ill is he prepared for the evil day. Let sickness increase, let death approach; where now is the joy of the selfish? (*W. Moodie, D.D.*) *Home and Sunday school*:—Here is a matchless picture of a great and beautiful human life in that grand, calm, and stately patriarchal time, which presents a refreshing contrast to these eager, rapid, rushing days, in which God has cast our lot. Each age has its own form of dignity and nobleness, and its own field of Divine service. This grand old sheikh, who was the *Christus consolator* of his people, was not even a member of the elect line. Job saw into the heart of the great social question of all ages when he declared himself a father to the poor. It is just the father's wisdom, firmness, and tenderness which poverty and ignorance need. It is just this which law cannot proffer to them. This explains the reason why in all ages the true help of the poor comes from the life-warm hand of the Christian Church. It is a large subject, and one full of interest, the fatherly ministry of the Church to the poor and helpless. We dwell on one feature only. The foremost duty of a father is the nurture and culture of the children. Let us see how, when the father wholly or partially fails, the Church steps forward with its Divinely helpful hand in his room. Plato, in his conception of the ideal republic, makes the children the charge of the State from the first. He makes their culture its most sacred duty, seeing that on their wisdom, industry, and moral habits so much of the health and wealth of the community in successive generations inevitably depends. It is practically impossible on any scheme of government to get a full representation of the highest wisdom of the community in the governing powers; and the training of all the children of the community in one type elaborated by human wisdom, however admirable, contradicts and does its best to frustrate the benignant purpose of God in the varied natural endowments of mankind. He has not made men in one type. Think of a Christian household of a lofty Christian type, where the children are trained to a noble manhood and womanhood by parents whom they both reverence and love; where the hand of authority is firm but never capricious; where God's statutes and judgments are maintained in absolute supremacy; but where the children are never suffered to question for a moment that the motive of their maintenance is

love. And whence the children are sent forth at length into the theatre of life with this deepest conviction in their hearts—that the only life worth the living is a life of service and ministry to mankind. Multiply such a home by all the homes of the community, and what a millennium of peace, and joy, and wealth would they bring in. But look at it on the other side. Think of thousands of homes, in which the children from the very first grow up in an atmosphere which taints at the spring their physical, mental, and moral life; in which they never hear the name of God or of Christ but in blasphemy. Multiply such homes by all the homes of the community, and then measure the dire and deadly ruin in which they would plunge themselves and the State at last. How does Christianity solve this question of the education of the children of a generation, with due regard to freedom of individual development on the one hand, and the need of bringing to bear on it the highest wisdom on the other? The Gospel establishes on the firmest and most lasting foundations the institution of the home. It deepens parental responsibility; it enlarges parental functions; it enhances the estimate of the momentous issues which are hanging on the due and Christian fulfilment of parental duty. The home is the ultimate unit of society. God sets the parent the pattern; God helps the parent in the task; God holds forth to the parent the prize. God attends the progress of humanity with an institution in which His truth is enshrined, in which His Spirit dwells, and which is the living and ever-present organ of His counsel and influence—the Christian Church. And here comes into the field the Sunday School. It would be wrong to say that the parental institution, the home, had failed; but a great mass of human parents are utterly unequal to the task that is laid upon them. The Church steps in with her helping hand, and sends forth from her bosom a great army of earnest, loving, and self-devoted teachers, to be as fathers to the children whose souls are fatherless, and to surround the shivering, homeless outcasts with the warm atmosphere of Christian love. This word, "I was a father to the poor," is the key to the teacher's position and work. Not to supersede the parent, but in every way to stimulate and help him, are teachers sent forth by the Church and by the world. Three things he must keep constantly in sight. 1. Instruction. To impart knowledge is his first and most important work. The Christian teacher mostly confines himself to the highest knowledge. 2. The teacher is to be a shepherd, a pastor to the children. Sunday-school teaching is pastoral work. 3. The teacher should follow the children to their homes, and do what he can to sweeten and purify the atmosphere of their lives. I honour the Sabbath School because—(1) It has opened a very noble field for that passion of ministry which is the Divine endowment of the Christian Church. (2) It maintains so nobly the Christian tradition of self-denying service, draws forth so richly and trains so effectively the self-denying, self-devoted spirit. (3) The teacher and teaching have formed a nexus, a link of connection of incalculable strength and importance, between jealous and often hostile classes of society. (4) The Sunday School is the nursery of the Christian Church. To train the child for Christ and for His service is the great object of the teacher. (*J. Baldwin Brown, B.A.*)

Ver. 18. **Then I said, I shall die in my nest.**—*The disappointments of life:*—If we examine the world, we shall everywhere discover variety, changeableness, and succession. Our bodies, our relations, our conditions and circumstances are perpetually changing. But this diversity constitutes the beauty and the glory of providence. It displays the Divine perfections, by rendering their interposition necessary and obvious. It furnishes means by which the dispositions of men are tried, and their characters formed. It lays hold of their hope and fear, joy and sorrow; and exercises every principle of their nature, in their education for eternity. Providence is God in motion; God fulfilling, explaining, enforcing His own word. I. IN THESE WORDS WE SEE SOMETHING GOOD. Even in his greatest prosperity, Job thought of dying. Death is always an irksome consideration to the man of the world. He strives to banish it from his thoughts. But the believer keeps up a familiar acquaintance with it. It is far more difficult to maintain a right state of mind in pleasing and prosperous circumstances, than in trying and distressing scenes. II. WE SEE SOMETHING DESIRABLE. Who does not wish to have his possessions and enjoyments continued; to escape painful revolutions in his circumstances? We talk of the benefit of affliction—but affliction, simply considered, is not eligible. We decry the passions,—but we are required to regulate the passions, rather than expel them. Temporal things are good in

themselves and needful. Our error in desiring them consists in two things. 1. In desiring them unconditionally. In praying for temporal blessings, we are always to keep a reserve upon our wishes, including submission to the will of God, and a reference to our real welfare. 2. When we desire them supremely. For whatever be their utility, they are not to be compared with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Things are to be valued and pursued according to their importance. III. WE FIND SOMETHING VERY COMMON. It is affluence and ease cherishing confidence and presumption. It is a supposition that we shall have no changes because we feel none. The consequence is natural, and it is easily explained. Present things most powerfully impress the mind. IV. SOMETHING VERY FALSE AND VAIN. "Then I said, I shall die in my nest." Oh, Job! "Boast not thyself of to-morrow." So ignorant are we of futurity, so erroneous are we in our calculations; so liable are we to mortifying vicissitudes. Whatever engages our affection may become a source of sorrow; whatever excites our hope may prove the means of disappointment. Such is the hard condition upon which we take all our earthly comforts. Are we secure from disappointment with regard to life; or health; or children; or friendship; or property? Observe, however, that we do not recommend you to cherish everlasting apprehension and gloom. It is displeasing to God when we pour the mercies He gives us to enjoy by mistrust. We may avoid solicitude, and not be guilty of the worldly confidence which we have condemned. It does require you—1. To be moderate in your attachments, and sober in your expectations. The way to escape disappointment is to keep your hopes humble. 2. It calls upon you to seek a better ground of confidence, and to make the Lord your trust. 3. It calls upon you to seek after a preparation for all the changing scenes of life. 4. It calls upon you to look beyond this vain and mutable world to a state of solid and unchangeable happiness. (*William Jay.*) *The disappointments of life*:—We have here the sadness and lamentation of a disappointed man. Matters had turned out differently to his expectations. Many things conspired against Job, and the providence of God doomed him to disappointment. In the chapter before us, and in the next following, he speaks of the hopes that he once had, and the frustration of these hopes for which he now mourned, as he seated himself in the ashes, and clothed himself with sackcloth. Having regard to Job's position and circumstances, none could say that his expectations were extravagant. But before old age came, he found himself with his nest torn to pieces, his reputation shattered, his prosperity perished, his influence destroyed, and foul disease threatening to sweep his body to an untimely grave. As we pass from one stage of life to another, we have to confess that many of our glowing expectations have turned out nothing but day dreams. Who has not had to mourn for frustrated hopes? These disappointments in life befall us under the providence of God; therefore we may be certain that they are meant for our instruction and discipline, as a test of principle for the maturing of our character and the promotion of our spiritual prosperity. These disappointments come in two ways. 1. We strive for that which we are never able to secure. 2. Disappointment comes to men when they reach the point for which they started, and then find it does not correspond with their expectations. Illustrate by the race for riches, or the desire for power. In the region of usefulness there is often disappointment. The same truth is illustrated in personal character. One thing this disappointment does—it drives us nearer to God. I can sometimes thank God for all the dark things in human life which prevent my leaning on anything but the One above, who is perfect both in wisdom and in love. (*Charles Vince.*) *Life; its hopes and disappointments, and their gracious design* (vers. 18–20; xxx. 26, 31). It would be impossible to find a more admirable description of prosperity than that given in this chapter. Job fondly anticipated that all this prosperity and power would be continued to him. How different the result proved. Job's experience has its counterpart in that of the children of men in general; in some, of course, more than in others, yet more or less in all. For some the disappointment of life is the disappointment of non-attainment. This may be illustrated in Abraham. What is God's loving design in life's disappointments? They form the medium whereby we reach higher blessings than those we miss. How was Job recompensed? Not by material blessings, which were but incidental. The true recompense lay in the purifying and perfecting of his character and life; in the spiritual blessings he reaped as the result of the discipline. So with ourselves. If rightly exercised by life's adverse influences, we may find gain in every loss. The disappointments of life operate favourably by bringing us nearer to God.

(*S. D. Hillman.*) **My root was spread out by the waters.**—*The commendable and censurable in character* :—I. Here is something VERY GOOD. In his greatest prosperity Job had thoughts of dying. II. Here is something VERY DESIRABLE. Job desired a continuation of his providential mercies. The wrong in desiring worldly good is when we desire it unconditionally and supremely. III. Here is something VERY COMMON. Job in his affluence cherished confidence and presumption. IV. Here is something VERY FALSE. Job calculated on dying in his "nest" when the storm was gathering round him. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 20. **My glory was fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my hand.**—*Freshness* :—The text tells us of the renown of Job, and of the way in which the providence of God continued to maintain the glory of his estate, his bodily health, and his prosperity. His glory was fresh in him. He did not achieve a hasty fame, and then suddenly become forgotten. He did not blaze out like a meteor, and then vanish into darkness. He says that his bow was renewed in his hand: whereas usually the bow loses its force by use, and is less able to shoot the arrow after a little while, and needs to lie still with a slack string, it was by no means so with him. He could send one arrow, and then another. and then another, and the bow seemed to gather strength by use. That is to say, he never seemed to be worn out in mind or body. However, this did not last always, for Job in this chapter is telling us of something that used to be—something that was—something the loss of which he very sorrowfully deplored—"my glory was fresh in me." He found himself suddenly stripped of riches and of honour, and put last in the list instead of first. So far as glory was concerned, he was forgotten as a dead man out of mind. This reads us a lesson that we put not our trust in the stability of earthly things. I. First, then, notice THE EXCELLENCY OF FRESHNESS. "I shall be anointed with fresh oil" (Psa. xcii. 10). David had been anointed while still a youth to be king over Israel. He was anointed yet again when he came to the kingdom: that outward anointing with actual oil was the testimony of God's choice and the ensign of David's authorisation, and oftentimes when his throne seemed precarious God confirmed him in it, and subdued the people under him. When his dominion waxed weak, God strengthened him and strengthened his servants, and gave them great victories; so that as a king he was frequently anointed with fresh oil. Freshness is a most delightful thing if you see it in another. It is a charm in nature. How pleasant to go into the garden and see the spring flowers just peeping up. How agreeable to mark the rills, with their fresh water leaping down the hills after showers of rain. But spiritual freshness has a double charm. Sometimes we know what it is to have a freshness of soul, which is the dew from the Lord. 1. How that freshness is seen in a man's devotions. Oh, I have heard some prayers that are really fusty. I have heard them before so often that I dread the old familiar sounds. Some hackneyed expressions I recollect hearing when I was a boy. But, on the other hand, you hear a man pray who does pray, whose soul is fully in communion with God, and what life and freshness is there! 2. And so it is well to have a freshness about our feelings. I know that we do not hope to be saved by our feelings; neither do we put feeling side by side with faith; yet I should be very sorry to be trusting and yet never feeling. Whether it be joy or sorrow, let it be living feeling, fresh from the deep fountains of the heart. Whether it be exultation or depression, let it be true and not superficial or simulated. I hate the excitement which needs to be pumped up. God keep us from stale feelings, and give us freshness of emotion. 3. I believe that there is a very great beauty and excellence in freshness of utterance. Do not hinder yourself from that. 4. There should be a freshness, dear friends, about our labour. We ought to serve the Lord to-day with just as much novelty in it as there was ten years ago. II. Now I will dwell upon the fear of losing it—THE FEAR OF ITS DEPARTURE. I have heard some express the thought that perhaps the things of God might lose their freshness to us by our familiarity with them. I think that the very reverse will turn out to be the case if the familiarity be that of a sanctified heart. Let me tell you some points on which, I fear, we have good ground of alarm, for we do our best to rob ourselves of all life and freshness. Christian people can lose the freshness of their own selves by imitating one another. By adopting as our model some one form of the Christian life other than that which is embodied in the person of our Lord we shall soon manufacture a set of paste gems, but the diamond flash and glory will be unknown. Another way of spoiling your fresh-

ness is by repression. The feebler sort of Christians dare not say, feel, or do until they have asked their leader's leave. If we want to keep up our freshness, however, the main thing is never to fall into neglect about our souls. Do you know what state the man is generally in when you are charmed by his freshness? Is he not in fine health? Let the fountain of the heart be right, and then the freshness will speedily be seen. I have shown you the things by which a man may lose his freshness; avoid them carefully. III. I close with the third point, which is this precious word which gives us HOPE OF ITS RENEWAL. Let us not think that we must grow stale, and heavenly things grow old with us: For, first, our God in whom we trust renews the face of the year. He is beginning His work again in the fair processes of nature. The dreary winter has passed away. Put your trust in God, who renews the face of the earth, and look for His Spirit to revive you. Moreover, there is an excellent reason why you may expect to have all your freshness coming back again: it is because Christ dwells in you. Then there is the other grand doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. He dwells in you. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

CHAPTER XXX.

VERS. 1–15. **But now they that are younger than I have me in derision.**—*Job's social disabilities:*—Man's happiness as a social being is greatly dependent upon the kind feeling and respect which is shown to him by his contemporaries and neighbours. The social insolence from which he suffers, and of which he complains, was marked by the following circumstances:—I. It came from the MOST CONTEMPTIBLE CHARACTERS. He regarded them as despicable in their ancestry. "Whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock." "They were driven from among men, and people cried after them as after a thief." "Among the bushes they brayed." These were the creatures amongst whom the patriarch now lived, and whose insolence he had to endure. They had no faculty to discern or appreciate his moral worth, and so utterly destitute of any power to compassionate distress that they treated him with a heartless cruelty and revolting insolence. Men may say that a man of his high character ought not to have allowed himself to have been pained with the conduct of such wretches. But who has ever done so? Even Christ Himself felt the reproaches of sinners, and was not indifferent to their revilings and their sneers. "He endured their contradictions." II. It was manifested in PERSONAL ANNOYANCES. "Now I am their song," he says, "I am their byeword." III. IT WAS SHOWN TO HIM ON ACCOUNT OF HIS PROVIDENTIAL REVERSES. Not because he had become contemptible in character, or morally base and degraded. Only because his circumstances were changed, great prosperity had given way to overwhelming adversity. Learn—1. The worthlessness of mere social fame. What is it worth? Nothing. Its breath of favour is more fickle than the wind. 2. The moral heroism of the world's Redeemer. Christ came into a social position far more heartless and insolent than that which the patriarch here describes. "Of the people there was none with Him, He was despised and rejected of men." 3. The importance of habitual reliance on the absolute. Do not trust in man. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 12. **Upon my right hand rise the youth.**—*The prospects of life:*—I. THE PROSPECTS OF LIFE ARE GENERALLY BRIGHT. Young people are full of buoyancy, animal spirits, ardent desire, sanguine expectation, high hope: all that is before them takes a colouring from themselves. There is little or no experience of life, by the use of which exaggerated views may be modified, and a correct estimate of the future ensured. Youthful hope often anticipates long life, and it fills up that life with many visions of success and happiness. II. THE PROSPECTS OF LIFE, TO WHICH HOPE GIVES SUCH A COLOURING, ARE OFTEN ILLUSIVE. A fine morning often ends in a wet and stormy day. Projects begun under favourable auspices frequently come to nought. Young people live in a realm of illusions. The young are liable to misapprehension, and need to be prepared for some measure of disappointment. Men at fifty often find that they have

failed to reach the height to which at twenty they aspired. Often the secret of failure has been lack of ability, or of perseverance, or of character. III. A FEW COUNSELS. 1. The present is a season of preparation for the future. Life is very much what we make it. Then sow now the seeds that shall grow up, and blossom, and fruiten into a good and blessed future. 2. Prepare for the future by the exercise of fidelity to yourself and to God in the present. 3. You need physical preparation for the future. A man's body has much to do with his mind and character. Courage and fortitude derive much support from a healthy physical constitution. 4. You need mental preparation for the future. I have had many opportunities of seeing what men lose for want of education and mental culture, and what they gain by their possession. Increase your knowledge by reading and observation. Strengthen your mental powers by use. 5. Moral and spiritual preparation. Set before yourself a noble object in life. Form a purpose, and seek to fulfil it. Place yourself under the teaching and government of conscience. Have right and fixed principle to guide you. Consecrate yourselves to God, and commit your life to His care. Have faith in Him. (*W. Walters.*)

Vers. 16-20. **The days of affliction have taken hold upon me.**—*Physical pain:*—In these verses the patriarch sketches his great corporeal sufferings, his physical anguish. Probably man's capability of bodily suffering is greater than that of any other animal existence. His nerves are more tender, his organisation is more exquisite and complicated. I. It tends to stimulate INTELLECTUAL RESEARCH. "Pain," says a modern author, "has been the means of our increasing our knowledge, our skill, and our comforts. Look to the discoveries made in science—in botany, in chemistry, in anatomy: what a knowledge have we gained of the structures and uses of plants, while we were seeking some herb to soothe pain or cure disease! What a knowledge have we gained of drugs, and salts, and earths, useful for agriculture, or for the fine arts, while we have been seeking only to find an ointment or a medicine! We have sought a draught to allay the burning thirst of a fever, and we have found a dozen delicious beverages to drink for our pleasure or relief. We studied anatomy to find out the seat of disease, and how to attack it, and we found what we did not seek—a thousand wonderful works of God, a thousand most curious contrivances, most admirable delights! We found a model for the ribs of a ship; we found the pattern of a telescope in the eye; we found joints and straps, strutting and valves, which have been copied into the workshop of the mechanic and the study of the philosopher. Yes, we may thank our liability to pain for this—for if pain had not existed, who can tell whether these things would have been so soon, if at all discovered." II. It tends to heighten man's ESTIMATE OF DIVINE GOODNESS. The physical sufferings of men, however aggravated and extensive, are not the law of human life, but the exception. They are but a few discordant notes in the general harmony of his existence, a few stormy days and nights in his voyage through life. We appreciate the dawning of the morning, because we have struggled fiercely with difficulties in the night. We appreciate the full flow of health because we have felt the torture of disease. Inasmuch, therefore, as human suffering, which is an exception in the general life of mankind, helps to heighten our estimate of God's goodness to our race, it is anything but an unmitigated evil. Nay, it is a blessing in disguise. III. IT TENDS TO IMPROVE OUR SPIRITUAL NATURE. Physical sufferings have led many a man to a train of spiritual reflections that have resulted in the moral salvation of the soul. As by the chisel the sculptor brings beauty out of the marble block; as by the pruning knife the gardener brings rich clusters from the vine; as by the bitter drug the physician brings health to his patient; as by the fire the refiner brings pure gold out of the rough ore—so by suffering the great Father brings spiritual life, beauty, and perfection into the soul. "Affliction," says quaint old Adams, "is a winged chariot, that mounts up the soul toward heaven." (*Homilist.*) *The use of afflictions:*—As opposite colours in a picture contribute to the beauty of the scenery or figures portrayed on the canvas by the artist, so God makes contrary things to promote His glory, and equally develop grace and character in us. There could be no vocal or musical harmony if all the voices and sounds were exactly alike in a concert. There is no real beauty in a painting that has no shades blending with the bright sunlight. As a foil is adapted to make the lustre of a diamond more conspicuous to the eye of the observer, so the contrary things

and afflictions of this life God will use to make His love more illustrious and convey His grace with more agreeable sensations to our souls. (*R. Venting.*)

Ver. 20. **I cry unto Thee, and Thou dost not hear me.**—*Unanswered prayer:*—1. There is no state so low but a godly man may have a freedom with God in prayer. Though a poor soul be in the mire, though he be but dust and ashes, yet he hath access to the throne of grace. 2. It is our duty to pray most, and usually we pray best, when it is worst with us; when we are nigh the mire and dust, prayer is not only most seasonable, but most pure. 3. Affliction provokes a soul to pray to the utmost, to pray not only in sincerity, but with fervency, not only to pray with faith, but with a holy passion, or passionately. 4. When prayer is sent out with a cry to God in affliction, it is a wonder if it be not presently heard. 5. Not to be heard in a day of trouble and affliction is more troublesome to a gracious heart than all his afflictions. Job thought he was not heard, because he had not present deliverance; and in that sense, indeed, he was not heard. And thus many of the saints may pray and not be heard; that is, they may pray, and not have present deliverance. How may we know that we are heard at any time? (1) By the quietness of our spirits. (2) Though we receive not the mercy presently, yet if we receive fresh strength to bear the want of it, that is an answer. (3) We are answered when, though the evil be not removed, yet we have faith and patience to wait and tarry the Lord's leisure for the removal of it. (4) He is answered in prayer that is more heavenly, or more in heaven after prayer. He that is edified in his holy faith, hath certainly prayed in the Holy Ghost, and, sure enough, every such prayer is heard. Godly men are always heard of God, yet they often think that they are not heard. (*Joseph Caryl.*)

Ver. 21. **Thou art become cruel to me.**—*Job's grievance against God:*—He says that God, who formerly had been kind to him, was now become cruel in His actings and dispensations toward him; and whereas He was wont to support him, He did now employ His power, as an enemy, in opposition to him. Job, in expressing his sorrow and resentments, is too pathetic, and expresseth much passion and weakness, for which he is reproved by Elihu. Considering this complaint in itself, it teacheth—1. It is the way of God's people to take up God as their chief party in all their troubles. 2. God may seem, for a time, not only not to hear godly supplicants, but even to be a severe foe to them. "Thou art become cruel." 3. It is a character of a godly man, that he is sadly afflicted with any sign of God's indignation, or even with the want of an evidence of God's favour and affection in trouble. Wicked men look rather to their lot in itself, without minding God's favour, or anger, in it. 4. Whether the wicked think of God's favour, who never knew it, yet the want of it will be sad to the godly, who have tasted by experience how sweet it is. 5. As God's power, when He lets it forth in effects, is irresistible and unsupportable for any creature to endure it, however fools do harden themselves, so godly men will soon groan under the apprehension thereof. It is indeed a characteristic of godly men that they are sensible of their own weakness, and therefore are soon made to stoop under the mighty hand of God. Learn—(1) All men by nature are apt to have hard thoughts of God in trouble. (2) Temptation may overdrive, even such as are truly godly, to speak that which is unbecoming, yea, worse than they think. (3) When godly men are ready to complain of God without cause, or to give credit to sense, they will readily find their complaints grow upon their hand. (*George Hutcheson.*) *Misunderstanding God:*—The only safe, sure way of avoiding this terrible peril is to study reverently and carefully what He has told us about Himself. It is a common temptation to accept the statements of others when they have the semblance of authority, and are asserted stoutly, as if they must be true. We may, and we ought, each of us, to become personally acquainted with our Heavenly Father. But our only hope of learning to know Him lies in patiently, lovingly, studying His character as revealed to us in Jesus Christ. His providences, too, often are such that we misunderstand them. Few of us are allowed to walk only in the light of conscious, joyous peace. Most of us sometimes are at a loss how to interpret the Divine dealings with us. There are occasions in some lives when God Himself seems to render it almost impossible to obey Him. Undoubtedly the object of such trying experiences is to develop a mightier faith. There must be always one possible next step forward in the

path of duty; or, if there be actually none, this must be because the time to take it has not come, and patient, prayerful waiting is the present duty. We may misunderstand the meaning of what is ordained for us, but we need not misunderstand its purpose. Those who have a faith strong enough to feel that behind the tangled scheme of human affairs God sits calmly directing all things, are wisest and happiest. His providences are meant to teach this, at the least. When the last analysis has been worked out it becomes apparent that the great central, fundamental evil which we most need to guard against, is this of misunderstanding our Heavenly Father. If we can learn to see things from His point of view, to look upon life, duty, pleasure, eternity, as He looks upon them, we shall be assured of safety and peace. Otherwise we never can be. (*Christian Age.*)

Ver. 23. **To the house appointed for all living.**—*The house appointed for all living* :—What were the definite grounds on which Job formed this conclusion? 1. What he saw around him on every side. 2. Job's bodily sufferings intimated also the same result. These increased and accumulated, and plainly tended, unless arrested, in the providence of God, to dissolution. 3. Creation around him impressed on him the same conclusion. 4. Job learned the lesson from Divine teaching. Learn who is the dispenser of death. We are prone to attribute all to second causes. Notice Job's personal application and appropriation to the truth in the text. We must translate Christianity from the impersonal to the personal. We have a description of that change of which the patriarch was thus personally assured. He calls it "death," and the "house appointed for all living." Death is the child of sin, though grace has made it the servant of Jesus. It is not annihilation. There is nothing natural or desirable in death itself. This is the only house that may be called the house of humanity. It is a dark house, a solitary house, a silent house, an ancient house. Even this house has a sunlit side. It is not an eternal prison-house, but a resting-place, a cemetery or sleeping-place. (*John Cumming, D.D.*) *Variety in the conduct of men at death* :—1. Consider those whom we esteem pious. Of these, in the time of death, there are three classes, widely differing from each other in their dying experiences. Some are agitated by terror, doubts, and apprehensions. Some are exulting and triumphant. Some, without any extraordinary raptures, have a sweet calm and tranquillity of spirit, a filial confidence and trust in their Redeemer. We refer, of course, only to those whose rational powers are unimpaired. We are not to judge of the future state of a man merely by his deathbed exercises. This is an error to which we are far too prone; an error that in its consequences is most pernicious. 2. The deathbeds of those who have lived impenitent and unbelieving without God, and without Christ in the world. Here we find similar diversity. Some are filled with agony and horror, some have a false joy, and an unwarranted exultation; and some are stupid, insensible, and unconcerned. (*H. Kollock, D.D.*) *Death universal* :—Man's life is a stream, running into death's devouring deeps. Doctrine—All must die. There is an unalterable statute of death, under which men are concluded. This is confirmed by daily observation. The human body consists of perishable materials. We have sinful souls, and therefore have dying bodies; death follows sin, as the shadow follows the body. 1. Man's life is a vain and empty thing. Our life, in the several parts of it, is a heap of vanities. 2. Man's life is a short thing; a short-lived vanity. 3. Man's life is a swift thing; a flying vanity. Having thus discoursed of death, let us improve it in discerning the vanity of the world in bearing up, with Christian contentment and patience, under all troubles and difficulties in it; in mortifying our lusts; in cleaving unto the Lord with full purpose of heart at all hazards, and in preparing for death's approach. (*T. Boston, D.D.*) *The certainty of death* :—The certainty of death. "All must die." 1. There is an unalterable statute of death, under which men are included. 2. If we consult daily observation. Everyone seeth that "wise men die, likewise the fool and brutish person." 3. The human body consists of perishing principles. 4. We have sinful souls, and therefore have dying bodies. 5. Man's life in this world is but a few degrees removed from death. Scripture represents it as vain and empty, short in continuance, and swift in its passage. Improvement—1. Let us hence, as in a glass, behold the vanity of the world; look into the grave, and listen to the doctrine of death. (1) This world is a false friend, who leaves a man in time of greatest need. (2) That hold as fast as thou canst, thou shalt be forced to let go thy hold. 2. It may serve as a storehouse

for Christian contentment and patience under worldly crosses and losses. 3. It may serve as a bridle to curb all manner of lust. (1) To remit our inordinate care of the body. (2) To abate our pride. (3) It may check our worldly lust. (4) And our worldlymindedness. (5) It may serve as a spur to incite us to prepare for death. (*T. Hannam.*) *The mission of death*:—Since we know assuredly that God will bring us to death, consider—I. THE CERTAINTY OF ITS APPROACHING SOON. All the works of nature, in this inferior system, seem only made to be destroyed. Man is not exempted. Our life is for ever on the wing, although we mark not its flight. Even now death is doing its work. If death be certainly approaching, let us learn the value of life. If death be at hand, then certainly time is precious. II. THE TIME AND MANNER OF THE ARRIVAL OF DEATH. Death is called in Scripture "the land without any order." And without any order the king of terrors makes his approaches in the world. He wears a thousand forms, marking out the unhappy man for their prey. III. THE CHANGE WHICH DEATH INTRODUCES. When we pass from the living world to the dead, what a sad picture do we behold! The periods of human life passing away, the certainty of the dissolution that awaits us, and the frequent examples of mortality which continually strike our view, lead us to reflect with seriousness upon the house appointed for all living. Death is the great teacher of mankind. (*J. Logan, F.R.S.E.*) *Death and the grave our common inheritance*:—The Coptic version reads thus:—"I know now that death will destroy me, for the earth is the house of all the dead." We have in the text two personifications. "Death will destroy me." "The grave is the house for all the dead." The power to wound and the pleasure of victory are figuratively ascribed to death and the grave. Death is said to be the extinction of life, but that neither defines nor explains it. We know death by its results. Life! Is it important to us, and wherein is its value and importance? The importance of life to every one of us is for our virtue, religion, happiness, and usefulness among our fellowmen, and to determine the character of our responsibility, our after-life, our destiny. Life, as connected with this world only, is the precious time for the discipline of the passions and affections, the elevation of our nature, the accumulations of virtue, the influence, principles, and power of religion, the happiness that ordinarily accompanies them, and the usefulness suggested and sustained by them. Our virtue, our religious character, the state of our hearts, veiled and unveiled, and the actions of our lives, will determine our everlasting destiny. Our responsibility relates to the honest convictions of our minds and hearts. (*R. Ainslie.*) *Death*:—1. THE DIVINITY OF DEATH. "I know that Thou wilt bring me to death." Men ascribe death to one of three causes—disease, accident, or age; but the Bible ascribes it to God. "Thou wilt bring me to death." 1. Nothing else can bring me to death unless Thou wilt. My existence depends every moment on Thy will. 2. Nothing else can prevent me from dying if Thou willest that I should depart; all is with Thee. "Thou turnest man to destruction. Thou changest his countenance and sendest him away." There are no premature deaths. II. The ORDINATION of death. "The house appointed." Death is no chance matter. "It is appointed unto all men once to die." 1. This appointment is very natural; all organic life dies: all sublunary life finds the "house" of mortality. To this "house" all plants, reptiles, insects, birds, fishes, beasts direct their steps. 2. This appointment is very settled. This appointment is kept as immutably as the ordinances of heaven or any of the laws of nature. III. The UNIVERSALITY of death. "For all living." Men, when living, have houses of various shapes, sizes, value, according to their tastes and means, but in dying they have only one "house." All go to one place. What a "house" is this grave! ancient—desolate—spacious—crowded. (*Homilist.*) *Relieving thoughts concerning death*:—The text suggests some thoughts of Job concerning his own death. I. There will be nothing UNNATURAL in my death. It is "appointed" as the death of every other kind of organised life on earth: it is the natural law of all organised bodies to wear out, decay, dissolve. As the earth takes back to itself all the elements that have entered into the composition of vegetables and animals, why should I refuse or dread the demand? I may rest assured that kind nature will make a benign and beneficent use of all the elements that have entered into my corporeal existence. Let me be ready to yield them up unreluctantly, ungrudgingly, thanking the Infinite for their use. 1. It is dishonest for me to object to this; for my body was only borrowed property, a temporary loan, nothing more. 2. It is ungrateful for me to object to this. Though I never had a claim to such a boon, it has been of great service to my

spiritual nature. 3. It is unphilosophic for me to object to this. Whatever my objections and resistance, it must come. II. There will be nothing UNCOMMON in my death. "The house appointed for all living." Were I one of a few, amongst the millions of the race, singled out for such a destiny, I might complain; but since all, without any exception, must die, who am I that I should complain? III. There will be nothing ACCIDENTAL in my death. "I know that Thou wilt bring me to death." (*Ibid.*) *Concerning death*:—Job suffered from a terrible sickness, which filled him with pain both day and night. He says in the eighteenth verse, "By the great force of my disease is my garment changed: it bindeth me about as the collar of my coat." When our God by our affliction calls upon us to number our days, let us not refuse to do so. Yet Job made a mistake in the hasty conclusion which he drew from his grievous affliction. Under depression of spirit he felt sure that he must very soon die. But he did not die at that time. He was fully recovered, and God gave him twice as much as he had before. It is a pity for us to pretend to predict the future, for we certainly cannot see an inch before us. It is the part of a brave man, and especially of a believing man, neither to dread death nor to sigh for it; neither to fear it nor to court it. Job made a mistake as to the date of his death, but he made no mistake as to the fact itself. He spake truly when he said: "I know that Thou wilt bring me to death." "Oh," saith one, "but I do not feel called upon to think of it." Why, the very season of the year calls you to it. Each fading leaf admonishes you. Oh! you that are youngest, you that are fullest of health and strength, I lovingly invite you not to put away this subject from you. Remember, the youngest may be taken away. I. I call your attention to a piece of PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE: "I know that Thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living." A general truth here receives a personal application. 1. Job knew that he should be brought to the grave, because he perceived the universality of that fact in reference to others. 2. He knew it also because he had considered the origin of mankind. We were taken out of the earth, and it is only by a prolonged miracle that this dust of ours is kept from going back to its kindred. If we had come from heaven we might dream that we should not die. Thus we have affinities which call us back to the dust. 3. Further, Job had a recollection of man's sin, and knew that all men are under condemnation on account of it. Does he not say that the grave is a "house appointed for all living"? It is appointed simply because of the penal sentence passed upon our first parent, and in him upon the whole race. 4. Once more, Job arrived at this personal knowledge through his own bodily feebleness. Those who die daily will die easily. Those who make themselves familiar with the tomb will find it transfigured into a bed: the charnel will become a couch. The man who rejoices in the covenant of grace is cheered by the fact that even death itself is comprehended among the things which belong to the believer. II. Having thus discoursed upon a piece of personal knowledge, I now beg you to see in my text the shining of HOLY INTELLIGENCE. Job, even in his anguish, does not for a moment forget his God. He speaks of Him here: "I know that Thou wilt bring me to death." 1. He perceives that he will not die apart from God. He does not say his sore boils or his strangulation will bring him to death; but "Thou wilt bring me to death." He does not trace his approaching death to chance, or to fate, or to second causes; no, he sees only the hand of the Lord. Let us rejoice that in life and death we are in the Lord's hands. 2. The text seems to me to cover another sweet and comforting thought, namely, that God will be with us in death. "I know that Thou wilt bring me to death." He will bring us on our journey till He brings us to the journey's end: Himself our convoy and our leader. 3. It may not be in the text, but it naturally follows from it, that if God brings us to death, He will bring us up again. III. I pass on to notice the QUIET EXPECTATION which breathes in this text. I want to reason with those disciples of our Lord Jesus who are in bondage from fear of death. What are the times when men are able to speak of death quietly and happily? 1. Sometimes they do so in periods of great bodily suffering. I have on several occasions felt everything like fear of dying taken from me simply by the process of weariness. 2. The growing infirmities of age work in the same way, beloved, without falling into sickness. 3. By being filled with an entire submission to the will of God. Delight in God is the cure for dread of death. 4. Next, I believe that great holiness sets us free from the love of this world, and makes us ready to depart. 5. Another thing that will make us look at death with complacency is when we have a full assurance that we are in Christ, and

that, come what may, nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Live in such a way that any day would make a suitable topstone for life. Let me add that there are times when our joys run high, when the big waves come rolling in from the Pacific of eternal bliss; then we see the King in His beauty by the eye of faith, and though it be but a dim vision, we are so charmed with it that our love of Him makes us impatient to behold Him face to face. IV. I conclude by saying that this subject affords us SACRED INSTRUCTION. "I know that Thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living." 1. Let us prepare for death. 2. Live diligently. 3. Next to that, let us learn from the general assembly in the house appointed for all living to walk very humbly. A common caravansary must accommodate us all in the end; wherefore let us despise all pride of birth, rank, or wealth. 4. Be prompt, for life is brief. 5. Men and women, project yourselves into eternity; get away from time, for you must soon be driven away from it. You are birds with wings; sit not on these boughs for ever blinking in the dark like owls; bestir yourselves, and mount like eagles. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 25. **Did I not weep for him that was in trouble.**—*Tears for the oppressed:*—By noticing the care with which Job throws back the insinuation of Eliphaz, how much he valued the character of charity, and how he esteemed it his bounden duty to contribute to the wants and necessities of others. Our text is a pathetic appeal, displaying the truly compassionate character of the patriarch. What are the tears which we may imagine fell from the eyes of Job, and which do fall from the eyes of every compassionate man that witnesses suffering and sorrow? They were tears of grief, of sincerity, of self-condemnation. But the compassionate man, like Job, may pour forth tears of indignation. For whom did compassionate Job thus weep? Lit. for "him in a hard day." He that was suffering from privation. I now have to plead for such, for men who are suffering from overtoil and over-exertion. Special reference may be made to the "late-hour system." (*J. M'Connell Hussey, B.A.*) *Christian sympathy:*—In endeavouring to justify the ways of God, Job's three friends came to the harsh conclusion that he would not have been so severely afflicted if he had not been a very great sinner. Among other accusations against the afflicted patriarch, Eliphaz the Temanite had the cruelty to lay this at his door, "Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry." Richly did the three miserable comforters deserve the burning rebuke of their slandered friend, "Ye are forgers of lies, ye are physicians of no value. O that ye would altogether hold your peace and it shall be your wisdom." I. HUMAN SYMPATHY, ITS COMMENDATIONS. 1. We may say of it, first, that even nature dictateth that man should feel a sympathy for his kind. Humanity, had it remained in its unfallen estate, would have been one delightful household of brothers and sisters. Alas! for us, when Adam fell he not only violated his Maker's laws, but in the fall he broke the unity of the race, and now we are isolated particles of manhood, instead of being what we should have been, members of one body, moved by one and the same spirit. Called with a nobler calling, let us exhibit as the result of our regenerate nature a loftier compassion for the suffering sons of men. 2. Further, we may remark that the absence of sympathy has always been esteemed, in all countries, and in all ages, one of the most abominable of vices. In old classic history who are the men held up to everlasting execration? Are they not those who had no mercy on the poor? 3. Sympathy is especially a Christian's duty. 4. Remember the blessed example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich." 5. Sympathy is essential to our usefulness. 6. Here I must supplement that thought with another; sympathy may often be the direct means of conversion. 7. And I shall say here, that this sympathy is sure to be a great blessing to yourselves. If you want joy—joy that you may think upon at nights, and live upon day after day, next to the joy of the Lord, which is our strength, is the joy of doing good. The selfish man thinks that he has the most enjoyment in laying out his wealth upon himself. Poor fool! II. THE HINDRANCES TO CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY. 1. One of the great impediments to Christian sympathy is our own intense selfishness. We are all selfish by nature, and it is a work of grace to break this thoroughly down, until we live to Christ, and not to self any longer. How often is the rich man tempted to think that his riches are his own. 2. Another hindrance lies in the

customs of our country. We still have amongst us too much of caste and custom. The exclusiveness of rank is not readily overcome. 3. Much want of sympathy is produced by our ignorance of one another. We do not know the sufferings of our fellows. 4. No doubt the abounding deception which exists among those who seek our help has checked much liberality. III. THE FRUITS OF CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY. 1. The fruit of Christian sympathy will be seen in a kindly association with all Christians: we shall not shun them nor pass them by. 2. It will be seen next, in a kindly encouragement of those who want aid, constantly being ready to give a word of good advice, and good cheer to the heart which is ready to faint. 3. Show it, also, whenever you hear the good name of any called into doubt. Stand up for your brethren. 'Tis an ill bird that fouls its own nest, but there are some such birds. 4. But still, there is no Christian sympathy in all this if it does not, when needed, prove itself by real gifts of our substance. Zealous words will not warm the cold; delicate words will not feed the hungry; the freest speech will not set free the captive, or visit him in prison. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

CHAPTER XXXI.

VERS. 1-32. **I made a covenant with mine eyes.**—*Guard the senses:*—Set a strong guard about thy outward senses: these are Satan's landing-places, especially the eye and the ear. (*W. Gurnall.*) *Methods of moral life:*—Let us look at the kind of life Job says he lived, and in doing so let it be remarked that all the critics concur in saying that this chapter contains more jewels of illustration, of figure or metaphor, than probably any other chapter in the whole of the eloquent book. Job is therefore at his intellectual best. Let him tell us the kind of life he lived: whilst he boasts of it we may take warning by it; the very things he is clearest about may perhaps awaken our distrust. Job had tried a mechanical life—"I made a covenant with mine eyes" (ver. 1). The meaning of "a mechanical life" is a life of regulation, penance, discipline; a life all marked out like a map; a kind of tabulated life, every hour having its duty, every day its peculiar form or expression of piety. Job smote himself; he set before his eyes a table of negations; he was not to do a hundred things. He kept himself well under control; when he burned with fire, he plunged into the snow; when his eyes wandered for a moment, he struck them both, and blinded himself in his pious indignation. He is claiming reward for this. Truly it would seem as if some reward were due. What can a man do more than write down upon plain paper what he will execute, or what he will forbear doing, during every day of the week? His first line tells what he will do, or not do, at the dawn; he will be up with the sun, and then he will perform such a duty, or crucify such and such a passion: he will live a kind of military life; he will be a very soldier. Is this the true way of living? Or is there a more excellent way? Can we live from the outside? Can we live by chart, and map, and schedule, and printed regulation? Can the race be trained in its highest faculties and aspects within the shadow of Mount Sinai? Or is the life to be regulated from within? Is it the conduct that is to be refined, or the motive that is to be sanctified and inspired? Is life a washing of the hands, or a cleansing of the heart? The time for the answer is not now, for we are dealing with an historical instance, and the man in immediate question says that he tried a scheduled life. He wrote or printed with his own hand what he would do, and what he would not do, and he kept to it; and though he kept to it, some invisible hand struck him in the face, and lightning never dealt a deadlier blow. Job then says he tried to maintain a good reputation amongst men—"If I have walked with vanity, or if my foot hath hasted to deceit; let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity. If my step hath turned out of the way, and mine heart walked after mine eyes, and if any blot hath cleaved to mine hands; then let me sow, and let another eat; yea, let my offspring be rooted out" (vers. 5-8). That was a public challenge. There were witnesses; let them stand forth: there was a public record kept; let it be read aloud. This man asks for no quarter; he simply says, read what I have done; let the enemy himself read it, for even the tongue of malice cannot pervert the record of honesty. Will not this bring a sunny providence? Will not this tempt

condescending heaven to be kind, and to give public coronation to so faithful a patron? Is there no peerage for a man who has done all this? Nay, is he to be displaced from the commonalty and thrust down, that he may be a brother to dragons and a companion to owls? All this has he done, and yet he says, "My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat. My harp also is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep" (xxx. 30, 31). This is not what we have thought of Providence. We have said, Who lives best in the public eye will be by the public judgment most honourably and cordially esteemed: the public will take care of its servants; the public will stand up for the man who has done all he could in the interests of the public; slave, man or woman, will spring to the master's rescue, because of remembered kindnesses. Is Job quite sure of this? Certainly, or he would not have used such imprecations as flowed from his eloquent lips:—If I have done thus, and so, then let me sow, and let another eat; yea, let my offspring be rooted out: let my wife grind servilely unto another: let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone. So then Job himself is speaking earnestly. Yet, he says, though I have done all this, I am cast into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes: though I have done all this, God is cruel unto me, and He does not hear me: I stand up, and He regardeth me not: with His strong hand He opposeth Himself against me: He has lifted me up to the wind, and He has driven me away with contempt: He has not given me time to swallow down my spittle: I, the model man of my day, have been crushed like a venomous beast. Job, therefore, does not modify the case against God. He misses nothing of the argument and withholds nothing of the tragic fact. He makes a long, minute, complete, and urgent statement. And this statement is found in the Bible! Actually found in a Book which is meant to assert eternal providence and justify the ways of God to man! It is something that the Bible could hold within its limits the Book of Job. It is like throwing one's arms around a furnace; it is as if a man should insist upon embracing some ravenous beast, and accounting him as a member of the household. These charges against Providence are not found in a book written in the interests of what is called infidelity or unbelief; this impeachment is part of God's own book. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 14. **What then shall I do when God riseth up?**—*The great question:*—1. Job's mind was deeply impressed with a sense of his own responsibility. There is a natural inclination in the mind of man to diminish the sense of responsibility. In most transactions of life men frequently evince a desire to escape as much as possible from personal responsibility. There are responsibilities arising out of the very conformation of the society in which we live, that cannot be avoided. It never can be a matter of choice with us, whether we shall be responsible to God, and in the sight of God. The very nature of our relation to God implies responsibility, and the very character of God, in reference to that relationship, also implies responsibility. The responsibility of man to God reaches to the whole of man's moral being. 2. Job's conviction that there is a day coming in which God will arise. As a Sovereign, making inquisition, and holding a grand assize in which the universe should be concerned. And God will "visit." That term is often used in the sense of visitation for the purpose of punishment. God will arise as the legislator of the universe—as the promulgator of a law which has been universally violated, and which has not exercised its restraining influence upon the hearts of men because their allegiance had departed. Of necessity there must be vindication. Either the justice of God must fail, or there must be a vindication. As the law of God reaches to the minutest details of human existence and of human conduct, the vindication must reach every personal interest, the details of every individual life. And the Lord must visit as an avenger; for vindication implies vengeance. The God whose own arm hath brought salvation, shall be the God who shall visit in the way of vengeance. Job asks, "When He visiteth, what shall I answer Him?" Should not we ask the same question? What will the man of this world, of pleasure, and of gain, answer? Realise the necessity for finding some answer. There is but one answer. There is nothing to do but to cling to the Cross of Jesus. (*George Fish, LL.B.*) *The great account:*—The subject brought before us here is our personal responsibility; that everyone must give account of himself to God. Nothing is hid from the all-seeing eye of Jehovah, that searcheth the heart and the reins, and looketh at the motive, the object, the spirit, in which the man acts. I. MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY. We must all give

account to God, not merely masters, but servants also; and we must give account in all the transactions of everyday life. Every man has time, talents, opportunities, gifts; every man has a certain station, every man has a certain amount of influence; and we are all responsible for the right use before God. Not one of you can help this influence going forth upon those around you; not one of you can avoid the things you do, telling, in one way or another, upon those with whom you have intercourse. You must do good, or you must do evil. This responsibility we need to face, for it is one that presses always. II. THE WAY OF MEETING THIS RESPONSIBILITY. Two things are spoken of here. 1. What shall we do? Regarding ourselves as responsible to God, what shall we do when He rises in judgment? Shall we not fear to face a holy God? Shall we hide ourselves from God, in order to elude His searching eye? That surely is a vain consideration. Shall we resist His summons? Surely that too is vain. 2. What shall we answer? Shall we say that we have not broken one of God's commandments? Shall we, like the Pharisee, compare ourselves with others? Shall we "begin to make excuse"? Shall we plead God's mercy? The careless cannot meet God. Nor can the formalist; nor the hypocrite and pretender. The two great things we require to be experimentally acquainted with, are repentance and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," and you are delivered at once from the power of the law, and all the accusations of Satan, because Jesus has conquered him, and you also win the victory through faith in Him. (*John W. Reeve, M.A.*) *The final judgment and ground of acquittal*:—I. THE CERTAINTY OF A DAY OF VISITATION AND RECKONING. 1. This is indicated by the testimony of conscience. Conscience is the vicegerent of the Almighty. It discriminates between virtue and vice, attaching to either their respective awards. 2. By a reference to the moral economy of man, or the economy of God's dealings towards man. 3. The certainty of a day of visitation is fully unfolded in the Book of God. II. THE GROUND UPON WHICH AN ANSWER IS TO BE PREPARED TO THE QUESTION IN OUR TEXT. Classify the Christian community into four compartments. 1. There are some who have no answer prepared. This is a fact of undoubted certainty. 2. Others prepare an answer on a self-righteous principle. They plead obedience to the requirements of God's law. 3. Others confide in the uncovenanted mercy of God. 4. But some take higher ground, and are preparing their answer in reference to the righteousness of Christ Jesus our Lord. This is the only plea which will bear inspection, the only foundation for the exercise of mercy. (*Adam Gun, A.M.*) *The day of visitation*:—Although Job appears to have taken an undue estimate of his own righteousness, and certainly adhered to his own integrity with a blamable tenacity, yet his scrupulous conscientiousness is greatly to be admired. The smallest act of injustice or oppression, nay, even of neglect, towards the meanest slave or household servant, was viewed by Job as a sin against God, and one for which God would hereafter call him to account! I. THE OCCASION CONTEMPLATED. "When God will rise up, and when He will visit" in judgment. 1. He appears now, as it were, indifferent to the affairs of men. 2. A day is coming when He will arise and visit. It is the day of death. It is the day of punishment. It is the day of judgment. 3. The certainty of its approach. Accountability seems almost an instinct in man. The day of judgment must come—there is no escape from it. 4. Yet most persons believe and act as if they believed it not. How surprising is the indifference of professed believers! II. THE IMPORTANT INQUIRY RESPECTING THIS SOLEMN EVENT. "When He visiteth, what shall I answer Him?" 1. There is individuality in this question; it is the soul's soliloquy. Not what shall this man do; but what shall I do? 2. It is, what shall I do? But the time for action is then over. Can I escape and hide myself? Can I evade or deceive? Can I contend with Him? 3. It is, what shall I answer? Various are the excuses with which men satisfy their consciences now, but they will avail nothing then. The following will have nothing to answer,—vicious men and dissipated. Men who have neglected their souls. Self-satisfied formalists. The spiritual professor who has not departed from secret sin. There will be one who can answer—the poor, penitent, humble, believing disciple of Jesus. (*F. Close, A.M.*)

Ver. 15. **Did not He that made me in the womb make him?**—*God the universal Creator*:—I. ILLUSTRATE THE DOCTRINE HERE CONVEYED. Both high and low, rich and poor, all sorts and conditions of men, have one common Creator. 1. The unity of creation. Men's tastes, habits, abodes, and appearances differ, but men

are one family. 2. The high position of the Divine Being. There are none to divide His praise, none to claim His position. 3. The harmony of God's providential dealings. He can cause one event to fit in with another, one person to assist and help his fellow, and out of the apparently diverse elements to make one perfect, harmonious, and beautiful whole. II. APPLY THE SUBJECT TO OUR OWN IMPROVEMENT. We are taught from the fact stated by Job. If we see another sin, our language should be, "Did not He that made me make him?" And we should bear with him tenderly. If we see another in want or poverty our thoughts should be, "Did not He that made me make him?" And we should afford our best relief. 1. Some suggestions for our duty towards God. He is our Creator. As our supreme Benefactor and Maker we should manifest our sense of His authority over us and our dependence on His care. 2. Some reflections on our duty one to another. (*Homilist.*) *Man's common rights:*—Had we not one and the same Creator, and have we not consequently the same nature? We may observe in regard to this sentiment—1. That it indicates a very advanced state of view in regard to man. The attempt has been always made by those who wish to tyrannise over others, or who aim to make slaves of others, to show that they are of a different race, and that in the design for which they were made, they are wholly inferior. Arguments have been derived from their complexion, from their supposed inferiority of intellect, and the deep degradation of their condition, often little above that of brutes, to prove that they were originally inferior to the rest of mankind. On this the plea has been often urged, and oftener felt than urged, that it is right to reduce them to slavery. Since this feeling so early existed, and since there is so much that may be plausibly said in defence of it, it shows that Job had derived his views from something more than the speculations of men and the desire of power, when he says that he regarded all men as originally equal, and as having the same Creator. It is, in fact, a sentiment which men have been practically very reluctant to believe, and which works its way very slowly even yet on the earth. 2. This sentiment, if fairly embraced and carried out, would soon destroy slavery everywhere. If men felt that they were reducing to bondage those who were originally on a level with themselves,—made by the same God, with the same faculties, and for the same end; if they felt that in their very origin, in their nature, there was that which could not be made mere property, it would soon abolish the whole system. It is kept up only where men endeavour to convince themselves that there is some original inferiority in the slave which makes it proper that he should be reduced to servitude, and be held as property. But as soon as there can be diffused abroad the sentiment of Paul, that "God hath made of one blood all nations of men," that moment the shackles of the slave will fall, and he will be free. (*Albert Barnes.*)

Ver. 19. **If I have seen any perish for want of clothing.**—*A good man's righteousness:*—These words do in general set forth the practice of a good man in the acts of mercy and righteousness, which do, above all others, declare him a follower of our blessed Lord. But chiefly they do imply something concerning the nature, manner, and object of those acts. In vulgar practice indeed men care not much for any acquaintance with the needy, and are all for doing kindnesses to them whose fortunes do not require it, or who can return the same again; but the good man's behaviour is like that of Job. If we care not to approve ourselves to God, by doing all the good we can to our brethren, we are so far sunk into the miserable state of hell. To prevent this misery we must be watchful over our minds, that they do not fall into a covetous humour, which is a stain to the soul, that can hardly be got out. Covetousness ever presses upon the sinner, and leaves no room for a sober or a relenting thought. Mankind seem to be distinguished into higher and lower ranks by Divine wisdom and providence, in order to the exercise of an universal charity. Such a charity as sweetens men's spirits, and from being rough and sour, makes them kind and affable to the meanest person, ready to oblige every one with a gentle and humble compliance. Such a charity as envies no man, but is pleased at the prosperity of others, is made better by their health, and rejoices at seeing them cheerful. Such a charity as never domineers, but scorns that usual insolence which is the spring of many disorders, and of much contempt of the poor. Such a charity as doth never demean itself haughtily or with reproach in words or gestures, but calmly debates all matters, that it may not behave itself unseemly. In fine, such a charity as thinks nothing too great to undertake, or too hard to undergo, for the good of mankind,

Now if this kind of charity did but get ground in the world, it would very much better the condition and the manners of it. A thorough reformation must be expected only from them who make others better, by their counsel, and by their example. The best arguments for our giving of alms are, that it is the only course we can take. 1. To be like our blessed Saviour. 2. To do services acceptable to God. 3. To save our souls for ever. Wherefore, if ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. (*John Hartcliffe, B.D.*) *The poor man's plea heeded* :—Some one expressed surprise to Eveillon, Canon and Archdeacon of Angers, that none of his rooms were carpeted. He answered, "When I enter my house in winter-time the floors do not tell me that they are cold; but the poor, who are trembling at my gate, tell me they want clothes."

Vers. 24–28. **If I have made gold my hope.**—*On the love of money* :—How universal is it among those who are in pursuit of wealth to make gold their hope; and, among those who are in possession of wealth, to make fine gold their confidence! Yet we are here told that this is virtually as complete a renunciation of God as to practise some of the worst charms of idolatry. We recoil from an idolater as from one who labours under a great moral derangement, in suffering his regards to be carried away from the true God to an idol. But is it not just the same derangement, on the part of man, that he should love any created good, and in the enjoyment of it lose sight of the Creator—that, thoroughly absorbed with the present and the sensible gratification, there should be no room left for the movements of duty, or regard to the Being who furnished him with the materials, and endowed him with the organs of every gratification? There is an important distinction between the love of money, and the love of what money purchases. Either of these affections may equally displace God from the heart. But there is a malignity and an inveteracy of atheism in the former which does not belong to the latter, and in virtue of which it may be seen that the love of money is, indeed, the root of all evil. A man differs from an animal in being something more than a sensitive being. He is also a reflective being. He has the power of thought, and inference, and anticipation. And yet it will be found, in the case of every natural man, that the exercise of those powers, so far from having carried him nearer, has only widened his departure from God, and given a more deliberate and wilful character to his atheism than if he had been without them altogether. In virtue of the powers of mind which belong to him, he can carry his thoughts beyond the present desires and the present gratification. He can calculate on the visitations of future desire, and on the means of its gratification. But the reason of man, and the retrospective power of man, still fail to carry him, by an ascending process, to the first cause. He stops at the instrumental cause, which, by his own wisdom and his own power, he has put into operation. In a word, the man's understanding is overrun with atheism, as well as his desires. To look no further than to fortune as the dispenser of all the enjoyments which money can purchase, is to make that fortune stand in the place of God. It is to make sense shut out faith. We have the authority of that Word which has been pronounced a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, that it cannot have two masters, or that there is not in it room for two great and ascendant affections. Covetousness offers a more daring and positive aggression on the right and territory of the Godhead, than even infidelity. The latter would only desolate the sanctuary of heaven; the former would set up an abomination in the midst of it. When the liking and the confidence of men are toward money, there is no direct intercourse, either by the one or the other of these affections towards God; and in proportion as he sends forth his desires, and rests his security on the former, in that very proportion does he renounce God as his hope, and God as his dependence. (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*) *The worship of wealth* :—What is the true idea of property—something to be left behind when we die, or something which may be interwoven with our immortal nature, and so will last us for eternity? Money, jewels, lands, houses, books, decorations of all sorts and kinds, must be taken leave of at the bed of death. But there are things that last. Habits are wrought into the intellect and will—the love of God and of man, sincerity, purity, disinterestedness, these things live, and are really property, for death cannot touch them. Most men regard civilisation as mere material progress; but true human improvement must be an improvement of the man himself. And man himself is not what he owns and can handle, nor even his bodily frame, but he is a spirit clothed in a bodily form. His real improvement

consists in that which secures the freedom and the supremacy of the noblest part of his nature. A true civilisation is that which shall promote this upon a great scale in human society. What do we see every year as the London season draws near, but a bevy of mothers, like generals, set out on a campaign, prepared to undergo any amount of fatigue if only they can marry their daughters, not necessarily to high-souled, virtuous men, but in any case to a fortune! What do we see but a group of young men, thinking, after perhaps a career of dissipation, that the time has arrived for settling respectably in life, and looking, each one of them, not for a girl who has the graces and character which will make her husband and children happy, but for somebody who has a sufficient dowry to enable him to keep up a large establishment! Who can wonder, when the most sacred of all human relations, the union of hearts for time and for eternity, is thus prostituted to the brutal level of an affair of cash, that such transactions are quickly followed by months or years of misery — misery which, after seething long in private, is at last paraded before the eyes of the wondering world amid the unspeakable shame and degradation of the Divorce Court! (*Canon Liddon.*)

Ver. 33. **If I have covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom.**—*Hiding and confessing sin*:—To cover and hide sin is sin: it is the adding of sin to sin. Sin is the disease of the soul, and there is no such way to increase and make a disease desperate as to conceal it. Silence feeds and cherishes the diseases of the body; and so it doth the diseases of our souls. Sin increaseth two ways, by concealment or hiding. 1. In the guilt of it. The obligation to punishment takes stronger hold upon the soul, and every man is bound the faster with those chains of darkness by how much the more he labours to keep his sins in the dark. The longer a sin remains upon the conscience unpardoned, the more doth the guilt of it increase. Now all the while sin is hid, all the while sin is artificially and intentionally covered, it remains unpardoned; and therefore the guilt of it must needs increase upon the soul. 2. Sin being thus covered, increaseth in the filth and contagion of it, in the strength and power of it, it gains more upon the soul, it grows more master and more masterly; lust begins to rage, rave, it commands and carries all before it, while we are so foolish as to keep it close and covered. If any say, Surely it is not so sinful to cover and hide sin, for doth not Scripture condemn those that did not hide it? I answer, that there is a twofold not hiding of sin. (1) There is a not hiding which proceeds from repentance. (2) And there is a not hiding which proceeds from impudence. Or there is a not hiding of sin which proceeds from a broken heart, and there is a not hiding of sin which proceeds from a brazen face, from a brow of brass. As Job in speaking this, would deny the hiding and covering of his sin, so he affirms the confession of it. So that here is more intended than expressed; when he saith he did "not cover," his meaning is, he discovered his sin; when he saith he did not hide it, his meaning is, he did disclose it. A godly man doth not only "not hide," but is ready to confess his sin. He makes confession that he may be freed from condemnation. The holy confession of sin, which is opposed to the covering or hiding of sin, hath three things in it. 1. A confession of the fact, or the thing done (Josh. vii. 19). 2. A confession of the fault; that is, that in doing so we have done amiss, or done sinfully and foolishly. 3. There is in confession not only an acknowledgment of the fact and fault, but a submission to the punishment. Confession is a judging of ourselves worthy of death. True confession is a submitting to the sentence of the Judge, yea, a judging of ourselves, and a justifying of God in all, even in His sharpest and severest dispensations. Some may say, Is there a necessity to make such a confession of sin, seeing that God is already acquainted with and knows our sins, with all the circumstances and aggravations of them? But we do not confess to inform God of what He knows not, but to give glory to God in that which He knows. We are also called to an acknowledgment and confession of our sins to God, that we ourselves may be more deeply affected with them. The knowledge which God hath of sin in and by Himself may be a terror to sinners, His knowing of them by us is only a ground of comfort; God hath nowhere promised to pardon sin because He knows it, but He hath if we make it known. Nothing is known properly to God in that capacity as He pardons and forgives, but that which is acknowledged by us. The acknowledgment of sin is—(1) The confession of all sin. (2) Of our special sins in a special manner. (3) And it takes in all the several circumstances and aggrava-

tions of it. Sin should be confessed feelingly, sincerely, with self-abhorrence, and believingly. (*Joseph Caryl.*)

Ver. 40. **The words of Job are ended.** — *Job's final position* :—Running like a golden thread through all this vehement and passionate language, we have seen a vein of thought which has given this half-rebellious questioner a claim upon our sympathy, and which even had the book ended here, would have prevented thoughtful men from joining his opponents, and from abandoning the solitary and tortured sufferer to the reproaches of his friends, and to the condemnation of the future readers of this great controversy. His soul, ripened by the hot blast of cruel affliction, is being prepared for a step, a long step forward, in that progressive revelation of God Himself to man, given us in Holy Scripture. He sickens at the sight and sense of wrong, and clinging to the conviction that, in spite of all appearances, God must be just—juster than his friends, or his own creed, or his own experience have declared Him to be—he struggles to be true, at once to himself, to his conscience, and his God. He yearns for a clearer sight of, and a nearer approach to the Divine Being against whom, as seen in the insufficient light given him, he has launched so vehement an indictment, so terrible a flood of fervid and poetic wrath. And while he has no sure and certain hope of a life beyond the grave, such as was revealed to the world in Christ, yet his pathetic moans at the finality of death give place, once to a dim aspiration, and once and again to a more loud assertion of his conviction—bursting forth like a flash of light from his darkest mood—that even if he is to die, die in his misery and desolation, God will yet be his Goël, his Vindicator; that somehow, he knows not how, he shall even after the shock of death have sight of God, and have his wrongs redressed; and therefore that he who has once been so dear to Him, and who has fallen so low in this life, will not be left to be "of all men most miserable." And we have noticed how, in his description of his early life, he moves in a serene and lofty atmosphere, puts before us a moral standard of practice and even of thought which a Christian might be thankful to attain and realise. . . . And now, he and his friends are alike silent, silent but unconvinced. Neither the one side nor the other have won the adhesion of those against whom they argue. They cannot point to any guilt on Job's part. He cannot convince them of his innocence. Neither one side nor the other have, we cannot but feel, laid their hands upon the whole truth. Yet each has exhausted his store of arguments, shot his arrows, and emptied his quiver. And deep as is the hold which Job has gained upon our interest and sympathy, yet "the light and shade has been so graduated that those sympathies are not entirely confined to one side." (*Dean Bradley.*)

CHAPTER XXXII.

VERS. 1-7. **Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu.**—*Analysis of Elihu's speech* :—After the introduction Elihu reproves Job, because he had claimed too much for himself, and had indulged in a spirit of complaining against God. He goes on to say that it is not necessary for God to develop all His counsels and purposes to men; that He often speaks in visions of the night; and that the great purpose of His dealings is to take away pride from man, and to produce true humility. This He does by the dispensations of His providence, and by the calamities with which He visits His people. Yet he says, if, when man is afflicted, he will be truly penitent, God will have mercy and restore his flesh, so that it will be fresher than that of an infant. The true secret, therefore, of the Divine dispensations, according to Elihu, the principle on which he explains all, is, that afflictions are disciplinary, or are designed to produce true humility and penitence. They are not absolute proof of enormous wickedness and hypocrisy, as the friends of Job had maintained, nor could one in affliction lay claim to freedom from sin, or blame God, as he understood Job to have done. He next reproves Job for evincing a proud spirit of scorning, and especially for having maintained that, according to the Divine dealings with him, it would be no advantage to a man to be pious, and to delight himself in God. Such an opinion implied that God was severe and wrong in His dealings. To meet this, Elihu brings forward a variety of considerations to show the impropriety of remarks of

this kind, and especially to prove that the Governor of the world can do nothing inconsistent with benevolence and justice. From these considerations he infers that the duty of one in the situation of Job was plain. It was to admit the possibility that he had sinned, and to resolve that he would offend no more. He then proceeds to consider the opinion of Job, that under the arrangements of Divine Providence there could be no advantage in being righteous; that the good were subjected to so many calamities, that nothing was gained by all their efforts to be holy; and that there was no profit though a man were cleansed from sin. To this Elihu replies, by showing that God is supreme; that the character of man cannot profit Him; that He is governed by other considerations in His dealings than that man has a claim on Him; and that there are great and important considerations which lead Him to the course He takes with men, and that to complain of these is proof of rebellion. Elihu then closes his address by stating—1. The true principles of the Divine administration, as he understood them; and 2. By saying that there is much in the Divine government which is inscrutable, but that there are such evidences of greatness and wisdom in His government, there are so many things in the works of nature, and in the course of events, which we cannot understand, that we should submit to His superior wisdom. (*Albert Barnes.*) *Post-exilic wisdom*:—Elihu appears to represent the "new wisdom" which came to Hebrew thinkers in the period of the exile; and there are certain opinions embodied in his address which must have been formed during an exile that brought many Jews to honour. The reading of affliction given is one following the discovery that the general sinfulness of a nation may entail chastisement on men who have not been personally guilty of great sin, yet are sharers in the common neglect of religion and pride of heart, and further, that this chastisement may be the means of great profit to those who suffer. It would be harsh to say the tone is that of a mind which has caught the trick of "voluntary humility," of pietistic self-abasement. Yet there are traces of such a tendency, the beginning of a religious strain opposed to legal self-righteousness, running, however, very readily to excess and formalism. Elihu, accordingly, appears to stand on the verge of a descent from the robust moral vigour of the original author towards that low ground in which false views of man's nature hinder the free activity of faith. . . . Elihu avoids assailing the conception of the prologue, that Job is a perfect and upright man before God. He takes the state of the sufferer as he finds it, and inquires how and why it is, and what is the remedy. There are pedantries and obscurities in the discourse, yet the author must not be denied the merit of a careful and successful attempt to adapt his character to the place he occupies in the drama. Beyond this, and the admission that something is said on the subject of Divine discipline, it is needless to go in justifying Elihu's appearance. One can only remark with wonder in passing, that Elihu should ever have been declared the Angel Jehovah, or a personification of the Son of God. (*Robert A. Watson, D.D.*) *Credulous and incredulous minds*:—1. Elihu appears to have been a young man of keen perception, vigorous intellect, and possessed of the idea that he had a mission to teach and criticise others. He saw their mistakes as a bystander might, and set himself to correct them. The thing which peculiarly stirs him is, that while Job was clearly wrong, the friends had not hit off the truth, they had erred more than he, and this he considers as overruled for good, that they might not fancy that "they had answered him," and that they, and not God, "had thrust him down." With this view of their relative positions he goes to work to answer their objections and to correct Job. The opening of his speech to Job gives the impression of a simple and intentionally humble person, nevertheless deeply persuaded that his mission to advise and teach others is from God. Yet there is an inclination to condemn others, and to an apparent arrogance. He first describes himself as "full of matter." This looks like vanity, but it need not be. There is an intuitive consciousness of inspiration in the minds of some men, and those often are the young, which seems to point them out as men to do a work for God, or the advancement of souls, in their own day. The power that urges them within is one they cannot resist. It is the teaching and influence of God. Many a youth is conscious of some such energy, and, being conscious of it, can neither resist the consciousness, nor hinder the expression of the power. Society usually condemns such men, though men often have to endorse their work in after days. Such an one Elihu seems to have been. It was not the possession of the power to see truth unseen by others which was his fault; nor was it the consciousness

that he possessed it; but the presuming on the power, to offend against the laws of humility and modesty, and the thrusting forward the consciousness of his ability in such a way as to contemn and despise others, or to give to others the impression that they are despised and neglected. 2. Elihu opens his speech with a warm protest in favour of the fairness of God's dealings, and against the complaints set up by Job assailing the inequality of providence. He shows that there is an end and object in God's dealings with man through sorrow and chastisement. He dwells on the perfection of His character. He then proceeds to show the power and omniscience of God. His complaint against Job is, not only that he has actually done wrong, but that his arguments are of a kind to fortify the wicked, and to strengthen the position of God's enemies. He concludes his remonstrance in the magnificent language of chapter xxxvii., in which he sets forth the greatness of the works of creation. He is offended at Job's deviation from the recognised paths of simple religion into the more devious and intricate ones of a somewhat metaphysical search into the causes of apparent contradictions. 3. The two conditions of mind are best seen in contrast. We often do see them so in life. The following classes of men are frequent and familiar to our mind. There is a man who sincerely serves and loves God. He has no hesitation as to his faith in His love, his choice and his intense desire; nevertheless, his mind is one which surveys and weighs everything. It sees the inequality of the law of God, if only the superficial view be taken; he goes down lower, and strives to find some firm basis founded on the moral sense, and the deeper condition of the progress of society. This man accepts and defends the discoveries of science; he is not startled at seeming contradictions. Such was Job. Elihu did not understand the man of keenly inquiring mind, agitated, as Job was, about the causes of things. There are two classes of men among us; those who reach the end of faith through the gallery of inquiry, and those who rest in it from the beginning, and would shudder at having to ask the question which they consider already finally rocked to sleep in the cradle of unsuspecting and unhesitating trust. 4. Elihu suggests to Job the various modes of God's visitations and dealings with men. Elihu expresses some surprise that Job should not more easily and heartly acquiesce in the justice of God's dealings, without inquiring and searching so deeply into God's actions and motives. So many men of Elihu's kind are surprised at the difficulty which deeper minds feel. He first objects to Job finding fault with God for giving him trouble, as if he had any right to object to the ways and laws of Him who made him. He tries to convince Job of the close connection between cause and effect in God's dealing with His people, of the reality of His intentions in every act of trial or humiliation to draw the soul of man out of some snare of Satan, some pit of destruction, and to bring him near Himself. Elihu's complaint against Job is, that he does not feel all this. He hesitates about this manifest connection between cause and effect; he searches more anxiously, decides more hesitatingly, and takes courage more cautiously. He searches into grounds and causes. Another man under a strong impression that some line of action is a duty, expects everything will guide him with regard to it; sees everything through that atmosphere, possessed in soul of one time, imagines everything he hears is a note which tends to recall it. See how each of these classes would deal with—(1) Chastisement. (2) National calamity. (3) The discoveries and dicta of science. (4) Natural phenomena. The two classes of mind are very distinct; but both may be religious, and that in the very highest sense; but they will have a tendency to mistake and misunderstand each other. There is a painful tendency in religious men to be narrow towards each other. We can help being severe in our judgment on each other. (*E. Monro.*) *The speech of Elihu:*—I. RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY ISSUING IN UTTER FAILURE. Long was the controversy of Job and his three friends; hot was their spirit, and varied the arguments employed on both sides. But what was the result? Neither party was convinced. Polemics have proved the greatest hindrance and the greatest curse to the cause of truth. "Disagreement," says F. W. Robertson, "is refreshing when two men lovingly desire to compare their views, to find out truth. Controversy is wretched when it is an attempt to prove one another wrong. Therefore Christ would not *argue* with Pilate. Religious controversy does only harm. It destroys the humble inquiry after truth; it throws all the energies into an attempt to prove ourselves right. In that disparaging spirit no man gets at truth. 'The meek will He guide in judgment.' The only effective way to

clear the atmosphere of religious errors, is to stir it with the breath and brighten it with the beams of Divine truth. Bring out the truth, regardless of men's opinions." II. INDIGNATION TOWARDS MEN SPRINGING FROM ZEAL TO GOD. "Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram: against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God. Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled." Men hating their fellow-creatures because their opinions concerning God tally not with their own. How arrogant is this! It is the regarding our own views as the infallible truth; and what is this but the spirit of Popery? 2. How impious is this! A zeal for God which kindles indignation to men, is a false zeal—a zeal abhorrent to the Divine nature. 3. How inhuman is this! Can anything be more inhuman than to be indignant with a man simply because his opinions are not in agreement with our own? III. REVERENCE FOR AGE RESTRAINING THE SPEECH OF YOUTH. "I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not show you mine opinion. I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom." Here this young man appears in an aspect most becoming and commendable. He shows—1. A sense of his theological inferiority arising from his youthhood. 2. A deference for the judgment of his seniors. "I said, Days should speak." Age gives a man great advantage in judging things. "The aged," says a modern writer, "have had an opportunity of long observation. They have conversed much with men. They have seen the results of certain courses of conduct, and they have arrived at a period of life when they can look at the reality of things, and are uninfluenced now by passion. Returning respect for the sentiments of the aged, attention to their counsels, veneration for their persons, and deference for them when they speak, would be an indication of advancement in society in modern times; and there is scarcely anything in which we have deteriorated from the simplicity of early ages, or in which we fall behind the Oriental world, so much as in the want of this." (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 7. **Days should speak.**—*The voice of days:*—Days should speak. They do. Each has a message. I. YESTERDAY SPEAKS. It says, "Learn of me." To learn from the experience of the past is one of our prime duties. What is learned by experience is best understood: is best remembered; and is most practical in its influence. II. TO-DAY SPEAKS. It says, "Use me. Turn me and my gifts to good account." Make prompt use of opportunity. III. TO-MORROW SPEAKS. It says, "Let me alone. Leave me. Trust me with God. Do not anticipate me." Wise and kindly message! Four considerations show this. To-day has quite enough cares. Anxiety will not help us to bear to-morrow's cares. Christ is Lord of to-morrow. And to-morrow may be quite different from what we expect. (*W. R. Stevenson, B.A.*) *Time yields maturity:*—The distance between the infancy of a great man and the climax of his greatness is immense, so that could we have heard Fox or Pitt deliver one of their greatest orations, it would seem impossible that the day ever was when those lips could not speak even the name of her whose arms were their whole world, their horizon, their parliament, their only earth and only heaven. Man is thus an accumulation. He grows as the tree grows. The little oak shrub stands only a foot high in the first summer, but around it the winds and rains and sunshine play, and cast their offerings upon their favourite, and joyfully it receives them, and heaps them up, and when a hundred years have passed, there stands the great monument of the forest, laden with all the vital forces that came near it in the whole hundred years. Its great trunk represents the sunshine and the rain that fell a hundred years before. It is probable that our earth in its early days presented only a surface of volcanic rock, as desolate as Gibraltar; and then came the influence of rain, and atmosphere, and sun, dissolving the surface and making that soil in which the trees and grass live, and which the plough can move so easily. Be this as it may, the philosophy of this world is action, and the conservation of this action in some new form. Into such a theatre of forces God saw fit to place man, and if the favourite creature of God is true to his world, each year comes and adds to his mind and heart far more willingly than the summer days add to the unconscious oak. The chief mission of earth must be to help the mind onward toward a higher condition of every faculty. In harmony with the whole theory of earth, Elihu opens his speech to Job, and drops one of the finest of truths: "Days should teach, and years should teach wisdom." *Homily for the New Year:*—Time should be educatory. Every day has its lessons divinely arranged

which we are expected to learn. The "days" by their educational processes should throw brighter light on the great problems of life, and make the pathway to the hidden world less ghostly and shadowed. There may be age without wisdom, and there may be wisdom without a "multitude of years." There is a wisdom which is only born of experience; and experience can only come with the silent growth of years. What is wisdom? The right application of means to ends. Wisdom is knowledge reduced to practice. But there may be worldly wisdom and advanced age without "understanding." Men may be intellectually cultured and wise, yet morally fools in their attempts at interpretation of questions and problems in the higher realm of the spiritual and divine. The mental can never of itself interpret the spiritual, the metaphysical, the Divine. Moral revelations come to none but such as are in heart prepared and waiting to receive them. This is the secret of the errors which our clever scientists are making to-day in their interpretations of the hieroglyphs of the spiritual universe,—they read them, spell them out, in the light of the intellectual, and guess at their meaning through the medium of secular knowledge, mere cultured reason. There must be the child-spirit of humility, receptivity, submissiveness, and love, or God will remain a hidden, impalpable, unrealised mystery, and the spiritual universe a sealed volume, a dumb oracle, a dread uncertainty. The mysteries of life are plain only in the light which is born of Divine "inspiration." Elihu, spirit-taught, saw beneath the apparent, the real design of Job's sufferings. They were "moral discipline," not "judicial visitation." Both parties looked at the same object, but the three philosophers saw it through the medium of their philosophy, and Elihu through the medium of sonship—filially; hence the difference! The heart sees farther than the head, and its Christian love interprets with accuracy what the dictionary confounds and philosophy contradicts. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*) *The lessons of time:*—I. TIME UNFOLDS THE PLAN OF OUR LIFE. Our curiosity often prompts us to desire a present knowledge of future events. Would we understand them if revealed? You put an arithmetic book in the hand of a child, and say, In this book you will find Practice, Proportion, Fractions, Interest, &c. The child turns the leaves over from beginning to end, but as yet he has not learnt numeration. The book is of no use, although it contains the arithmetician's wisdom. So, did we see the end from the beginning, we should be no wiser. God has kept the other pages of the Book till we have learnt the first; the others are not soiled. 1. Human life is ordered of God. He orders our steps. He girded Cyrus for his work, although he knew it not. It is impossible to realise and value life if this view is not taken of it. Its sacred origin and its Divine organisation constitute the basis of belief. 2. Human life is gradually unfolded. Because it is Divine it is mysterious. All God's works have passed through time. Matter and events must ever turn in cycles. God alone is immovable. "I, the Lord, change not." II. TIME UNFOLDS OUR CAPACITIES FOR LIFE. Growth is a characteristic of life; change, that of inanimate nature. 1. Man becomes an intelligent being by the exercise of time. There are activities which tend both to reveal that which we ought to know, and enlarge our capacity for knowing it. It is a two-fold process. Unexercised brains are dwarfs. Minds which are exercised about that which pleases them, and are made their hobby, grow like the willow—very long, but very weak. 2. Man becomes a moral being by considering time. Life moves on gradually, like a panorama, that we may observe its motions, and know the purposes of God in them. We learn the nature of actions by the exercise of the intuitive faculty, as actions reveal themselves. Morality and accountability are unfolded by degrees. 3. Man becomes a social being by the enjoyment of time. We have a capacity for enjoyment, and life has blessings to exercise that capacity. Every period of life has its charms. III. TIME UNFOLDS THE GREAT PURPOSES OF LIFE. 1. The development of true manhood. Man is God's ideal creature. All others are steps up to man. Evolution is the gradual unfolding in creation of the final embodiment of matter and life. 2. The unity of the various parts. There is a period when we shall not look upon life as atoms separated from their kindred, or contradictions, but a whole, with all its parts fitly put together, and all things working for our good. (*T. Davies, M.A.*) *The past:*—I. THE PAST SHOULD SPEAK OF US. 1. It speaks of sins committed. Spectres seem to come up from the dark arches of the past, and confront us at every turn. They tell of sins of omission and sins of commission; they speak of failures here and errors there. The past is dark, and few can look it in the face without a

blush. 2. It speaks of privileges abused. The means of grace neglected—prayer restrained—the Gospel declined. 3. It speaks of opportunities neglected. (1) Opportunities of doing good. (2) Opportunities of getting good. II. THE PAST SHOULD SPEAK TO US. 1. It should speak to us of the frailty of human life. 2. It should speak to us of the shortness of time. 3. It should speak to us of the future recompense of the saints, and punishment of the ungodly. The voice of the past says: "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption," &c. III. THE PAST SHOULD SPEAK IN US, AND IMPRESS OUR MORAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN REGARD TO OUR PERSONAL OBLIGATIONS. 1. It should teach us to develop a spirit of gratitude. "O praise the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever," is the language as well of the thoughtful intelligent Christian as the emphatic utterance of revelation. 2. It should preach to us the part of our personal responsibility to ourselves; to our families; to the Church; to the world. 3. It should teach us greater fidelity to God. 4. It should inspire us with a Divine earnestness. Conclusion—Meditate on the past. Mourn over its sins and its failures. Seek to improve upon it. Ask Divine aid in order that you may succeed. (*The Study.*) *Ancestral experience a Divine schoolmaster*:—I. A DISTINGUISHING FACULTY IN HUMAN NATURE. Of all the creatures on this earth man alone has the power of deriving instruction from the experience of others. We have no reason to believe that the birds of heaven or the beasts of the field derive one particle of information from any of their ancestors through the ages that are gone. 1. The faculty connects all generations together in a mental unity. 2. This faculty explains the gradual advancement of the world in intelligence. Every age builds up a fresh layer of general intelligence, on which the next steps up and works, and thus the generations are ever climbing the hill of knowledge. 3. This faculty increases the moral responsibility of the world. On us the ends of ages are come. II. A SAD PERVERSITY IN HUMAN NATURE. In secular matters we are constantly learning from the experience of our ancestors. We avail ourselves of their discoveries. But in moral and spiritual matters we are slow to learn. Ancestral experience teaches us lessons on spiritual subjects not only in the general historical works of the world, but especially in the Bible. The Bible for the most part is a record of man's experience in relation to the higher and more solemn relations of being. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 8. **But there is a spirit in man.**—*The spirit in man*:—We can define "spirit" only by negations, but the negations are positive, inasmuch as it is the limitations and imperfections of matter that they deny. Spirit, though it uses material organs and implements, is distinct from them, their owner and master. Modern science derives man's parentage from what we have been accustomed to call the lower order of beings. I confess a strong preference for the genealogy whose two connecting links are, "which was the Son of Adam, which was the Son of God." Man has the same material conditions, surroundings, and necessities with his humbler fellow-beings. But is there in man an immaterial, supra-material consciousness, in which he differs from the brutes, not in degree alone, but in kind, something into which instinct could never grow, occupying a range of thought, knowledge, and aspiration which to the brute is and ever will be an unexplored region? This question we attempt to answer. 1. Note man's power of progress, as manifested both individually and collectively. The swallow builds as good a nest the first spring of his life as he will ever build. But man's antecedents and surroundings do not furnish the first elements for calculating his orbit, which may intersect the outermost circle of the material system to which he belongs, and stretch on unto the unmapped region beyond, as the comet wings its flight into depths of space remoter than the planet's round. Man, also, alone of all animals, grows collectively, and from generation to generation. Each generation of men mounts on the shoulders of that which preceded it. Facts are epitomised into principles; knowledge is condensed into general truths, and the acquisitions of a thousand years are carried by the child from the primary school. There is no physical peculiarity in man that can account for this power of progress. Is it ascribed to speech? The human hand cannot account for man's progress. Man's power of progress is due to causes wholly unconnected with his physical development, and with the possibility of material consciousness. We have no proof that other animals have any knowledge, except that which comes to them immediately through the senses. They evince no apprehension of principles, of multitudinous, comprehensive facts, of general truths. Man's superiority consists in

his capacity for super-sensual ideas, and these cannot be elaborated by any conceivable material apparatus. Man with his mental vision sees a class or a law as distinctly as the eye discerns an individual object; and still further, by higher stages of abstraction and generalisation, he resolves clusters of classes into more comprehensive classes, fascicles of laws into single laws of a broader scope, till in every department he seizes upon some one unifying principle under which all the classes may be grouped, or to which all the laws may be referred. He then, from these principles, deduces inferences which the senses never could have discovered. And man's entire imaginative apparatus is super-sensual. 2. The phenomena of man's moral nature cannot be derived from his material organisation. Of all beings on the earth, man alone cognises the distinction between right and wrong. The first question in ethics, whether theoretical or practical, concerns the nature of moral distinctions—the essential difference between right and wrong. Material philosophers see the origin of this distinction in the differing sensations of pleasure and pain; and that conscience results solely from the observation of what is approved and what disapproved. But materialism cannot account for either a man's moral or a man's religious nature. We conclude that natural science cannot detach man's hold upon the ancestral tree which traces his parentage from God. In Jesus Christ Himself we find the strongest of all arguments against the theory of material evolution as applicable to the higher portion of man's nature. (*A. P. Peabody, D.D.*) *Human spirit and Divine inspiration:*—Read text thus, "There is a spirit in man, and the in-*spirit*-ing of the Almighty giveth them understanding." The spirit in man is that special apartment of his nature which has been contrived and fitted for personal intercourse between him and God. The spirit in man is to the great inbreathing of God what the lungs are to the circumambient air. It is the element of our being that establishes in us religious possibilities. "There is a spirit in man," and like every other instinct of our being, it stands to us authoritatively, and lays its mandate upon us imperiously. We are religious by nature. It is just this faculty divinely wrought upon, and this string divinely played upon, that really composes the strength and tenacity of our religious convictions. The inspiration here has to do, in a purely general way, with God's own personal communication of Himself to us, and, at the spirit-point of our being, imparting unto us the energies of His own wisdom, holiness, and power. It is not our concern to understand how this is done. The first office-work of inspiration is to create in us fresh personal vigour and new spiritual animation. Character cannot be constructed. It cannot be put together. It needs first of all a principle that is animated, and one, therefore, that is animating. It was an impulse more glowing, determined, and passionate than anything we are possessed of naturally. We need nothing so much as a determining life force at the core of character, an impulse from out the very soul of God, that shall hold us in its warm, steady, and irresistible grip, and impel us with a momentum that has the very pressure of Jehovah in it. And all of this is a draft upon the Divine inspiration. This may seem to be what theologians call "regeneration." The new man, the new life, is only another name for character wrought out at the determining impulse of a Divine inspiration. What we need first of all is not to act like Christ, but to have exactly the same Divine Spirit working at the core of our lives that worked at the core of His, and then acts will take care of themselves. All true manliness grows around a core of divineness. Virtue is safe only when it is inspired. Another office-work of inspiration is to create in us fresh and vivid perceptions of the Divine truth. We need as much inspiration to read the Bible as its authors needed to fit them to write it. No Christian creed is ever constructed. It is the form in which a man shapes his own experiences of the things of God, and of his own soul. As we go on to know the Lord, our creeds will change. Christian thinking will continue growing better, deeper, truer, so long as Christians, along the luminous path of God's self-revelation to them, continue getting into the deeper things of God and the closer intimacies of God. And further, the inspirations of the Almighty are suited to become to us qualification for all kinds of holy doing. We make toilsome work of being good, because we do not let the inspirations of God work in us: and we make irksome work of doing good because we do not let the inspirations of God work through us. . . . Our common and comprehensive need is of the inspiration of the Almighty, the direct breathing into us of the breath of God, with all the wisdom, holiness, and power which such a Divine afflatus involves, that whether we speak, be it by word or act, we may speak as the oracles of God; and whether we minister, we may do it as of the

ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Christ Jesus. (*Charles H. Parkhurst, D.D.*) *God the source of all wisdom*:—Professor Morse, the renowned electric telegraph inventor, was once asked, "Professor, when you were making your experiments yonder in your rooms in the university, did you ever come to a stand, not knowing what to do next?" "Oh yes; more than once." "And at such times, what did you do next?" "I may answer you in confidence, sir," said the professor, "but it is a matter of which the public knows nothing. Whenever I could not see my way clearly, I prayed for more light." "And the light generally came?" "Yes. And I may tell you that when flattering honours came to me from America and Europe on account of the invention which bears my name, I never felt that I deserved them. I had made a valuable application of electricity, not because I was superior to other men, but solely because God, who meant it for mankind, must reveal it to someone, and was pleased to reveal it to me." The inventor's first message—"What hath God wrought"—intimated in no uncertain way the inspiration which gave his work longevity, and made it a light to the world. *On man as a rational and moral being*:—The inherent excellence of our nature. Consider man—1. As a rational being. How are we otherwise to account for that superiority which man has acquired over all the other inhabitants of this world? In the lowest conditions of human society there is always a marked pre-eminence in man over the other animals. In man there are at all times signs of a mind possessing in some degree a creative and inventive energy. The effects of this power in man are by no means small and insignificant. While he is yet remote from what we call civilisation, the native grandeur of the human mind shows itself in bold exertions of genius; and as he proceeds in his career, man constantly discovers new resources. What is this power? Is it not what the text declares it to be, "a spirit in man, the inspiration of the Almighty"? Going on the principles of natural reason,—what, indeed, is it that produces in our minds a belief of the existence of the supreme God, but the perception that the world which we inhabit bears strong indications of design and intelligence having been employed in its formation? Our connection with God is impressed on our minds by the very proofs which bring us a knowledge of His existence, and we could not know that there was such a Being unless we tried His works by the scale of our own reason. 2. The same great truth will appear if we consider man as a moral being. Other animals follow blindly the impulse of appetite. There is impressed on the mind of man a rule by which he judges himself,—a sense of right and wrong in conduct, by which he becomes conscious that he is the object either of love and esteem, or of contempt and hatred. Reflect on the very high dignity and importance of this part of our constitution; how much it elevates us above the other creatures; how close a connection it forms between us and the Almighty. How can we derive, except from God Himself, except from the spirit which He has breathed into man, any feeling of those excellencies, any love for, or any aspiration after that goodness which indisputably constitutes His own greatest attribute? Is not our relationship to the Divine nature apparent in this, that we alone, of all the creatures breathing upon earth, are capable of having any relish of those perfections which alone render God Himself the object of worship and love? (*J. Morehead, M.A.*) *On man as a religious being*:—Man has not only received understanding from the inspiration of the Almighty, but he knows that it is so; and he is prompted by nature to lift up his thoughts to the contemplation of that great Being who conferred upon him so high a pre-eminence. This principle it is which distinguishes us from the lower animals, even more than our reason or our moral perceptions. He alone of all creatures thinks it not presumption to address himself to the unknown God. Wherever man exists, therefore, you will find religion. By collecting together all the follies of superstition, it has been attempted to show that the religion of man is rather a proof of the weakness than of the loftiness of his nature. It must be owned that the vices and follies of man have shown themselves as frequently in the midst of his religious sentiments as in any other part of his character. Yet the perversions of religion ought never to be treated in a light and careless strain; they are rather objects of pity. But even these superstitions prove that man is by nature a religious being. Man is a spirit, clouded and obscured, struggling with darkness, and fettered by sin, yet aiming at lofty things, and striving to regain some glimpses of the Divine form, which was accustomed to walk with man while yet in the garden of primeval innocence. 1. Let students pursue their inquiries with a becoming reverence for the nature

to which they belong. 2. Value Christianity which has brought immortality to light. (*Ibid.*) *The world within:*—There is a spirit in man—a rational, accountable, undying personality. This spirit has been called "the world within," and truly of all worlds it is the greatest and most wonderful. Like the outward world of nature, it has its own orbit, and its own revolutions, and its own centre. Souls create their own centres. The Bible everywhere teaches the distinction between the soul and matter. This world is the greatest world. 1. It is a world whose existence is complete in itself. 2. It is a world that has a self-multiplying power. 3. It is a world conscious of its own existence. 4. It is a world that can make use of the outward. 5. It is a world that can devoutly recognise its Maker. 6. It is a world which its Maker has made extraordinary efforts to restore. 7. It is a world that can shut out its Maker. Conclusion—(1) Consider the sad moral state of this "world within." (2) Profoundly study this world within. (3) Earnestly cultivate this world within. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 17. **I also will shew mine opinion.**—*The spirit and message of Elihu:*—This is the beginning of Elihu's declaration. It is quite a new voice. We have heard nothing like this before. So startling indeed is the tone of Elihu's voice that some have questioned whether his speech really forms part of the original poem, or has been added by some later hand. We deal with it as we find it here. It is none the less welcome to us that it is a young voice, fresh, charmful, bold, full of vitality, not wanting in the loftier music that is moral, solemn, deeply religious. It appears, too, to be an impartial voice; for Elihu says—I am no party to this controversy: Job has not said anything to me or against me, and therefore I come into the conference wholly unprejudiced: but I am bound to show mine opinion: I do not speak spontaneously; I am forced to this; I cannot allow the occasion to end, though the words have been so many and the arguments so vain, without also showing what I think about the whole matter. Such a speaker is welcome. Earnest men always refresh any controversy into which they enter: and young men must speak out boldly, with characteristic freshness of thought and word; they ought to be listened to; religious questions are of infinite importance to them: sometimes they learn from their blunders; there are occasions upon which self-correction is the very best tutor. It is well for us to know what men are thinking. It is useless to be speaking to thoughts that do not exist, to inquiries that really do not excite the solicitudes of men. Better know, straightly and frankly, what men are thinking about, and what they want to be at, and address oneself to their immediate pain and necessity. Elihu will help us in this direction. There comes a time when the old way of putting things must give way to some new method. But if the old are not always wise, the young are not always complete. We live in a time of doctrinal change. There is now an opportuntiy for an Elihu, whose wrath is divinely kindled, to make the great progress in attempting the higher education of the soul. Elihu must come; when he does come he will be killed: but another Elihu must take his place, and go forward with the work until the enemy is tired of blood, and lets the last Elihu have a hearing. We may change forms without changing substances. Let us allow that new methods of stating old truths are perfectly legitimate. Nor let us condemn a man who resorts to novel expressions, if he do not injure the substance of the thing which he intends to reveal. Take, for example, the doctrine of prayer. The doctrine of prayer has been mocked, or misunderstood, or imperfectly stated. Every man must state this doctrine for himself. Only the individual man knows what he means by prayer. There is no generic and final definition which can be shut up within the scope of a lexicon. Who can define prayer once for all? Only the Almighty. Every suppliant knows what he means when he prays to his Father in heaven. He must not be overloaded with other men's definitions; they will only burden his prayer; they will only stifle the music of his supplication. Suppose we say, Prayer is good in cases of sickness, but it stops short at surgery. What a wonderful thing to say—wonderful because of its emptiness and vanity. Yet how inclined we are to smile when we are told that prayer is exceedingly good in the removal of nervous or imaginary diseases, but prayer always stops short at surgery; prayer never prayed a man's limb back again to him when he had once lost it. As well say, Nursing is very good, but it always stops short at death. So it does; so it must. As well say, Reaping is very good,

but reaping always stops short at winter. That is true, and that is right. "That which is lacking cannot be numbered" Law must have some reasonableness, or it ceases to be law: when it loses its reasonableness it loses its dignity and the power of getting hold upon the general judgment and the personal trust of man. Even miracles themselves might be played with, turned into common-places, debased into familiarities utterly valueless. Prayer may and does stop short at surgery, but love itself has a point at which it stops short; the living air has a point at which it falls back, so to speak, helplessly; all the ministries of nature stop short at assignable points, saying that without assent and consent and co-operation on the other side no miracle can be done. In all these cases consider reasonableness and law, and the necessity of boundary and fixture in the education and culture of mankind. Then again, others would deprive prayer of what many have considered to be an essential feature. In order to maintain what doctrine of prayer they may have, they are only too glad to eviscerate it of the element of petition. They are not unwilling to have aspiration, a species of poetical communion with the invisible, but they would complete a great work of evacuation in the direction of request, petition, solicitation; they would dismiss the beggar from the altar, and admit only the poetic contemplatist, or the spiritual enthusiast, or the mystic communicant. For this I see no reason. I hold to the old doctrine of "Ask, and ye shall receive: ye have not, because ye ask not: if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God." That there may be abuses in the direction of solicitation is obvious; but we must never give up the reality because it can be abused. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 18. **For I am full of matter.** — *Ideas and expression*:—Sainte-Beuve remarks that the great art in speech, as in military service, is to gather, maintain, and bring to bear at once the greatest number of forces. Some generals can manage but few men, and some speakers can handle but one or two ideas. "There are writers who resemble Marshal Soubise: when he had all his troops gathered at his disposal he knew not what to do with them, and he dispersed them again that he might fight to better advantage. So I know of writers who, before writing, dismiss half their ideas because they can express them only one by one: it is pitiful. It shows that one is embarrassed by his very resources."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

VERS. 1-7. **Wherefore, Job, I pray thee, hear my speeches.** — *Personal applications of truth*:—Here is the great failure in the case of the three friends and Elihu: they speak broad generalities; they are sure the doctrine is right. With these, as mere utterances, we have no fault to find; but where was the wisdom which could apply the doctrine to the individual case? Where the holy skill that could touch the wound without aggravating it? Where that learned and eloquent tongue that could speak a word in season to him that is weary, and speak as if he were singing? Who could utter himself without making any noise; who could declare a judgment without perpetrating a violence? Such condolence is the very balm of heaven, but such comfort was never associated with bald generalities, rough, vague statements of truths, however profound; such condolence, such solace, can only be applied out of the heart that has itself become rich in experience, and learned through many a long schoolday to suffer and be strong. Common-places, however profound and beautiful, cannot touch the agony of life. By "common-places" is here meant statements which may for their truthfulness pass without challenge; they have become amongst the established truths of the world; they are accepted; the Church listens to them as to falling rain; they excite no surprise; they come and operate as by a gracious necessity. But what we want is particular application, study of every individual case; each heart has its own history, each spirit knows its own want. So, in listening to great broad declarations from the pulpit, we must each receive these declarations according to our individual need: they cease to be merely general when they become definitely and personally applied. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. **The Spirit of God hath made me.**—*On the general dispensation of the Holy Spirit with respect to the new creation:*—The Holy Spirit completed the work of creation in all its parts. With respect to the new creation, the work is threefold. I. HIS RICH AND COPIOUS INFLUENCES AND OPERATIONS. The dispensation of the Spirit with respect to the new creation may be considered as follows:—1. The plentiful effusion of the Spirit's influences. 2. The ministry of the Spirit, in the Gospel, is called the ministry of the Spirit by way of eminence. 3. In the Gospel the Spirit is promised to all ranks and degrees of men. 4. Our Lord teaches all His disciples to pray for the Spirit (Luke xi. 13). 5. The chief comfort which our Lord left to His disciples at His departure was the Spirit. II. THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT WITH RESPECT TO THE HUMAN NATURE OF CHRIST, THE HEAD OF THE NEW CREATION. 1. Spirit miraculously formed our Lord's human nature, soul and body, in the womb of the Virgin. 2. He filled the human nature of our Lord with holiness; He sanctifies the new nature of the believer. 3. He carried on the progressive work of grace in our Lord's soul and body; He carries on the sanctification of the believer unto perfection. 4. He anointed our Lord with all extraordinary powers necessary for the discharge of His offices; He anoints the believer for the discharge of every duty. 5. He enabled our Lord to work miracles. He enables the believer to conquer sin and Satan: and are not these great miracles? 6. He directed and comforted our Lord in all His troubles. He directs and comforts believers in all their troubles. 7. He enabled our Lord to offer Himself without spot to God. He enables the believer to meet death in peace and purity. 8. He preserved our Lord's dead body that it saw no corruption. He will gather the remains of the believer's body, wherever they are. 9. He raised our Lord from the dead. He will raise the believer at the last day. 10. He glorified our Lord's human nature. He will glorify the believer, when raised from the tomb. 11. He has borne witness concerning our Lord ever since He raised Him from the dead. He will write the name of the believer in the Book of Life. III. THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT UPON THE MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S MYSTICAL BODY. (*J. Kidd, D.D.*) **The breath of the Almighty hath given me life.**—*The value of life:*—There are two conflicting theories of the origin of man. One brings him upward from the brute, the other downward from God. 1. Life, in its origin, is infinitely important. The birth of a babe is a mighty event. The Scandinavians have a very impressive allegory of human life. They represent it as a tree, the "Igdrasil," or tree of existence, whose roots grow deep down in the soil of mystery; the trunk reaches above the clouds; its branches spread out over the globe. At the foot of it sit the past, present, and future, watering the roots. Its boughs, with their unleafing, spread out through all lands and all time; every leaf of the tree is a biography, every fibre a word, a thought, or a deed; its boughs are the histories of nations; the rustle of it is the noise of human existence onwards from of old; it grows amid the howling of the hurricane—it is the great tree of humanity. 2. Human life is transcendently precious from the services it may render to God in the advancement of His glory. Man was not created as a piece of guess-work, flung into existence as a waif. There is purpose in the creation of every human being. What is the purpose of life? Man was created to be happy, to be holy! That is the double aim of life—duty first, then happiness as the consequence. The highest style of manhood and womanhood is to be attained by consecration to the Son of God. 3. Life is infinitely valuable from the eternal consequences flowing from it. This world is a solemn vestibule of eternity. Practical thoughts—1. How careful we ought to be to husband life. 2. What a stupendous crime wanton war becomes! 3. How short life is, yet infinite in its reach and retribution! What sort of life are you living? (*T. L. Cuyler, D.D.*)

Vers. 6, 7. **Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead.**—*The philosophy of mediation:*—The words mediation and intercession present fundamentally the same idea—a coming between, to bridge over a gulf, or to avert a stroke. Some being to stand between him and God, and to be the interpreter of God's dealing with him, and of his thought about God, was what Job's heart yearned after. The one question which man demands to have answered, as the condition of his peace, is this—Is there any being, having prevailing power with God, who can be touched as a brother with the feeling of our infirmities, and who can bear the feeling of our infirmities with him in all his transactions with God on our behalf? Intercession rests on the fact that there is a complete

humanity in God. There is already the human within the orb of the Divine nature. The thought of the creature acting upon God except through a Mediator who is God, destroys that which is most essential in the idea of God. We talk of the love of God in Christ as though it were born when Christ took on Himself the burden of our sins and cares. He but drew forth and revealed, so that every eye could see it, that which had been there from all eternity. Here is the true deep ground of all intercession. We have not to create anything, we have not to change anything, we have but to draw forth what is already waiting to be drawn forth from the Divine heart. Then what need is there of the Mediator? There was a Divine necessity that God should be self-revealed as the Mediator, that this God-like form of God should take shape and appear in our world. Creation is the Divine thought clothing itself in visible form; and it comes forth into form because to give Himself forth is the most God-like act of God. But there were depths in the Divine nature, secret things of the Divine counsels, which no material creation was full enough or rich enough to draw forth into expression. In the Mediator we see the infinite riches of grace and mercy, compassion and tenderness, which had else remained pent-up within God's heart. What must be the form of the Mediator to fulfil the conditions, and to satisfy, not the longings of the human heart only, but the necessities of the human life? 1. According to our wish in God's stead. God only can stand in the stead of God. There is that absolute difference between God and every creature, that the only being who can make known God is God Himself. 2. "I also," says Elihu, laying down the conditions of a Mediator's nature and work, "am formed out of the clay." Is there one who knows both,—the things of God and the things of a man, by interior knowledge, in whom the two experiences meet? Yes, is the answer of revelation. There is one God: there can be but one God-man. The Word made flesh. Receiving Him as our Mediator who is able to stand in the stead of God, and yet wears the form of clay by our side, we see—1. That He is our peace. 2. He is here to explain and to justify our discipline. 3. He is here to fulfil our largest and loftiest hope. He is made like unto us on earth, that we may be made like unto Him in heaven, that we may behold His glory, and, beholding, share. (*J. Baldwin Brown, B.A.*) *God's dealings with man*:—Turn attention first on those operations of the Holy Ghost through which, as we believe, God acts on man, urging him to righteousness, and warning him against iniquity. There is much of mystery around these operations; we recognise them by their effects. These operations are not only hidden from others, they are hidden from the very party himself, within whose breast they are making themselves felt. The operations of the Spirit are not to be altogether separated from the actings of one's own mind. If it can be shown that in acting on us through the operations of His Spirit, God makes use of a created instrumentality, there would be little difficulty in proving, from this very circumstance, that He deals with us in tenderness and compassion. . . . There have been many who have supposed that Elihu is none other than the Redeemer Himself; but without supposing this, it cannot be denied that the language of our text would be wondrously appropriate on the lips of the Mediator, and, indeed, that in the largest significance it cannot be justly used by any other. It is of great importance to assign its just worth to each part of the scheme of redemption, in order not to dwell upon any one to the comparative forgetfulness of any other. That the Mediator died for us is not the whole of the Gospel: that He ever lives for us is to the full as important an announcement. Elihu certainly assumes the character of a messenger sent from God, and under this character there is much that is emphatic and interesting in his words. (*Henry Melvill, B.D.*)

Vers. 12, 13. **God is greater than man. Why dost thou strive with Him?**—*Man's contentions with God*:—The mysterious meeting-place of the Divine and human wills. Unknown by us and undiscoverable. Both wills are operative, and can only be reconciled by filial acquiescence. Man has two prerogatives: to choose, and to complain. Our complainings rebuked. I. THE NATURE OF MAN'S CONTENTIONS WITH GOD. 1. Man complains of his lot. The inevitable taken stoically. The inevitable kicked against. The Israelites murmured in the desert. A crook in every lot. 2. Men strive against the commandments of God. God speaks not only by circumstances, but by His Word. Yet men complain. Another law within them. The commandments are not adapted to human life. Religion too theoretical. Not fitted for tried and tempted

man. In business, the shop-window lies when man admires the truth. A low moral tone induced in society. Slippery ways fashionable. God's law politely bowed out of the house and the world, and sometimes the Church. 3. Men contend with the promises of God. Too good to be true. Afraid to appropriate them. Men dare not believe. II. THE FOLLY OF RESISTING GOD, AND THE CONSEQUENT WISDOM OF YIELDING TO HIM. 1. Such strivings do not advance our best spiritual interests. They do not make us happy. Fret and fume hinder growth. Quietness necessary. The tree strikes root where it is. 2. Such contentions impeach the wisdom of God. Religion is practical. God made man. He knows what is in man. His Son became man. Religious men have been practical men. 3. The success of such contentions would be fatal to us. Such strife not directed against power of God. He could crush us. We have liberty of moral action; but prophecy and revelation to warn us. Our joy and duty to fall into the hands of God. "In all thy ways," &c. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding." God is greater than man. In wisdom, goodness, and love. This greatness is communicated to those who trust in Him. (*Samuel Pearson, M.A.*)

Ver. 14. **For God speaketh once.**—*Elihu's first discourse:*—Elihu says, God does speak to men in various ways. It is not true that He gives no account of Himself, and of His dealings with men. Two or three of God's ways Elihu specifies. 1. God quickens men to thought and moral emotion in the silence and slumber of the night; deep religious intuitions and yearnings take form in visions. One method of Divine approach is through the Gate of Dreams. By such solemn visitations God has in all ages "uncovered the ear" of men otherwise deaf to their instructions, and sealed or stamped on their minds the special admonition of which they stood in need; or—for this may be the force of the image—conveyed to them, in this sealed and private way, the confidential hint or warning He wished them to receive. 2. God speaks to men by pain, when he corrects and chastens them through suffering. In expounding this, Elihu certainly has Job in his eye. Is there no hope even for such a sufferer as this? There is no school in which men learn so much, or so fast, as in the school of suffering; there is no experience by which the soul is so purged and chastened as by the experience of pain and loss. The Divine rebuke is as the ploughing up of the hardened and weed-stained soil, that it may bring forth more and better fruit. 3. If even these fail God sends a messenger—man or spirit—to interpret their thoughts and emotions to them. As he describes this third way, it may be that Elihu, who has already generalised the experience of Job and Eliphaz, turns his eye upon himself. For he himself had been moved and taught by God. The deep "conviction" to which he was now giving utterance, was, as he more than once insists, an "inspiration" from above. And this inspiration, this new interpretation of the facts of human life, probably came to him through one of the thousand messengers whom God employs to "show man what is right." But while he claims a Divine teaching and inspiration for himself, Elihu does not claim to be favoured above his fellows. God's messengers come to all, and come with the same end in view—to show us what is right, and to pour the light and peace of heaven on our darkened and distracted hearts. Even grave and sober commentators, however, have found in these verses the whole mystery of redemption. In the "angel" of ver. 23 they see "the Angel of the presence," the "Angel Jehovah"; and in the "ransom" of ver. 24 "the Sacrifice of the Cross"; and hence they attribute to Elihu at least some "provision" of the "great mystery of godliness." Such a method of interpretation is, in my judgment, forced and unnatural. (*Samuel Cox, D.D.*) *Divine communications:*—Here it is said that God sometimes addresses men without their perceiving it,—not certainly from any want of clearness in the communication, but because they are wanting in reverence. Three ways in which we may believe the Deity to hold communications with His children. One is through the visible world around us; another, by direct communion with the human Spirit; and yet another, by commissioned interpreters of His mind and will. I. IN THE WORKS OF NATURE. There can be no direct intercourse of mind with mind. The only way that I can intimate to another what is passing in my mind, is by pointing to some other visible object, which shall represent to him the unseen thought. Language consists of images either naturally suggestive of certain thoughts and emotions, or appropriated to that purpose, which are brought up before us by letters or sounds differing according to the dialect of the country.

Since this is the language of nature, we might suppose that God would communicate with His children in this way; and most certainly He does, to a far greater extent than is generally understood. There must be very few who, in looking on the natural world, have not been conscious of strong impressions made upon them at times. We ought then to regard the natural world as a medium of communication. II. By DIRECT ACTION ON THE SPIRIT OF MAN. This is reasonable; but it cannot be proved to the satisfaction of anyone who doubts it, for the same reason that we cannot demonstrate any of our sentiments and emotions. Still, this unseen communication of the Spirit of God with our spirits is believed by every religious mind. It is true the measure of such communications cannot be ascertained, nor can they be distinguished, as a rule, from the operation of our own minds. We should extend our faith, and believe this to be common, and in the usual order of providence, and not a mysterious and unusual thing. To those who can see God in all things where His agency is present, the moral world becomes more deeply interesting, more sublime and beautiful, than the visible. We can look through human nature up to the God of nature. III. THROUGH THE SCRIPTURES, written by commissioned interpreters of His mind and will,—particularly those who have recorded the life and character of Jesus Christ. In Him the Divine was blended with the human, so as to present at once the perfection of Divine and human character, giving us a living image of that union which we could not otherwise understand. It may be asked, "Why should God address men again? Is not the voice of nature clear enough?" It was not the defect of God's previous communications, but the faithlessness of men to their destiny, their worldliness and corruption, which darkened their spiritual vision, and made it necessary to give new light from on high. It was, as the Bible teaches, in concession to human sin, not on account of the want of other original means of light, that the Christian revelation was made. It is not every one who understands how God communicates with us through the Scriptures. It is not by the letter alone. To this must be added the suggestions which they give, the trains of thought which they awaken. The direct information which the words convey to us, seems to be of little worth compared with the lifegiving power of the Spirit which works through the Word. (*W. B. O. Peabody.*)

Vers. 15–18. **In a dream.**—*A hard case:*—How persevering is Divine love. God has voices which He uses in such a way that men must and shall hear. I. So, then, first, let us begin with what is a very humbling consideration, namely, that MAN IS VERY HARD TO INFLUENCE FOR GOOD. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" According to the text, before God Himself can save men, He has to open their ears: "Then He openeth the ears of men." Towards God, men's ears are often stopped. Original sin engenders in men great carelessness about Divine things. How quickly they are aroused by talk about politics! Their ears are stopped by carelessness. Often, too, there is another form of stopping, which is very hard to get out of the ear; that is, worldliness. "I am too busy to attend to religion!" In some cases the ear is stopped by prejudice. It would be a foolish thing for a man to prejudice himself into rags and beggary; but it is far worse when a man prejudices himself out of life eternal into everlasting woe. With a great many more the ear seems to be doubly sealed up by unbelief. They will not believe that which God Himself has spoken. It may also be stopped by self-sufficiency; when a man has enough in himself to satisfy him, he wants nothing of Christ. Then there is another difficulty. If we get through the ear, and the man is influenced to listen, his heart does not retain that which is good, he so soon forgets it. Hence the text says of the Lord, "He openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction." Ah! we think the child, the man, the woman, has learned that truth at last; but it is much as if we had written it on a blackboard, it is soon wiped out. How shall men be saved? We cannot impress them; or, if we do impress them, how often it ends in nothing! Another difficulty must be noticed: that is, the purpose of so many men; indeed, the secret purpose of all men; and from this purpose men have to be withdrawn. The purpose of most men is to seek after happiness, and their notion is that they will find it by having their own way. Ay, and there is one thing more which is, perhaps, the greatest barrier of all. It is not merely their deafness of ear, and their unretentiveness of spirit, and their resoluteness of purpose; but it is their pride of heart. Oh, this is like adamant; where shall we find the diamond that can cut a thing so hard as man's pride? God

save us from that sin! It needs God to do so, for only He can "hide pride from man." II. Now, secondly, though man is hard to influence, GOD KNOWS HOW TO COME AT HIM, and He does it in many ways. According to the text, He sometimes does it "in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed." I have no doubt that many, many times, men's sleeping thoughts have been the beginnings of better things for them. You see, reason holds the helm of the vessel when we are awake, and as a consequence it keeps conscience down in the hold, and will not let him speak; but in our dreams, reason has quitted the helm, and then, sometimes, conscience comes up, and in his own wild way he begins to sound such an alarm that the man starts up in the night. Did you ever notice how God aroused Nebuchadnezzar, that greatest man, perhaps, of his age? Why, in a dream! God gets at other men in a different way, namely, by affliction, or by the death of others. So have I known men aroused by strange providences. If God does not come at men by strange providences, how often He does it by singular words from the preacher! Then God has a way of coming to men's hearts by personal visitations, without dream, without speech, without voice. III. WHEN GOD DOES GET AT MEN HE ACCOMPLISHES GREAT PURPOSES. His purpose is, first, to withdraw man from his own purpose. "That He may withdraw man from his purpose." Sometimes a man has proposed at a certain moment to commit a sin, and God stops him from doing it. He also withdraws men from their general purpose of continuing in sin. I find the translation may be, that God withdraweth man from his work, from that which has been his life-work; from the whole run and tenor of his conversation, God withdraws him. A man goes out after having received the Word of the Lord, and he is a different man from that hour. Then what else does God do? He hides pride from man. That is a very strange expression, certainly, to "hide pride from man." Did none of you ever hide away a knife from a child? Have you never hidden away fruit from your little children when they have had enough, and they would have eaten more if they could find it? God often hides pride from men because, if man can find anything to be proud of, he will be. Then, lastly, He thus secures man's salvation from destruction. "He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword." How wonderfully has God kept some of us back from what would have been our destruction if we had gone on! (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Dreams — their philosophy and use:* — All dream, and each knows what a dream is better than he can be told. I. THEIR PHILOSOPHY. 1. What originates a dream? Probably it has more causes than one, and different kinds of dreams have different causes. The cause of some may be found in the state of body at the time. The cause of others may be found in something that has made more than ordinary impression on the mind. "A dream," says the wise man, "cometh from a multitude of business." 2. Why do thoughts take such grotesque forms in dreams? The reason may be this,—the mind in sleep is left uncontrolled by the will. If the thought is of an unnatural kind, it will go on producing the unnatural and the monstrous. In dreams the mind is like a vessel without a rudder. The laws of association heave her about in all directions. II. THEIR USES. 1. They serve to throw some light on our spiritual constitution. (1) They show the soul's power for involuntary action; action in which the will is not concerned. There are two kinds of involuntary action. In obvious peril, we involuntarily seek safety. In the presence of axiomatical truths we involuntarily believe; in the view of the truly beautiful, we involuntarily admire and love. There is an involuntary action that is wrong. It arises from a thorough infirmity of the will, through the indulgence of the passions, and long habits of sin. (2) The soul's power for vivid realisation. In dreams the spirit sees the objects with all the vividness of reality. When awake, we see outward objects through our sensations; but the objects which come to us in dreams we see directly face to face. (3) The soul's power of rapid movement. (4) The soul's power of uncorporeal action. (5) The soul's power of moral character. 2. They are sometimes the organs of Divine communication. The subject teaches that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 19–30. **He is chastened also with pain upon his bed.**—*Sanctified affliction:*—Two chapters in the book of human life are hard to understand—the prosperity of the wicked, and the afflictions of the righteous. The Book of Job is a luminous commentary on both. Carefully studied, these verses furnish a

chain of reason which will make clear to reverent minds the source and meaning of earthly affliction. I. THE LORD JEHOVAH IS A SOVEREIGN (ver. 13). "He giveth not account of any of His matters." It is from this point that the problem of human evil in all its forms must begin to be solved. And if our inquiries should end where they begin, with the absolute sovereignty of God, there would be no just ground of complaint. God has all power and right in His own universe. He is not bound to justify any single act of His to human reason. The first treatment of all affliction, is to give it welcome. It is the uttered will of God. It is to be taken without any reason, not because there is none, but because we have no right to be shown it. But while God is a sovereign, and does His pleasure, it is not His pleasure to afflict men willingly nor hastily, for—II. HE SPEAKS AGAIN AND AGAIN BEFORE HE STRIKES (vers. 14–18). These verses are a picture of the patience of God in His dealings with men. He will exhaust every form of warning and every tone of voice. When men in their waking hours are dull to the voices of God, then He invades their sleep. III. SUFFERING UNDER THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD IS OFTEN ADDED TO INSTRUCTION AND ENTREATY (vers. 19–22). The discipline of suffering is not confined to any one part of man's nature. It ranges freely through body, mind, and spirit. It appears in disordered nerves; in the failure of natural desires; or the very sources of health become choked and deranged; with many the joy of living is clouded with the shadow of an ever-present death. All this we recognise as the faithful picture of many a human life, and wonder at it. We call it a mystery; but the mystery ceases when we look at these things from the right angle of vision. Suffering under the government of God is a necessity of Divine benevolence. It is the last device of love. We have to learn that this world is not our real home. Nothing but suffering, in most lives, can work this healthful conviction. It is among the first laws of a successful life that the kingdom of Christ and its righteousness must stand before the kingdom of self and its pride. How do men learn this? The great mass of men are made perfect in this wisdom by means of suffering. They must be bitterly disappointed in their struggle after the lower things before they learn to put the first last and the last first. Failure is the keen knife that pierces their pride. IV. EARTHLY AFFLICTIONS CEASE WHEN THREE RESULTS ARE ATTAINED. When men understand their purpose (ver. 23). When men turn to God with prayer (ver. 26). And when they repent of their sins (ver. 27). Understanding, prayer, penitence,—look at these conditions of relief for a moment. Affliction can do us no good till we bow to its meaning. The ends of all God's acts are moral ends. As a result of affliction, how natural, as a condition of relief, how indispensable is prayer! The twin grace of prayer is penitence. Neither can survive the other. Neither can exist without the other. These three are the first fruits of sanctified trial. Only the doctrine of Divine providence, ruling the world for moral ends, has ever riven the dark clouds of human suffering, and drawn the blessing of their spring rain upon the hearts of men. (*Sermons by Monday Club.*) *The mission of sickness*:—I. THE GREAT INCIDENCY OF HUMAN NATURE TO SICKNESS AND BODILY DISEASES. The best of men are not exempt from them. This incidency to sickness and bodily diseases is founded partly in the frame of our natures, partly the common accidents of life, but especially the great inlet to all calamity, namely, sin, and our fatal apostasy from God. Then what reasons we have for thankfulness, for every moment's enjoyment or continuance of health. And as we should be thankful for health, we should be also submissive in sickness. II. SICKNESS AND BODILY DISEASES HAVE A GREAT DEAL OF INSTRUCTION IN THEM. It pleases God frequently to inflict them for this very end; that men might thereby be brought to the knowledge of themselves, and their duty towards Him. This may appear—1. From a consideration of God, who has all along made it plain in the revelations of His Word, that He has that love and goodwill to mankind, He never afflicts them for affliction's sake. 2. From a consideration of the calamity itself. By diseases and sickness we are taught the absolute vanity and uncertainty of this world, with all the comforts of it; the beauty of all vanisheth before us upon a sick-bed. By sickness we gain an easier insight into our own guilt, and all the unreasonable provocations we have given the Almighty, throughout the whole course of our lives. Sometimes the sin is read in the very distemper itself. III. WHAT AN ALLAY TO SO GREAT A CALAMITY IT IS TO HAVE A MESSENGER OR INTERPRETER. Some understand here the ministry of an angel. The value of such a messenger may be seen—1. In our indisposedness to do anything on

good purpose for ourselves. 2. The great mistakes we are apt to fall into. 3. A mediator is of further advantage, to implore God on our behalf. Learn to live under a wise expectation of such a calamity. Let us not despise at such times the help of God's ministers. (*Nathanael Resbury, D.D.*) *The right improvement of sickness and other distress*:—I. A CASE OF DISTRESS SUPPOSED. The words lead our thoughts to a very common spectacle—that of a person suffering under pain and dangerous illness, and oppressed at the same time by much darkness and anxiety of mind. These things very frequently go together. "Without are fightings, within are fears." II. IT WILL BE WELL TO CALL IN A COMPETENT ADVISER. Let him that is grieved with sickness send for his proper spiritual counsellor. III. THE TEXT SUGGESTS WHAT, IN GENERAL, SUCH AN ADVISER WILL HAVE TO DO. He must show unto the afflicted person God's righteousness. In proportion as he shall be able to do this, through Divine grace, he will prove "one of a thousand" to him who is in want of guidance and consolation. IV. THEY DECLARE THE CONSEQUENCES, THROUGH THE DIVINE MERCY, IF SOUND COUNSEL BE FAITHFULLY FOLLOWED. If the patient has a docile, sincere and childlike disposition of mind, the truth delivered will be blessed to him, and the fruits will show it. (*E. Bather, M.A.*)

Vers. 23, 24. **If there be any messenger with him, an interpreter.**—*How to visit the sick*:—It is not man's torment or ruin that God desires, but his reformation and amendment. To this end He speaks to men in dreams. When that will not do, by afflictions. To make those afflictions more intelligible and effectual, He sends a messenger, either an angel, by office, not by nature; or an interpreter—of the mind and will of God. Doctrine—That the seasonable instruction of sick and languishing persons is a work, as of great advantage, so of great skill and difficulty. I. IT IS OF GREAT ADVANTAGE. Some are apt to think that sick-bed applications are in a manner useless and ineffectual. Observe—1. That the instruction of sick persons is God's institution. 2. God's mercy is proposed by Himself, and may be offered by ministers, even to languishing persons. 3. Sick-bed repentance is not wholly impossible, though it be hard. Sickness is one means that God useth to work repentance. II. IT IS OF GREAT DIFFICULTY. 1. It is a work which God hath put into the hands of His chief officers, His ministers, who ought to be the most accomplished persons. 2. It is not every minister who is fit for this work. How ministers or Christian friends may and ought to apply themselves to sick persons for their good, and the discharge of their own consciences. (1) Endeavour must be used to understand the state of the sick person. (2) The great business is to bring the sick man to a true sight of his state and condition. (3) Ministers and others must take heed lest, while they avoid one extreme, they run upon another; which is a common error in practice. (4) The same methods are not to be used to all sick persons. Regard must be had to difference of tempers; of education and conversation; and of guilt. (5) It is a very bad guide to follow the counsels or desires of sick persons, or their carnal friends. (6) The same course (for substance) is to be taken for the conversion of sick and healthful persons. (7) The greatest care must be to keep sick persons from those errors whereby such persons commonly miscarry. Such as insensibleness of their danger; willingness to be deluded; carelessness and listlessness; resting in generals; the concealment of some hidden way of wickedness. (8) Taking heed of healing the souls of sick persons slightly. This we are very apt to, from the sick man's greedy desire of comfort; from the expectation and desire of carnal friends; from our own careless hearts, that love not to put ourselves to any trouble or reproach, which we shall meet with, if we be faithful to the case. Uses—1. To ministers. Learn the great difficulty of ministerial work. What angelical abilities doth it require! Acuteness, to discern the sick man's temper; knowledge, to understand the nature of all spiritual diseases; wisdom, to make suitable applications. A minister had need know all things, understand all persons, discern the subtleties of men's hearts, and not be ignorant of the wiles of the devil. 2. To people. Is it of such difficulty? Oh, labour you to do your work in health, while time and strength last, before the evil days come. (*Matthew Poole, A.M.*) *The Gospel preached by Elihu*:—Though the words of the text are taken out of the oldest book in the Bible, they contain the elements and breathe the spirit of the Gospel. Scarcely less uniform is the experience of God's people in every age. Consider the words as a Divinely inspired description of the way of salvation intended for the instruction of a true believer then under the deepest afflictions, but equally designed for

the edification of those who in these last times are feeling the burden of their sins. We discover six states of the sinner. 1. A state of impending ruin. "His soul draweth near to the grave." 2. A state of grace. "If there be a messenger with him," &c. 3. A state of justification. "I have found a ransom." 4. A state of sanctification. "He shall return to the days of his youth." 5. A state of peace with God. "He will be favourable unto him." 6. A state of glory. "He shall see His face with joy." The text closes with a brief recurrence to the gracious cause of all this progressive advancement from repentance to glory. (*C. A. Hulbert, M.A.*) *Footsteps of mercy*:—I. When God has, in the way of providence, prepared any human heart for a work of grace, one of the first means of blessing the chosen man is TO SEND HIM A MESSENGER. I suppose the passage before us may be primarily referred to Christian ministers, who become, through God the Holy Ghost, interpreters to men's souls. But I prefer to believe, with many expositors, that the full meaning of these words will never be found in ministers of mortal race; we must rather refer it to the Great Messengor of the covenant, the Great Interpreter between God and man, whose presence to the sin-sick soul is a sure prophecy of mercy. Another description that belongs to Him, as I believe, is an interpreter. Jesus Christ is indeed a blessed interpreter. An interpreter must understand two languages. Our Lord Jesus understands the language of God. He knows how to speak with God as the fellow of God, co-equal and co-eternal with Him. He can make out the sighs and cries and tears of a poor sinner, and He can take up the meaning, and interpret them all to God. Moreover, Jesus understands our language, for He is a man like ourselves, touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and smarting under our sicknesses. This messenger, then, this interpreter, is He not "One among a thousand"? O peerless Jesus! who among the sons of the mighty can be compared with Thee? II. Now, secondly, wherever this Divine messenger comes, according to the text, HE REVEALS GOD'S UPRIGHTNESS. III. The third stage is this—"THEN HE IS GRACIOUS UNTO HIM." God deals with convinced sinners in a way of grace. Every word here is weighty. "Then He is gracious unto him." Mark the time—then! God is gracious to a man when, Christ having come to him as a messenger and an interpreter, he is led to discern his own sin and God's uprightness. The way as well as the time demands your notice. It is through the messenger that God is gracious. Then—that is when the messenger comes. When Jesus interposes then God is gracious. IV. Let us proceed to the next stage—GOD DELIVERS THE SINNER. "He saith, Deliver him from going down into the pit." V. The last thing is that GOD EXPLAINS TO THE SINNER WHOM HE DELIVERS THE REASON OF HIS DELIVERANCE. "Deliver him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom." "I have found a ransom"—a covering. You notice these words, "I have found a ransom." You do not find it for yourselves. You could not ever have discovered it, much less have brought it into the world. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **I have found a ransom.**—*The finding of the ransom*:—These words were from the lips of Elihu, the companion and counsellor of Job. The men of that day had but dim visions of Him that was to come; they had to look through the type to the antitype; through the symbol to the thing signified. "I have found a ransom." This indicates in the man who spake it—I. A KNOWLEDGE OF MAN'S STATE. A ransom signifies the price of redemption from captivity. Before we apply for a ransom we must feel that we are involved. Sensibility to our suffering condition is the very foundation work of an appeal to Jesus. Man by nature is in bondage; he is taken captive by Satan at his will. II. THE MEANS OF MAN'S DELIVERANCE. "I have found a ransom." The prisoner finds a ransom—where? In the offers of the worldly-wise? In the counsellings and suggestions of self? Nay; no man ever breathed this assurance until his eyes were fixed on the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. To what else could he turn? III. THE ACQUISITION OF THIS KNOWLEDGE. That is, a knowledge of your own heart in a state of nature, and a knowledge of the ransom that is provided for you in the dispensations of grace. Both the one and the other proceed immediately from the Spirit of God. He convinces of sin, and He alone. "I have found a ransom" implies that the ransom was sought for; and this seeking is a course of humble, diligent, and persevering prayer. (*T. J. Judkin, A.M.*) *The ransom found*:—I. MAN'S PERILOUS STATE. He was "going down to the pit." 1. Man in his fallen and debased condition. Crown fallen from his head; fallen from holiness, dignity, dominion, happiness, &c.; into guilt, depravity, and misery. 2. It denotes

man's passage to the grave. Sin introduced disease and death. 3. It represents our exposedness to the pit of destruction. The tendency of the sinner was towards perdition. His sin had doomed him to it. And sin also was ripening him for it. His steps were downwards towards the gates of perdition, the regions of endless woe. What a dreadful state! II. DISPLAYED HIS GRACIOUS REGARDS TOWARDS HIM. Now God's interposition on his behalf must have been altogether gracious. 1. Deity was entirely independent of man. He could easily have blotted out the human race, and have formed creatures every way more worthy of His regards. 2. Man had nothing to interest Jehovah in his welfare. No moral excellency; no reasonable apologies for his crime; no possibility of giving a return. 3. Jehovah had every reason to punish. Justice was injured, holiness insulted, goodness abused, &c., yet mercy prevailed. III. TO THE MEANS OF DELIVERANCE PROVIDED. "I have found a ransom." 1. The source of our deliverance. "I" have found, &c. Man did not find, nor yet angels, but God found a ransom. Oh yes! God alone possessed stores of wisdom sufficient for the great and mighty undertaking. 2. The instrument of our deliverance was a ransom. That ransom was His own Son. "He gave His Son," "Spared not His own Son," &c. The price of our ransom was "the precious blood of Christ." 3. The mode of our ransom. This was done by assuming our nature; obeying the law; dying for sin; overcoming the powers of hell; rising from the grave, &c. (Isa. liii. 4–11; Rom. iv. 15; Col. i. 20). Learn—1. What ruin and misery sin has produced. 2. What Divine mercy has provided. 3. What the Saviour's merits hath procured. 4. The necessity of feeling ourselves personally interested in the blessings of redeeming grace. "He that hath the Son, hath life." 5. The grateful return we should render for the loving-kindness and redeeming mercy of God. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *Deliverance from the pit*:—Let it never be forgotten that, in all that God does, He acts from good reasons. You observe that the text, speaking of the sick man, represents God as saying, "Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom." If I understand the passage as relating solely to a sick man, and take the words just on the natural common level where some place them, I would still say that the Lord here gives a reason why He suspends the operations of pain and disease, and raises up the sufferer: "I have found a ransom." There is always a reason for every act of grace which God performs for man. So let each one of us think, "If I have been raised from sickness, if my life, which was almost gone, has been spared, I may not know why God has done it, but certainly He has done it in infinite wisdom and compassion. There is such a thing as sickness of the soul, which is, in God's esteem, far worse than disease of the body; and there is such a thing as recovery from soul-sickness. I. Now, coming to our text, I shall ask you, first, to look with me upon A MAN IN GREAT PERIL. This is his peril: he is "going down to the pit." That phrase describes his whole life, going down, down. 1. Notice, first, that this is a daily and common danger. If we are unconverted, if we are unrenewed by Divine grace, every one of us is in danger of going down into the pit of woe. 2. Further, there are some who, of set purpose, are going down to the pit. In this chapter Elihu said of some that God sends sickness to them that He may withdraw them from their purpose. 3. There are some, also, who are going down to the pit through their pride. 4. There are others who feel some present apprehension of coming judgment. 5. If you add to all this the fact that the man, as Elihu describes him, was suffering from a fatal sickness, so that he dreaded the actual nearness of death, you have indeed an unhappy case before you. II. Now let us notice, in the second place, A NEW PRINCIPLE IN ACTION: "Then He is gracious unto him." What does that mean? 1. Well, "grace" means, first, free favour. 2. But grace has another meaning in Holy Scripture; it means saving interference, a certain Divine operation by which God works upon the wills and affections of men, so as to change and renew them. III. This brings me to my third point, which is concerning how this grace operates. It operates by A WORD OF POWER. This man was going down to the pit, but God said, "Deliver him." To whom is this command spoken? 1. It appears to be addressed to the messengers of Divine justice. 2. More than that, the man was not only bound by justice, but he was fettered by his sin. His sins held him captive, and they were dragging him down to the pit. There was drunkenness, for instance, which held him as in a vice, so that he could not stir hand or foot to set himself free. 3. I see this same man, in after life, attacked by his old sins. IV. I finish by noticing that, in this case, God supplies us with His reason for delivering a soul, and it is AN ARGU-

MENT OF LOVE: "Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom." Observe that the text says, "I have found a ransom." 1. This ransom is an invention of Divine wisdom. I do not think it would ever have occurred to any mind but the mind of God Himself to save sinners by the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. Notice, next, that God has not only invented a way of deliverance, but He has found a ransom 2. So that it is a gift of Divine love: "Deliver him from going down to the pit." It does not say, "because there is a ransom," or "I will accept one if he finds it and brings it"; but the Lord Himself says, "I have found a ransom." It is the man who sinned, but it is God who found the ransom. 3. And is there not something very wonderful in the assurance of this truth? This is God's "Eureka!" "I have found a ransom. I did not look for a ransom among the angels, for I knew they were too weak to furnish it. I looked not for it among the sons of men, for I knew it was not to be found there, they were too fallen and guilty. The sea said, 'It is not in me.' All creation cried, 'It is not in me.'" (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 25. **He shall return to the days of his youth.**—*The autumn crocus:*—If the snowdrop may be called the morning star that ushers in the dawn of the floral year, the crocus may be said to be its sunrise. So much is the crocus associated with the showers and the sunbeams of April, that it requires a special mental effort, even when the fact is known, to realise that it also blooms in the fading light and amid the withering foliage of September. There are well-known species of crocus that flower only during the autumnal months. In Switzerland the sandy meadows along the banks of the Alpine streams are covered with myriads of autumn crocuses, whose exquisitely pure and delicate amethystine hue in the glowing sunshine is a feast of colour of which the eye never wearies. Every one is familiar with the pale violet saffron crocus, which blooms according to soil and position from the end of September to the beginning of November. If the yellow spring crocus is the golden sunrise of the floral year, the lilac autumn crocus is its sunset. The autumn crocus is a type of one of the most interesting phenomena of nature and of human life. In many departments there are numerous instances of the recurrence at a later period of something that belongs to an earlier time. The crimson and gold of the sunrise is repeated in the splendour of sunset. The older one grows, the more pathetic does the tender grace of each spring become. So much of what we loved and lost never comes back, that the beauty of the spring touches us like the brightness of a perfect day, when the grave is closing over dear eyes that shall never more behold it. Why should the inferior things of nature return, and those for whose use they were all made, lie unconscious in the dust? The aged live in the springs of the past; and their life goes forward to another and brighter spring in the eternal world, of which the springs of earth are only fleeting types and shadows. But though the bright flame of their spring crocus has burnt down to the socket, and only the green monotonous leaves remain behind, is there no re-kindling in the withered plot of their life of the autumn crocus, whose more sober hue befits the sadder character of the season? Yes, man's life, too, has its Indian summer and its autumn crocus. The season of decay brings to him also reminiscences of the bright season of renewal. Often, where others see only withered leaves, the heart feels the springing of vernal flowers. Job, describing the happiness which he had in former years, and longing for its return, says, "Oh that I were as I was in the days of my youth!" This phrase literally means the vintage season, the time of fruit gathering; and the authorised version, adopting another translation which the phrase also bears, unwittingly expresses the subtle connection between youth and age, the spring and the autumn, the blossoming and the fruit-time of life. The true days of Job's youth was the period when his life became young again through the maturity of his powers, and the consummation of his hopes. It was in the autumn of his life that he enjoyed all those blessings of prosperity whose loss he deplores. The legitimate symbolic use of autumn is as the season of ripeness—fulness of power, not of decay. That there are days and signs of youth in the time of the harvest and vintage of life every one can testify. The autumn fields are "happy" with the flowers that tell of spring, with the remembrance of days that are no more. True, indeed, the autumn crocus is not the same flower as the spring crocus. It has hues deeper and more intense. It speaks of change and decay. So the joys of our early life, which we recall in late years, are not the same as when they stirred our young blood; we colour them with the deeper

and tenderer hues of our own spirit. In the physical sphere of man there are numerous instances of the spring crocus blooming again in the autumn. The cutting of new teeth, and the growth of young hair, in old age, are by no means so infrequent as we might suppose. The eagle's power of self-renewal has been manifested by many an aged form. In the mental sphere the growth of the autumn crocus is much more common than in the physical, and much more precious and beautiful. How numerous and splendid are the examples of intellect disclosing its fullest powers at the very close of life! As an old man Cato learnt Greek. Goethe was fourscore years old when he completed the second part of *Faust*. Literary men have often recorded the peculiar delight with which in their later years they have returned to the studies of their youth. The Chinese encourage their students to persevere in their mental pursuits to extreme old age, by bestowing the golden button of the successful candidate upon a man when he is eighty years old, although he has failed in all his previous examinations. But it is in the sphere of the soul that the autumn crocus blooms most beautifully. The rejuvenescence of the soul, the renewal of the spiritual life, may be the experience of all. This youthful victoriousness—the inward man being renewed more and more while the outward man is decaying—is the glory of every true Christian's old age. Only the fire that comes down from heaven can preserve the youth of the spirit amid all the changes and sorrows of life. Religion really lived keeps the heart always young, always tender. It teaches us that nothing beautiful or good once possessed is wholly lost to us; that there is a deeper truth in the words, "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever," than even its poet knew. (*Hugh Macmillan, D.D.*)

Vers. 27, 28. **He looketh upon men.**—*A penitential spirit:*—The text—I. PRESENTS TO US THE EXTENT OF THE DIVINE INSPECTION. "He looketh upon men." God's omniscience ought to make us adore and tremble. He watches over men's actions, and there is no darkness or shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves from His eye. He looks upon men universally. He sees them all at one glance, in one view. II. UNFOLDS THE LANGUAGE OF UNFEIGNED REPENTANCE. Here God fixes His eyes upon one who says, "I have sinned." The man who makes a confession like this is far better in the sight of God than he who says he has no sin, and deceives himself. Here is—1. A confession of having by sin offended against God. Wherever the Spirit of God has begun to work upon the soul, there will be this sense of unworthiness, this conviction of sin. 2. A confession of having abused the best of blessings. "I have perverted that which was right." That is, Thy holy providence gave me many and peculiar favours, which I employed to a bad purpose, or entirely neglected. 3. A confession of having experienced disappointment in the ways of sin. "I have done all this, and it profiteth me not." Every penitent can testify that the way of transgressors is hard. III. DISCOVERS THE TRIUMPH OF REIGNING GRACE. This humble penitent who looks to the Redeemer, obtains grace in His sight; for the Lord—1. Prevents his soul from enduring eternal perdition. 2. Raises him to the everlasting enjoyment of Divine illumination. Learn—(1) The richness of God's pardoning mercy, extending even to sins of perverseness. (2) The madness of impenitent sinners; they must be banished to the pit, never to see the light. (3) The importance of imploring daily a penitential spirit. We sin daily; therefore beg always for mercy. (*T. Spencer.*) *Repentance:*—Three points arising out of the text. I. THE FACT THAT GOD LOOKETH UPON MAN. This is the doctrine of God's omniscience. Go wheresoever we may, whether in the crowd or in solitude, we can never escape from the eye of God. He sees the very thoughts of our hearts; He reads the motives from which actions spring. This is a very marvellous truth—it almost baffles our comprehension. The eye of God is not only upon us, it is upon the entire universe. This must be a necessary attribute of God. How should God govern the world if He were not able at one glance to scan the thoughts and actions of all mankind? II. THE CHARACTER OF A TRUE PENITENT. This includes—1. The personal consciousness of sin. Sin brought home to the individual, sin acknowledged—sin confessed as a burden resting upon the individual himself; not merely a burden shared in common with others. 2. The absence of all self-excusing. "I have perverted that which was right." An insincere penitent will always endeavour rather to palliate his fault than otherwise; to extenuate his trespass. The true penitent is rather ready to aggravate than to extenuate

the sins of which he is conscious. 3. Hopeless dissatisfaction. "It profiteth me not." Every transgressor of God must be brought, at one time or another, to exclaim, "It profiteth me not.' Sin always comes with the offer of profit. The temptation to transgress would fall powerless if it were not accompanied with the bribe of some prospective advantage. III. THE BLESSED EFFECTS FOLLOWING TRUE REPENTANCE. Two things—1. Deliverance from condemnation "He will deliver his soul from going into the pit." This speaks of full and complete forgiveness. 2. Translation to reward. "His life shall see the light." He shall be translated to everlasting life. (*Bishop Boyd Carpenter.*) *God looking upon men*:—Whether God visits with affliction, with adversity, or prosperity, yet all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living. I. HE LOOKETH UPON MAN. As a Creator. As the Governor of the world. As a holy Being. As the Judge of men. As a compassionate parent looks upon his family. II. THE PENITENT MAN LOOKING UP TO GOD. 1. "I have sinned." This supposes reflection. "I thought on my ways." This supposes self-abhorrence. "Woe is me, for I am undone." This supposes godly sorrow, sorrow for sin. I have sinned. My sin has brought misery and evil upon myself, and exposed me to future punishment. 2. "And perverted that which was right." These words may be considered in reference to the dispensations of providence, whether prosperous or adverse. They are perverted by man. Man perverteth his way as to opinion; as to moral practice; for interest or gain, as well as pleasure. III. THE MERCIFUL DETERMINATION OF GOD IN BEHALF OF THE PENITENT. "He will deliver his soul from going down to the pit, and his life shall see the light." These expressions are sometimes used for deliverance from natural death to life and health. Sometimes these expressions are used figuratively for deliverance from distress, and restoration to happiness. God will hear our cry, and deliver us out of all our troubles. (*J. Walker, D.D.*) *The penitent pardoned*:—True repentance begins in conviction, awakens contrition, leads to confession, and ends in conversion. Many encouragements are given to sinners to repent. I. GOD SEES THE CONDUCT OF PENITENT SINNERS. 1. God looks upon men universally. Our power of vision is limited. God sees all things. 2. God looks upon men individually. No man can hide from God. II. GOD HEARS THE CONFESSION OF PENITENT SINNERS. Many have sinned who do not admit their sinfulness; many confess their sins who do not forsake them. 1. The true penitent confesses his sins. The penitent's confession is full, free, and sincere. 2. The true penitent acknowledges his folly. We have perverted our spiritual blessings. 3. The true penitent admits his disappointment. Sin is a great blunder. There is no satisfaction in sin. III. GOD DELIVERS THE SOUL OF PENITENT SINNERS. God knows the backwardness of the trembling penitent, and seeks to encourage him with the fullest assurance of pardon. 1. God saves the penitent from eternal death. 2. God rewards the penitent with eternal life. (*J. T. Woodhouse.*) *The penitent's creed*:—There is the whole philosophy of penitence in the text. I. THE CREED OF PENITENCE. 1. An absolute good and evil, right and wrong. There are those in whose sight the burden of a guilty conscience is but a bad form of hypochondria. While the world lasts, the penitent's creed will express the conviction and feeling of mankind. 2. I have perverted that which is right. This is the second article of the penitent's confession of faith. No man knows what "I" means, but the man who has felt himself isolated from God by transgression. According to the pantheistic philosophy, there is, strictly speaking, no such thing as sin. Man sins like a sullen dog, or a vicious horse. 3. And it profited me not. "The wages of sin is death." If any other confession than this of the text were possible for a sinner in the long run, and after full experience of an evil way, it would simply mean that the righteous God had ceased to be the ruler of the world. II. THE CONFESSION OF PENITENCE. "If any say, I have sinned." That implies fundamentally that evil is not of God. God has made a being capable of sin, but God has not made sin. Saying to God, "I have sinned," is essential to complete forgiveness; on what ground of reason does this necessity rest? If a man is convinced, is not that sufficient? God demands confession. 1. Confession alone makes the penitence complete. 2. Confession alone re-establishes that filial relation, without which the penitence can have no lasting fruits. III. THE FRUITS OF CONFESSION THROUGH THE ABOUNDING MERCY AND LOVE OF GOD. The fruits here set forth are twofold. He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light. A glory

shall gild its path, even through this weary wilderness of discipline. (*J. Baldwin Brown, B.A.*) *Jehovah's look of love*:—I. GOD'S MERCIFUL REGARD TO MAN. "He looketh upon man." The looking upon man is not of a general kind; it is expressive of that kind, benignant attention which has immediate respect to the welfare of its objects. It is not the scrutinising look of a hard and rigorous task-master, who feels a pleasure in finding out a fault; it is the look of a Father, who, though when He sees evil may not and cannot suffer it to pass unnoticed, desires to behold nothing but what is right, and affectionately fixes His eyes upon the least sign of a favourable kind in the conduct of His child. II. WHAT GOD EXPECTS FROM MAN. He looks to discover a humbled, penitent state of heart. All morality, and all that is called religion which is not founded on a sense of guilt, and which does not rise from humiliation for sin, is but a splendid delusion, a mere form, and shadow, and mockery of piety. There must be the full, open, frank acknowledgment of guilt. Confession is the first, proper, natural language of repentance. When your minds are deeply humbled, you will not only confess that you have sinned, but you will feel and acknowledge too that it "profited you not." III. THE BLESSINGS WHICH GOD IMPARTS TO THOSE WHO COMPLY WITH THIS DEMAND. "He will deliver his soul from going down into the pit, and his life shall see the light." It is not certain Elihu meant more than that humiliation before God would be the means of preserving Job's life, and of restoring him to his former peace and prosperity. We can have no difficulty in giving to the language a much wider and more general meaning. Beyond the grave there is a deeper and more awful pit. But there is now no condemnation to the humble and believing penitent. (*Stephen Bridge, M.A.*) *God waiting to discover repentance, and to accept the penitent*:—1. God's eye is fixed upon every individual of the family of man. The very opposite sentiment, the negation of this truth, was maintained by some of the most eminent heathen philosophers. Their notions of the Deity were such as led them to conceive it impossible that He should be in any way concerned with the things of this our world. 2. What God specially looks for is a full confession of sin. (1) An acknowledgment of sin's essential guilt, as a perversion of that which is right. (2) Confession of the actual fact of sin. (3) Acknowledgment of its disappointing and deceptive folly. 3. Such penitent confession shall turn to our unspeakable advantage. Learn then to view the confession of sin as a duty of the first importance. The language of confession in our text every living being has reason to make his own. (*Robert Eden, M.A.*) *The unprofitableness of sin in this life an argument for repentance*:—The great folly and perverseness of human nature is in nothing more apparent than in this, that when in all other things men are generally led and governed by their interests, and can hardly be imposed on by any art, or persuaded by any solicitation, to act plainly contrary to it; yet, in matter of their sin and duty, they have little or no regard to it. Of this every sinner, when he comes to himself and considers what he hath done, is abundantly convinced. In these words is a great blessing and benefit promised on God's part, and a condition required on our part. 1. A penitent confession of our sins to God. 2. A true contrition for our sin; not only for fear of the pernicious consequences of sin, but from a just sense of the evil nature of sin, and the fault and offence of it against God. 3. Here is a description of the evil nature of sin—it is a perverting of that which is right. Sin is a perverting of the constitution and appointment of God, and of the nature and order of things. When we do that which is right, we act agreeably to the design and frame of our beings; we do what becomes us; but sin perverts the nature of things and puts them out of course. 4. An acknowledgment of the mischievous and pernicious consequences of sin. This is not only true as to the final issue and event of an evil course in the other world, but even in respect of this world and the present life, the practice of some sins is plainly mischievous to the temporal interests of men; that others are wholly unprofitable. Reflections—1. What has been said upon this argument ought particularly to move those who have so great a consideration of this present life, and the temporal happiness of it, that the practice of all virtues is a friend to their temporal as well as eternal welfare, and all vice is an enemy to both. 2. This likewise takes off all manner of excuse from sin and vice. It pretends not to serve the soul, and to profit our future happiness in another world; and if it be an enemy also to our present welfare in this world, what is there to be said for it? 3. All the arguments used to convince men of the folly of a wicked course, are so many strong and unanswer-

able reasons for repentance. Men make mistakes about repentance. Some make the great force and virtue of it to consist, not so much in the resolution of the penitent, as in the absolution of the priest. Some make repentance to consist in the bare resolution of amendment, though it never has its effect. (*J. Tillotson, D.D.*)

Vers. 29, 30. **Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man.**—*Divine providence*:—He who believes in the being of a God, must logically believe in the doctrine of Divine providence. That providence is over all things—a general providence—must imply a particular providence, for all generals are made up of particulars. And to God nothing can be great or small. We cannot understand the mysteries of Divine providence, any more than we can perfectly comprehend the mysteries of the work of creation. God's government is truly paternal. He cares for His children, and more especially for their higher interests. Nothing can happen to us by chance, for everything is ordered and regulated by His wisdom and power and goodness. By various ways the discipline of Divine providence may be exercised upon us, and we may gather illustrations of its purpose from various sources. 1. We perceive the moral purpose of Divine providence in overruling the original curse. That which has fallen upon our whole race as a dark cloud brought upon us by sin, has yet its edges fringed with silvery light, and we learn that there is hope for men even in the midst of the curse. 2. In the usual consequences of vice and virtue, of holiness and sin. All observation and testimony makes it clear that God is on the side of virtue, and against vice; that no crimes pass unnoticed by His eye. Although there are not such uniform consequences following transgression or virtue as to make us think that in this life the whole judgment is complete, yet there is enough to tell us that there is verily a God that judgeth in the earth; that while there is a good deal yet wrong, there is a day coming when God will judge men according to the Gospel. The sins of the flesh are punished in the flesh. The sins of the spirit are punished in the spirit. Where there is reformation, the immediate consequences of men's sins are not obviated in every instance, and yet it is a step in the right direction. 3. This arrangement of Divine providence is strongly marked in the inherent vanity which is stamped on all earthly good. Why do I but pursue that which flits before me, and eludes my grasp like a shadow? This is intended to teach man this great lesson, that out of God Himself man shall not be happy; no earthly good can be man's end and rest. 4. Another illustration may be found in the special dispensations of Divine providence. God has reserves of wisdom, of goodness, and of severity. Learn from this view of the providence of God that providences are paternal, moral, and remedial. But the entire scheme of God's providence rests upon the scheme of God's redemption and mercy. (*Francis A. West.*) *God's work with man*:—The summing up and practical application of Elihu's defence of Job's character, and vindication of God's dealings with him. Turning from Job to the entire race he says, "Lo, all these"— I. THE SUBJECT OF THE DIVINE OPERATIONS. "Man." 1. An intelligent being. God can work with him and expend upon him the resources of His wisdom, love, and power (Job xxxii. 8). 2. Fallen and depraved. Man needs the Divine operations and without them he must perish (Gen. i. 16, vi. 5; Rom. viii. 7). 3. Redeemed. God works for man's recovery through Christ (John v. 17), but does not supersede the necessity of human effort (Phil. ii. 12, 13). II. THE MEANS OF THE DIVINE OPERATIONS. "Lo, all these"— 1. Dreams and visions of the night (ver. 15). The effects of some dreams prove that the soul has listened to the voice of God. 2. The secret and silent inspirations of the spirit (ver. 16). The dream leads to alarm and enquiry, then the spirit opens the avenues of the soul, pours in the light, and a permanent impression is produced 3. Afflictions (vers. 19–22). A mournful picture, correction to prevent destruction (Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13; Psa. cxix. 67). 4. Efforts of friends (vers. 23, 24). The parent, minister, friend, who as the God-sent "interpreter" leads the afflicted to God's favour is esteemed as "one of a thousand." 5. The frequency of the Divine operations. "Oftentimes." When one means fails God employs another. III. THE DESIGN OF THE DIVINE OPERATIONS (ver. 30). 1. To save "from the pit." Metaphors teach truth. Hell is a dreadful reality. The unsaved are on their way to it. God looked into Himself and "found a ransom" that man might not "go down into the pit"; and all the means His love can devise are adopted to secure this purpose. 2 To make life bright and

happy. "Enlightened with the light of the living," read from ver. 25. (*Samuel Wesley.*) *Trials sent of God to save the soul*:—Everybody knows the story of Job. The several steps in the ladder of God's purposes appear as follows:—1. Earthly worries are heavenly blessings, not curses. Coming from the oldest book in the Bible, we behold in Job the representative man of trouble. The fact that afflictions were sent upon him, only proves that God had not let go of him yet. Darkness was but a proof of light, just as the shadow on the sundial proves the existence of the sun. These disturbances of our times only show that God does care what becomes of us. The best friend the Alpine climber can have is the faithful guide, who arouses him from fatal drowsiness by blows, harsh and painful. 2. The second step is, God's rule in visiting sorrows upon us is purpose, not simply permission. He does not merely permit troubles to come upon us, He sends them. Any other idea implies that somebody is stronger than God. If any one chastises us, let it be our Heavenly Father. 3. God worketh. The heathen have a god, Brahma, who rests in an eternal sleep. We have a God that worketh. He saves us as the surgeon, by earnest, resolute work—cutting off a limb, or taking away an eye. Caught in the grip of providence, we can say nothing. The fountain cannot be constructed without demolishing much that is beautiful; the grass, the soil upheaved, the unsightly debris, are all processes of necessary work. At last all is put back again, the green soil is restored, and a fountain is the result. So is it with the fountain of the new life. 4. The range of the omnipotent eye is over all the world at once. He subdues us by concerted processes, and persistent ones. "I could have taken a hurt," says one, "but to be utterly overthrown is more than I deserved," which shows the heart still in rebellion. 5. The fifth step indicates God's aim to be the full redemption of man. It is from the pit He saves him. God means business; He means at whatever cost to save souls. 6. We have God's promise to give perfect light out of darkness, hope instead of unbelief, Heaven instead of the pit. By and by we realise that it is after all better that things should be as they are, that intelligence guides the universe. In view of this, one of two things you can do—1. You can resist this purpose. But no man ever prospered who resisted God's will; or, 2. You accept this will, and adjust your purposes accordingly. If you yield, He will cease His chastisements. And this is natural, easy, and proper. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *An old-fashioned conversion*:—I. The matter in hand is to compare an old-fashioned conversion with those of the present time, and the first note we shall strike is this: it is quite certain from the description given in this thirty-third chapter of Job that THE SUBJECTS OF CONVERSION WERE SIMILAR, and men in the far-gone ages were precisely like men in these times. Reading the passage over, we find that men in those times needed converting; for they were deaf to God's voice (ver. 14); they were obstinate in evil purposes (ver. 17), and puffed up with pride. They needed chastening to arouse them to thought, and required sore distress to make them cry out for mercy (vers. 19–22). They were very loth to say, "I have sinned," and were not at all inclined to prayer. Salvation was only wrought by the gracious influences of God's Spirit in the days of Job, and it is only so accomplished at this present hour. Man has not outgrown his sins. II. The second note we shall strike is this, that in those olden times THE WORKER OF CONVERSION WAS THE SAME,—"all these things God worketh." The whole process is by Elihu ascribed to God, and every Christian can bear witness that the Lord is the great worker now; He turns us, and we are turned. III. The most interesting point to you will probably be the third: THE MEANS USED TO WORK CONVERSION IN THOSE DISTANT AGES WERE VERY MUCH THE SAME AS THOSE EMPLOYED NOW. There were differences in outward agencies, but the inward *modus operandi* was the same. There was a difference in the instruments, but the way of working was the same. Kindly turn to the chapter, at the fifteenth verse; you find there that God first of all spoke to men, but they regarded Him not, and then He spoke to them effectually by means of a dream: "In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed." Now, this was an extraordinary means of grace, seldom used now. It is much more profitable for you to have the word in your houses which you can read at all times, and to have God's ministers to proclaim clearly the gospel of Jesus, than it would be to be dependent upon visions of the night. The means, therefore, outwardly, may have changed, but still, whether it be by the dream at night, or by the sermon on the Sabbath, the power is just the same: namely, in the word of God. God speaks to men in dreams; if so, He

speaks to them all nothing more and nothing different from what He speaks in the written word. Now, observe, that in addition to the external coming of the word, it seems from the chapter before us, in the sixteenth verse, that men were converted by having their ears opened by God. Note the next sentence, He "sealeth their instruction." That was the means of conversion in the olden times. God brought the truth down upon the soul as you press a seal upon the wax: you bear upon the seal to make the impress, and even thus the power of God pressed home the word. By sealing is also sometimes meant preserving and setting apart, as we seal up documents or treasures of great value, that they may be secure. In this sense the Gospel needs sealing up in our hearts. We forget what we hear till God the Holy Ghost seals it in the soul, and then it is pondered and treasured up in the heart: it becomes to us a goodly pearl, a Divine secret, a peculiar heritage. This sealing is a main point in conversion. It appears, also, that the Lord, in those days, employed providence as a help towards conversion—and that providence was often of a very gentle kind, for it preserved men from death. Read the eighteenth verse: "He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword." Many a man has had the current of his life entirely changed by an escape from imminent peril. But further, it seems that, as Elihu puts it, sickness was a yet more effectual awakener in the common run of cases. Observe the nineteenth verse, "He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: so that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat." In addition to this sickness, the person whom God saved was even brought to be apprehensive of death—"Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers." It were better for you to be saved so, as by fire, than not to be saved at all. But now, notice that all this did not lead the person into comfort; although he was impressed by the dream and sickness, and so on, yet the ministry of some God-sent ambassador was wanted. "If there be a messenger with him," that is a man sent of God—"an interpreter," one who can open up obscure things and translate God's mind into man's language—"one among a thousand," for a true preacher, expert in dealing with souls, is a rare person "to show unto man his uprightness, then he is gracious unto him." God could save souls without ministers, but He does not often do it. IV. Fourthly, THE OBJECTS AIMED AT IN THE OLD CONVERSIONS WERE JUST THE SAME as those that are aimed at nowadays. Will you kindly look at the seventeenth verse. The first thing that God had to do with the man was to withdraw him from his purpose. He finds him set upon sin, upon rebellion. The next object of the Divine work was to hide pride from man, for man will stick to self-righteousness as long as he can. Another great object of conversion is to lead man to a confession of his sin. Hence we find it said in the twenty-seventh verse, "He looketh upon man, and if any say, I have sinned and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not, he will deliver his soul from going into the pit." Man hates confession to his God; I mean humble, personal, hearty confession. V. Fifthly, the process of conversion in days of yore exactly resembled that which is wrought in us now as to ITS SHADES. The shadowy side wore the same sombre hues as now. First of all, the man refused to hear; God spake once, yea twice, and man regarded Him not: here was obstinate rebellion. VI. But now, sixthly, THE LIGHTS ARE THE SAME, even as the shades were the same. You will note in Elihu's description that the great source of all the light was this: "Deliver him from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom." There is not a gleam of light in the case till you come to that Divine word,—and is it not so now? Then this precious gospel being announced to the sinner, the comfort of it enters his soul in the exercise of prayer: "He shall pray unto God, and He will be favourable unto him." Next, it appears that the soul obtains comfort because God gave it His righteousness—"for He will render unto man His righteousness." And then the man being led to a full confession of his sin in the twenty-seventh verse, the last cloud upon his spirit is blown away, and he is at perfect peace. God was gracious to the man described by Elihu. God Himself became his light and his salvation, and he came forth into joy and liberty. There is nothing more full of freshness and surprise than the joy of a new convert. VII. And last of all, which is the seventh point, THE RESULTS ARE THE SAME, for I think I hardly know a better description of the result of regeneration than that which is given in the twenty-fifth verse: "His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth." "Old things have passed away, behold all things are become new!" And with this change

comes back joy. See the twenty-sixth verse: "He shall see His face with joy; for He will render unto man His righteousness"; and the thirtieth verse: "To bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Vers. 6-9. **What man is like Job?** — *Elihu's estimate of Job*:—It was natural that, with all his reverence for Job, Elihu should be offended by the heat and passion of his words, by the absence of moderation and self-restraint, and tell him that "this strained passion did him wrong." No doubt it is easier for a friend on the bank to maintain his composure, than it is for the man who has been swept away by the stream of calamity, and is doing instant battle with its fierce currents and driving waves. Job is not to be overmuch blamed if, under the stress of calamity, and stung by the baseless calumnies of the friends, he now and then lost composure, and grew immoderate both in his resentments and his retorts. Remembering the keen agony he had to endure, we may well pardon an offence for which it is so easy to account; we may cheerfully admit, as Jehovah Himself admitted, that in the main he spoke of God aright; we may even admire the constancy and patience with which, on the whole, he met the provocations and insults of the friends; and yet we cannot but feel that he often pushed his inferences against the Divine justice and providence much too far: as, indeed, he himself confessed that he had, when at last he saw Jehovah face to face, and carried his just resentment against the friends to excess. There are points in the progress of the story where he seems to revel in his sense of wrong, and to lash out wildly against both God and man. With fine moral tact, Elihu had detected this fault in his tone and bearing, and had discovered whither it was leading him. (*Samuel Cox, D.D.*)

Vers. 10-12. **Neither will the Almighty pervert justice.** — *On the justice of God*:—These words are a description of the justice and righteousness of the supreme Governor of all things; introduced with an affectionate appeal to the common reason of mankind for the truth of the assertion, and closed with an eloquent repetition of the assurance of its certainty. There are, and must be, difficulties in the administration of providence; but these difficulties affect only such as are careless in matters of religion, and they can never make reasonable and considerate persons, men of attention and understanding, to doubt concerning the righteousness of the Divine government. I. GOD IS, AND CANNOT BUT BE, JUST IN ALL HIS ACTIONS. There being necessarily in nature a difference of things, which is what we call natural good and evil, and a variety in the dispositions and qualifications of persons, which is what we call moral good and evil, from the due or undue adjustment of these natural qualities of things to the moral qualifications of persons, arise unavoidably the notions of right and wrong. Now, the will of every intelligent agent being always directed by some motive, it is plain that the natural motive of action, where nothing irregular interposes, can be no other than this right or reason of things. Whenever this right and reason are not made the rule of action, it can only be, either because the agent is ignorant of what is right, or wants ability to pursue it, or else is knowingly and willingly diverted from it, by the hope of some good, or fear of some evil. But none of these causes of injustice can possibly have any place in God. His actions must necessarily be directed by right, and reason, and justice only. It is sometimes argued that the actions of God must needs be just, for whatever He does is just, because He does it. But this argument is not proving, but supposing the thing in question. It has been unworthily used, as if, because whatever God does is certainly just, therefore whatsoever unjust and unreasonable things men, in their systems of Divinity ascribe to Him, were made just and reasonable by supposing God to be the author of them. Or that, God being all-powerful, therefore whatever is ascribed to Him, though in itself it may seem unjust, and would be unjust among men, yet by supreme power is made just and right. Upon this kind of reasoning is built the doctrine of absolute reprobation, and some other the like opinions. But this is speaking deceitfully for God. In Scripture, God

perpetually appeals to the common reason and natural judgment of mankind for the equity of His dealings with them. II. WHEREIN THE NATURE OF GOD'S JUSTICE CONSISTS. Justice is of two sorts. There is a justice which consists in a distribution of equality; and there is a justice which consists in a distribution of equity. Of this latter sort is the justice of God. In the matter of punishment, His justice requires that it should always be apportioned with the most strict exactness, to the degree or demerit of the crime. The particulars wherein this justice consists are—1. An impartiality with regard to persons. 2. An equity of distribution with regard to things; that is, the observing an exact proportion in the several particular degrees of reward and punishment, as well as an impartiality and determining what persons shall be in general rewarded or punished. III. OBJECTIONS ARISING FROM PARTICULAR CASES AGAINST THE GENERAL DOCTRINE OF THE DIVINE JUSTICE. 1. From the unequal distributions of providence in the present life. This is answered by the belief of a future state, wherein, by the exactness and precise equity of the final determinations of the great day, shall be abundantly made up all the little inequalities of this short life. There are also many special reasons of these seeming inequalities. God frequently afflicts the righteous, for the trial and improvement of their virtue, for the exercise of their patience, or the correction of their faults. On the other hand, God frequently, for no less wise reasons, defers the punishing of the wicked. Besides these, there are also particular difficulties arising from singular inequalities, even with regard to spiritual advantages. The uses of this discourse are—1. Let us acknowledge and submit to the Divine justice, and show forth our due sense and fear of it in the course of our lives. 2. A right notion of the justice of God is matter of comfort to good men. 3. The justice of God is a matter of terror to all wicked and unrighteous men, how great and powerful soever they may be. 4. From a consideration of the justice of God arises a true notion of the heinousness of sin. 5. If God, who is all-powerful and supreme, yet always confines Himself to what is just, how dare mortal men insult and tyrannise over each other, and think themselves by power and force discharged from all obligations of equity towards their fellow-creatures? (*S. Clarke, D.D.*) *The perdition of the unconverted, not attributable to God*:—I. GOD CANNOT WISH THAT ANY HUMAN MIND SHOULD CONTINUE UNCONVERTED. It would be strange indeed if He did. It is blasphemy to think that God should wish any creature to commit sin. The holy God cannot wish any human mind either to begin to be unholy, or to continue to be unholy. II. GOD CANNOT WISH THAT ANY HUMAN BEING SHOULD PERISH. God has declared that they shall. It is inevitable in order to the ends of justice, and the maintenance of His moral government. But, then, He does not desire this issue. To say He did would be to say that God is malevolent. He cannot take any pleasure in suffering. III. GOD HAS NOT DECREED THAT ANY SINGLE MIND SHOULD CONTINUE UNCONVERTED, AND SHOULD PERISH. There is no such decree. If there were, it would be substantially the same with the last, only that it would be underhand and clandestine. It would be charging God, not only with sin, but with cowardice and hypocrisy. IV. GOD NEVER ACTS WITH THE VIEW THAT ANY SHOULD CONTINUE UNCONVERTED, AND SHOULD PERISH. God never operates upon the mind with this view. He never interposes difficulties in the way of its conversion, and with a view to its perdition. God does wish that every human mind should be converted and saved. 1. Prove this from God's words. 2. The actions of God will be found in harmony with His word. 3. Prove this from the death of Christ. 4. This doctrine is deducible from the entire plan of salvation. (*John Young, M.A.*)

Ver. 13. **Who hath disposed the whole world.**—*The disposer of the world*:—It becomes us to entertain proper apprehensions of "Him with whom we have to do." I. GOD'S ALL-DISPOSING AGENCY. 1. God is the disposer of the whole world of nature. What man can produce, man can comprehend. All human workmanship is limited and finite, and capable of improvement. It is otherwise with the works of God. Here nothing is superfluous, nothing wanting, nothing by alteration can be improved. What arrangement there is in all those numerous and immense worlds which God hath created! If we are struck with a single instance of God's arrangement in the world of nature, how much more should we be impressed with the whole if we were in a proper state of mind, and if God were in all our thoughts. 2. He is the disposer of the whole world of

grace. The apostle speaks not only of grace, but of the purpose of grace. There was nothing left unappointed or unarranged. The scheme stretches from eternity to eternity, and in every part of it we see God abounding in all wisdom and prudence. 3. He is the disposer of the whole world of providence; and while He seems to be doing nothing, He is doing "all things according to the counsel of His own will." We have many specimens of God's providence in the Scriptures of truth. Providence has been at work in your history. II. PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS. Four ways in which the doctrine of the all-disposing energy of God may be improved. 1. In the way of conviction. 2. In the way of adoration. 3. In the way of consolation. 4. Let this subject check our presumption. (*William Jay.*)

Vers. 16–30. **If now thou hast understanding, hear this.**—*Elihu's remonstrance*:—I. FOUNDED ON THE SUPREMACY OF GOD. Where there is absolute supremacy, there can be no injustice. There are some who speak of the absolute law of right as something outside the Almighty, independent of Him, and to which He is accountable. What the Supreme wills, is right, and right because He wills it. II. ON THE IMPARTIALITY OF THE ETERNAL. God is no respecter of persons. This is a fact proclaimed over and over again in the Bible, and which all nature and history demonstrate. The thought of God's impartiality serves two purposes. 1. To alarm the influentially wicked. 2. To encourage the godly poor. III. ON THE OMNISCIENCE OF THE ETERNAL. "There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." 1. Wicked men perform their deeds in darkness. 2. However deep the darkness, God's eye is on them. IV. ON THE POWER OF THE ETERNAL. What a description of power we have here. Are not these views of God sufficient to hush every murmuring thought, to subdue every rebellious will, and to bring every heart into a loving agreement with His plans? (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 20. **And the mighty shall be taken away without hand.**—*God's sovereignty viewed in relation to the death of His people*:—The text is part of the argument employed by Elihu to establish the principle of the Divine equity in the government of the universe. He insinuates that the suffering patriarch had at least implied certain reflections on the character of the Deity, and he remonstrates with him to show that the governor of the universe could not be unjust. I. THE SOVEREIGNTY AND IMPARTIALITY OF GOD. Sovereignty in the highest and most proper sense belongs exclusively to Jehovah. No bounds are set to His influence, and no department is free from His control. The originating cause of death is not Divine sovereignty, but our sin. In salvation we see God's sovereignty as the originating cause; but in death man's guilt. Though death has not originated in sovereignty, yet all the circumstances of death are controlled by it. Death stands as a willing messenger at the footstool of Omnipotence. 1. God determines the hour of dissolution. The casualties which we sometimes speak of are casualties to us, but not to God. They are necessary parts of the general system which His wisdom regulates and His power controls. There is no confusion in what God does or permits to be done. 2. God determines or controls the instruments by which life shall be ended. Whether by long, lingering sickness, or by a sudden stroke. There are only two cases of (apparent) exemption—Enoch and Elijah. 3. God is uninfluenced by the consideration of merely present consequences. They are all foreseen by Him. Death is a penalty that must be universally rendered. While administering equitable government, that which is particular must not be permitted to impede the universal good. II. THE WEAKNESS AND DEPENDENCE OF MAN. The contrast is tremendous between the feebleness of the creature and the majesty of the Creator. "Man dieth and wasteth away." "He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down." We ask the question, "Where is he?" Nature gives no answer. Philosophy gives no answer. Only revelation can. It flings its light upon the future, and as in one word utters "eternity!" (*George Wilkins.*)

Ver. 29. **When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?**—*Christian quietness*:—It is no small blessing to enjoy quietness in a world like this. I. THIS QUIETNESS. It is not a freedom from outward afflictions. We often notice, that so far are Christians from being exempted from sufferings, that it is just the most advanced Christians who are the most deeply tried. It

is not a callous indifference to our own sufferings or the sufferings of others. It is not hardness or selfishness. By purifying the heart, and destroying its natural and miserable selfishness, Christianity renders the affections far more strong and enduring. Nor is this quietness a freedom from conflict. Indeed, only the true Christian knows what this conflict between the flesh and the spirit is. Everyone who reaches heaven in safety is, and must be, a conqueror. Yet there is a quietness of spirit which the Christian enjoys. A calmness of spirit which arises from faith and confidence in Jesus Christ, in His perfect atonement, His finished work, His precious blood, His living person. This quietness is something unworldly, something that comes from above, and so it is a state of mind which endures. Notice whence and how it comes. "When He giveth quietness." It is a gift—a free gift of God. The channel is Jesus Christ. Real peace, real quietness of spirit, can only come to sinners as we are through a mediator. We lack quietness of spirit when we do not depend fully and simply upon Christ. But it is not always at the commencement of the Christian course that God gives "quietness." Sometimes it is bestowed nearer its close. It is the result of a holy walk with God, with increasing acquaintance with Him. II. THE SEASONS WHEN GOD GIVETH QUIETNESS. We need not speak of seasons of outward prosperity. Then it is, and only then, that the world enjoys its worldly quietness. But that quietness, what an empty thing it is! The quietness which God gives, He bestows in largest measure in seasons of trouble. It is just when outward comforts fail, when the world looks very dark, it is then that inward consolations abound, and the believer's cup runs over. . . . "Who then can make trouble?" It is a bold challenge! Bold, whether addressed to Satan, the world, or our own hearts, all of which are so mighty to make trouble. The true Christian can meet even death with quietness of spirit. (*George Wagner.*) *God-given quietness*:—In our inmost being there is a yearning for what Elihu here calls "quietness," for what Paul elsewhere describes as "the peace that passeth understanding," for what Jesus promised to the "weary and heavy-laden"—rest. We are tired of the weary struggle in our own hearts, the internal to-and-fro conflict between good impulses and bad. Notice some of the ways in which "God giveth quietness" to the soul. I. BY PACIFYING THE CONSCIENCE. Conscious innocence makes the best pillow. Blessed are all those who know something of the quietness that God gives when He pacifies the conscience! II. BY WORKING IN THE HEART A CONTENTED DISPOSITION. Discontent is one of the greatest enemies to our peace of mind. It is the murderer of men's happiness. We stretch forth empty hands from the attained to the unattained. It is the old story: the apprentice longs to be a journeyman, and the journeyman pants to be a foreman, and the foreman groans to be a master, and the master pines till he is able to build a snug villa and retire from business. But God gives quietness, and then we drop anchor, never to voyage any more upon the sea of unsatisfied desire. Who now can make trouble? III. BY DELIVERING US FROM ALL ANXIETY ABOUT THE FUTURE. It is not everyone who can contemplate the future with composure. To many it is a shapeless terror. Who will venture to open its seven-sealed book, who brave enough to read its contents? The future! No man can look fearlessly upon it, except the Christian. Come what will, he is prepared for all that shall befall him between this hour and the grave. IV. BY IMPARTING A SENSE OF SECURITY IN VIEW OF THE FINAL CHANGE. (*S. L. Wilson, M.A.*) *Christian calmness*:—I. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE QUIETNESS HERE SPOKEN OF? When God enables a man to rest peacefully, tranquilly, without let or hindrance, without anything to molest, or harm, or disturb, or terrify him, "who can make trouble?" 1. External quietness, as when God interposes in the defence of His people. Here is the Christian's comfort, that no harm can happen to him without God's permission. He is safe beyond the reach of danger. But we cannot be certain at any time that it is God's pleasure wholly to deliver us. He may let the evil come. He may keep us in suspense. 2. There is another way. God may supply us with inward peace—such peace as shall set us free from anxious fears as to trials that may be coming upon us, or shall bear us up, and sustain us, in the midst of trials which have come. Often the trials which we dread do not come; and often, when they do come, they prove less than we had imagined. God gives quietness in such cases by enabling us to look up to Him as our Father, our reconciled Father, in Christ Jesus, and so to feel assured that we are the objects of His fatherly care. II. THE AUTHOR OF THIS BLESSED PEACE—GOD. We are perfectly secure from all molestation,

and all danger, because He that keepeth us is the eternal, unchangeable, almighty, ever-present God. III. IN WHAT WAY IS THIS QUIETNESS TO BE ATTAINED? 1. The first step towards it is to make sure that we are in a state of reconciliation with God; and this is to be attained by earnestly and heartily returning to Him through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2. The second step is to live closely to God—to walk before Him in all holy obedience, serving Him faithfully, unreservedly, diligently. We may rest assured that real, solid, well-grounded peace is to be enjoyed by none but those who do thus serve Him. 3. We must learn to cast all our care on God in the full assurance that He careth for us. We must look off from ourselves. We must walk by faith, not by sight. 4. We should acquire the habit of carrying our cares, and anxieties, and sorrows to God, and spreading them before Him in prayer. It is true that He knows them all without our telling Him; but He would have us tell Him notwithstanding. Prayer is His own appointed ordinance. (*C. A. Heurtley, B.D.*) *Peace:*—Wherever innocence is found, there perfect peace reigns. Man, as the subject of sin, carries on war against universal being—himself not excepted. I. PEACE HAS NO NECESSARY RESIDENCE ANYWHERE BUT IN THE BOSOM OF JEHOVAH. He is called, "the God of peace." Then—1. Peace must be universally the gift of God. Finite being has no peace to confer on another; it must emanate ceaselessly from the bosom of Deity. 2. Peace is likewise the purchase of Deity. One who is God must bear the consequences of our sins, or His peace can never reach us. 3. It is the gift and creation of the Divine Spirit. Learn, then, to estimate the value of true religion. II. WHY, THEN, DOES GOD HIDE HIS FACE FROM HIS CHILD? 1. To lead man into intimate acquaintance with Himself. 2. To humble His family. 3. To teach them to prize communion with Himself above everything. 4. That He may try if anything can make them happy in His absence. 5. To chastise His children for their transgression. (*W. Howel.*) *The need for justifying the providence of God:*—I. THE DOCTRINE ON THE SUBJECT. God is the supreme and only disposer of all human affairs. This doctrine is not laid down formally, but taken for granted. It forms the ground of Elihu's appeal. Many will not admit that God interferes in the affairs of this or that particular person. But this objection to the doctrine of particular providence proceeds, not from doubt about the doctrine, but from dislike to it. In the government of the world, God not only rules, but overrules. God, in the government of the world, feels toward it, not merely the interest of a creator and contriver of means to an end, but the far more tender and compassionate regard of a Redeemer. II. THE DUTIES WHICH ARISE OUT OF THE DOCTRINE. 1. The Christian duty of faithful dependence on God. 2. The Christian duty of reverential fear of Him. (*F. C. Clark, B.A.*) *God the Giver of quietness:*—1. Because all things are in subjection to His disposing. As, for example, men's purposes and counsels, they are all guided by Him. 2. When God will give quietness, none shall be able to make trouble, because that trouble which is at any time made, it is in reference to God Himself, and for the avenging of His quarrel upon people. The second reference of this verse is as they respect, not a kingdom, but a particular person. When God will give a man quietness, none can trouble him; when God will hide His face from him, none can uphold him. When God gives inward peace, a man shall suffer no great inconvenience from outward trouble. Trouble is not so much from the condition, as the affection; it is not so much from the state, as from the mind. Where a man has peace and quietness of conscience, he is so far forth provided against all trouble and disturbance whatsoever. He which has peace and atonement with God, has that within him which swallows all outward sadness and trouble whatsoever. He which has peace with God, there is nothing which is able to trouble him, because that which is the main ground, and occasion, and foundation of trouble is removed, and taken away from him. Where God gives this quietness and peace, there is also an intimation and assurance of all those evils and outward calamities, as working and making for our good. Where there is peace with God, there is also an intimation of safeguard and protection for time to come. There is also the sweet and comfortable expectation of a blessed and happy condition, which a man shall partake of in another world. (*T. Horton, D.D.*) *Christian calmness:*—1. THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF THE BLESSING HERE SPOKEN OF. It is quietness, calmness, repose, and may consist of—1. External peace. This is when God interposes on behalf of His people. "He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Still, we cannot reckon on this kind of peace. 2. Internal peace. This is of a different

nature to external peace, and every Christian can and ought to enjoy it. It is independent of all the vicissitudes of life, of all the trials of time. II. THE METHOD OF ITS ATTAINMENT. The quietness of our text is one of the growths of Christian character. There are two particulars which bring it about:—1. Reconciliation with God. There can be no peace where there are alienation and enmity. 2. Holiness of conversation. There can be no peace where there is indulged sin. 3. Assurance of confidence. "Casting all your cares on Him, for He careth for you." (*J. J. S. Bird.*) *The quiet mind*:—To serve God in a world which is in rebellion against Him is alike our duty and high privilege. Christ bade us, "take no thought"—*i.e.*, be not anxious and disquieted, suffer not your mind to be distracted, drawn different ways, by cares as to this want and that; learn to trust, to serve God with a quiet mind. How can we obtain and secure this spirit? If we are really serving the Lord, how can we do it as here asked for, with a quiet mind? The ever-restless, ever-changing sea is but too true an image of the heart. In order to be real, lasting, and effectual, there must be the true basis for it, the pardon and cleansing away of sin; there must be the purging of the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. True service must be based upon the sense of pardon and reconciliation. In no other way can the motive be supplied which alone can produce the result. In addition to the pardon which God offers, and as a result of its being received by us, and assured to us, there is the peace, that we may serve Him with a quiet mind. There must be the true basis, but there must also be this result aimed at, and carried out. It is, indeed, a consequence of pardon, but it must not be taken for granted that it is enjoyed, that the service is necessarily yielded, and the quietness of mind maintained. This privilege is provided by God, but the degree in which it is used is found to vary greatly in the case of different Christians. There are so many causes of trouble and unrest—doubts and difficulties in connection with God's word; personal and family trials—in the discharge of the duties to which God's providence calls us, and in employing for Him the talents He has given, we may at times be perplexed. There may seem a clashing of duties, and this may disquiet us in our service; but He does not require of us more than we can do. How often the fears which have disturbed the quietness of God's children have been groundless. (*J. H. Holford, M.A.*) *God—all in all*:—I. First, then, the eye of faith beholds the all-sufficiency of Jehovah, and our entire dependence upon Him, as she marks HIS EFFECTUAL WORKING. "When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" This unanswerable question may be illustrated by the Lord's works in nature. The world was once a tumultuous chaos: fire and wind and vapour strove with one another. Who was there that could bring that heaving, foaming, boiling, raging mass into quietude and order? Only let the great Preserver of men relax the command of quiet, and there are fierce forces in the interior of the earth sufficient to bring it back to its primeval chaos in an hour; but while His fiat is for peace, we fear no crash of matter and no wreck of worlds. Seed time and harvest, summer and winter, cold and heat, do not cease. Passing on to the age of man, we see the Lord in the day of His wrath pulling up the sluices of the great deep, and at the same moment bidding the clouds of heaven discharge themselves, so that the whole world became once again a colossal ruin. The covenant bow was seen in the cloud, the token that the Lord had given quietness to the earth, and that none again should be able to disturb her. Further down in history the Red Sea asks of us the same question, "When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" Glancing far on in history, and passing by a thousand cases which are all to the point, we only mention one more, namely, that of Sennacherib and his host. God put a hook into the enemy's nose, and thrust a bridle between his jaws, and sent him back with shame to the place from whence he came. "When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" 1. We shall reflect upon this truth as it applies, first, to God's people. If your gracious Lord shall give you quietness of mind, who then can cause you trouble? We have found it sweet to be afflicted when we have enjoyed the presence of God in it, so that we have counted it all joy when we have fallen into divers temptations; because, in our hour of extremity and peril, the Saviour has been unspeakably the more precious. When the Lord giveth quietness, slander cannot give us trouble. Ay, and at such times you may add to outward troubles and to the slanders of the wicked man, all the temptations of the devil; but if the Lord giveth quietness, though there were as many devils to attack us as there are stones in the pavement of the streets of London, we would walk

over all their heads in unabated confidence. Even inbred sin, which is the worst of ills, will cause the Christian no trouble when the light of Jehovah's countenance is clearly seen. 2. I thank God that my text is equally true of the seeking sinner. If the Lord shall be pleased to give thee, poor troubled heart, quietness this day in Christ, none can make trouble in thy soul. What a mercy it is for you that God can give you peace and quietness! "Ah," say you, "but there is His law, that dreadful law of ten commands; I have broken that a thousand times." But if the Saviour lead thee to the cross, He will show thee that He fulfilled the law on thy behalf; that thou art not thyself under the law any longer, but under grace. "Yes, yes," say you, "well, I thank God for that, but my conscience, my conscience will never let me be in quietness." Oh! but my Master knows how to talk with thy conscience. He can say to it, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins." And let me say, dear friend, if the Lord gives you quietness while the law and conscience will be at peace with you, so will that Book of God be. Some of you, whenever you turn the Bible over, can find nothing but threatenings in it. Oh! but if you can only come to Jesus and rest in Him, then the page shall glisten with blessings, and glow with benedictions. 3. Now this text, which thus belongs to the saint and to the seeking sinner, I think is equally true, on the larger scale, to the Christian Church. I shall leave this first point when I have briefly drawn three lessons from it. "When the Lord giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" The first lesson is, those who have peace should this morning adore and bless God for it. Secondly, be hopeful, ye who are seeking peace, whether for others or for yourselves. Lastly, give up all other peace but that which the Lord giveth to every believer. If you have a quietness which God has not created, implore the Lord to break it. II. The all-sufficiency of God is seen, secondly, IN HIS SOVEREIGN WITHDRAWALS. God does sometimes hide His face from His people, and then, as His saints well know, nothing can enable them to behold Him or to be happy. III. THIS IS TRUE OF A NATION as well as of any one Church and of any one man. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 31–37. **Surely it is meet to be said unto God.**—*The second speech of Elihu:*—I. A GOOD COUNSEL. Elihu recommends Job to do two things. 1. To resolve on an improved life. This includes—(1) Moral reform. (2) Increased light. 2. To submit to the eternal will. God's mind is the standard—all knowing, all loving, all righteous, immutable. . . . Should the method of redemption be according to thy mind? Two facts convince us that the human mind is utterly incompetent to form a scheme for spiritual restoration. The mistakes it has made on the subject in interpreting Scripture. And the mistakes it has made on the subject in interpreting Christianity. II. A BAD EXAMPLE. Four things (vers. 34–37) exhibit Elihu in no very virtuous or amiable light. 1. There is vanity. 2. Arrogance. 3. Heartlessness. 4. Calumny. In these things Elihu is a warning to young advocates of religious opinions. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 31, 32. **I have borne chastisement.**—*The nature and necessity of holy resolution:*—There are two essential parts of a true repentance. A humble acknowledgment and confession of our sins to God. A firm purpose and resolution of amendment, and forsaking of sin for the future. I. SHOW WHAT RESOLUTION IS IN GENERAL. It is a fixed determination of the will about anything. It supposes—1. A precedent deliberation of the mind about the thing to be resolved on. Peremptorily to determine and resolve upon anything before deliberation is not properly resolution, but precipitancy and rashness. 2. Resolution supposes some judgment passed upon a thing after deliberation. This judgment of the necessity and fitness of the thing is not the resolution of the will but of the understanding. To be convinced that a thing is fit and necessary to be done, and to be resolved to set upon the doing of it, are two very different things. An act of the judgment must go before the resolution of the will. 3. If the matter be of considerable consequence, resolution supposeth some motion of the affections; which is a kind of bias upon the will. Deliberation and judgment, they direct a man what to do or to leave undone; the affections excite and quicken a man to take some resolution in the matter. II. WHAT IS THE SPECIAL OBJECT OR MATTER OF THIS RESOLUTION. What it is that a man when he repents resolves upon. It is to leave his sin and return to God and his duty. He that truly repents, is resolved to break off his sinful course, and to abandon those lusts

and vices which he was formerly addicted to, and lived in. The true penitent does not stay in the negative part of religion, he is resolved to be as diligent to perform the duties of religion as he was before negligent of them. III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN A SINCERE RESOLUTION OF LEAVING OUR SINS AND RETURNING TO GOD. Three things. 1. It must be universal, in respect of the whole man, and with regard to all our actions. 2. A sincere resolution implies a resolution of the means as well as of the end. 3. It implies the present time, and that we are resolved speedily and without delay to put the resolution into practice. There is this reason why thou shouldst immediately put this resolution in practice, and not delay it for a moment. Thou mayest at present do it much more certainly, and much more easily. Thou art surer of the present time than thou canst be of the future: and the longer thou continuest in sin, thy resolution against it will grow weaker, and the habit of sin continually stronger. Sin was never mortified by age. IV. IN THIS RESOLUTION OF AMENDMENT, THE VERY ESSENCE AND FORMAL NATURE OF REPENTANCE DOTH CONSIST. A man may do many reasonable actions without an explicit resolution. But not matters of difficulty. There is no change of a man's life can be imagined, wherein a man offers greater violence to inveterate habits, and to the strong propensions of his present temper, than in this of repentance. So that among all the actions of a man's life, there is none that doth more necessarily require an express purpose than repentance does. V. SOME CONSIDERATIONS TO CONVINCE MEN OF THE NECESSITY AND FITNESS OF THIS RESOLUTION, AND OF KEEPING STEADFAST TO IT. 1. This resolution of repentance is nothing but what, under the influence of God's grace and Holy Spirit, is in your power. It is a power which every man is naturally invested withal, to consider, and judge, and choose. As to spiritual things, every man hath this power radically. He hath the faculties of understanding and will, but these are hindered in their exercise, and strongly biassed a contrary way, by the power of evil inclinations and habits; so that, as to the exercise of this power, and the effect of it on spiritual things, men are in a sort as much disabled as if they were destitute of it. When we persuade men to repent, and change their lives, and resolve upon a better course, we do not exhort them to anything that is absolutely out of their power, but to what they may do, though not of themselves, yet by the grace of God. 2. Consider what it is that you are to resolve upon; to leave your sins, and to return to God and goodness. Consider what sin is. Consider what it is to return to God and duty. 3. How unreasonable it is to be unresolved in a case of so great moment and concernment. There is no greater argument of a man's weakness, than irresolution in matters of mighty consequence. 4. How much resolution would tend to the settling of our minds, and making our lives comfortable. VI. DIRECTIONS CONCERNING THE MANAGING AND MAINTAINING OF THIS HOLY AND NECESSARY RESOLUTION. 1. What an argument it is of vanity and inconstancy, to change this resolution, whilst the reason of it stands good, and is not changed. 2. If we be not constant in our resolution, all we have done is lost. 3. We shall by inconstancy render our condition much worse. Application—(1) Let us do all in the strength of God, considering our necessary and essential dependence upon Him. (2) We ought to be very watchful over ourselves. (3) Let us frequently renew and reinforce our resolutions. (*J. Tillotson, D.D.*) *For the sick and afflicted*:—I. But first let us commune together upon the text in its more natural application as addressed TO THE AFFLICTED. 1. The first lesson is, it is meet for them to accept the affliction which the Lord sends, and to say unto God, "I have borne chastisement." We notice that the word "chastisement" is not actually in the Hebrew, though the Hebrew could not be well interpreted without supplying the word. It might exactly and literally be translated "I bear," or "I have borne." It is the softened heart saying to God, "I bear whatever Thou wilt put upon me; I have borne it, I still bear it, and I will bear it, whatever Thou mayest ordain it to be. I submit myself entirely to Thee, and accept the load with which Thou art pleased to weight me." A constant submission to the Divine will should be the very atmosphere in which a Christian lives. We must not be content with bearing what the Lord sends, with the coolness which says, "It must be, and therefore I must put up with it." Such forced submission is far below a Christian grace, for many a heathen has attained it. Neither, on the other hand, are we to receive affliction with a rebellious spirit. Neither, as believers in God, are we to despair under trouble, for that is not bearing the cross, but lying down under it. The Christian, then, is not to treat the cross which God puts upon him in any such way as I have

described, but he is to accept it humbly, looking up to God, and saying, "Much worse than this I might reckon to receive even as Thy child; for the discipline of Thine house requireth the rod, and well might I expect to be chastened every morning." We should receive chastisement with meek submission. The gold is not to rebel against the goldsmith, but should at once yield to be placed in the crucible and thrust into the fire. We should accept chastisement cheerfully. The next duty is to forsake the sin which may have occasioned the chastisement. "It is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement; I will not offend any more." There is a connection between sin and suffering. There are afflictions which come from God, not on account of past sin, but to prevent sin in the future. The third lesson in the text to the afflicted clearly teaches them that it is their duty and privilege to ask for more light. The text says, "That which I see not, teach Thou me. If I have done iniquity, I will do no more." Do you see the drift of this? It is the child of God awakeend to look after the sin which the chastisement indicates; and since he cannot see all the evil that may be in himself, he turns to his God with this prayer, "What I see not, teach Thou me." It may be that, in looking over your past life and searching through your heart, you do not see your sin, for perhaps it is where you do not suspect. You have been looking in another quarter. Perhaps your sin is hidden away under something very dear to you. Jacob made a great search for the images—the teraphs which Laban worshipped. He could not find them. No; he did not like to disturb Rachel, and Laban did not like to disturb her either—a favourite wife and daughter must not be inconvenienced. She may sit still on the camel's furniture, but she hides the images there. Even thus you do not like to search in a certain quarter of your nature. This is the right way in which to treat our chastisements: "If I have done iniquity, I will do no more. That which I see not, teach Thou me." II. And now, I am going to use the text for THOSE OF US WHO MAY NOT HAVE BEEN AFFLICTED. What does the text say to us if we are not afflicted? Does it not say this—"If the afflicted man is to say 'I bear,' and to take up his yoke cheerfully, how cheerfully ought you and I to take up the daily yoke of our Christian labour"? "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." We have yet another remark for those that are strong. Should not the favours of God lead us to search out our sins? Do you not think that while enjoying God's mercy we should be anxious to be searched by the light of the love of God? Should we not wish to use the light of the Divine countenance that we may discover all our sin and overcome it? III. The last remark I have to make is to THE UNCONVERTED. Perhaps there are some here who are not the people of God, and yet they are very happy and prosperous. Take us at our worst—when we are most sick, most desponding, most tried, most penitent before God, we would not exchange with you at your best. Would we change with you, for all your mirth and sinful hilarity? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **I will not offend any more.**—*Reformation under correction:*—Resolution to reform should be upon the heart of all them that smart under the rod of the Lord. I. WHAT KIND OF REFORMATION IT IS THAT WE SHOULD RESOLVE UPON UNDER THE ROD OF THE LORD. 1. In the work of reformation under the rod, we must have reference to Him that useth the rod, go to God, and set ourselves to amend what is amiss, as under the eye of God. 2. You must be sure to have your work guided by God Himself. 3. You must be careful to reform in one particular, as well as another; you must go through-stitch with this business. He hath not reformed in anything aright that doth not reform in everything blameworthy. 4. You must not only reform in what you yourselves do, or may understand to be amiss, but you must take direction to know what is blameworthy; be eager and earnest to understand wherein you do amiss. 5. A Christian under the rod should be so wrought upon with a resolution to reform, that he should, by solemn covenant, bind himself to God for the future. 6. Christians under the rod must severally and personally, and not only jointly and in company and assemblies, reform what is amiss, according to the afore-mentioned rules. Christians should not look on this reforming as a task necessary, and a duty commanded; they should regard it as an employment comely and lovely. II. WHAT ARGUMENTS MAY PREVAIL WITH CHRISTIANS THUS TO REFORM UNDER THE ROD? 1. Some in relation to God. (1) Because God that calleth for reformation under correction is the author of every blow, of every scourge. (2) God afflicts us because we are blameworthy, because we have sinned. (3) God is exceeding just and gracious in every rod He useth, in every stroke that He giveth, in every affliction

that He sendeth. God will not make the staff too heavy nor the rod too big. (4) The Lord considers the frame of every man's spirit, the carriage of every soul under His correcting hand. (5) The Lord is no respecter of persons. (6) This is the very end God aims at, that by His rod people might be reformed. (7) His Majesty will account Himself honoured, in sort we may make God amends, not by way of requital, but by way of manifestation. 2. In relation to ourselves. (1) For driving arguments. Not to reform under the rod, it fastens a black mark of shameful ignominy and reproach upon the heart of a sinner. It is a sign of unspeakable foolishness and extraordinary brutishness. 2. Drawing arguments. This is the way to gain the comfort of the Lord, the tender bowels of His compassion. The worst things you can suffer, shall turn to your joy and everlasting comfort. III. WHAT COURSE WE SHOULD TAKE TO BE WROUGHT UPON TO ATTAIN UNTO THIS FRAME OF SPIRIT. 1. Thoroughly, from Scripture light, inform ourselves concerning the sinfulness and the ugliness of the course whereof you must reform. 2. You must be deeply humbled for whatever it is that under the rod you do discover to be out of order, both in your heart, mind, and actions. Thus go to God, pray unto God, wait upon God, and expect deliverances from Him. (*William Fenner.*) *The improvement of affliction*:—I. A HUMBLE CONFESSION OF GOD'S JUSTICE IN AFFLICTING. "I have borne chastisement," *i.e.* I have suffered justly; nay, I have been punished less than mine iniquities deserve. The afflictions of believers are chastisements from God. Particular afflictions are not indeed always sent on account of particular sins, but there is enough of sin in the best of men to justify the severest sufferings with which they may be visited in a present world. II. A PRAYER FOR DIVINE TEACHING. "That which I see not, teach Thou me." A prayer necessary for all; but peculiarly seasonable in the time of affliction, since one of the principal ends for which affliction is sent is the discovery of sin, and one of the chief benefits derived from it is the knowledge of ourselves. 1. This prayer may have a reference to the rule and measure of our conduct, the holy law of God. Consider what low, imperfect ideas the generality of mankind entertain of the law of God: and what a poor measure of outward conformity to its precepts appears to satisfy many. 2. This prayer may have reference to the application of this rule to our own characters and conduct, whereby we become acquainted with our own sins in particular. III. A PIOUS RESOLUTION, FOUNDED ON THE FOREGOING CONFESSION AND PRAYER. "If I have done iniquity, I will do no more." This implies a total renunciation of all sin, and a full and fixed purpose of new and better obedience. Wherever the grace of God is known in truth, there is an absolute renunciation of all sin, and an entire surrender of ourselves to the service of God. (*D. Black.*) **That which I see not, teach Thou me.**—*Holy desire of instruction*:—The desire of knowledge is universal among men. It is a second nature. It becomes natural from the course of their education, however limited that education may be. There is in every mind a thirst for information and intelligence. Human means of knowledge, however, are soon exhausted. Religious truths are of the deepest interest to the mind of every thoughtful man, but of these he could naturally know nothing. Even when the deep things of God are revealed, they are beyond the comprehension of human reason. The faculties of man were darkened by the fall, and his affections estranged from heaven and heavenly things. It was for the offended Jehovah to open his eyes and pour upon them the light of a new-born day. This is the working of the mighty scheme of redemption, to give man somewhat of the knowledge which he had lost; to reveal the God of truth within him, and to fill his soul with a desire and love of the truth. Such is the prophetic description of the Gospel day. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." It is for this that the regenerating spirit is breathed into them. There is nothing more remarkable in the natural man than his spirit of self-sufficiency; and this continues to show itself more or less even after he has been brought into fellowship with a holy God, even through the whole of his Christian trial. They who are resting content with their present attainments and observances, show themselves to be strangers to the nature of Divine truth; to the meaning and purpose of that revelation with which they are favoured by their merciful God. There is much to be learned continually from the dealings of God with us, day by day, from His spiritual and providential dealing. (*J. Slade, M.A.*)

Ver. 33. **Should it be according to thy mind?**—*Conceit rebuked*:—The

verse is written in language of the most ancient kind, which is but little understood. Moreover, it is extremely pithy and sententious, and hence it is obscure. The sense given in our version is, however, that which sums up the other translations, and we prefer to adhere to it. I. DO MEN REALLY THINK THAT THINGS SHOULD BE ACCORDING TO THEIR MIND? 1. Concerning God. Their ideas of Him are according to what they think He should be; but could He be God at all if He were such as the human mind would have Him to be? 2. Concerning Providence on a large scale, would men re-write history? Do they imagine that their arrangements would be an improvement upon infinite wisdom? In their own case they would arrange all matters selfishly. Should it be so? 3. Concerning the Gospel, its doctrines, its precepts, its results, should men have their own way? Should the atonement be left out, or the statement of it be modified to suit them? 4. Concerning the Church. Should they be head and lord? Should their liberal ideas erase inspiration? Should Baptism and the Lord's Supper be distorted to gratify them? Should taste override Divine commands? Should the ministry exist only for their special consolation, and be moulded at their bidding? II. WHAT LEADS THEM TO THINK SO? 1. Self-importance and selfishness. 2. Self-conceit and pride. 3. A murmuring spirit which must needs grumble at everything. 4. Want of faith in Christ leading to a doubt of the power of His Gospel. 5. Want of love to God, souring the mind and leading it to kick at a thing simply because the Lord prescribes it. III. WHAT A MERCY THAT THINGS ARE NOT ACCORDING TO THEIR MIND! 1. God's glory would be obscured. 2. Many would suffer to enable one man to play the dictator. 3. We should, any one of us, have an awful responsibility resting upon us if our own mind had the regulation of affairs. 4. Our temptations would be increased. We should be proud if we succeeded, and despairing if we met with failure. 5. Our desires would become more greedy. 6. Our sins would be uncorrected; for we should never allow a rod or a rebuke to come at us. 7. There would be universal strife; for every man would want to rule and command (James iv. 5). If it ought to be according to your mind, why not according to mine? IV. LET US CHECK THE SPIRIT WHICH SUGGESTS SUCH CONCEIT. 1. It is impracticable; for things can never be as so many different minds would have them. 2. It is unreasonable; for things ought not so to be. 3. It is unchristian; for even Christ Jesus pleased not Himself, but cried, "Not as I will" (Matt. xxvi. 39). 4. It is atheistic; for it dethrones God to set up puny man. Pray God to bring your mind to His will. Cultivate admiration for the arrangements of the Divine mind. Above all, accept the Gospel as it is, and accept it now. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *A word to the God-criticising man*:—I. SHOULD THE ARRANGEMENTS OF LIFE BE ACCORDING TO THY MIND? Those who are constantly murmuring under the dispensations of Providence should remember—1. The circumscribed sphere of their observation. 2. The limitation of human faculties. 3. The brevity of man's mortal existence. 4. The narrowness of human sympathies. II. SHOULD THE METHOD OF REDEMPTION BE ACCORDING TO THY MIND? There are many who raise objections to Christianity. Many who imagine that they could have constructed a better system of spiritual redemption. Two facts convince us that the human mind is utterly incompetent to form a scheme for spiritual restoration. 1. The mistakes it has made on the subject in interpreting nature. 2. The mistakes it has made on the subject in interpreting Christianity. The perverters of the Gospel plan of salvation may be divided into two grand classes. (1) Those that infer from Christianity that they can be saved by a mere intellectual faith in certain theological propositions. (2) Those that infer that they can be saved by an external observance of certain ceremonies—the intervention of priests, the invocation of saints, the observance of sacraments, &c. Thus we say to the captious sceptic, we cannot have a system of religion according to thy mind. Thy mind is utterly unsuited to construct a religion redemptive to man and acceptable to God. "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard," &c. (*Homilist.*) *The condemnation of self-will*:—The speaker is Elihu. The meaning of the question is obvious. "Shall the Supreme Being do nothing without thy consent? Should He ask counsel of thee?" Job would instantly have answered, "No." I. TO HAVE THINGS ACCORDING TO OUR MIND IS A VERY COMMON WISH. Man is naturally self-willed. The disposition appears very early in our children. All sin is a contention against the will of God. It began in Paradise. Enter the world of grace. Behold the revelation which God has given us. One deems it unnecessary; for a second it is too simple; for a third it is too mysterious. We seek to be

justified by our own works, while the Gospel assures us we must be justified by the faith of Christ. The same is seen in the world of providence. Who is content with such things as he has? Who does not covet what is denied him? Who does not long to be at his own disposal? But is not this disposition crushed in conversion? Alas, too much of self-will remains even in the choicest saints. We are far from saying that they would have nothing done according to God's mind, but they are often solicitous to have too many things done according to their own. II. THE DESIRE IS UNREASONABLE. For we are wholly unqualified to govern; while God is in every way adequate to the work in which He is engaged. Nothing can be more absurd than to labour to displease Him, and substitute ourselves as the creators of destiny, the regulators of events. Have you not often found yourselves mistaken where you thought yourselves most sure? Have you not frequently erred in judging yourselves, and generally erred in judging others? And how can we decide on the means which the Supreme Being employs, while we are ignorant of the reasons which move Him, and the plan which He holds in view? III. THE DESIRE IS CRIMINAL. The sources are bad. 1. It argues ingratitude. It is infinite condescension in God to be "mindful of us." For all this He surely deserves our thankful acknowledgments, and we insult Him with murmuring complaints. 2. It springs from discontent. It shows that we are dissatisfied with His dealings, for if we were not dissatisfied why do we desire a change? 3. It betrays earthly-mindedness. The soul feels it when "cleaving to the dust." According to our attachments will be, all through life, our afflictions and our perplexities. More attached are we to our fleshy interests than to our spiritual concerns. 4. It is the produce of impatience. This will suffer no delay, and bear no denial. 5. It is the offspring of pride and independence. It is a presumptuous invasion of the authority and prerogative of God. Your place is the footstool, not the throne. Maintain your distance here, and do not encroach on the Divine rights. IV. THE DESIRE IS DANGEROUS. If it were accomplished, all parties would suffer,—God, our fellow-creatures, and ourselves. In a word, you would be too ignorant to choose well. In order to determine what will promote our happiness, it is necessary for us to know the things themselves from among which we are to make our choice. Nor is it less needful to understand ourselves. For a man must be adapted to his condition, or he will never be happy in it. Here another difficulty occurs. It is impossible for us to judge of ourselves in untried circumstances and connections. We are not only liable to err on the side of our hopes, but also of our fears. V. THE DESIRE IS IMPRACTICABLE. 1. The desires of mankind are often opposite to each other; hence they cannot all be accomplished. 2. The plan of Divine government is already fixed. Learn—(1) Not to think ourselves guilty of the disposition to censure, when we only indulge allowed desire. (2) The subject preaches submission. (3) It inspires with consolation. (*William Jay.*) *God's providence*:—"God's work of providence is His most holy, wise, and powerful, preserving and governing all His creatures and all their actions." The truth is, we must either bring God into all, or keep God out of all. To Him, and to His presiding providence, all must be attributed—all or nothing. If the great events of life are brought about by the hand of God, so also must the little; for, in the web of human destiny, the two are inseparably interwoven. There are some who reject this view of God's providence. It is not consistent with their notions of the dignity and greatness of God, to think of Him as taking notice of our race in its feebleness and insignificance. What is the reply? We argue too much from ourselves up to the Almighty. We know only a few things: we know nothing thoroughly. It is only the outside of things we see. It is one of the sad entails of scientific exploration, that we have got, in these latter days, into a labyrinthine maze of second causes. . . . The belief in Providence is too happy to be parted with. God is watching all our fortune, guarding all our welfare, guiding all our way. The mysterious and fearful dispensations of His providence may seem inscrutable and past finding out. Alas! we are all very apt to believe in Providence when we get our own way, but when things go awry, we think, if there is a God, He is in heaven, and not on the earth. (*A. B. Jack, D.D.*) *God judges better than man*:—When we consider that there is a God of infinite perfection at the head of the universe, extending His providence to every event, and making it the expression of His will, it seems to be the plainest of all truths that such creatures as we are, ought to be cheerfully subject to His disposal. Time was when submission to God on the part of man was not deemed grievous. Then the

will of man and the will of his God were one. But man would be wiser than his Maker, and vainly imagined that, in consulting his own will, higher satisfaction was to be found than in according with the holy will of a perfect God: in the same path of miserable adventure have gone, ever since, his blind and unhappy offspring. To develop this form of human selfishness, and to show how unbecoming it is in such a creature as man, let us consider it—I. AS HIGHLY PRESUMPTUOUS. Look at the lesson of experience. In all their estimates men are not merely liable to mistakes, but they constantly fall into them. The very events to which men are chiefly indebted for their happiness are not of their own contriving. It is the testimony of experience, that we neither understand well how to choose events, nor how to control them. The presumption is still more strikingly apparent if we reflect on our own incompetence to govern. Can we even look through time? Can we cast an eye over immensity and through eternity? The presumption is still more striking when we reflect on our inability by comparison or contrast. What is man, and what is God? II. THIS DESIRE, IF ACCOMPLISHED, WOULD BE FATAL TO THE HIGHEST AND BEST INTERESTS. What would become of the glory of God? The effects would not be less fatal to the interests of any community. It would be equally fatal to the individual interests of man. And still more fatal to their spiritual interests. How differently we should order events from the manner in which God orders them, if things might be according to our mind. III. THIS STATE OF MIND IS HIGHLY OFFENSIVE TO GOD. It betrays almost every evil temper and disposition. It shows a sordid attachment to our own selfish interests. This desire betrays also dissatisfaction with God. It bespeaks ingratitude to God. It is in direct rebellion against God. To govern the world is the prerogative of God. To wish to change the administration at all is an invasion of that prerogative, and high treason against the King of kings. It is distrust of God. Remarks—1. Submission to the Divine will is necessary to secure the blessings which we need. 2. Acquiescence in the Divine will is a duty which respects *all* events. 3. Let this subject support us under the trials of this world, and animate us in our way to a better. (*N. W. Taylor, D.D.*) *Presumption reproved*:—This was a very proper question to be put to Job, whose danger was, to challenge and arraign the ways of God. But the principle reproved in him is largely diffused among men. Our proneness to oppose our judgments to the Divine determinations sometimes appears. I. WITH RESPECT TO THE EXTENT OF THE DIVINE LAW. We allow His right to govern. God claims to govern the opinions of men; to regulate the will, by a wise adjustment of its degrees of choice to the degrees of moral goodness. II. WITH RESPECT TO RELIGION AS A MATTER OF EXPERIENCE. If it were "according to thy mind," what would be the system of experimental piety set before us? III. WITH REFERENCE TO THE METHOD OF OUR PARDON AS SINNERS. That beings who have so greatly offended should ever stand upon being pardoned in a way prescribed by themselves to their greatly-offended God, though a strange fact, is yet established. And here man claims, proudly and petulantly claims, that it shall be according to his mind. IV. THE PRINCIPLE IS ILLUSTRATED IN ANOTHER, BUT NOT AN UNINSTRUCTIVE MANNER, BY THAT TENDENCY THERE IS IN US TO WRESTLE WITH THE APPOINTMENTS OF GOD IN THE CHOICE OF OUR LOT AND PORTION IN LIFE. Here, indeed, we not unfrequently think that it ought to be according to our mind: and we as often find ourselves very painfully crossed in our endeavours to make it so. V. THIS PRINCIPLE IS APT TO SHOW ITSELF, EVEN IN GOOD MEN, IN WHAT WE MAY CALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THEIR EXPERIENCE. Far better take religion as described in the Scriptures. To take our providential lot, and extract good from it. And to leave the process of our recovery from sin to holiness in the hands of God. (*R. Watson.*) *The mind of God*:—The mind of man is not the mind of God. Suppose man had the ordering of things, what an alteration would he make in the Lord's counsels and arrangements. Is the mind of the spiritual man opposite to that of God? Through the abounding grace of his Redeemer it is in great measure otherwise. But in him, yea, even in him, there is a frame of mind, at times, which rises, or which strives to rise, against the mind of God. There are certain dispensations of God's providence which even he is often under strong temptations to wish otherwise. When affliction comes upon him, he sometimes thinks God's hand presses too sore, and beyond what the case asks for. Even the mind of the believer is not, in many points, conformed to the mind of God. Consider a comparison of God and His creatures. 1. In point of rank and eminency. 2. In point of wisdom. 3. Think of the Lord's graciousness and

goodness. The experience of all ages is enough to teach us how ill it has been when things have been according to men's own minds, and how well it has been when they have submitted to the mind of God. The Lord has sometimes let men have their own way; and sad has been the consequence. A last reason why the believer ought not to desire that things should be according to his mind, is that such was not the spirit of Christ his Saviour. Even Christ pleased not Himself. And yet how much reason there is to fear that this is the secret wish of too many of us. Else why so much of fretfulness and discontent when things are not according to our mind? (*A. Roberts, M.A.*) *Submission to the Divine will*:—Man is so imperfect in his views, so weak in his faith, so worldly in his spirit, and so selfish in his actions, as to be incapable of wisely directing his own affairs; how much more then is he incapable of suggesting anything to Him, who is "wonderful in counsel and excellent in working!" I. EXPLAIN THE NATURE OF THIS SUBMISSION. It is the yielding of the heart to God in all the dispensations of His providence, and in the administration of His government. It is a state entirely remote from apathy or stoicism. It cherishes, rather than destroys, the best sensibilities of our nature. Some have distinguished between submission and resignation. This state of mind is the subjection of our reason to the supreme authority in reference to various truths which we cannot comprehend. It is the surrender of the will to His gracious arrangements. II. URGE THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS SUBJECT. To submit ourselves unto God is a duty founded on the most solid principles, and urged by the most cogent and feasible considerations. Consider—1. The state of man. As a creature, it is that of subjection to God, and entire dependence upon Him. As a sinner, man has fallen into the lowest degradation—abject poverty and complete vassalage. 2. The character of God. He has a right to dispense His favours as He may please. 3. The nature of God's moral government. The whole of the Divine procedure to man is founded on the most sacred principles, the everlasting principles of moral justice, the essential principles of moral goodness, and the unalterable principles of moral rectitude. Can such a being do wrong? 4. The state of mind evinced in some of the most distinguished characters. Example is of great consequence and of great influence. Take the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and patience—such as Aaron, Eli, Job, &c. III. ILLUSTRATE THE ADVANTAGES OF THIS STATE OF MIND. Our duty and our happiness are closely united; in keeping of God's commands there is great reward. 1. Submission is the effect of Divine influence, and thus becomes an evidence of grace. 2. It is the operation of sacred principle, and accordingly prepares the mind for future trials. Religion does not exempt from suffering; but it ensures adequate support. 3. It is a blessing of the New Covenant, and, as such, is an earnest of heaven. IV. SUGGEST MOTIVES TO ITS EXERCISE. 1. Reflect much on your own moral guilt. Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? 2. Contemplate the sufferings of Christ; these were numerous, direful, overwhelming. He suffered in His person, in His circumstances, in His character. He suffered in His soul. He suffered as a substitute. 3. Contrast present sufferings with future glories. 4. Consider the great inconsistency of the want of submission with your own character as creatures, with your state as sinners, and with your profession and prayers and obligations as Christians. (*John Arundel.*) *Whose way shall it be?*—The theology of Job's friends was, that success waits on a right character and sorrow attends a wrong one. With this theology, if a man has sorrow, misfortune, and pain, it is certain his character is amiss. Like many other of later times, they never once thought of revising their theology when they found it did not fit the facts. They take a short cut; they revise the facts. The fact is, that the good are not free from suffering, and the bad are not given up to it. Becoming a Christian does not exempt a person from trial, or give him what he wants. He can have what he wants, if he wants what God wants him to have; He can have his way if his way is God's way. To become Christians is, in general, to give up our plans to Him, our will to His. Religion is self-surrender. What is the freedom of the will? Freedom is not an absolute but a relative term. There is no such thing as unqualified freedom. Freedom of the will does not mean freedom from all restraints; it does not mean licence; but freedom "from some particular kind of restraint or inducement to which other beings are subject." Freedom is not freedom from the influence of motives, but freedom to make choice of motives. Man's will is subject to motives. Here is what we mean when we speak of forming a character. To form a character is to induce a probability that

a man under given conditions will act in a manner which can be foreseen. Man can see where he is weak, and when he sees a motive coming to assail him which he thinks too strong for him, he can interpose another to shut out the first. The education of a man is for a man to come under the controlling influence of certain motives; a right education is to come under the easy and permanent control of the best motives. We see, then, that not the man most obedient to determined motives is the slave, but he whose conduct can be the least foreseen. The slave is one who is subject to the impulse of the moment, given over to the whim and caprice of any passion that may strike him. The strong man, the free man, the large, hopeful, intelligent, brave man, is he who has made the most perfect surrender to the best motives. We have the paradox, striking but true, that the man who possesses this freedom of will in its most valuable form is the one whose will is the most nearly a slave to the best motives, and who therefore obeys them easily and without rebellion. It comes to this, that when we speak of religion as being self-surrender to God, we mean that human freedom consists in the frank, conscious, total, irreversible, glad surrender to Him in whom all the highest motives which actuate humanity reside, and from whom they take their origin. The Lord Jesus represents this central character to the world. This self-surrender to the will of God is wisdom. We are starting out with the end in view to make something of ourselves which shall stand the shock of death and the wear of eternity. Now it is wise to give the conduct of this process into the hands of God. And for two very simple reasons. 1. Because we do not know the elements which would work into the character we desire. And 2. We have not the power to combine them if we did. (*Henry Elliot Mott.*) *Should it be according to our mind?*—No one has all he wishes. Many have a great deal in the life-lot which they deprecate, object to, resent, and strive against with all their might, albeit in vain. Much depends on the "mind" a man has. How much "mind" has he to begin with? Of what nature is it? How is it ordered and kept? If the temper is keen, and the will strong, and the view of life and duty defined and decisive, then between the soul and events there will be continual collision. Things will not take their right shape;—all this will be, unless there shall come in, happily, the explanation and corrective of a trustful faith, of true religion. The only answer we can give to the question of the text is in the negative. It should not be according to our mind. 1. Because our knowledge is so limited. Our judgment of things is quite as imperfect as our knowledge of them. We mistake the nature of what we do see. The forms of things are not the things themselves. 3. If this were granted in one case, it must be granted in all. 4. The very thing we seek by self-will is not attained by it. No self-willed man is happy. Not even when in a large measure he gets what he seeks. 5. There is one moral Governor of this world, and only one, who governs and keeps us all. His will is sufficiently made known to each to be to him a rule of practical guidance in everything he has to do. The providence of natural law contemplates and provides for only one plan of life for each—the best. The failure of that must bring penalty, and, indeed, irretrievable disaster. Well may it be according to the mind of God, and ill must it be with any who still insist that it shall be according to their own. (*Alex. Raleigh, D.D.*) *Justice requires government by an unerring mind:*—Judgment must be shaped according to knowledge, and where ignorance prevails, how can the judgment be just? A railroad engineer was arrested and tried for manslaughter because his train ran into another, passing half-way through one carriage before it stopped. In the trial the defendant deposed that he was running on schedule time, only fifteen miles an hour, and so was not responsible for the disaster. The prosecution charged that he was running thirty miles an hour, and was, therefore, entirely to blame. It was a question of the rate of speed, and an accurate knowledge of this one fact was essential to a just decision. With certain figures at his command, a professor in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology carefully calculated the momentum of the moving train and the inertia of the ill-fated carriage, and found that the result was in perfect accord with the statement of the engineer. Had the rate of speed been thirty miles an hour it was clearly shown that the increased momentum would have forced his engine four times as far. And the engineer was at once set at liberty. Now, without this knowledge of mathematics, who would presume to sit in just judgment upon such a case? Shall men of less experience, and much more limited understanding, affirm that justice must be according to their mind? Before presuming thus much, it might be well to make at least one honest attempt to answer the wonderful questions which the Lord asked Job out of the whirlwind,

and then confess that our knowledge is as the rivulet, our ignorance as the sea. (*R. Cox, D.D.*) *Our own way preposterous* :—We are all very apt to believe in Providence when we get our own way; but when things go awry, we think, if there is a God, He is in heaven and not upon earth. The cricket, in the spring, builds his house in the meadow, and chirps for joy because all is going so well with him. But when he hears the sound of the plough a few furrows off, and the thunder of the oxen's tread, then his sky begins to darken, and his young heart fails him. By and by the plough comes craunching along, turns his dwelling bottom-side up, and as he goes rolling over and over, without a house and without a home, "Oh," he says, "the foundations of the world are breaking up, and everything is hastening to destruction." But the husbandman, as he walks behind the plough, does he think the foundations of the world are breaking up? No. He is thinking only of the harvest that is to follow in the wake of the plough; and the cricket, if it will but wait, will see the husbandman's purpose. My hearers, we are all like crickets. When we get our own way we are happy and contented. When we are subjected to disappointment we become the victims of despair. (*A. B. Jack.*) *Our mind should be in harmony with God's mind* :—There is a way by which you may get everything according to your own mind. Men have been labouring to discover the philosopher's stone—the secret by which they could transmute iron, copper, tin, all their possessions into gold. Now, there is a way—and I will show it in one word—there is a way by which we may get everything according to our own mind. They tell me, if you take two instruments and tune them into perfect harmony, and lay your finger on one and sound it, that the other, though in a fainter tone, sends forth the same note, as though an invisible musician stood by the harp and touched it with the light finger of a spirit. Be that true or not, of all instruments, I know that if the Holy Spirit tune your discordant soul into perfect harmony with God; I know that if there be a holy harmony between heaven and earth, your mind and God, then you have everything according to your own mind, because your mind is according to the mind of God. (*Ibid.*) *Pride catechised* :—I. To begin at the beginning, here is, first, A QUESTION: "Should it be according to thy mind?" You say that you are willing to find mercy, and that you are very teachable; but you object to the plan of salvation as it is revealed in the Scriptures. First, then, what is it to which you object? Do you object to the very basis of the plan, namely, that God will forgive sin through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His Son? But, possibly, you do not object to the doctrine of substitution, but your objection is to the way of salvation by faith. But if you object to this doctrine, how would you like to have it altered? "Oh, well! I would like to have some good feelings put in with faith." And how, then, would any man be saved? Can he command his own feelings? "Oh, but!" say some, "we object to the requirements of the Gospel, especially to that verse where Christ says, 'Ye must be born again.' Well, sirs, as you say that Christ's requirements are not according to your mind, what would you like them to be? What sin is there, in the whole world, that would be put to death if men were left to pick and choose the Agag which each one wished to save? "Should it be according to thy mind?" No, certainly not; for, putting all reasons into one, it is not the slightest use for you to make any objection to the Gospel, for you will be lost if you do not accept it just as it is revealed in the Scriptures. I have thus tried to mention a few of the objections which men make to God's plan of salvation. Now let me ask two or three questions. First, should not God have His way? You know that when we give even a trifling charity, we like to do it in our own way. O Lord, if Thou wilt but save me, save me anyhow! Further, is not God's way the best? The mind of God is so infinitely great, and good, and wise, that it cannot be supposed that, even if He left the plan of salvation to our option, we could choose anything half as good as what He decrees and appoints. Suppose the plan of salvation should be according to any human mind, whose mind is to decide what it shall be? Yours? Nay, mine. And another says, "No, mine." II. Now, secondly, here is A WARNING: "He will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose." By this I understand that, whatever our will may be, God will carry out His own purpose. I would also remind you that, though you cavil at God's way of salvation, God will punish sin just the same. And further, though you may object to God's way of salvation, others will be saved by it. Christ did not die in vain. Just once more, upon this point, let me say that God will certainly magnify His own name, whoever may oppose Him. III. This brings us to the third part of our subject, on which I desire to say

exactly what Elihu said: "and not I." We cannot be absolutely sure what these three words mean; but if they mean what I think they do, they teach us a lesson, which I have called A PROTEST. Whenever you find anyone opposing God, say to yourself, "and not I." When there is any wrong thing being done, and it comes under your notice, say, "and not I." Take care that you go not with a multitude to do evil. What Elihu did mean, I think, was this. Whoever opposes God should know that he is not dealing with a man like himself. Elihu also means, I think, "I will not be responsible for the man who refuses God's Word. I will not stand in his place, or take the blame which is due to him." And, once more, Elihu means, "If you refuse God's Word, it is not I. I will not share in your rebellion against Him." IV. Our last head is, A CHALLENGE AND AN INVITATION. If there are any who refuse the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, for any reason known only to themselves, we venture to ask them to say what it is: "Therefore speak what thou knowest." It was not in Elihu's mind to tell Job to be silent, and never open his mouth again. Speech is the glory of man, and freedom of speech, as far as concerns his fellow-creatures, is the right of every man. It is far better that, when there is a difficulty or an objection, it should be fairly stated, than that it should lie smothered up within the soul to breed untold mischief. Therefore, if thou hast an objection to God's Word, write it out, and look at it. But at the same time, when thou art speaking, "speak what thou knowest." Now, what dost thou really know of God? Little enough do the most of us know; but, still, I think we know enough to know that He is not the god of modern times whom some preach. It is well for us to speak of God as we have found Him. He has dealt kindly and graciously with us: "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities"; else had we been cast away for ever. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 34. **Let men of understanding tell me.**—*Abide by certitudes:*—It behoves us to beware of originality in matters of faith. The old maxim that "What is true is not new, and what is new is not true," is of no little value. Parke Godwin used to say that he had heard a good deal of "original investigation where the originality surpassed the investigation." Dr. C. F. Deans also remarked, "Believe your beliefs, and doubt your doubts; never make the mistake of doubting your beliefs and believing your doubts." Never be reckless in abandoning, without sufficient cause, a faith long cherished by the most devout souls of all ages. As Paley says, "We should never suffer what we know to be disturbed by what we do not know." And Butler well adds, "If a truth be established, objections are nothing; the one is founded on our knowledge, the other on our ignorance." There is an Arab fable of a dervish who was told that the "philosopher's stone" lay in a certain river-bed. He picked up pebble after pebble only to throw it away; and actually picked up the treasure among the rest, but he had formed such a habit of casting away that he threw the philosopher's stone away too, and never could recover it. (*A. T. Pierson.*)

CHAPTER XXXV.

VERS. 3–8. **For thou saidst, What advantage will it be unto thee?**—*Man's character:*—Nothing is so important to man as his character. I. THAT SELFISHNESS IS AN EVIL IN MAN'S CHARACTER. "For thou saidst, What advantage will it be unto thee? and, What profit shall I have, if I be cleansed from my sin?" Whether Job expressed this selfish idea or not, Elihu's language implies that such an idea is a great evil. It is by no means an uncommon thing for men to take up religion on purely selfish motives. 1. There are some who take it up for mere worldly gain. 2. There are some who take it up for eternal gain. Their object is to escape hell and get to heaven. Religion to them is not the *summum bonum*, is but a means to a selfish end. II. THAT GOD IS INDEPENDENT OF MAN'S CHARACTER. "Look unto the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds which are higher than thou. If thou sinnest, what doest thou against Him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto Him?" This being the case, it follows that sovereignty must be the principle of all His conduct with men.

1. It is the reason of all law. Why does He require us to love and serve Him? Not for His own sake, but for ours. Thus only I can become happy. 2. It is the source of redemption. Why did He send His Son into the world? He cannot be advantaged by it. "God so loved the world," &c. 3. It is the ground of rewards. The blessedness He communicates to the good, is given not on the ground of merit, but of grace. III. THAT SOCIETY IS INFLUENCED BY MAN'S CHARACTER. One man's character is reproduced in another. The righteousness of one must profit society. Three things give every man some influence upon his race. 1. Relationship. 2. Dependence. 3. Affection. If righteous we are fountains of life, whence rivers to irrigate, purify, and beautify the world will flow down the ages. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 6–8. **If thou sinnest, what doest thou against Him?**—*Does man influence God?*—Elihu, in these words, brings out his views of God in the form of questions, which views are of an Epicurean character. He looks upon God as a being so far above human concerns and conduct as not to be influenced by them. There are those now who have sympathy with these sentiments. They say God is too high and too great to be affected by the sin or righteousness of man. The doctrine of the Bible is, that man's conduct does influence God as well as man. I. ANSWER THE TWO QUESTIONS THAT ELIHU, IN HIS SCEPTICISM, PROPOUNDS. 1. "If thou sinnest, what doest thou against Him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto Him?" A man that lives in sin, and multiplies his transgressions—(1) Sets God at defiance as his Sovereign Ruler. (2) Violates His laws. (3) Rivals God. (4) Opposes God's nature. (5) Casts off His fear and restrains prayer. (6) Rejects His mercy, grace, truth, and love. If God was an Epicurean God, man's sins may not affect Him; but all His revelations of Himself to us go to show that He is our Father, Sovereign, Saviour; that He hates sin; that He loves the sinner. Hence our sins do influence Him. The Bible abounds with illustrations of these particulars. 2. If thou be righteous, what givest thou Him? or what receiveth He of thine hand? A righteous man (truly such in the scriptural sense) gives to the Almighty—(1) Praise for what He is. (2) Thanks for what He does. (3) Obedience to His laws. (4) Submission to His will. (5) Himself a living sacrifice (Rom. xii. 1). (6) Love for love. "We love Him because He first loved us." (7) His testimony. He is His witness. Numerous illustrations of these particulars also may easily be collected from the Old and New Testament. The second part of this text, Elihu has no doubt about. Neither have those sceptics in our day, who sympathise with him in his former sentiments. 1. "Thy wickedness may hurt, or injure a man as thou art." As to the hurt your wickedness may do your fellow, it may depend much upon the nature of the wickedness and the character, relations, and circumstances of your fellow-man. One form of wickedness affects one man in one way, and another a different way. For instance, lying will hurt where swearing may not; and drunkenness where dishonesty may not. This thought more particularly applies to example. But look at the particular in its general application. Thy slander may hurt another man's character. Thy false accusation may hurt his feelings and reputation. Thy theft or dishonesty may hurt his property or circumstances. Thy calumny or detraction may injure his influence for good upon others. Humanity is one body—one family—one society; and it is impossible for one member to do wickedly without affecting in some way or other, to some degree or other, the rest. 2. "Thy righteousness may profit the son of man." On the same principle that wickedness hurts our fellow-men, righteousness is a benefit to them. If the term righteousness here be understood in a broad sense, as right-doing according to the moral instinct, it is profitable to man in a world like this, where human nature is so prone to wrong-doing. If the term be understood as the righteousness which is by faith in Jesus Christ—as received from Him in justification, and as wrought in Him in good works, according to His Spirit—it is still more profitable to man. This may be shown in the terms used to designate such:—the "light of the world." Light is good and useful in darkness;—the "salt of the earth." Salt is good and profitable in many ways. Righteousness implies truthfulness, honesty, goodness, purity, humility, benevolence, temperance, brotherly kindness, charity; and each of these is profitable in its influence on our fellow-men. As wheat, fruit, flowers, vegetables, &c., in the natural world are profitable to man; so are the fruits and flowers of righteousness in the moral world. Learn—1. Your responsibility to

individuals and society in respect to your conduct towards them. 2. Your responsibility to God in respect to wicked or righteous conduct before Him. 3. The necessity of having a new nature within in order to live righteously before God and man. (*J. Bate.*)

Vers. 10, 11. **But none saith, Where is God my Maker?**—*Questions which ought to be asked:*—Elihu perceived the great ones of the earth oppressing the needy, and he traced their domineering tyranny to their forgetfulness of God. "None said, Where is God my Maker?" Surely, had they thought of God, they could not have acted so unjustly. Worse still, if I understand Elihu aright, he complained that even among the oppressed there was the same departure in heart from the Lord: they cried out by reason of the arm of the mighty, but unhappily they did not cry unto God their Maker, though He waits to be gracious unto all such, and executeth righteousness and judgment for all the oppressed. I. THINK OVER THESE NEGLECTED QUESTIONS. 1. Where is God? Pope said, "The proper study of mankind is man"; but it is far more true that the proper study of mankind is God. Let man study man in the second place, but God first. Some men have a place for everything else, but no place in their heart for God. They are most exact in the discharge of other relative duties, and yet they forget their God. 2. Where is God thy Maker? Oh! unthinking man, God made you. Do you never think of your Maker? Have you no thought for Him without whom you could not think at all? 3. Where is God our Comforter? "Who giveth songs in the night?" Though you have had very severe trials, you have always been sustained in them when God has been near you. It will be very sad if we poor sufferers forget our God, our Comforter, our Song-giver. 4. Where is God our Instructor? Who "teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of the heaven?" God has given us intellect. It is not by accident, but by His gift, that we are distinguished from the beasts and the fowls. If animals do not turn to God, we do not wonder, but shall man forget? Why, O man, with thy superior endowments, art thou the sole rebel, the only creature of earthly mould that forgets the creating and instructing Lord? II. THERE ARE QUESTIONS WHICH GOD WILL ASK OF YOU. Adam heard the voice cry, "Where art thou?" There will come such a voice to you if you have neglected God. Though you hide in the top of Carmel, or dive with the crooked serpent into the depths of the sea, you will hear that voice, and be constrained to answer it. You will hear a second question by and by, "Why didst thou live and die without Me?" Such questions as these will come thick upon you—"What did I do that thou shouldst slight Me? Did I not give you innumerable mercies? Why did you never think of Me?" You will have no answer to these questions. Then will come another question—"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" III. GIVE THE ANSWERS TO THE GRAVE INQUIRIES OF THE TEXT. Where is God? He is everywhere. Where is God your Maker? He is within eyesight of you. You cannot see Him, but He sees you. Where is your Comforter? He is ready with "songs in the night." Where is your Instructor? He waits to make you wise unto salvation. "Where then may I meet Him?" says one. You cannot meet Him—you must not attempt it—except through the Mediator. If you come to Jesus, you have come to God. Believe in Jesus Christ, and your God is with you. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Neglect of God in seasons of need:*—I. THAT SEASONS OF AFFLICTION SHOULD INDUCE MEN TO SEEK AFTER GOD. 1. All men are exposed to trouble. (1) Temporal visitations of Divine displeasure. When God visits a nation with war, famine, or pestilence, then it is a time of darkness. When families or individuals are subjected to poverty, to disappointment in their plans, hopes, &c. Happy are they who have then the God of light for their refuge. (2) Bodily and mental afflictions may be compared to night. (3) The season of temptation is a dark season (1 Pet. i. 6). (4) Declensions and backslidings lead to darkness (Rev. ii. 4, 5). (5) Death is compared to night (John ix. 4). 2. It is the duty of all to inquire after God. "Where is God my Maker?" (1) A conviction that He is the source of all that is good and excellent, and that without an interest in Him the soul will be ruined for ever. (2) Investigation of His character by the light of revelation. (3) A deep conviction of our state of alienation from Him, which induces repentance, godly sorrow, &c. (4) A knowledge of Christ as the Mediator, the way to the Father—a cordial reception of His own terms of reconciliation, and the exercise of faith in the Redeemer's sacrifice. (5) Frequent prayer to Him, especially in seasons

of darkness, believing that in Him alone is our help found. II. THAT GOD CAN AND WILL AFFORD RELIEF IN THE DARKEST SEASONS. "Who giveth songs in the night." He can give deliverance, grant support and consolation, and sanctify all the trials of His people, which will make them utter songs of gladness and praise. 1. It is evident from His power. "Who has an arm like God?" &c. (Psa. lxvi. 3, xlvi. 1, &c; Deut. xxxiii. 27). The Psalmist might well sing of His power (Psa. xxi. 13). 2. It is evident from His love. He loves as a father, and will defend them, and save them. 3. It is evident from His promises. 4. It is evident from what He has done. "Call to remembrance the former days." (1) He has given songs in the night of spiritual alarm (Acts xvi. 34). (2) He has given songs in the time of deprivation and want (Hab. iii. 17–19; 1 Cor. v. 11); yet the apostles uttered songs of triumph (2 Cor. i. 3, 4). (3) He has given songs under bodily afflictions (2 Cor. xii. 7–10). (4) He has given songs in the time of persecution (Rom. viii. 36, 37, &c.; 2 Tim. i. 12; Matt. v. 10). (5) He has given songs in the hour of temptation (1 Cor. x. 13; James i. 12; 1 Pet. i. 6). (6) He has given songs in the night of death (Psa. xxiii. 4; Acts xxi. 13; 1 Cor. xv. 55). III. WHY IT IS THAT SO FEW ARE INQUIRING AFTER GOD. 1. Because man naturally hates God (Rom. viii. 7). 2. From the want of spiritual perception (1 Cor. ii. 14). 3. Because they are intoxicated with the vain pleasures of earth. 4. Pride also prevents them (Psa. x. 4). 5. Because they are captives to Satan. They are his servants—him they obey (Eph. ii. 2). Application—1. The happiness of those who inquire after God. 2. The present and future misery of the wicked. 3. Seek the Lord while He may be found. (*Helps for the Pulpit.*) *Inquiry after God:*—It is the height of ingratitude to forget God in the day of prosperity. Considering, however, the deep corruption of man's fallen nature, there is little in such ingratitude, culpable as it is, to excite our surprise. The great subject for wonder is, that while God has revealed Himself as the refuge of the oppressed, a friend in the day of calamity, a Saviour from guilt, and sin, and hell, a comforter in darkness, and a deliverer in trouble, He should be neglected in circumstances and times when no other being and no other object can cheer the heart, or interpose any effectual relief. There is no deficiency of complaint in the hour of affliction, come from what source it may. The charge of the text is one involving deep criminality. It implies an affectation of independence of God; it argues ingratitude; it evinces all the temerity of rebellion; it is the expression of contempt. For it is the duty, and it ought to be esteemed the delight of the rational soul to be inquiring after God, to be climbing up the ascent to an intimate acquaintance and near fellowship with Him, who is the Father of our spirits and the God of glory. But wherefore is it necessary to inquire after God? Whence this language importing difficulty—language which supposes the absence of God our Maker? There is no local distance to separate between the soul of any living thing and Him the former of it. The only absence of God from men is one of reserve, of restrained manifestation: it is the cold distance of offence created by human guilt; for we have compelled Him to stand aloof; we have insulted Him in the manifestation of His glory. Therefore it is necessary to seek God, and to say, "Where is God my Maker?" To solicit, not His presence, for that necessarily fills heaven and earth, but His favourable presence, the spiritual union of our souls with Him. We must seek Him as He is "in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." What are the motives which ought to influence every one to ask, "Where is God my Maker?" and to seek Him as He reveals Himself in Christ Jesus? 1. His glory, that we may give Him the worship due to His name and majesty. 2. That we may express our gratitude. 3. That we may obtain assurance of His favour. 4. That we may learn His will. 5. That we may secure His help. But the charge is aggravated. Were God a being regardless of the worship, the miseries, and discomforts of His creatures, although such neglect could not then be justified, yet it would seem to be palliated to a certain extent. But when God is a strength to the poor, when it is in the ordinary course of His government to heal the broken in heart, the neglect is greatly aggravated. The night is a general symbol for what is melancholy and sorrowful; as the day, illuminated by the splendour of the sun, is the image of joy and exhilaration. Whatever the darkness we contemplate, we shall find that for that "night season" God has provided consolations, has given songs to cheer the heart of the believer. Life itself is a time of darkness. It is a scene of sin, trial, and temptation. There are seasons of gloomy night to individuals, as well as to the world. The seasons of temptation, affliction, and death, are times of darkness, on which Christ arises as the light. Then let reason have her just

sway, and you will inquire after God your Maker. You will become penitent, humble believers in Christ. You will become new creatures. (*T. Kennion, M.A.*) *Men who do not ask for God*:—"None sayeth, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?" They do not betake themselves to God thus revealed for consolation in their trials. There are some who ask not for God at all, speculative or practical—atheists, who, in conscious fear of Divine holiness and justice and truth, set themselves resolutely to disbelieve in the Divine existence, and strangely choose to be creatures of chance and slaves to inexorable fate, rather than the creatures of a personal God—the children of a Heavenly Father. So, instead of asking for God, they go groping amid old geologic ruins for some substitute for the Eternal One, crying into every skeleton and spectre, "Where is this monstrous thing, 'force' or 'law,' that hides itself in the night?" And in this reference there is an undesigned but withering irony in Job's foregoing confession, "I said to corruption, Thou art my father, and to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister." And we leave the whole school to the raptures of such a brotherhood and sisterhood—to all the consolation, in coming trials, of the promise unto those who "honour such a father and mother," to fill all the death-caverns of unbelief with the sibilation inspired by such a genesis. But be it our blessed privilege to honour a nobler parentage, to cherish holier hopes and higher memories, and to go forth amid present glooms crying, "Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?" (*C. Wadsworth, D.D.*) *Song in the night of sorrow*:—The late Sir Arthur Sullivan had long admired the words of "The Lost Chord," and had made up his mind to set them to music. Relating the circumstances of the composition of the best-known sacred solo of the day, Sir Arthur said, "One night I was in the room next to that in which my brother lay dying. I had been watching at his bedside, and was thoroughly tired out and weary. I chanced to sit down in the room and there the noble words were before me. I did not rise from the seat until I had composed the music." The lovely strains were composed in the hour of sorrow. The dark night gave birth to the sweet song! Perhaps we do not know what we are producing when we travel the rough road—we are only conscious of the pains, and not of the products. But we may rest assured that our Father knows the ministry of every circumstance through which He makes us pass. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *Men's neglect of God*:—I. WHAT IS MEANT BY INQUIRING AFTER GOD OUR MAKER? 1. When we investigate the important question, Is there a Deity? what notions are we to form of His nature, perfections, and providence? 2. When we apply to Him in the exercise of religious duty, particularly prayer (Job. viii. 5; Isa. lv. 6). 3. When we are solicitous to discover His will concerning our duty and privilege, as moral and reasonable beings (Rom. xii. 2; 1 Thess. iv. 3). 4. When we earnestly pant after His approbation, and give ourselves no rest till we obtain it, through repentance for sin, and faith in the atonement of the Son of God (Rom. iii. 25, 26). 5. When we thirst after that better country, where God is enjoyed, and where our inquiries after Him shall meet with ample success. There we shall have the justest and the brightest ideas of Him, the most glorious resemblance of His holy and benevolent nature (1 John iii. 2). II. WHY IS IT THAT SO FEW ARE MAKING THIS INQUIRY? 1. Because mankind are so much engaged about visible things: these strike the senses more than things of a spiritual and invisible nature; and seem to be the only things which command their attention. 2. Dissipation. They have no taste but for play and amusement, one scene of diversion after another; the hours which should be spent in intercourse with heaven, are prostituted to folly, vanity, and idleness. 3. They make a God of this world, by placing their affections supremely upon it (James iv. 4); its gold and silver, honour, fame, power, dominion, popular applause. 4. They are sensual, making a God of pleasure, sensuality, lascivious gratifications. How can a soul, thus fettered to earth, elevate itself to inquire after God its Maker? no more than a bird can ascend without wings. 5. Some live so criminally, that God is the object of their dread: they wish there was no God; are glad to hear religion opposed; would be happy to hear its truths confuted, if they could; they would obliterate the doctrine of providence, and the soul's immortality. III. CONSIDER THE AMIABLE ACCOUNT HERE GIVEN OF GOD. "He giveth songs in the night"; or matter of songs, &c. 1. By exhibiting those bright orbs which fill the expanse of heaven (Psa. viii. 3, 4). 2. Night may be taken figuratively. Day is put for prosperity, success, joy, and comfort. Night for adversity, calamity, grief, and vexation. God cheereth the mourner's heart, and solaceth His people in the night of adversity, grants support, unexpected

relief (Psa. lxvi. 19). 3. He giveth songs in the night of death, of praise and thanksgiving, of victory (1 Cor. xv. 55, iv. 7). Improvement—1. Let us rejoice in Him, who lifteth up the hands that hang down, and giveth songs of praise in adversity. 2. Let us adore the wisdom of Providence, in whose dispensations day and night, good and evil, are so seasonably blended, enjoy the good thankfully, suffer the evil with resignation. 3. Let us fortify ourselves under every calamity by looking forward. (*T. Hannam.*) *The apparent intentions of Divine wisdom*:—To inquire after God our Maker, with a view of understanding, so far as we are able, His designs, and conforming to His will, is our highest wisdom. But what are we able to know of Him? Are we able to attain no knowledge of Him? That would be denying our own reason, and degrading ourselves to a level with the brute creatures. God has distinguished us with a rational nature above them. It is therefore our privilege and duty to inquire, Where and what is God our Maker? His infinite unsearchable perfection ought not to discourage our humble and sincere inquiries; but is a consideration proper only to damp that pride, conceit, and self-sufficiency which would obstruct our inquiries, and prevent our attainment of real knowledge. All His works discover something of Him; and we are utterly ignorant of ourselves and of the world around us, if we know nothing of God. The apprehension of a Deity results immediately from the very consciousness of our own existence. Every creature around us points to a Creator. Our acquisition of knowledge was an intention of the Almighty Creator. All instruction comes from God, the original fountain of wisdom and knowledge. The Divine intention will strike our minds, if we attend to the gradual process by which men arrive at that portion of knowledge which they are severally possessed of. In the beginning of life the human soul subsists with few ideas, according to its minute capacity. But they multiply fast; the inquisitive curiosity is adapted to and gratified with a continual accession of new objects. When the stock of ideas is sufficiently increased, the comparing and judging faculty begins to operate. Here reason commences, and is henceforth continually employed in disposing the intellectual furniture of the mind, arranging everything in due place and order. Is there no design of creative wisdom in this admirable and evident process of nature? Did not God thus intend to disclose to us His works, and consequently lead us to the study and contemplation of Himself? The first branch of knowledge is that which respects ourselves and mankind around us, the relations, dependencies, connections, interests, inclinations, customs, and laws of human society. This qualifies me to live in society, and to behave as subjects of law and government, and in a manner proper to domestic and national obligations. The second branch of knowledge is that of a Supreme Being, as the maker and disposer of all things, the all-wise Governor of the whole world, the just Judge of mankind, and the original Author of all good. This knowledge is constantly taught by the still eloquence of universal nature. These two kinds of knowledge, so important and so beneficial, are common to mankind in general. Reflections—1. It becomes us to acknowledge with all gratitude the liberality and kindness of our Creator, in forming and designing us for the acquisition of such excellent and valuable knowledge, and in bringing us to the possession of it. 2. Let us observe and pursue the Divine intention, by a diligent improvement of our advantages. 3. The knowledge of God, and of the visible intentions of His wisdom and goodness in the frame of our world, in the faculties of our minds, and in the order of society, is the best preparation for understanding and embracing the Gospel of our Saviour. We must believe in God, before we can have faith in Christ; we must previously hear and learn of the Father Almighty, before we come to Christ duly qualified for His instructions. If we wisely improve present advantages, there is a glorious everlasting constitution, which God hath established in Christ Jesus our Lord, in order to our rising again from the dead to the enjoyment of immortality. (*E. Bown.*) **Who giveth songs in the night.**—*Songs in the night*:—I. WHAT SEASON OF OUR LIVES IS DESCRIBED UNDER THE IMAGE OF NIGHT? Night is the time of darkness and of gloominess; when we can see nothing and can do nothing, as we can in the bright and cheerful light of day. As such it fitly represents a time of ignorance, and unbelief, and sin. It also represents a time of adversity and of affliction, whether of a public or a private nature. The season of suffering is, to the unconverted person, a season of gloom and heaviness. How cheerless is the chamber of sickness to the eye and the heart of an unsanctified sufferer! II. WHAT IS THE REAL CHRISTIAN'S SPIRIT AND TEMPER AND CONDITION IN THESE DARK SEASONS

OF SUFFERING? Singing bespeaks an easy, contented, and happy state of mind. We seldom if ever hear a person singing who is very unhappy. But this excellent gift and faculty may be and often is abused. There are different sorts of song, and different characters who sing them. We should not understand the word "songs" in our text, only in its literal meaning. It also represents that sweet and composed and resigned spirit which the Christian sufferer experiences inwardly when all outward things are dark about him. "Songs in the night" describe that peaceful and composed frame of mind and soul which the Christian sufferer enjoys in his darkest night of suffering or sorrow. III. WHO IS TO GIVE US THIS CHRISTIAN SPIRIT, TEMPER, AND CONDITION? Even the Lord, our Maker, and Preserver, and Saviour, and Comforter. A heavenly mind and spirit can only proceed from heaven. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature"; and as such he receives a new nature, and a new spirit, and he sings a new song. He sees everything with different eyes; he receives everything with a different spirit; he bears everything with a different temper; he no longer looks upon himself, or his condition in this world, as he once did. It is no longer his rest; it is a school in which he is to learn lessons of heavenly wisdom; a warfare, in which he is to fight the good fight of faith. (*Robert Grant, B.C.L.*) *Songs in the night*:—Elihu suggests one possible reason why the cry of the afflicted is not oftener redressed. The reason suggested is, that it is a godless cry. "Surely God will not hear vanity." But if the sufferer would apply to God with a humbled, pentient, and believing spirit, the darkness might be more readily dispelled. God, our Maker, giveth songs in the night, songs at an unwonted time, melody when least expected. Here then we have a forcible and effective contrast. An ever-helpful truth this, that when the cry of deep disquietude and great unrest is changed into a prayer, when it assumes the form of an intelligent and patient faith, it loses in the act its plaintiveness and becomes triumphant. It is no longer the wail of hopelessness, it is the hallelujah of thanksgiving. 1. Young has these lines—

> "Earth, turning from the sun, brings night to man;
> Man, turning from his God, brings endless night."

And we have no more fit image than night for the occasion of our heaviest woes. What a pall sin will bring over our souls! We are all of us learning by experience. Are not our moods ofttimes of a sombre character? We cannot always control the moods of our soul. It is not easy to sing the song of faith when the voice refuses to sing the song of glad and happy love. Yet let the true soul wait on God, and the songs will come. Cry first, and you will sing presently. 2. So, too, faith may lose its assurance. It may want some of the links that give perfection and continuity to a personal trust. The shades of unbelief, or a faith that has lost its clearer lights, will sometimes take the place of a well-evidenced trust. If the time should ever come that you lose your early trust, do not let your cry lose aught of its devoutness; do not lose your hold upon God; still cling to Him. He is still with you in all those earnest questionings; and He will give you songs even in that dark night, if you cry to Him. 3. "At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises to God." It was a strange place for the voice of thanksgiving, for the melody of praise. That night seemed a fit image of their circumstances, dark enough in all truth. Not much, to human seeming, that could inspire songfulness; everything to beget fear and alarm. Not more so, perhaps you are thinking, than the circumstances of some you know—your own, perhaps. Little outwardly to cheer your life, very much to depress it. And yet you, too, may have songs of trust and loving confidence; songs of hope, and triumph in that hope. We must not spend the time of our trial in fruitless complaining. Let us besiege heaven with our suppliant tones. 4. But I think it would be easier to die for Christ than to live through the commonplace life of thousands of modern Christians, who have to drink of the water of affliction, and eat the bread of adversity, and yet be Christlike. Yes, to live thus, and still keep one's hold of God, and lift in consequence a hymn of glad thankfulness or patient hope, is it not yet more difficult? I often think so. 5. What is the aggregate life of the Church, with all its blessed fruits of love, joy, and peace, but a "song in the night"? If then, God has given any of us "songs in the night"; songs of happy love, songs of quiet hope, songs of deep trust, songs of true thankfulness, no night will last for ever. (*G. J. Proctor.*) *Songs in the night*:—There is sufficient in our God to give every saint a song

even during his darkest night of sorrow. 1. Our sufficiency in God is in no way affected by our outward circumstances. Have you never rejoiced in the purposes of your God? Another well of comfort is found in the love of God. The thought of God's having pardoned us is a fountain of joy. Have you not often rejoiced in the anticipation of heaven? What is your night? Perhaps it is one of changed prospects; or of changed health; or it is a night of bereavement; or, may be, of spiritual depression. 2. Some of the songs God gives to His saints. The song of faith; hope; tranquillity; sympathy with Jesus; heavenly anticipation. (*Archibald G. Brown.*) *Songs in the night*:—The world hath its night. It seems necessary that it should have one. Night is one of the greatest blessings man enjoys. Yet night is to many a gloomy season. Yet even night has its songs. Man, too, like the great world in which he lives, must have his night. And many a night do we have—nights of sorrow, of persecution, of doubt, of bewilderment, of anxiety, of oppression, of ignorance—nights of all kinds, which press upon our spirits, and terrify our souls. I. WHO IS THE AUTHOR OF THESE "SONGS IN THE NIGHT"? God our Maker. Any fool can sing in the day. It is easy enough for an Æolian harp to whisper music when the wind blows; the difficulty is for music to come when no wind blows. What does the text mean, when it asserts that God giveth songs in the night? Two answers. 1. Usually in the night of a Christian's experience God is his only song. We can sacrifice to ourselves in daylight—we only sacrifice to God by night. 2. He is the only one who inspires songs in the night. It is marvellous how one sweet word of God will make whole songs for Christians. II. WHAT IS GENERALLY THE MATTER CONTAINED IN A SONG IN THE NIGHT? What do we sing about? About the yesterday that is over; or else about the night itself; or else about the morrow that is to come. III. WHAT ARE THE EXCELLENCIES OF SONGS IN THE NIGHT ABOVE ALL OTHER SONGS? A song in the night of trouble is sure to be a hearty one. The songs we sing in the night will be lasting. They will be those which show a real faith in God. Such songs prove that we have true courage and true love to Christ. IV. SHOW THE USE OF SUCH SONGS. It is useful to sing in the night of our troubles, because thus we may cheer ourselves: because God loves to hear His people sing. Because it will cheer your companions. Because it is one of the best arguments in favour of your religion. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Songs in the night*:—In regard of God's dealings with our race, there is an almost universal disposition to the looking on the dark side, and not on the bright; as though there were cause for nothing but wonder, that a God of infinite love should permit so much misery in any section of His intelligent creation. We cannot deny, that if we merely regard the earth as it is, the exhibition is one whose darkness it is scarcely possible to overcharge. But when you seek to gather from the condition of the world the character of its Governor, you are bound to consider, not what the world is, but what it would be, if all which that Governor has done on its behalf were allowed to produce its legitimate effect. When you set yourselves to compute the amount of what may be called unavoidable misery—that misery which must equally remain, if Christianity possessed unlimited sway—you would find no cause for wonder, that God has left the earth burdened with so great a weight of sorrow, but only of praise, that He has provided so amply for the happiness of the fallen. The greatest portion of the misery which exists, arises in spite of God's benevolent arrangements, and would be avoided, if men were not bent on choosing the evil and rejecting the good. There must be sorrow on the earth, so long as there is death; but, if this were all, the certain hope of resurrection and immortality would dry every tear, or cause at least triumph so to blend with lamentation, that the mourner would almost be lost in the believer. For wise ends, a certain portion of suffering has been made unavoidable. When we come to give the reasons why so vast an accumulation of wretchedness is to be found in every district of the globe, we cannot assign the will and appointment of God; we charge the whole on man's forgetfulness of God; on his contempt or neglect of remedies and assuagements Divinely provided; yea, we offer in explanation the words of our text,—"None saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?" Elihu represents it as a most strange and criminal thing, that, though our Maker giveth songs in the night, He is not inquired after by those on whom the calamity presses. 1. What an aggravation it is of the guilt of men's forgetting their Creator, that He is a God who giveth "songs in the night." It is one beautiful instance of the adaptation of revela-

tion to our circumstances, that the main thing which it labours to set forth is the love of our Maker. Natural theology, whatever its success in delineating the attributes of God, could never have proved that sin had not excluded us from all share in His favour. The revelation, which alone can profit us, must be a revelation of mercy, a revelation which brings God before us as not made irreconcilable by our many offences. This is the character of the revelation with which we have been favoured. But if God has thus revealed Himself in the manner most adapted to the circumstances of the suffering, does not the character of the revelation vastly aggravate the sinfulness of those by whom God is not sought? 2. With how great truth and fitness this touching description may be applied to our Maker. Take the cases of death in a family, or the times of sorrow a minister meets with. And how accurate the description is, if referred generally to God's spiritual dealings with our race. Who would not be a believer in Christ? when such are the privileges of righteousness, the privileges through life, the privileges in death, the wonder is, that all are not eager to close with the offers of the Gospel, and make these privileges their own. (*Henry Melvill, B.D.*)

Ver. 14. **Therefore trust thou in Him.**—*The counsel of Elihu to the despondent*:—There is no word which the worshippers of God need to have whispered to their hearts more frequently than this, "Trust thou in Him." We are in a world, and under a system of events, wonderfully adapted to try our faith. I. IF WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD, WE MIGHT INFER THAT FAITH IS EMINENTLY PLEASING. There is in Scripture no list of those who distinguished themselves for zeal, or humility, or hope; but the eleventh of Hebrews emblazons the names of men and women who through faith did marvellous things. Faith is the crowning glory of the Christian character. II. A PRINCIPAL DESIGN OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IS TO TEACH US FAITH. A wonderful illustration in connection with the text. God meant to teach mankind by this book, that the great business of man in this world is to trust God. "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." III. THE COUNSEL OF ELIHU IN THE TEXT IS PROFITABLE TO A SINKING HEART. The meaning is, "Although you say you will never see Him appear for you, yet He will exercise judgment when to do so; therefore trust thou in Him." There are times, when a dark providence has settled down like a cloud on our prospects. Something has happened which is the very worst thing which it seems to us God could have chosen wherewith to afflict us. There is no explanation, no mitigation, no cheerful outlook. Friends are mistaken if they tell us not to weep. Nature finds comfort in cries, groans, tears. There is no use in argument, we say, God was my friend once, now He has set me up as His mark. To such afflicted souls the Word of God says, "Although thou sayest thou shalt not see Him, yet, judgment is before Him." You think that you will never see His design to accomplish good in you and by you in this affliction. It seems to you without plan, confused, reckless. But judgment is for Him, whenever a child of His suffers; the arrow that pierces us wounds His heart ere it reaches ours. IV. OUR DUTY IN DARK HOURS IS HERE MADE PLAIN. "Therefore trust in Him." This is done by special heartfelt address to God by word of mouth. To rise and go upon our knees, implies a serious determination to seek God, and the act of framing our speech, shows that we are in earnest. Having committed our prayer to God, declaring our trust in Him, we must show our sincerity by a quietness of mind which, be it remembered, is not inconsistent with importunity. We should never abandon ourselves to grief in the darkest hours. God takes pleasure in those who, against hope, believe in hope, taking part with God by insisting that He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Did we but know it, God is wooing those whom He is afflicting. "He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." Therefore be of good courage, desponding souls. Submit yourselves under His rod. Finally—Everything which has been said of trust in God in times of despondency is eminently true of faith in the Saviour. (*N. Adams, D.D.*) *A God who hides Himself*:—1. These words suppose that there are seasons and situations, in which the ways of heaven seem dismaying and inexplicable. This is abundantly evident to whatever department of the Divine government we turn our eyes. If we look on the natural world we shall not always find unobscured the God of nature. If we look into the social department, here, too, we shall find His ways mysterious. There are times when the

protection of His providence would seem to be withdrawn from society. Its interests appear subject to the caprices of fortune and the passions of men. If we turn our attention to the normal department, here, too, we shall find occurrences to astonish and perplex us. Affliction maintains a powerful and oppressive dominion among the sons of men. It is not uncommonly the lot of the righteous to bear the heaviest burdens, and experience the severest trials of life. In the management of their allotments, the ways of the Deity are inscrutable. When we compare the terrors of nature with His benevolence who rules her movements; when we contrast the triumphs of iniquity in the world, with His power and holiness by whom it is governed; when we combine the afflictions of the virtuous, and the trials of the Church, with His love to whom they are devoted: it must be confessed that there are seasons when he whose faith is most firmly fixed, may be ready to exclaim with the amazed prophet, "Verily, Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, Oh God of Israel, the Saviour!" Of this, however, we may be sure. His government must be as pure, just, and benevolent, as His nature; and consequently, righteous in every measure of it; seeking unceasingly the manifestation of justice, and the melioration and happiness of the creature. "The Lord is righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works." We ought to maintain, in every situation in which His providence places us, an unshaken trust in His goodness, and obedience to His will. Nothing more frequently distresses the feelings, and disturbs the principles of men, than the inscrutableness of the dealings of God. But are the measures of His government wrong, because they do not coincide with our partial views? Are the methods of His providence to be condemned, because they cannot be comprehended by our limited understandings? That His ways are mysterious should fill us with humility. It should inspire us with reverence and godly fear; but it ought not to excite our surprise. We are assured by reason and by Scripture, that His government is infinitely and uniformly righteous. In the gift of His Son for our salvation, He has offered us the greatest pledge we are capable of receiving, that His aim, His wish, His constant care is the preservation and happiness of His offspring. In men assured of the perfection of a governor, and of the principles by which he acts, it is absurd to be dissatisfied with measures which they can see but in part. The most afflictive and inexplicable dispensations may often be the springs of the most important and happy operations. Let us learn, from what has been said, to preserve in every situation an unshaken reliance on the love of the Almighty, and a steadfast obedience to His will. (*Bishop Dehon.*)

CHAPTER XXXVI.

VERS. 1–4. **Elihu also proceeded, and said.**—*The portrait of a true preacher:*—I. THE SIDE HE HAS TO TAKE. "I have yet to speak on God's behalf." Sin is a controversy with God. The true preacher has to take the side of God in the discussion. 1. He has to defend the procedure of God. He has to justify the ways of heaven. 2. He has to vindicate the character of God. The true preacher has to clear his Maker of all ungodly accusations. 3. He has to enforce the claims of God. His claims to their supreme love and constant obedience. 4. He has to offer the redemption of God. To show forth the wonderful mercy of God in Christ Jesus. II. THE KNOWLEDGE HE HAS TO COMMUNICATE. "I will fetch my knowledge from afar." Literally, the true preacher has to fetch his "knowledge from afar." 1. "From afar" in relation to the intuitions of men. The facts of the Gospel lie far away from the inbred sentiments of the human soul. 2. "From afar" in relation to the philosophical deductions of men. Human reason could never discover the essential truths of the Gospel. 3. "From afar" in relation to the natural spirit of men. III. THE PURPOSE HE HAS TO MAINTAIN. "I will ascribe righteousness unto my Maker." Elihu's purpose seemed to be, to demonstrate to Job that God was righteous in all His ways, and worthy of his confidence. With this conviction he will show—1. That no suffering falls on any creature more than he deserves. 2. That no work is demanded of any creature more than he can render. IV. THE FAITHFULNESS

HE HAS TO EXHIBIT. "Truly my words shall not be false: He that is perfect in knowledge is with thee." (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 5. **Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any.** — *The law of reverence*:—Contempt, whether of men or of things, is a feeling that is alien to God. With Him there is no littleness; He neither spurns, nor slights, nor disregards. And the reason is, that He is so mighty. I. GOD IS GREAT IN INTELLIGENCE AND DESPISETH NOT. How great that intelligence is, in its reach, in its grasp, in its certainty, the Scriptures keep continually before us. He whom we worship is the "Only Wise." God sees things not only in themselves, but in their connections, sources, and results; sees them with all those secret accompaniments that make matters that are apparently trivial really significant and momentous. Therefore, though man may be careless, he cares; what man holds lightly, he esteems. We argue from the inerrancy of the Divine judgment. We found on the comprehensiveness of the Divine mind. God is great in knowledge and despiseth not, depreciating neither person nor thing. II. GOD IS GREAT IN HOLINESS AND DESPISETH NOT. He is so pure and exalted a moral Being Himself, He must needs hold everything of importance into which the moral element enters. Take the minutest moral deflection. He cannot think lightly of that. Sin is sin, whatsoever its scale. He cannot think lightly of the least moral aspiration. The feeblest of our longings, the stretching of a hand, the breathing of a sigh, the dropping of a tear, are matters of interest and importance to Him whose kingdom is a kingdom of uprightness, and who longs for that kingdom to come in the hearts and lives of men. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness. His very purity is a sure guarantee that the yearnings and the strivings of a sin-weary heart will always be precious in His sight. Then beware of contempt. Do not belittle the moral realities. Do not belittle sin. Too often we meet goodness with a spirit of levity. III. GOD IS GREAT IN HIS LOVE AND DESPISETH NOT. 1. The greatness of God's love is a pledge that He will not despise the least or the lowliest disciples. He is not the God of the strong merely, He is the God of the weak. 2. The greatness of God's love is a pledge that He does not despise the least or the lowliest needs. 3. The greatness of God's love is a pledge that He will not despise the least and lowliest services. Whatsoever love offers, love will value, love will store up, and love will reward. Two practical lessons. (1) Observe the light which the text casts on the dignity of everyday life. It illumines our homeliest tasks. Do not think lightly of the homeliest kindnesses. (2) The principle also throws light on the nearness and sympathy of God. He despiseth not little things, therefore consult Him about little things. (*W. A. Gray.*) "*He despiseth not any*":—It is a poor result of vast wealth, or great learning, or cultivated taste, when a man affects superiority and despises others. True wisdom should make us humble, not haughty. God is mighty. Yet His power is the omnipotence of right, and truth, and love. God's infinite might has co-existent with it, infinite right and infinite love. This wonderful combination in the Divine character is now before us. 1. Behold this combination in the lower orders of creation. The minutest insects are as well provided for as the cattle on a thousand hills. Compared with man, what are they? Yet God despiseth them not. 2. In the revelation of His Word. All language does but poorly express the great thoughts of God. Yet He condescends to all degrees of thought. The old philosophers concealed their thoughts from common people. 3. In the subjects of the Divine regard. Men are in danger of despising each other. God despiseth not any. 4. In the incarnate life of Christ, how near He seems to come to men! It would not be difficult to survey Hebrew society, and pick out the despised classes—lepers, lost women, publicans. Jesus came very near to the weak and weary, the reviled and persecuted, and they found recovery and rest in Him. 5. In the agencies He employs, God does not pass by His own best materials among men; but He uses the humble prayer of a desolate widow, or the effort of some silent worker, who speaks a word for the Master in quiet places of the city. In the moral world there is no need to despise the day of small things. 6. In the sacrificial atonement of Christ. The magnet of the Cross meets all conditions of men, all types of character, all degrees of education, all depths of ignorance, all forces of rebellion and self-will. 7. In the great gathering of the redeemed. There the rich and the poor, the master and the servant, meet together. Jesus is Lord and brother of men. Deity is linked with humanity in the marks and memories of the manger, the carpenter's home,

and the Cross. Many who have had scant mercy from man, will enjoy there the triumphs of the mercy of God in Christ. (*W. M. Statham.*) *None overlooked*:—You can buy complete sets of all the flowers of the Alpine district at the hotel near the foot of the Rosenlaui glacier, very neatly pressed and enclosed in cases. Some of the flowers are very common, but they must be included, or the fauna would not be completely represented. The botanist is as careful to see that the common ones are there, as he is to note that the rarer specimens are not excluded. Our blessed Lord will be sure to make a perfect collection of all the flowers of His field, and even the ordinary believer, the every-day worker, the common convert, will not be forgotten. To Jesus' eye, there is beauty in all His plants, and each one is needed to perfect the fauna of paradise. May I be found among His flowers, if only as one out of myriad daisies, who with sweet simplicity shall look up and wonder at His love for ever. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *God's reverence for man*:—No one renders a better service to his fellows than he who leads them to a true conception of the character and purpose of God. No one has been so grievously misunderstood, caricatured, and aspersed as God. Men have looked at Him with sceptical eyes, melancholy eyes, sin-damaged eyes, tear-filled eyes, and many of their readings have been grotesque, unsatisfactory, and mischievous. How much misery has resulted from the thought that God is impersonal—that the throne of the universe is without a King, that we are in the hands of a remorseless fate, that blind forces are evermore giving us shape, that we are accountable to no authority beyond ourselves! How much misery has resulted from the thought that God is cruel! Some have imagined God a merciless monster, an infinite detective, a harsh task-master, a vindictive gaoler. How much evil has been caused by the thought that God is exclusive—that only a select number are His children, that for the rest He has no love, no care, no blessing! How much evil has been caused by the thought that God is indifferent, that He dwells in splendid isolation, too self-absorbed to heed man's anguish, to ease his woes, redress his wrongs! Here, then, is our thought—God has a profound reverence for man; and this is so because of His unequalled greatness. This we know runs counter to our general way of thinking. We think of greatness as isolating, separating, and not as uniting men. We think contempt a proper sort of thing, and not often do we see greatness and gentleness going together. Our great teacher John Ruskin says: "One of the signs of high breeding in men generally will be their kindness and mercifulness." And Shakespeare says: "Mockery is the fume of little hearts." Now, whatever we may find in men, we see that the greatness of God is not aloofness, not high disdain, not proud contempt, but infinite love, eternal compassion, omnipotent tenderness, absolute devotion to man's interests. Behold, God is mighty—so mighty that we are awed as we think of Him. But He despiseth not, for in Him might and mercy are combined. This is an oft-recurring note of the Bible. "I will sing of Thy power," says the Psalmist, but he adds, "Yea, I will sing aloud of Thy mercy." And again, "He telleth the number of the stars, He calleth them all by their names." But what says the context: "He healeth the broken in heart; He bindeth all their wounds." Oh, beautiful juxtaposition of power and tenderness, knowledge and grace. God does not despise any person. No human soul is valueless in the eye of God; it is more than all else to Him—the jewel of priceless value, the gem of peerless worth. Disparagement of man has been a note of all times, and not least of our own. Man's contempt for man finds luxuriant expression, and all its signs are ugly. Sometimes we see men despising others because of their poverty. Not for this reason does God despise men. Among the indigent He has found His princeliest souls, His most faithful servants. The ban of poverty is nothing to Him. Sometimes we see men despising others because they are commonplace. The world swarms with the colourless, the insignificant, the inept, the failing. Not so does God regard men. The colourless are full of suggestions to Him; the commonplace all have a place in His great heart. He does not measure men superficially, but radically. He takes note, not of the accidental, but of the essential. God is willing to take in hand the inept, the unbrilliant, the unpromising, and to bring their lives to an undreamt-of glory and greatness. Sometimes we see men despising their fellows because of their sinfulness. Man never appears so mean and worthless as when his sin is obvious. He, to whom sin is most offensive; He, whom it has cost more than anyone, despiseth not any sinner. He loves the sinner in spite of his sin, for love sees what nothing else can see. It is in Jesus Christ we see this truth best illustrated. He went straight to the worst,

He touched the outcast, and he became a denizen of God's Kingdom. More than comforting is the precious truth that no soul is God-despised. He who despiseth not any person does not despise our desires. How often we despise ourselves because of the paucity of our good desires, or else on account of their feebleness. Well, we may sit in stern judgment on ourselves, and it is well, perhaps, we do so, but God despiseth not any desire. And God does not despise any service. Sometimes we disparage our services. We think them slight, imperfect, obscure. God never overlooks the quiet, obscure workers. Do not despise yourself. Are you poor? So have been earth's noblest children, so have been the peers of piety. Are you sinful? Thank God for the consciousness of your sin; it is a stepping-stone to salvation. Remember, the Church is made up of transmuted failures. God gives to men a second chance, and He delighteth in mercy. Do not despise your fellows. Moreover, it is ours to make it as easy as possible for every prodigal son of our Father to come home. Do not despise God. The adjuration is not unnecessary. Alas! this is the fatal fault of men; they disesteem their Maker, Redeemer, Friend. The Apostle asks: "Despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (*J. Pearce.*)

Ver. 9. **Then He sheweth them their work, and their transgression that they have exceeded.** — *Showing up our transgressions:* — I. GENERAL REMARKS ON THE TEXT. 1. Sin is properly attributable to man. It is "their work." If God suffers moral evil to exist, He is not the author of it. Satan may tempt, but cannot constrain to the commission of sin. The whole guilt of it lies upon the offender. It first exists as simple apprehension, is then approved, and, being conceived in the heart, it brings forth actual transgression, until it is finished in death. 2. It is the prerogative of God effectually to convince men of sin; or, "to show unto them their work." No man ever saw his sinfulness in a proper light until it was thus discovered to him. 3. The Lord frequently imparts this knowledge in a season of affliction: "then" it shows unto men their work. It was in deep adversity that Job was made to possess the iniquities of his youth, to recollect what had been long forgotten, and to feel the burden of his guilt. 4. The knowledge of our sinfulness is necessary to true repentance, and to our believing in Christ for eternal life. Sorrow for sin, confessing and forsaking it, will be the immediate effect. An irreconcilable hatred to sin, and an earnest desire to have it mortified and subdued, will be the necessary consequence of a true conviction of its evil nature. II. IN WHAT RESPECTS THE LORD MAY BE SAID TO "SHOW UNTO MEN THEIR TRANSGRESSIONS." 1. He makes known to them the fact that they are sinners, and that their transgressions are their own. 2. The Lord convinces them not only of the fact, but also of the evil of sin, and causes them to repent of that, as well as of its consequences. 3. When persons are truly convinced of sin, the Lord not only shows them their work and their transgression, but also "that they have exceeded." They are made to see that they have sinned with a high hand. God employs various means, and accompanies them with various effects. God often renews the discovery of sin in our later experience. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*)

Ver. 10. **He openeth their ear to discipline.** — *Discipline:* — 1. Notice the discipline which God uses in His family. Many of us are froward children and need discipline. Job needed it, and had it; we are not told why, except that God meant to try his graces, and bring them into exercise. Paul was disciplined, and if he had not been well-disciplined, he would never have been such a scholar. The first feature in God's discipline for His family is what Paul calls, "apprehending them." A laying fast hold of conscience. Has Jesus apprehended you? This apprehending is sometimes very severe discipline. The next feature of discipline is translation. He translates the poor sinner out of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son. There shall be transformation as well as translation. The discipline which our God exercises in His Church is for the express purpose of exercising all the graces that He imparts to the soul. By discipline Jehovah nourishes His own life in the souls of His children. By this discipline, decision of character is effected. 2. The obedience to be effected. "He openeth their ears to discipline." Jehovah opens the ears of His people to discipline in such wise as that they shall even wait and listen for more discipline—more of the exercise of Divine wisdom and power, to carry out His wise purposes

and designs. The teaching of Jehovah goes on thus blessedly in the experience of His people: for it is written, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be their peace." (*Joseph Irons.*) *The advantages of affliction:*—It is assumed in the text that the righteous may experience painful changes, severe afflictions—great calamities may overtake them. Some of the advantages of these afflictions we consider. 1. Afflictions tend to promote self-knowledge by leading to serious and faithful self-examination. 2. Afflictions tend to soften and humble the mind, and dispose us to confess, to bewail, and to forsake our transgressions. 3. Afflictions tend to promote our instruction in righteousness. 4. Afflictions tend to promote our entire sanctification, and, if patiently endured, will issue in everlasting glory. But afflictions are not necessarily salutary. Sometimes they are not improved; and when they are not improved, instead of being a blessing they are indeed a curse. (*Robert Alder.*)

Ver. 16. **Out of the strait into a broad place.**—*An invitation to straitened souls:*—What is literally straitness? The word "strait" means "narrow." The place between two mountains or two seas is a strait or narrow passage. A strait implies a difficulty of choice. "I am in a strait betwixt two." We say of a man, when he cannot pay his debts, that he is in straitened circumstances. Other countries have similar terms. In Scotland they say "pinched," or "hampered," in America that "he has a hard row to hoe," alluding to the hoeing of sugar or corn. We say a man is in a strait when he has a large family and a small income. As strait places are unpleasant in temporal circumstances, they are also unpleasant in spiritual affairs. Then pray "Bring me out of a strait place to-night." 1. One reason is, that the grand design of Christ may be answered. 2. Another reason is, that our heavenly Father wants to take us into a broad place. 3. His desire is, that we should be contented with all our circumstances. "Contentment is great gain." (*J. Caughey.*)

Ver. 18. **Because there is wrath.**—*The wrath of God:*—The language of the text may be spoken to every impenitent and unbelieving sinner of the human race. I. THE ACTUAL. "There is wrath." 1. This wrath is Divine. By virtue of God's perfection He is in the possession of an emotional nature, He has the attribute of wrath. Instead of this property being inconsistent with the other attributes of God, it is absolutely necessary to constitute Him morally perfect. This wrath is undoubtedly a great reality. 2. This wrath is merited. Sin merits wrath. Sin is the wrong act of a moral substance, a substance in the possession of free-will. In this act there are rebellion, robbery, and ingratitude. Hence sin merits the Divine indignation. Hence, wherever there is sin there is also suffering. 3. This wrath is impartial. It has been revealed from heaven against angels and against men, without respect of person. It has been revealed against every sinful act of every sinful being. II. THE PROBABLE. There may be destruction. "Beware lest He take thee away with His stroke." He hath power to do it. 2. He has threatened to do so. 3. Some who were as near saved as you have been lost. III. THE IMPOSSIBLE. There cannot be deliverance. "Then a great ransom cannot deliver thee," literally, "cannot turn thee aside." Deliverance is impossible—1. By a great ransom of material wealth. Though we could give mines of gems, oceans of pearls, worlds of gold and silver, yet such a ransom price could not deliver us. 2. By a great ransom of animal life. 3. By the ransom of the Highest, Christ Jesus. "Christ gave Himself a sacrifice for us." (*Homilist.*) *Divine anger:*—1. There is "wrath" in the government of God. 2. This "wrath" may overtake the sinner any moment. 3. When it overtakes him in this way, he has no means of deliverance. (*Ibid.*) *Solemn warning:*—Whether these words were suited to the case of Job or not, they are certainly applicable to all impenitent sinners, and contain—I. AN IMPORTANT ASSERTION. "Because there is wrath." From this declaration it is evident that it has been known from the earliest ages that God is displeased with sin, and has often revealed His anger against the ungodliness of men. 1. This assertion must be explained. The anger, hatred, and wrath of God are not impure passions in Him, as they are in man. All who violate the precepts of His law become obnoxious to its awful penalties, and justly incur the punitive wrath of the Divine Lawgiver (Rom. ii. 3-9). 2. This assertion must be confirmed. This is evident from the Scriptures, which assure us that the Lord is "angry with the wicked." II. AN AFFECTIONATE ADMONITION. 1. The exercise of caution.

"Beware!" Deeply consider your state and character before God—remember your awful responsibility, and the intimate connection which subsists between a state of mortal probation and eternal retribution (Gal. vi. 7, 8); be wise, and know the day of your visitation. 2. The pursuit of salvation. An apprehension of Divine wrath should induce a diligent use of the means appointed for our deliverance; this is the only way of being rescued from sin and ruin. III. AN IMPRESSIVE ARGUMENT; "Lest He take thee away," &c. 1. The sinner's punishment is inevitable. "Lest He take thee away with His stroke." Incorrigible impenitence leads to unavoidable ruin (Rom. vi. 21); sin will surely find us out, "for the wicked shall not go unpunished." His stroke signifies a sudden calamity or awful judgment. Such was the deluge—the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah—the punishment of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram—the death of Herod, Ananias, and Sapphira, &c. (Gen vii. and xix. 27-19; Numb. xvi. 31-33; Acts v. 1-10 and xii. 20-23). 2. The sinner's punishment is irremediable. "Then a great ransom cannot deliver thee." To ransom is to deliver, either by price or by power. The present life is the only day of salvation. There is no Redeemer for the finally lost. They have nothing to offer for their ransom, nor can any possible price purchase, or power rescue them from interminable perdition. What, then, is our present state? (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*)

Ver. 21. **Take heed; regard not iniquity; for this hast thou chosen rather than affliction.**—*Affliction better than sin*:—Elihu rebukes Job with a becoming dignity, for some rash and unadvised speeches which the severity of his other friends, and the sharpness of his own anguish, had drawn from him, and particularly cautions him in the passage before us. Illustrate and prove the general proposition, that there can be no greater folly than to seek to escape from affliction by complying with the temptations of sin. That the greater part of mankind are under the influence of a contrary opinion, may be too justly inferred from their practice. How many have recourse to sinful pleasures to relieve their inward distress. In order to evade sufferings for righteousness' sake, thousands make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, through sinful compliances with the manners of the world. 1. Sin separates us from God, the only source of real felicity. That man is not sufficient to his own happiness is a truth confirmed by the experience of all who have candidly attended to their own feelings. This makes men seek resources from abroad, and fly to pleasures and amusements of various kinds, to fill up the blanks of time, and divert their uneasy reflections. God alone can be the source of real happiness to an immortal soul. Sin bereaves the soul of man of this its only portion. Afflictions are often the means of bringing the soul nearer to Him. 2. Affliction may not only consist with the love of a father, but may even be the fruit of it. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." A good man may even glory in tribulation. But sin is always both evil in its nature, and pernicious in its effects. 3. Sin is evil whether we feel it or not, and worst when we are most insensible of it. To be past feeling, in this respect, is the worst woe we can possibly bring upon ourselves. Affliction, though a bitter, is a salutary medicine. It is the discipline by which we are trained to glory, honour, and virtue. The greatest error we can fall into, is that of taking this world for the place of our rest. To cure this fatal mistake, God visits us with affliction. 4. In afflictions we are commonly passive, but always active in sin. The one is left to our choice, the other is not. When we suffer in the cause of virtue, we are in the hand of our most faithful and everlasting friend; but when we sin, in order to avoid suffering, we commit ourselves into the hands of that malicious and cunning enemy, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour. 5. The evil of affliction is of short duration, but that of sin perpetual. (*R. Walker.*) *Caution against losing the crown through fear of the cross*:—Three things to be observed in Job's case. 1. Job, before his afflictions, is called a man "perfect and upright," one that feared God, and eschewed evil: that is, both a moral man and a pious man. Before any one may suppose that the lamentations of Job suit his case, he must be clear that he has lived like Job. 2. A great part of Job's complaints are made in answer to the three friends. Whatever Job's sin was, it was not hypocrisy. No wonder that when accused, Job should break out in strong cries of grief, defend his innocence, and hold fast his integrity. 3. Some of Job's complaints are absolutely sinful; they are murmurings of self-righteousness and rebellion. Job would not submit to the chastisement of God. The other three had accused Job falsely, but Elihu accused him justly. If any take comfort from reading these sinful

complaints of Job, and think that, because Job complained in the way he did, they may do the like, they are greatly mistaken. And if any go further and think that because, like Job, they utter sinful complaints, like him too they shall be pardoned and accepted in the end, they are yet more mistaken. Unless they are brought, like the penitent patriarch, to see and confess with self-abhorrence the sinfulness of their murmurs, those complaints will be the ruin of their souls, even though they may be expressed in simple language. It is owned that it is hard to bear affliction. A wounded spirit is tempted to breathe hard sayings against God. But a child of God will not indulge such a temper. He will know the wickedness of it. There are many, however, who do not murmur against God's dealings with them, who may still be accused of choosing iniquity rather than affliction. In truth, it may be charged against all unconverted men. There is an affliction which all who live in a careless, unconverted state must suffer before they can have any hope of salvation. To every one whose conscience tells him that he has not yet been brought to a sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the word of the Lord is, "Take heed." It would be a false and unscriptural representation of Christ and religion, to make it appear a light or an easy thing to be His disciple. And he who does not find it a life of constant struggle and watchfulness, of difficulty and self-denial, may be certain that he is altogether mistaken if he thinks he is a believer. Let no man flatter himself that the way to glory is a path strewed with flowers, one in which he may take his fill of pleasure and indulge his indolence. The true profession of Christianity is inseparable from suffering. It would be well for all those who are living in security, who have no fear for the safety of their souls, if they would examine the grounds of their confidence, and ask themselves in what way they bear their cross daily? What afflictions of the righteous fall to their lot? If they find that they really are not bearing the cross; that they are suffering none of the "afflictions of the righteous," they may be sure that their confidence is not the assurance of faith, but the presumption of ignorance. . . . It generally happens that a believer's comforts and spiritual consolations rise higher in proportion to his trials and conflicts. (*R. W. Dibdin, M.A.*)

Ver. 22. **Who teacheth like Him?** — Like whom? you ask. Like Him who is the great Teacher and Enlightener of the Church—even God, the Holy Spirit. This question is a sort of challenge to us to point out any teacher equal to the Lord. In what points does the teaching of God the Holy Spirit exceed all other teaching? Consider—I. THE NATURE OF HIS INSTRUCTIONS. There are many valuable things, no doubt, which man's wisdom has to teach. But look—1. At the amazing nature of the facts which the Spirit has revealed to us. This mystery, that God so loved the world as to send His Son to shed His blood for it; nothing is worthy of the name of wonderful and glorious compared with this mystery, that God was manifest in the flesh, and died for me upon the Cross. 2. Who is like this glorious Teacher in the holiness of His instructions? The Holy Bible is the Spirit's lesson-book. It is there that all His glorious precepts are embodied. 3. And the Holy Spirit's lessons are indispensable. The instructions which man's wisdom gives may be useful and important in their way. But we can get to heaven without them. The Spirit teaches us the only way that leads there. II. THE WAY IN WHICH HE GIVES THESE INSTRUCTIONS. Note the variety of instruments which He employs, and through which He gives instruction to the heart. His chief instrument is the Written Word. Here is doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness. He teaches also by the living voices of His ministers; and, through them, what a multiplicity of arguments does He employ! And He teaches by His providence; by afflictions; by humbling providences; by mercies and loving-kindnesses. Are they looking to the world for happiness and satisfaction? He makes that world so bitter to them by its crosses and vexations that they are forced to learn the lesson of its emptiness and vanity. He further enlightens the eyes of their understandings. III. THE RESULTS OF HIS INSTRUCTIONS. Let the Holy Spirit preach, and then the man's faith, and the man's practice, both are changed. They pray that God the Holy Ghost will vouchsafe to be your teacher and your guide, that He will illuminate the eyes of your understanding, and that He will reveal Christ unto your hearts. (*A. Roberts, M.A.*) *God's teaching, our example*:—The God of the Bible is represented to us under different names and views peculiar to Himself. He is represented to us as the source and comprehension of all truth, goodness, happiness, and glory. When we try to reduce our conception of God

to a finite form, the best conception we can form of Him is the highest combination of all the attributes that are good, pure, and glorious. We now view Him as our Divine Teacher. I. THE TEACHING CHARACTER OF THE DIVINE ORDER. The teaching intention is seen everywhere in the established economy of the whole arrangement of the constitution of the universe. It is not an arrangement to be noticed here and there, but a matter of law and universality, unchangeable and regular. The whole range and laws of nature, the whole animal economy—providence, revelation, Christianity, and the whole works of God as known to us—have a teaching commission. All have their science to make known to men; all have their influence in the moulding of human character. Everything has its message; everything is backed by Divine law and authority. This order is intended, in its teaching power, to lead and re-unite us with the source and end of our life, and thus to realise the chief good of our being. 1. The supreme order of which we are subjects is one of universal relation and dependence. Illustration: relation of parent and child. One is made to teach, and the other to be taught. 2. As a teaching power, the order of which we are subjects is one of advancement. The whole is intended to advance. The order of God is ever forward. 3. The order under which we live is one of universal and unending obligation. A condition of dependence is one of obligation. To our obligation there is neither limit nor end. All we have are things to fulfil our obligation with, and the degree of our possession is the limit of our obligation. 4. The order in which we are established is one of useful purpose in its laws and provisions. The high design is to fit all its dependent creatures for the end of their being. The order of God intends to economise all its gifts and talents. No talent is to be buried, no power is to lie dormant, no plot uncultivated, and no opportunity unemployed. All are fitted for themselves, for one another, and all to show the praise of the great teacher Himself. 5. The teaching order of God has fit and sufficient resources to meet its requirements, and fulfil its designs. Everything is an educational link to some higher development. The order of God has everything in itself to make it complete. He requires no foreign element. All perfect order precludes the possibility of deficiency, or any goodness outside itself. II. GOD'S TEACHING IS OUR PATTERN TO FOLLOW. All men require much teaching themselves before they are competent to teach others. Teaching is Divine. 1. God's teaching is our pattern in the kindness of its execution. There is nothing harsh and oppressive in the teachings of God. He allures by promises, and leads on by the cords of tenderness and love; giving us a pattern how to teach those who are under our care and our charge. 2. The teaching of God is one of repeated application. God repeats His calls and applications. If one way and means are not effectual, He tries and uses others. 3. The Divine teaching is one of rule and order. Every period has its work, every work has its laws, and every act its certain and fit results. Constancy is one rule. Attention to small points is another. Earnest action is another. Every power must act its part. 4. The teaching of God is one of gradual advancement. Our wants and capacities, in the order of being, keep pace with each other. When one is small, the other is not great; and as one increases the other advances. God suits His teaching to our wants and powers. 5. God's teaching contains in it hard lessons for us in our present state and condition. 6. God teaches, by suitable means, to accomplish the end He has in view. III. THE AIM AND END OF DIVINE TEACHING. Wisdom is right in the end in view, and the means used to obtain it. One end is—to teach us self-insufficiency and trust in Him. Another, to teach us the evil of disobedience and sin. Another, to educate our nature in its highest powers, to its highest possible capacity. That we should understand the law of His order, and respect it. To fit us for the precise work intended to be done by us. To lead us to Himself, and to make us fit for all His will and purpose. Conclusion—The obligation on our part which the Divine administration of teaching involves. (*T. Hughes.*) *The being and agency of God*:—I. His BEING, as here presented. Elihu points our attention to three great facts concerning this Great Being. 1. He is mighty. "Behold, God exalteth by His power." 2. He is independent. "Who hath enjoined Him His way?" He is amenable to no one beyond Himself. 3. He is righteous. "Who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity?" 4. He is adorable. "Remember that thou magnify His work, which men behold." Man is here called upon to adore Him in His works, which are visible to all. 5. He is incomprehensible. (1) In His nature. He is the fathomless mystery. (2) Incomprehensible in His duration. "Neither can

the number of His years be searched out." Notice—II. His AGENCY as here presented. His agency both in the mental and the material domains is here referred to. 1. His agency in the mental realm. He is a Teacher. "Who teacheth like Him?" He is an incomparable Teacher. (1) He teaches the best lessons. (2) He teaches the best lessons in the best way. (*a*) By symbols. All the works of nature are the symbols, the hieroglyphics He employs. "The heavens declare Thy glory," &c. (*b*) By example. "He bowed the heavens and came down," and He acted out His grand lessons in the life of a wonderful Man—the Man Christ Jesus. (3) He teaches the best lessons in the best way for the best purpose. He does not teach as men teach, in order to make their pupils craftsmen, merchants, artists, and to qualify them for getting on in this life; He teaches in order to make them men, fit them for eternity. 2. His agency in the material realm. Four ideas are suggested here concerning His agency in nature. It is—(1) Minute. (2) Inscrutable. (3) Moral. (4) Often terrible. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 26, 27. **God is great, and we know Him not.**—*The knowledge of God:*—These words recall the supreme questions which divide hostile philosophies. Even Christian apologists have maintained that God is inaccessible to human thought, and that our highest knowledge of Him can have only a relative truth. Many who are antagonistic to the Christian faith maintain that man's knowledge is necessarily limited to the universe of phenomena, and that all attempts to pass beyond it are the result of an ambitious discontent with the eternal limitations of our intellectual power. The words of the text cannot mean that God is absolutely unknown. We know God, and therefore we worship Him; but there is infinitely more to know. His greatness passes beyond the widest limits, not only of our actual knowledge, but of all knowledge possible to us. This truth is pressed upon us in whatever direction thought may travel. 1. Our hearts should be filled with awe when we meet to worship Him. 2. That God is great, and we know Him not, should encourage the largest and freest confidence in His ability and willingness to meet and to satisfy all the exigencies of our personal life. 3. It is the infinite greatness of God—a greatness that can never be defined or exhausted by created thought—which alone enables us to accept calmly, and without dread, the gift of immortality. 4. If this is the strength and joy of those who are conscious that through His infinite mercy their sins are forgiven, and they are restored to the light and blessedness of His love, it is full of terror to all with whom He is not at peace, and who are exposed to His eternal condemnation. (*R. W. Dale, D.D., LL.D.*) *The unknowable God:*—Unknown, unknowable—truly; yet not on that account unusable and unprofitable. That is a vital distinction. The master of science humbly avows that he has not a theory of magnetism; does he, therefore, ignore it, or decline to inquire into its uses? Does he reverently write its name with a big M, and run away from it, shaken and whitened by a great fear? Verily, he is no such fool. He actually uses what he does not understand. I will accept his example, and bring it to bear upon the religious life. I do not, scientifically, know God; the solemn term does not come within the analysis which is available to me; God is great, and I know Him not; yet the term has its practical uses in life, and into those broad and obvious uses all men may inquire. What part does the God of the Bible play in the life of the man who accepts Him and obeys Him with all the inspiration and diligence of love? Any creed that does not come down easily into the daily life to purify and direct it, is, by so much, imperfect and useless. I cannot read the Bible without seeing that God (as there revealed) ever moved His believers in the direction of courage and sacrifice. These two terms are multitudinous, involving others of kindred quality, and spreading themselves over the whole space of the upper life. In the direction of courage—not mere animal courage, for then the argument might be matched by gods many, yet still gods, though their names be spelt without capitals; but moral courage, noble heroism, fierce rebuke of personal and national corruption, sublime and pathetic judgment of all good and all evil. The God-idea made mean men valiant soldier-prophets; it broadened the piping voice of the timid inquirer into the thunder of the national teacher and leader; for brass it brought gold; and for iron, silver; and for wood, brass; and for stones, iron; instead of the thorn it brought up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier the myrtle-tree, and it made the bush burn with fire. Wherever the God-idea took complete possession of the mind,

every faculty was lifted up to a new capacity, and borne on to heroic attempts and conquests. The saints who received it "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire; out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." Any idea that so inspired in man life and hope, is to be examined with reverent care. The quality of the courage determines its value and the value of the idea which excited and sustained it. What is true of the courage is true also of the sacrifice which has ever followed the acceptance of the God-idea. Not the showy and fanatical sacrifice of mere blood-letting: many a Juggernaut, great and small, drinks the blood of his devotees; but spiritual discipline, self-renunciation, the esteeming of others better than one's self, such a suppression of the self-thought as to amount to an obliteration of every motive and purpose that can be measured by any single personality—such are the practical uses of the God-idea. It is not a barren sentiment. It is not a coloured vapour or a scented incense, lulling the brain into partial stupor or agitating it with mocking dreams; it arouses courage; it necessitates self-sacrifice; it touches the imagination as with fire; it gives a wide and solemn outlook to the whole nature; it gives a deeper tone to every thought; it sanctifies the universe; it makes heaven possible. Unknown—unknowable! Yes; but not therefore unusable or unprofitable. Say this God was dreamed by human genius. Be it so. Make Him a creature of fancy. What then? The man who made, or dreamed, or otherwise projected such a God, must be the author of some other work of equal or approximate importance. Produce it! That is the sensible reply to so bold a blasphemy. Singular if man has made a Jehovah, and then has taken to the drudgery of making oil-paintings and ink poems, and huts to live in. Where is the congruity? A man says he kindled the sun, and when asked for his proof, he strikes a match which the wind blows out! Is the evidence sufficient? Or a man says that he has covered the earth with all the green and gold of summer, and when challenged to prove it, he produces a wax flower which melts in his hands! Is the proof convincing? The God of the Bible calls for the production of other gods—gods wooden, gods stony, gods ill-bred, gods well shaped, and done up skilfully for market uses: from His heavens He laughs at them, and from His high throne He holds them in derision. He is not afraid of competitive gods. They try to climb to His sublimity, and only get high enough to break their necks in a sharp fall. Again and again I demand that the second effort of human genius bear some obvious relation to the first. The sculptor accepts the challenge, so does the painter, so does the musician—why should the Jehovah-dreamer be an exception to the common rule of confirmation and proof? We wait for the evidence. We insist upon having it; and that we may not waste our time in idle expectancy, we will meanwhile call upon God, saying, "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven." (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *The greatness of God*:—I. THE GREATNESS OF GOD INFINITELY SURPASSES OUR KNOWLEDGE OF HIM. "Behold, God is great, and we know Him not." Consider how imperfect our knowledge is—1. Of the Divine nature. We are greatly to seek in the first notion of God, that He is a Spirit; then, that He is a Trinity in Unity. 2. Of the Divine decrees and counsels. We must conjecture uncertainly about His decrees, because we are so distant and so incompetent in all our speculations about the Divine nature. 3. Of the Divine work in creation and providence. II. USEFUL INFERENCES. 1. What an inestimable treasure the Holy Scriptures ought to be esteemed by us. 2. How reasonable a thing it is for us to love one another in some differences of opinion and thought while we are on this side heaven. 3. How justly the wise and the good mind may be longing after that state where their knowledge of God may be advanced to such unspeakable degrees, suitably both to the nature of God and the capacious nature of our souls. (*Nathanael Resbury, A.M.*) **For He maketh small the drops of water.**—*God's greatness in small things*:—We lose God in His greatness, and it is well for us to be told that the great God can do small things, and that small things are often the illustrations of His greatness. I. GOD ILLUSTRATES HIS GREATNESS IN DOING SMALL THINGS. Illustrate from the statesman, who can find time to contribute to the literature of his country; the great builder, who cares for minute ornament. Or from God's attention in creation to every detail. Or from the ritualism of the old dispensation, which included the elaborate and minute. It is to reduce God to our littleness, to suppose that He measures all things by our scale. He

does not even measure time by our computation. Great and small are terms which have not the same meaning with God as with man. How can anything be great to Him but Himself? He regulates the ripples on the sea of human life, caused by trivial circumstances, as well as the lifting up of the floods, when the angry waves threaten us with shipwreck. God is great, and He is so great that He is gentle; there are no hands so strong, and none so tender. God does great things, but He does them silently. The greatest forces operate without bustle and noise. Gentleness is the perfection of strength. II. CHRIST, THE MANIFESTED GOD, DOES ALL THINGS BEAUTIFULLY, SMALL AS WELL AS GREAT THINGS. He comes, as all the race come, by birth. "He grew in wisdom and stature." No one but a teacher, "in whom were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," could have discoursed with such beautiful simplicity on the highest themes. The doctrine of providence He brings down to the little things of daily life. What a Gospel He gives us in a few words. His conduct to childhood illustrates the singular beauty with which He did everything. III. THE WAY TO GREATNESS IS TO DO SMALL THINGS. Men who have obtained greatness have begun with the beginning of things. Great men have always been men of detail—great works are done by careful attention to little things. To overlook the importance of small things, is to forget that these give birth to great things. Life, to a great extent, is made up of small things. It is with small things we build up character. (*H. J. Bevis.*) *God's incomprehensible greatness illustrated by little things:*—I. MAN CANNOT COMPREHEND IT. "God is great, and we know Him not, neither can the number of His years be searched out." 1. Man cannot comprehend His nature. Great in Himself. All His attributes transcend our understanding. 2. Man cannot comprehend His history. "Neither can the number of His years be searched out." In the presence of His greatness—(1) All the glories of mankind dwindle into insignificance. In the presence of His greatness—(2) With what profound reverence should we ever think and speak of Him. II. LITTLE THINGS ILLUSTRATE IT. "For He maketh small the drops of water"; or, as some render it, "He draweth up the drops of water." Elihu seems to connect God's greatness with His attention to the drops of water. 1. The greatness of His wisdom is seen in the small. Take the microscope and examine life in its minutest form, and what wonderful skill you discover in the organisation: as much wisdom as the telescope will show you amongst the rolling worlds of space. 2. The greatness of His goodness is seen in the small. 3. The greatness of His taste is seen in the small. Take the wing of the smallest insect, or the smallest grain of ore, and what exquisite forms and what beautiful combinations of colour. 4. The greatness of His power is seen in the small. (*Homilist.*)

CHAPTER XXXVII.

VERS. 1–13. **Hear attentively the noise of His voice.**—*What is Elihu's message?*—What he really contributes to the main argument of the book is, that suffering may be medicinal, corrective, fructifying, as well as punitive. The friends had proceeded on the assumption, an assumption abundantly refuted by Job, that his calamities sprang, and only could spring from his transgressions. In their theology there was no room for any other conclusion. But, obviously, there is another interpretation of the function of adversity which needs to be discussed, if the discussion is to be complete; and this wider interpretation Elihu seeks to formulate. According to him, God may be moved to chastise men by love, as well as by anger; with a view to quicken their conscience, to instruct their thoughts, and give them a larger scope; in order to purge them, that they may bring forth more and better fruit; to rouse them from the lethargy into which, even when they are spiritually alive, they are apt to sink, and to save them from the corruption too often bred even by good customs, if these customs do not grow and change. His main contention has indeed, since his time, become the merest commonplace. But this pious commonplace was sufficiently new to Job and his friends to be startling. To them Elihu, when he contends that God often delivers the afflicted by and through their afflictions, must have seemed to be either uttering a dangerous heresy, or speaking as one who had received now

light and inspiration from on high. (*Samuel Cox, D.D.*) *The phenomena of nature* :—Elihu regarded nature—I. As the RESULT of the Divine AGENCY. He speaks of the thunder as the voice of God. "The sound that goeth out of His voice," "the voice of His Excellency." He speaks of the lightning as being directed under the whole heaven by Him, even unto the "ends of the earth." Modern science spreads out theoretic schemes between nature and God. It speaks of laws and forces. This was not the science of Elihu; he regarded man as being brought face to face with God in nature. II. As the REVEALER of the Divine CHARACTER. He recognised—(1) His majesty. "In the thunder." (2) His ubiquity. He saw Him everywhere, in the little as well as in the great. (3) His inscrutableness,—he could not follow Him in all His movements. III. As the INSTRUMENT of the Divine PURPOSE. "And it is turned round about by His counsels; that they may do whatsoever He commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth. He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for His land, or for mercy." (*Homilist.*) **For He saith to the snow.**—*The lessons of the snowflakes* :—I. WE LEARN THAT WHAT GOD GIVES IS PURE. The beautiful snow, in its purity, is a type of His gifts. To be pure is certainly a state to earnestly desire, and strenuously endeavour to attain. It requires the crucible of affliction and discipline to reach it, and God often, yea, indeed, constantly uses it. II. THAT WHAT GOD GIVES IS BEAUTIFUL. Nothing is so beautiful as a field of fresh-fallen snow. The snow grows more beautiful when you examine it closely. But think of the source from whence they come, and each little form will be to you a profitable teacher. God gave the snow, and it is thus beautiful; so beautiful are all His gifts. Beauty is a quality in objects not to be ignored. When God makes beauty, how infinitely superior it is in beauty to the beauty constructed by the hand of man. III. THAT WHAT GOD GIVES IS GOOD. Were it not for the kindly snow, in some countries, not one grain of wheat would live through the rigorous cold of the winter. But the very wheat is warmed into life by the protection of the snow. IV. THE SNOW TEACHES US TO BE IMPARTIAL. In this it accords with the Word of God. It bestows its benefits upon a community, it neglects none. V. WE LEARN A LESSON OF CAUTION. How easily soiled is the snow, because of its very whiteness and cleanness. Its susceptibility to soil and dirt is a constant pleading that one be careful not to soil it. The fairer, whiter, cleaner a thing is, the more easily is it soiled. VI. ONE MORE LESSON—THE EVANESCENCE OF ALL EARTHLY THINGS. The fields, now hidden from view by their snowy covering, will soon be seen again; and when the snow is gone, how brief will seem to have been the season of its sojourn! Out of this lesson comes another—the duty of readiness to meet the Bridegroom. (*Wallace Thorp.*) *The snowstorm* :—I. THE SNOW IN ITS INTERESTING PHENOMENON. The snow falls in beautiful showers almost every year, and covers the face of nature. Multitudes admire its beauties, but few understand its singular formation, important uses, and varied design. These things ought not so to be. We should make ourselves acquainted with the works of God, especially such common gifts as the rain, and wind, and snow. This would lead our thoughts from nature to nature's God; and then His wisdom, and power, and goodness as seen therein would excite our admiration. The snow, this wonderful creature of God, has been thus described—"Snow is a moist vapour drawn up from the earth to, or near the middle region of the air, where it is condensed, or thickened into a cloud, and falls down again like carded wool, sometimes in greater and sometimes in lesser flakes. The snow and the rain are made of the same matter, and are produced in the same place, only they differ in their outward form, as is obvious to the eye, and in their season. Rain falls in the warmer seasons, the clouds being dissolved into rain by heat; snow falls in the sharper seasons, the clouds being thickened by the cold. The place where the snow is generated is in the air, from thence it receives a command to dispatch itself to the earth, and there to abide." Three things respecting the snow may just be noticed. 1. Its whiteness. The whiteness of snow, observe naturalists, is caused by the abundance of air and spirits that are in transparent bodies. "The whiteness of snow," says Sturm, "may be accounted for thus—it is extremely light, and thin, consequently full of pores, and these contain air. It is further composed of parts more or less thick and compact, and such a substance does not admit the sun's rays to pass, neither does it absorb them: on the contrary, it reflects them very powerfully, and thus gives it that white appearance which we see in it" (Isa. i. 18). 2. Form. "The little flakes," observes the

pious author just named, "generally resemble hexagonal stars; sometimes, however, they have eight angles, and at others ten, and some of them are of quite an irregular shape. The best way of observing them is to receive the snow upon white paper, but hitherto little has been said of the cause of these different figures." 3. Abundance. "Hast thou," said God to Job, "entered into the treasures of snow?" II. THE SNOW IN ITS EFFICIENT SOURCE. The philosopher may explain its secondary, or instrumental causes, but the Christian recognises and acknowledges its first and original cause. Elihu, in the text, and in other parts of this chapter, traces, or notices, the thunder and the lightning, the snow and the rain, the whirlwind and the cold, the frost and the clouds, to their Divine source. "For He saith" (*i.e.*, He commands) "to the snow, Be thou on the earth." The source from whence the snow proceeds, illustrates—1. God's power. When the Almighty Maker wills a thing, He has only to speak, and it is done. 2. God's sovereignty. The sovereignty of God means His power and right of dominion over His creatures, to dispose and determine them as seemeth Him good. The snow affords an instance of the exercise of this attribute—on God's will depends the time, the quantity, and the place. 3. God's justice. The text itself refers to this very attribute. "For He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for His land, or for mercy." And Elihu, in the end of the chapter, where he closes his conversation with Job, on the attributes of God, as seen in His works, gives prominence to His justice. "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find Him out: He is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice: men do therefore fear Him." And the Almighty Himself, in the next chapter, tells Job that He sometimes sends His snow and hail in justice, that sinners may be punished for their sins (Job xxxviii. 22, 23). 4. God's goodness. 5. God's providence. III. THE SNOW IN ITS VARIED PURPOSES. "He causeth it," *i.e.*, "the cloud, with whatever is its burden, to unladen and disburden itself"—"for correction, or for His land, or for mercy." We must here observe—1. The Lord sometimes sends the snow in the way of correction. The Hebrew is, for a rod—so we put it in the margin. Thunder and rain is the rod (Sam. xii. 17–19). And who can tell but God may send His snow, and wind, and cold, to punish us for our unmindfulness of His mercies, and opposition to His laws? 2. The snow may be sent for the benefit of God's land. "For His land" (ver. 13). "The world is His, and the fulness thereof." The clouds, therefore, drop down their moisture for the benefit of God's land, that the beasts may have pasture; plants, nourishment; and that there may be provision for all God's offspring (Psa. civ. 10–14, 27, 28, lxv. 9–13). 3. The design of God in sending the snow may be merciful. IV. OUR DUTY AS IMPLIED IN ELIHU'S ADDRESS TO JOB. "Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God" (ver. 14). The works of God are wonderful—wonderful in their magnitude, variety, beauty, usefulness, and order—these are to be considered. Consider them, therefore; many see them, who never consider them. Consider them reverently. Patiently. Calmly. Closely. God's works will bear inspection. Frequently. Devoutly. Not merely that your minds may be informed, but your heart drawn out towards God, in pious affections. We learn from this subject—1. The generality of men pay little attention to the wondrous works of God, that such indifference is very criminal, and that it is the duty of ministers to awaken the attention of their people to the subject. 2. Special and particular providences demand special and particular attention. "Hearken unto this." 3. The perfect ease with which God can punish the wicked, and hurl them to destruction. 4. The present time affords a fine opportunity for the exercise of Christian benevolence. 5. The precious privileges of those who are interested in the favour of God. (*The Pulpit.*)

The snow and its lessons:—I. We may learn from the snow THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO DO A GREAT DEAL OF GOOD WITHOUT MAKING VERY MUCH NOISE. The snow is a great blessing. The Psalmist says, "He giveth snow like wool" (Psa. cxlvii. 16). Wool, as we know, is very warm. Winter garments are made of wool, and so we keep out the cold. The snow is God's winter garment for the earth. It covers up the tender roots and plants with its thick clothing, and protects them from the cutting frosts which would otherwise destroy them. Then the snow is useful for the watering of the earth (Isa. lv. 10, 11). When we look upon the beauty of spring, and the many glories of the summer, we must not forget the part which the snow took in producing these things. And yet, while the snow is so useful to the earth, how silently it does its work (Matt. vi. 2). II. TAKE CARE WHAT FOOTPRINTS YOU LEAVE BEHIND YOU. The fresh snow is a very faithful record

of our footsteps. It is in a more serious sense that we also leave our footprints behind us as we walk down the lane of life. I do not mean upon the snow, but upon the memories and characters of those who have known us. III. Another lesson the snow has taught us is THE POWER OF LITTLE THINGS. A snowflake is a little thing, but many snowflakes make "a white world." Success in life consists very much in a constant attention to little things. We cannot always find opportunities of doing great deeds. IV. The last of our lessons is that GOD LOVES HOLINESS. Nothing is whiter than the snow. No sin can enter heaven. (*R. Brewin.*) *Suggestions of the snow:*—The Old Testament far more than the New employs the phenomena of nature to symbolise truth. The birth of snow, far up upon soft clouds, or yet more tenuous ether, gives rise to pleasant suggestions of the ways of God in nature. To a child, snow descending is like feathers, as if the great globe were a bird coming to its moulting and shedding all its old plumes. Or, if snow be likened to flowers, then the raindrops in the upper air are buds, and snow is the blossoming or budding raindrops. Or, if the poet renders his thought, the snow is the great husbandman, and plants the moisture borrowed from lake and sea, and in due time shakes down upon the earth the plumy grains that have been reared in the heaven above. Or yet again, as an emblem, Quarles might have noticed the rare beauty of the snow. Each flake of snow is more exquisite in structure than anything mortal hands can make. Why should not the raindrops come pelting down rounded like shot—as they do in summer? The earth, then, it might be thought, had all the beauty of form and flower that it needed; but in winter, cold and barren, the sky is the gelid garden and sends down exquisite bloom, fairer than the lily of the valley. Not only is each flake beautiful, but so are all its weird and witching ways. If undisturbed the snow falls with wondrous levity, as if in a dream or reverie; as if it hardly knew the way, and wavered in the search of the road. It touches the ground with airy grace, as if like a sky-bird it touched the bough or the twig only to fly again. But when once embodied, it hangs upon bush and tree, ruffling the black branch with lace, or cushioning the evergreen branch with the rarest and daintiest white velvet. Or, when winds drive it or send it in swirls around and above all obstructions, drifting it into banks with rim and curvature, like which no pencil or tool can match, it still, out of all its agitation, works lines of grace and beauty that have been the admiration of the world from the beginning. This child of the storm is itself beautiful, and the artist of beauty. Consider the weakness and the power of the snow. Can anything be gentler and more powerless? It comes not as a ball from the rifle, or an arrow from the bow, or a swooping hawk descending from the sky for its prey. A child's hand catches and subdues it; and ere he can see it, it is gone. A baby can master that which masters mankind. Boys gather it, and it is submissive; it resists nothing. All things seem stronger than the snow new born. Yet, one night's weaving, and it covers the earth through wide latitudes and longitudes with a garment that all the looms of the earth could not have furnished. One day more and it sinks fences underneath it, obliterates all roads, and levels the whole land as spade and plough, and ten thousand times ten thousand engineers and workmen could not do it. It lays its hand upon the roaring engine, blocks its wheels and stops its motion. It stands before the harbour, and lets down a white darkness which baffles the pilot and checks the home-returning ship. It takes the hills and mountains, and gathering its army until the day comes, without sound of drum or trumpet, it charges down; and who can withstand its coming in battle array? What power is thus in the hosts of weakness! So the thoughts of good men, small, silent, gathering slowly, at length are masters of time and of the ages. If such be the power of God's weakness, what must be the Almightiness of God, the thunder of His power? Consider, also, that the descending snow has relations not alone thus to fancy, but is a worker too. We send abroad to the islands of South America, and to the coast quays, to bring hither the stimulant that shall kindle new life in the wasted soils and bring forth new harvests. Yet from the unsullied air the snow brings down fertility in the endless wastes that are going on,—exhaled gases, from towns and from cities, multiplied forms that are vandals, wanderers in the sky. Caught in the meshes of the snow, the ammoniacal gases and various others are brought down by it and laid upon the soil; and it has become a proverb that the snow, fresh and new-fallen, is the poor man's manure. It gathers again, then, the waste material of the earth, whose levity carries it above, and lays with equal distribution over all the lands that which brings back to them their needed fertility. (*Henry Ward*

Beecher.) *Winter* :—What are its mute lessons to us? 1. Winter presents us with a special study of the richness, wisdom, and greatness of the Divine order of the world. The religion of winter-worship is pre-eminently the religion of the supernatural—the religion of Christ. It is the impulse of a religious spirit to recognise the beauty, the wisdom, the grandeur of these manifestations of the Creator. Power, beauty, and goodness are revealed. 2. Winter may be made the text of an important social study. It has potent influences upon character, and upon the duties and sympathies of life. What a lesson it is in the distribution of God's gifts. Everywhere nature—God's order—rebukes selfishness. Winter is potent as a social civiliser. Home is fully realised only in winter climes. Winter appeals to human charities and sympathies. 3. Winter is a fine moral study, full of spiritual lessons and analogies, such as Christ would have elicited. It is something that there is a break upon mere acquisition—a season when accumulation is arrested, when even God does not seem to be lavishing gifts. Winter brings a due recognition of the beauty and glory of the earth that God has made, its wondrous forms and forces. It brings a sense of obligation to the marvellous providence of the earth's economy—the relation of seed-time to sowing, of winter to summer; and all the while the uniform wants of life supplied, one season providing for another which produces no supplies. How transient all earthly conditions and forms of beauty and strength! How unresting, how unhasting the law of change. The supreme analogy of winter is death. To this winter of human life we all must come. (*Henry Allon, D.D.*) *Lessons of the snow* :—I. CONSIDER ITS BEAUTY. Its shape and colour have always charmed the naturalists and the poets. Its beauty is its own, unique, artistic, Divine. This beauty suggests a higher beauty, as articulated in thought, in character, and life. The beauty of any life consists in that circlet of excellences called the fruit of the Spirit. That life is beautiful whose touch is healing, whose words are comforting, and whose influence is ennobling. Delicacy and sweetness belong to the highest music. The purer the soul, the more of delicacy and sweetness will be in it. A beautiful life carries the Christ heart. Not only is each snow-crystal a thing of beauty, but its ways are ways of pleasantness. How graceful the curves and beautiful the lines of falling snowflakes! How gently they touch the earth! With feathery softness they weave about the trees and bushes the rarest lacework, defying all the looms of the modern world. The snow is an artist unequalled in all the world. Its ways are full of grace and beauty. And beauty in the soul expresses itself in comely ways and winsome deeds. Spirituality will not only transfigure the countenance, but clothe the hands and feet with tenderness and grace. II. CONSIDER THE PURITY OF THE SNOW. It is clean, white, and bright. But when it comes in contact with soot, its purity is defiled and its comeliness destroyed. What a pitiable sight is a soul defiled by the soot of sin! Snow undefiled is bewitchingly beautiful, but when tainted it is repulsive. The sight of doves and snow made David yearn for a pure heart. III. CONSIDER THE VARIETY OF THE SNOWFLAKES. The snowflake has been examined by the microscope, and its revelations disclosed. Revelations of crowns studded with brilliants, of stars with expanding rays, of bridges with their abutments, and temples with their aisles and columns. Scientific men have observed no less than a thousand different forms and shapes in snow-crystals. While they shoot out stars like chiselled diamonds, they reveal endless variety. O what a God is ours! Everywhere in nature we see diversity. We stand amazed before the various types of mind. When we say the snow-crystal is a picture of God's thought, we also are forced to believe it is expressed in a thousand different ways. IV. CONSIDER THE USEFULNESS OF THE SNOW. It is a stimulant and fertiliser. Exhausted soils are enlivened and strengthened by the snow. Gases are captured by it, and they descend in showers to enrich and beautify the fields. Utility is a widespread law. Waste material is caught up and made to serve another purpose. See how the snow covers with its woollen mantle uncomely objects, and simultaneously protects those hidden potencies which under the vernal equinox unfold into bud and leaf, blossom, fruit. Beneath that white shroud the forces of spring are allying and marshalling, like soldiers on the field. Snow is a source of irrigation. In countries of great elevation, where the rains are only periodical, the inhabitants depend wholly on the snow to enrich and fertilise their fields. Viewing human life in the light of a Divine philosophy, we are forced to the conclusion that the winter of our trials is essential to soul-fruitage. Lowell saw in the first fall of snow the picture of a great sorrow, but a sorrow sweetened by the elements of

hope. Reposing in the thought of a universal Father, and having assurances that winter will give place to spring and the melodies of birds, let us see in our trials and afflictions the means ordained for our entrance into glory. In Haydn's *Creation* the opening passage abounds in dissonances, a fit representation of chaos; but they soon give way to harmonies, choral and symphonic, that fill the soul with dreams of immeasurable glory and unearthly peace. And as in music, so in life, discords will end in harmonies, and sweet strains fill earth and sky. Death may seem to silence the harp of life, yet it is only as a pause in music that is preparatory to richer, sweeter, and fuller tones. (*J. B. Whitford.*)

Ver. 7. **He sealeth up the hand of every man.**—*God known by the sealing up of man's hand*:—The primary reference to this statement is to the season of winter. Then the earth is hard with frost, and perhaps covered with snow. This brings to man a diminution of power. Scope for his usual activity is cut off. Not only does the labour of the husbandman in great measure cease, but other forms of outdoor labour as well, the necessary materials being no longer plastic in the workman's hand. The hand of man is so effectually sealed that, for a time, numerous industries fail. While this is the primary reference of the statement, it may be much more widely applied. On every side God sets a limit to man. In relation to everything he comes to a point where he finds his hand "sealed up." This, no doubt, is a necessity of his limited nature. 1. God sealeth up man's hand in the realm of nature, that we may know His work in the supply of our necessary food. For that we are dependent on the earth, and the elements: and we can do many things towards extracting from them the food which we need. We can plough, and sow, and harrow, and weed. But in this case man comes to a point where God sealeth up his hand. There is another class of operations which is equally necessary to secure the desired result. There must be apportionment of moisture and sunshine; and there may be mildew and blight. But as regards all this, man is utterly helpless. We have no power over the clouds and sunshine. All that kind of operation belongs entirely to God. This is a special reason for adoration and gratitude when the work is completed, seeing it is so peculiarly and manifestly the work of God. If the harvest were, from first to last, our own work, how proud should we be! how self-sufficient and how forgetful of God! 2. God sealeth up the hand of man by events in Providence, that all men may know His work as the Ruler of the world. Providence is just God's work in this sense. It sets Him before us as the righteous Governor of the universe. Men can do many things, but they cannot do everything. This comes very much from the concealments of Providence. There is a thick veil spread over the doings of God in order that men may fear before Him. This applies to nations as well as to individuals. Both the one and the other must move very much in the dark as regards circumstances and results, but not as regards principles. For principles are immutable, and God intends us to act from these. How often does God actually arrest courses of human action by sudden combinations in providence which make them impossible—as in the confusion of tongues at Babel. 3. God sealeth up man's hand by affliction, that men may know His work in their individual life. Affliction is no doubt a part of providence, but it is an isolated part. It is individual in its action, and it enforces the knowledge of God's work in the personal sphere. This it does by sealing up the hand. Then we feel how little we had in our own power even when we were at our best, and how completely we were at the mercy of a higher. And we see also how well things can go on without us. 4. God seals up the hand of every man when, by His Spirit, He convinces him of sin, that all may know His work in the matter of the soul's salvation. Here we are in the region of conscience. Practical lesson. We must accept our weakness, and all the limitations of our present condition, if we are ever to know God's work. (*A. L. Simpson, D.D.*)

Ver. 14. **Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.**—*God's wondrous working*:—The teaching of Scripture, both in the Old Testament and in the New, impresses upon us a recognition of the most intimate connection between God and all the forces and events of nature and providence. The thunder is His voice, the clouds are the dust of His feet. I. HOW IS IT DONE? By what means is it brought about? Let us take the wind and the clouds to illustrate this question. "The wind bloweth where it listeth:

thou hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth." We can exercise no control over it; it seems to be under no control. But closer examination throws doubt upon the opinion that wind and cloud movements are mere chance work. Some winds are found to be very fixed in their season, their direction, and their force. To find out how the clouds are formed, and the winds rise and fall, is the work of science. Law and order must prevail wherever science can work. But suppose that, one by one, natural phenomena have been traced to their proximate causes throughout the whole domain of nature and natural law, and science brings us its final results, we have no reason, with the Scriptures in our hands, and their truths hid in our hearts, to receive those results with any other feeling than rejoicing. We know from Scripture that God is not a God of confusion (1 Cor. xiv. 33). But we must not allow ourselves to be imposed upon by the use of ambiguous terms. Suppose we could trace up the existing universe to its primeval germ or germs; we are no nearer the discovery of the origin of things. The laws of nature, proximate causes, or whatever other phrase may be preferred, are not forces, much less are they powers; they are merely the modes in which the force or the power operates. Underneath and beyond all these laws, or modes, or sequences, there is a mysterious power which science cannot catch, which it knows to exist, but which has ever evaded its search. Tyndall is right, because strictly scientific, when he says that natural phenomena are, one by one, being associated with their proximate causes; but he may be wrong when he adds that the idea of personal volition mixing itself in the economy of nature is retreating more and more, because here he ventures beyond his sphere, and makes science speak as if it had something to say on a question concerning which he himself allows that it ought not to venture an opinion. For what if this mysterious Power at the back of things should itself be a Person whose volition is the most potent factor of all? Professor Darwin says: "As man can produce, and certainly has produced, a great result by his methodical and conscious means of selection, what may not Nature effect?" We reply: Infinitely more, provided Nature possesses infinite wisdom and power to adopt the methods and to make the selections, along with the personal volition which originates them all. But this "Nature" is none other than the God of the Bible, who created the heavens and the earth, and who made man in His own image. II. BY WHOM IS IT DONE? By what agent is it brought about? The world by its wisdom has never known God. God reveals Himself. While science searches all His workings, it finds everywhere the "hiding of His power," but Himself it cannot find. God can be known only by those who hear His own voice making Himself known. By faith we understand the worlds were framed by the word of God. By faith also we know that the worlds are upheld and balanced by the same Power which made them. The laws of nature are the methods by which the God of creation and providence disposes and balances the things which He has made. It is strange that the How should be confounded with the Who, or that the reign of law should be imagined to set aside the necessity, and render doubtful the existence, of a lawgiver. A watch is made, so also is a tree. The method of making does not in either case supersede the necessity of a maker. The laws of painting do not produce a picture of a tree without the hand and skill and volition of a painter tracing every detail. When we listen to the winds, or look upwards to the clouds, or, standing upon the shore, look out upon the stormy ocean, there may be in these no articulate voice to direct us to the character and name of that power which made and moves them. But surely the Maker and the Mover of winds and clouds and storms is not so weak and helpless but that He may speak for Himself, and make Himself understood by intelligent creatures. It is true, and must in the very nature of the case remain ever true, that to the mere scientific explorer God remains unknown, "declining all intellectual manipulation." When now we search the Scriptures as those who desire to hear God's own voice, to listen to His own explanation of how the world was fashioned, and how it is upheld, we find, it may be, many things hard to be understood; but we find also the constant declaration of the Divine omnipresence, as superintending, directing, and actively working, according to His own eternal purpose, whatsoever comes to pass. The relation of God's providential power to His creative power is a matter rather of profitless speculation than of practical importance. Jonathan Edwards suggests, as an illustration, the forming and sustaining of an image in a mirror. The first rays of light from the object falling on the mirror form the image, and there is a constant and unbroken stream

of rays which sustain it. The forming and sustaining powers are substantially one. The relation likewise of God's free and universal agency in providence toward other free agencies and secondary causes, raises many interesting questions, which, however, are also of little profit. Sufficient unto us are the facts that God is not, and cannot be, the author of sin; that no violence is offered to the will of the creatures; that the liberty or contingency of second causes is not taken away, but rather established, inasmuch as the same providence which causeth all things to come to pass, ordereth them to fall out according to the nature of second causes. And again, the relation of God's general to His particular providence, the adjustment of events to the whole, and at the same time to each and every one of its minutest parts, suggests many problems which it is hard, perhaps impossible, to solve. Sufficient for us is the assurance that, however complicated the task may seem to us, with God all things are possible. And the God to whom all this power and wisdom belong, is revealed to us in the person of Jesus, who is the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance, who says to us: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." In the earthly life of Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels, the man of science will find problems as hard to solve, and mysteries as difficult of comprehension, as those which meet him on the field of nature. There is the same mysterious power, the same awful presence, and the same failure of an intellectual manipulation to capture and define it. III. WHY IS IT DONE? For what purpose is it brought about? This question is obviously twofold, according as it is asked by science or religion, in reference to the modes of action or the motives of the agent. The former may be answered in a single sentence. Every event, regarded scientifically, is first an effect, and then also a cause; whatever flows from it shows the purpose for which it was itself brought about. Physically, the event is intended to produce whatever, according to the laws of nature, flows from it. But the question remains whether, speaking strictly of the material world and its phenomena, the God of nature and of providence has, or can have, any ends in view which are outside the domain of physical science. When He makes the clouds His chariot, or walks upon the wings of the wind, does He confine Himself to purely physical work? According to Elihu, in our text, it is far otherwise; for those clouds and that wind may be carrying heavy loads of mercy or of judgment. The physical, the moral, and the spiritual—the personal, the national, and the universal—are all departments of the same government, and that government is personal and absolute. It is sometimes affirmed that the teaching of Scripture—at least, of the Old Testament—is not to be applied to modern life and the providence of God in relation to it, inasmuch as God was then dealing in a special way with a theocratic nation, which was specially under His authority, in a sense in which no nation now is. But this involves an obvious fallacy: for 1. It can, at most, apply only to the particular methods of the Divine government with that particular nation, and not the principles of the Divine government generally. 2. We find those principles applied in Scripture to other nations besides Israel. 3. We find the same mysteries exercising men's minds then as now. 4. The same principles are carried into the New Testament, and are there treated as universal in their scope. Even what might seem the most exceptional dealings of the Lord towards His people are adduced for the purpose of impressing upon us the principles involved, and supplying us with examples. Elijah, for instance, was a man like ourselves, says James, and the efficacy of his prayers teaches us that we, too, may pray with expectation. It is true that Scripture reveals to us the presence of God manifesting itself by miracle, as well as by ordinary providence. But we are not now concerned with the methods of the Divine manifestation, only with the fact that the will and power of God are present, and that they are supreme. Grant this, and the question of miracles becomes a purely secondary one. Even the will of the creature man is a potent force among those of the world around him, many of which at least are under its control so far as to be directed towards particular ends which they would not otherwise accomplish. In this respect also man was made in the image of his Maker; and no account of nature and providence can possibly be adequate which does not make allowance for the will of God as the Supreme Power over all. It is not the extraordinary or miraculous merely in the natural world which may be made subservient to moral and spiritual ends. But the ordinary laws of nature are so disposed and balanced that they co-operate for such ends also. It is well, no doubt, in view, for example, of bad trade, agricultural depression, the prevalence of disease or personal, social, or national disaster—it is well to examine carefully the

natural causes of these things, and to remove them if we can. But is that all our duty? Mr. Froude says: "The clergy are aware all the time that the evils against which they pray depend on natural causes, and that prayer from a Christian minister will as little bring a change of weather as the incantations of a Caffre rain-maker." Now, certainly, if the prayers of the Christian minister are to be classed along with the Caffre rain-maker's incantations, as the same in kind and similar in their motive and design, Mr. Froude is right. But is this a fair or accurate description of the case? The Christian minister, we submit, is called upon to pray, not because his prayer can change the weather, but because his God can do so. Pestilence comes through uncleanness and the neglect of sanitary measures; therefore in this department let all due precautions be taken to avert it. It comes also from the hand of God, and therefore it is a proper subject for humiliation and prayer. For surely it is both irrational and profane to assert that we ourselves may so overrule and direct the forces of Nature, by sanitary precautions and otherwise, as to alleviate or avert the cholera, and yet to maintain that the God to whom we pray has no power so to do. Depression in trade may be due to economic causes, it is due also to the finger of God. We may, and often do, err, however, in attempting to read God's providence from the wrong end, by asking what God means by it, instead of inquiring what lesson we ourselves may learn from it. We may err in reading God's providence for others instead of for ourselves. We may err in directing too exclusive attention to what we call special providences, and thinking too little of ordinary and everyday Divine protection. All events have, at least, a twofold aspect—one in relation to their proximate causes and effects among the laws of nature, which reads its appropriate lesson as to the use or neglect of means for averting evil, and another in relation to the hand and will of God, which reads its lessons too, no less clearly and impressively than the former. It is a narrow and unworthy view of the Divine government, akin to that spirit which makes God altogether such an one as ourselves, to suppose that when we have found one manifest design and adaptation of any event in one department, there can be no other designs or adaptations in other directions which we do not observe. It is one evidence of the wisdom by which the forces of nature are disposed and balanced that nothing is allowed to run to waste, but that all is economised and made to go as far as possible. In conclusion, let me advert to three practical points on which the subject under consideration has an important bearing. 1. In the sphere of social and national life, the hand of God, by means of natural law, visits iniquity with chastisement, and His voice calls to thankfulness, penitence, and prayer. God is supreme, but also immediate and personal, Governor among the nations. As by means of natural law He visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, and makes the show of the sinner's countenance testify against him, so likewise He assures us by His providence, as well as by His word, that righteousness exalteth a nation, and that sin becomes a nation's reproach. Nations, as well as individuals, receive Divine calls to gratitude, repentance, and prayer. 2. The duty and the efficacy of prayer are to be considered solely in the light of our second question. The proper use of means for the accomplishment of given purposes belongs to the first department—the How; and this ought not to be neglected. But prayer looks directly to God, and has nothing to do with secondary causes. The range of prayer is as wide as the providence of God. Whatever difficulties may beset the philosophy of the subject, we can pray best, most scripturally, most truly, when we forget all about its philosophy and its difficulties. These all lie in the region of natural law and secondary causes, with which prayer has nothing to do. It is vain to attempt any compromise or division of territory between natural law on the one side and effectual prayer on the other. All prayer must, in the nature of the case, be limited and conditioned by the submission of the petitioner's will to the will of Him to whom he prays, and should involve thanksgiving and adoration. Some attempt to exclude prayer from the physical world as a force not provided for, and of no avail, and would limit it to things more purely spiritual. But if the reign of law excludes prayer from the physical world, it excludes it equally from every department. For the frames and feelings of the human spirit, the workings of conscience, and all that belongs to the spiritual world, are as much under the reign of law as the motions of the tides or the phases of the moon, and events are as much settled in the one sphere as in the other. And the same line of argument, if consistently carried out, would paralyse all human effort in every direction whatever. If we are to have law and prayer at all, we must have them co-operating

as fellow-servants in the same sphere, and there is no possibility of an amicable division of the land between them. 3. In all the work of the Church, specially in the work of the pulpit, we have to do, directly and mainly, with the Word of God. Our work lies in another sphere from that of the scientific explorer in the domain of natural law. The world needs the Gospel; we have the authority of God for saying that Christ Jesus can save to the uttermost. Paul said to Timothy, "Preach the Word"; he charged him also to turn away from the oppositions of the knowledge which is falsely so called (1 Tim. vi. 20). The surest way to drive all enemies from the field is to preach the Word, to let it speak for itself. (*James Smith, MA.*)

Ver. 16. **Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds?**—*Clouds*:—Note, in the address of Elihu, his close observation of God's works in nature, and the admirable use he makes of them. I. THE FACT IN NATURE. Wonderful creations of God are the clouds, well deserving our admiration and our study. What a beautiful fact is the balancing of the clouds! Think of the material of which the cloud is composed. There it is, a fleece asleep on the bosom of the blue. Can we explain the balancing? How the hard ice or heavy water turns into light steam, or how the steam condenses into water, or hardens into ice again? Why it is that one day may frown with the storms of winter, and the next smile with the light of spring? Heat, gravitation, electricity, are useful names for the facts we observe, but how much explanation do they give? II. THE FACT IN EXPERIENCE. Elihu's words were intended to carry the thoughts of Job beyond the clouds of heaven: for the Book of Job is not a treatise of natural philosophy, but of moral and spiritual truth. Are there no clouds in our sky? Is all bright—without a single shadow? Such a sky would be more than we could bear. Our heads are too weak to stand it. Blessed be God for clouds! They temper the scorching sky, and make the atmosphere more sweet, more healthy. They open a new field for the exhibition of the Divine attributes; they present masses for the light of His character to irradiate and glorify. And is there no balancing of our clouds? Does a single affliction ever gather over us which God does not weigh and measure and control? Infinite Wisdom is at work to determine the form and degree of our earthly trials; and He will not "suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear." Still, how little we know about it! We see the purpose of some of our sorrows; the evil they lead us to correct, the danger they teach us to avoid; but, for anything we can tell, God has many other purposes in them, of which we shall never know till they are revealed to us in heaven. (*F. Tucker, B.A.*) **Which is perfect in knowledge.**—*Of the omniscience of God*:—These words are a declaration of that Divine attribute, the perfection of knowledge. I. GOD IS A BEING INDEED WITH PERFECT KNOWLEDGE. 1. Knowledge is a perfection without which the foregoing attributes are no perfections at all, and without which those which follow can have no foundation. Where there is no knowledge, eternity and immensity are as nothing; and justice, goodness, mercy, and wisdom can have no place. 2. That God must be a Being indeed with perfect knowledge, appears from His having communicated certain degrees of that perfection. For whatever perfection is in any effect, must of necessity have been much more in the cause that produced it. Nothing can give to another that which it hath not in itself. Though nothing can give what it has not, yet any cause may forbear to give *all* that it has. 3. From the immensity and omnipresence of God may the same truth be likewise clearly evinced. Wherever Himself is, His knowledge is, which is inseparable from His being, and must therefore be infinite. II. THE PARTICULAR NATURE AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DIVINE KNOWLEDGE. 1. The object of this knowledge. It is a knowledge of all things absolutely. Our knowledge is short as our duration, and limited as our extent. The knowledge of God is a knowledge of all the actions of men; of all their thoughts and intents; and even of future and contingent events. Even the most contingent futurities, the actions of free agents, cannot be conceived to be hidden from his foresight. How can foreknowledge in God be consistent with liberty of action in men? Premise that our infinite understandings are not able to comprehend all the ways of infinite knowledge, and that the question is not whether men's actions are free, but how that freedom of action which makes men to be men, can be consistent with foreknowledge of such actions. If these two things were really inconsistent, and could not be reconciled, it would follow, not that men's actions were not free (for that would destroy all religion), but that such free actions

as men's are, were not the objects of the Divine foreknowledge. Foreknowledge does not cause things to be. The futurity of free actions is exactly the same, whether they can, or could not, be foreknown. 2. The manner of this Divine knowledge. We cannot, in particular, explain all the ways, manners, and circumstances of infinite knowledge. We can only make a few general observations. The Divine knowledge is not, as ours and the angels, a knowledge of things by degrees and parts. It is a perfect comprehension of everything, in all possible respects at a time, and in all possible circumstances together. It is not, as ours, only a superficial and external knowledge, but an intimate and thorough prospect of their very inmost nature and essence. It is not, as ours, confused and general, but a clear, distinct, and particular knowledge of every, even the minutest, thing or circumstance. It is not, as ours, acquired with difficulty, consideration, attention, and study, but a knowledge necessarily and perpetually arising of itself. 3. The certainty of this Divine knowledge. It is absolutely infallible, without the least possibility of any degree of being deceived. III. A FEW PRACTICAL INFERENCES. 1. If the Divine knowledge is perfect, it is a proper object of our admiration and honour. 2. If God knows all, even our most secret actions; then ought we to live under the power of this conviction, in all holy and godly conversation, both publicly and in private. 3. Learn the folly of all hypocrisy; the obligation to purity of heart. 4. If God knows all future events, we may safely depend and trust on His providence, without being over-solicitous for the time to come. 5. See the folly of pretending to foreknow things. 6. If God alone knoweth the thoughts of men, we ought not to be forward in judging others. (*S. Clarke, D.D.*)

Ver. 18. **Hast thou with Him spread out the sky?**—*The sky*:—For beauty, for inspiration, for health and refreshment, for a sense of freedom and enlargement, is there anything like the sky when the earth does not bury it out of sight by her vapours, nor foul and tarnish it by her smoke? Or again, for teaching and for sublimest instruction, for tenderness and for strength, for measurelessness and everlastingness, is there anything like the sky? How it attracts us and draws us all out of doors, makes it impossible for us to live within any doors! We must be under the sky. And how it rewards us! The first step when we leave the threshold, what a meeting between a man's face and the face of the sky! It is a spirit and life to us. It bathes us. It is anodyne in the evening, it kisses us in the morning. It is vital enough, intense enough to enter and flow through the centre of every blood-globule, every nerve and every atom. More, it positively is soul for our soul, for it kindles thought and affection; yea, still more, it is inmost spirit for our inmost spirit, for God is in the sky and gives Himself to us through it. If you do not receive God through the sky that is your fault; it is neither God's fault nor the fault of the sky. For I, at anyrate, am conscious of receiving God every day of my life through the sky. Hence the sky feeds our reverence; quickens worship; teaches us how to worship; puts all littleness and partiality out of our worship; makes our worship large, and grand, and impartial as the sky; takes fear and distrust from us, creates in us faith and a hope that will not die. When you feel dark and doleful within the narrow prison of your own personality, do go out to God's sky, liberate yourself, let your soul expand in its openness. There is an infinite hope for us in the sky, and God has put it there. All prophets, therefore, and these Scriptures refer us to the sky. You know how full the prophets of this Old Book are of reference to the sky and to Him who stretched it out. "God alone stretcheth out the heavens," saith Job. "O Lord, my God," says David, "Thou art very great; . . . Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain." The sky is a veil or a curtain between His glory and the outer glory. But what we call the outer glory—sky—is His glory come through. His vitality presses on the blue curtain. The blue curtain is pervious in every point to His Spirit. The tender infinite sky is God's remoter robe, and His robe is full of Him—full of His virtues. He holdeth back the face of His throne, and hangeth the blue curtain before it. Let me note here that the word translated sky in our text is plural in the Hebrew, and means "the ethers" or the tenuous atmospheres which are intermediate between our heaven and that other glory which mortal eyes cannot see. And in justifying the words "stretcheth out" and "spreadeth," as applicable to the "ethers" or the sky, let us observe, once for all, that the things most solid and those most attenuated are all one substance. Strictly, there is but one substance in the visible and invisible universe.

The other of the sky is just as metallic as gold, or silver, or steel. These metals may any day be made other again. Nothing is so solid and nothing so strong as the everlasting sky. It is the "stretched out" spirit-substance; the sweet transparency. It is the image and the mirror of the invisible God, and one word expresses both, the ether and His Spirit. The breath of God is what we call Holy Spirit, and the "stretched out" sky simply clothes His breath or spirit to us who are so dull of comprehending His Spirit—the great, clear, infinite sky—so that it is the manifestation, the image of the Spirit of God. We must allow God to hang the picture before us; He knows what we want. We are wise enough to follow this Divine method in putting pictures before the eyes of our little ones, and having awakened wonder and secured their interest we then proceed to give them the ideas of which the pictures are the signs. Now of all pictures, the infinite curtain dotted over with its innumerable golden suns is *the* picture. It is God holding before our eyes the shadow of Himself. The boundless, over-arching tent which is spread over all the worlds and heavens of His children is simply the image of His own boundlessness. It is one, like God—fathomless, measureless, strong, and endless. As of all scenes the sky is first and largest, likewise among things serviceable it is of the very first use. It is the infinite, the invisible servant of God. It is the first of all His ministering angels. It is always blessing us and without a sound. It is always teaching us. It teaches us more than all sounds and voices ever taught us or ever can teach. It teacheth us concerning the Spirit of God, concerning the face of God, and concerning the operation of God. And if you want to learn what His Trinity is, I implore you not to learn it from men, or books, but from God's teaching. It is the Father representing His own adorable Trinity to His children, and how unspeakably superior to all our definitions, whether Athanasian or otherwise! "Lift up your eyes," He says, "and behold My infinite ether, behold it by day and behold it by night. When you have considered with admiration and reflection My infinite ether, then consider the sun which is in the bosom of the ether, the child, the only begotten of the infinite ether. Then, thirdly, think of the breath of the ether coming down into your blood and frame, and of the beam of light, both alike proceeding from the Father, and the Son, from the infinite ether and from the sun in the sky." It is impossible to imagine either a more expressive or a more impressive teaching about Father, Son, and Holy Spirit than God has made the sky. From the sky we have breath for the lungs and light for the eyes, and from the adorable Trinity the breath and illumination of His Spirit for our eternal life. Think of the infinitude of the living spirit which is behind the ether, and think of that central light which lightens all the suns, which the suns simply reflect, and think again of the living spirit and the living light giving themselves to every atom-child in the universe for the eternal life of every child of the Father in His visible heavens. God has given to us the sublimest teaching in the sublimest way. Now as if to insist that we must carry over the whole sky and all that is in the sky into our Gospel—and if you do not carry it into the Gospel then it is no Gospel of God, for wherever your Gospel came from I am certain that the first teaching of God is in His infinite sky—God shows us therein a mirror of Himself spread out before us. The sky is "a molten looking-glass" to reflect God's face. Likewise we read, "Thy tabernacle, thy tent in which thou dwellest with thy children." But who can speak of the children folded within the infinite curtain of the sky? All worlds have, of course, their own atmospheres, but beyond their distinct atmospheres there is one ethereal mantle, one sky that includes them all. One blue tent comprehends all constellations and all planets, but nothing is so firm as this fixed tent. Why do we call it firm? Because it is immovable. Winds blow and storms rage in your planetary atmosphere, but never in the ether. If ten thousand times ten thousand suns, which are now in the firmament, were to burn out and become extinct to-night, it would not in the very least touch or affect the infinite or the eternal ether which over-arches all worlds. It is imperturbable because it is God's image, like Himself, imperturbable, and yet infinitely delicate and tender. God breathes through this skyey tent, and His tent at every point inbreathes the breath of God. His sleeping and waking children throughout the universe sleep and wake throughout their Father's all-breathing tent of azure and of gold. "He stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent for His children to dwell in," and He breathes through into the tent, into every spirit and bosom of every child, because the ethers are many. One ether above another, one ether within another, adapted to the diverse requirements of His children,

and yet all the inner and inmost ethers of angels and of men, all the material heavens of immensity, and all the invisible heavens are but one Father's tent to dwell in. Lift up your eyes on high and behold the countless homes in your Father's infinite tent; the children of each orb in the sky, of incomputable number. How ineffable then is the thought of all the children of all the worlds and all the heavens in one tent of an infinite God. Scope enough opens here to admit of foreign travel to all eternity. There is also family enough here to occupy and interest us to all eternity. We shall have an everlasting opportunity of entertaining strangers and of being entertained by strangers. But the thing which specially concerns us is that beautiful transformation we are undergoing from being grubs of the earth to becoming God's butterflies of the sky—the transformation of God's children from being planetary children to becoming His children of the heavens. In the present form of our nature we can only live in the dense atmosphere of our own earth, but God is generating an inner man within us. He who asked us just now to think of Him who "formed us in the womb" asks us now to think of our outer form as a womb in which He is forming the inner creature which shall be able to breathe His ether, and after that the sublimer ether, until at last in our highest refinement we shall be able to breathe the sublimest ether, namely, the ether of His own presence and glory. Suppose, for an illustration of our formation and our transfiguration, that we take those strange denizens of our sky called comets, which appear to be planets in the making, that is, they so appear to me, and I shall so think of them till I am better instructed. They have all been generated and thrown off by some sun. All earths and comets are children of suns. The comets have too much of the fiery energy of their original. The comets are too recent; they require ages and ages to cool down—as our own planet did—before they can become grass-growing, fruit-growing habitations. But mark the beautiful process. To what immeasurable distance from their parent sun these comets rush, as though they were bent on entering the outer darkness! But behold in due time, perhaps in their hundredth year, if not then, in their seven hundredth year, or in their thousandth year, they begin to rush as fast back under the attraction of their parent the sun—just as fast as they had all the centuries been receding from the sun. What a process! Receive instruction. In travelling from the sun they are cooling, cooling, and bathing themselves in distant and more distant atmospheres, and impregnating themselves with foreign virtues, and then in returning to the sun they renew their energy and are impregnated with solar electricities. And this strange law of receding from and then advancing towards the sun continues until the happy balance is struck, and they become mild and temperate worlds. In the light of this law contemplate the present strangely inconsistent earth-life of man. Child though he is of God, shot out of His bosom, yet there is in him a terribly strong tendency of turning his back on God, and rushing away in the strength of his own will, as though he would rush on to darkness, chaos, desert, hell, and find a region without God—without hope. But the moment comes—the moment of his greatest distance, perhaps his greatest sin—when he bethinks himself, pulls himself up and repents, bends round, turns, moves towards his God with all the earnestness that heretofore he went from Him, comet-like. Thus it is that he, too, acquires experience,—the experience of distance, the experience of darkness, the experience of his own fiery passions; and then the experience of God's breath, of God's harmonising truth, of God's pure, calm, changeless, eternal love, until ultimately he attains to great riches of nature, the riches of darkness, the riches of light, the riches of personality, the riches of God, and becomes a divinely balanced character, a noble son of God. (*John Pulsford.*)

Vers. 19-24. Teach us what we shall say unto Him. — *Man and God:*—I. SUGGESTIONS CONCERNING MAN. 1. The sublimest act, speaking to God. "Teach us what we shall say unto Him; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. Shall it be told Him that I speak? If a man speak, surely he shall be swallowed up." Speaking to God is an act implying a belief in the personality, presence, and susceptibility of God. Concerning this act, Elihu here intimates three things: (1) A conscious unfitness for it. (2) A conscious necessity for it. Has there ever lived a man who has not felt at times the necessity of communing with God? (3) The conscious solemnity of the act. "If a man speak, surely he shall be swallowed up," or destroyed. Is there any act more sublimely awful than the act of speaking to God? 2. A sad tendency

This is suggested in the words, "Men see not the bright light which is in the clouds." Although the reference here is of course to the physical fact, it is certainly suggestive of the mental tendency, which is very strong in some, to look at the dark side of things. You see this tendency—(1) In the sceptic, in relation to the dark things of revelation. (2) In the refiner, in relation to God's providence. (3) In the misanthrope, in relation to the character of his fellow-men. (4) In the desponding Christian, in relation to his own experience. II. DECLARATIONS CONCERNING GOD. There are four facts concerning God here declared; and as they have been noticed more than once before, it will be sufficient just to mention them. 1. His greatness is referred to. "With God is terrible majesty." 2. His inscrutability is referred to. "We cannot find Him out." 3. His righteousness. "He is excellent in power and in judgment, and in plenty of justice." 4. His independency. "He respecteth not any that are wise of heart." (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 21. **And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds.** — *Light in the clouds*:—Faith can see light when to human sense all is dark and dismal; can distinguish stars in the darkest night, sunbeams in the blackest clouds. I do not profess accurately to determine the meaning of our text. Possibly the words are to be interpreted in their literal signification, referring to changes in the weather, by which God, in a manner unknown to man, accomplishes His wise and benevolent purposes. But a cloud is so common a figure to denote adversity, light to denote prosperity, a cold north wind a painful dispensation of Providence, and fair weather a time of comfort and tranquillity, that I do not hesitate to make application of the words to the present condition of believers. I. THE CLOUDS. Clouds not infrequently gather around the path of the Christian in his pilgrimage to heaven. To look for perpetual sunshine is a vain and foolish expectation in passing through the vicissitudes of this stormy world. If man be born to trouble, assuredly the Christian has no exemption from the common lot of human nature. His example is Christ, and in conformity with Christ his religious character must attain its purity and perfection. Like his great Master, he must learn obedience in the things which he suffers. You believe in Providence; now is the time to trust it. You believe in the chastening hand of your heavenly Father: then say to God, "Show me wherefore Thou contendest with me." How will the cloud disperse? In what way will it end? That must be left between yourself and God. The order of Providence has been arranged with reference to the character of the believer. II. THE BRIGHT LIGHT. The light is here, though men see it not. Some people are not accustomed to observe the monition of Providence. The events must come in all their reality before they are correctly appreciated. Light and shade are mingled in the dispensations of Providence, as in the scenery of nature; and in the darkest shade we shall discern some light if we look for it in a right disposition of mind. Some will not see shade; others will not see light. The silvery margin of the cloud is a pleasant sign. Or is the bright light a pencil of rays, breaking through an opening in the thin and fleecy cloud, as you may often have observed it in the summer's evening? It tells you the sun has not set. It still shines through the cloud. Or is the bright light the bow in the clouds, the reflected light of sunbeams separated in their rich and beautiful colours? This is the emblem of promise, the token of good. It means promise in sorrow, and promise is ever present in the darkest day of our lives. III. THE PASSING WIND. The wind here is not that which bringeth up the rain from the chambers of the south, but that which disperses the clouds, and produces fair weather. You may experience something of the same kind of dispersion of your gloom and sorrow. The wind that drives away the cloud may seem rough and cold. But be the wind what it may, rough or gentle, cold or warm, it is sent by the Lord. Our troubles are of His appointment, our deliverance at His disposal; and He will disperse the troubles, and send deliverance at such a time, and by such means as He sees best. Be it ours, then, to see that the trials accomplish the good purpose of God, and then we may expect their speedy removal. (*R. Halley, D.D.*) *The bright light in the clouds*:—From Elihu we learn that any seeming defect in the Divine arrangements must be attributable, not to any want of skill or wisdom in the Divine Ruler of all things, but rather to the short-sightedness of man's imperfect vision. Taken in this point of view, the text presents us with ample materials for deep reflection upon the Divine character, and at the same time administers to us instructive

reproof. How apt are we to indulge in a repining and complaining spirit, when we cannot see the whole machinery of God's government working according to our notions of equity and goodness. "Vain man would be wise," says Zophar to Job; his restless and soaring spirit would fain explore the whole treasure-house of knowledge; and yet, with all this panting after wisdom, how little does the most gifted of earth's sons comparatively know of God as revealed in the broad and thinly-leaved volume of the Divine works. If there be so much that is dark and mysterious in the works of God so richly spread around us, and in the works of God so warmly beating within us, what wonder is it if we are unable to track out to our satisfaction the higher dealings of God's moral government? There is, however, always the bright light of wisdom and benevolence shining in the darkest cloud; and it does not shine the less really because unobserved by our short-sighted vision. In all God's dispensations, He doubtless has ever a reason of wisdom and love, though it may be involved in the clouds of obscurity, and unknown to us. We see merely a few of the cross-wheels, and are at a loss to understand the meaning of their revolvings. But to Him who ordereth all things, and who seeth the end from the beginning, every wheel appears properly adjusted for its own special work. Remember, then, that upon those who are really living by faith in the Son of God, though they may not always recognise it, the bright light of the heavenly favour is shining in the darkest cloud of Providence; and what we know not now, we shall know hereafter. (*W. J. Brock, A.B.*)

Light on the cloud:—The argument is, let man be silent when God is dealing with him; for he cannot fathom God's inscrutable wisdom. The text represents man's life under the figure of a cloudy day. I. WE LIVE UNDER A CLOUD, AND SEE GOD'S WAY ONLY BY A DIM LIGHT. As beings of intelligence, we find ourselves hedged in by mystery on every side. All our seeming knowledge is skirted, close at hand, by dark confines of ignorance. What then does it mean? Is God jealous of intelligence in us? Exactly contrary to this. He is a Being who dwelleth in light, and calls us to walk in the light with Him. By all His providential works He is training intelligence in us, and making us capable of knowledge. The true account is, that the cloud under which we are shut down is not heavier than it must be. How can a Being infinite be understood by a being finite? Besides, we have only just begun to be; and a begun existence is, by the supposition, one that has just begun to know, and has everything to know. How then can he expect, in a few short years, to master the knowledge of God and His universal kingdom? There is not only a necessary, but also a guilty limitation upon us. And therefore we are not only obliged to learn, but, as being under sin, are also in a temper that forbids learning, having our minds disordered and clouded by evil. Hence come our perplexities; for, as the sun cannot show distinctly what is in the bottom of a muddy pool, so God can never be distinctly revealed in the depths of a foul and earthly mind. The very activity of reason, which ought to beget knowledge, begets only darkness now, artificial darkness. We begin to quarrel with limitation itself, and so with God. He is not only hid behind thick walls of mystery, but He is dreaded as a power unfriendly, suspected, doubted, repugnantly conceived. We fall into a state thus of general confusion, in which even the distinctions of knowledge are lost. Reminded that God is, and must be, a mystery, we take it as a great hardship, or, it may be, an absurdity, that we are required to believe what we cannot comprehend. Entering the field of supposed revelation, the difficulties are increased in number, and the mysteries are piled higher than before. God in creation, God in Trinity, God incarnate. Man himself. Man in society. Practically, much is known about God and His ways—all that we need to know; but, speculatively, or by the mere understanding, almost nothing save that we cannot know. The believing mind dwells in continual light; for, when God is revealed within, curious and perplexing questions are silent. But the mind that judges God, or demands a right to comprehend Him before it believes, stumbles, complains, wrangles, and finds no issue to its labour. II. THERE IS ABUNDANCE OF LIGHT ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CLOUD, AND ABOVE IT. This we might readily infer from the fact that so much of light shines through. The experience of every soul that turns to God is a convincing proof that there is light somewhere, and that which is bright is clear. It will also be found that things which at one time appeared to be dark—afflictions, losses, trials, wrongs, defeated purposes, and deeds of suffering, patience, yielding no fruit—are very apt, afterward, to change colour, and become visitations of mercy. And so where God was specially

dark, He commonly brings out, in the end, some good or blessing, in which the subject discovers that his heavenly Father only understood his wants better than he did himself. Things which seemed dark or inexplicable, or even impossible for God to suffer without wrong in Himself, are really bright with goodness in the end. What then shall we conclude, but that on the other side of the cloud there is always a bright and glorious light, however dark it is underneath? Hence it is that the Scriptures make so much of God's character as a light-giving power, and turn the figure about into so many forms. III. THE CLOUD WE ARE UNDER WILL FINALLY BREAK WAY AND BE CLEARED. On this point we have many distinct indications. Thus it coincides with the general analogy of God's works, to look for obscurity first, and light afterward. Illustrate—Creation; animals blind at birth; the manner of our intellectual discoveries, &c. Precisely what is to be the manner and measure of our knowledge, in the fuller and more glorious revelation of the future, is not clear to us now; for that is one of the dark things or mysteries of our present state. But the language of Scripture is remarkable: it even declares that we shall see God as He is. It is even declared that our knowledge of Him shall be complete. Let us receive from this subject—1. A lesson of modesty. Which way soever we turn in our search after knowledge, we run against mystery at the second or third step. There is no true comfort in life, no dignity in reason, apart from modesty. 2. How clear it is that there is no place for complaint or repining under the sorrows and trials of life. God is inscrutable, but not wrong. If the cloud is over you, there is a bright light on the other side; and the time is coming, either in this world or the next, when that cloud will be swept away, and the fulness of God's light and wisdom poured around you. 3 While the inscrutability of God should keep us in modesty, and stay our complaints against Him, it should never suppress, but rather sharpen, our desire for knowledge. (*Horace Bushnell, D.D.*) *Light in the clouds*:—These words illustrate—I. THAT DARK SEASON WHEN CLOUDS OF UNFORGIVEN GUILT OVERHANG AND OPPRESS THE SOUL. Like those dense clouds which, long gathering, thicken into a distinct and compact mass so is the huge guilt of the sinner who is alienate from God. As thick clouds conceal the sun, and obstruct the light of day, so this accumulated guilt hides from the wretched sinner all light of the favour of God. II. THOSE DARK AND SORROWFUL SEASONS THAT SOMETIMES OCCUR IN THE CHRISTIAN'S CAREER. There are seasons and days when the light of the Lord is withheld, and he must walk on, and work in the darkness. Yet never is his darkness altogether dark. At such times there is no change in God, no withdrawment of Christ. The sun all the while is in his proper place in the heavens. III. THE CLOUDY SEASONS OF ADVERSITY AND AFFLICTION. It is part of the method of Divine procedure in the education of the human race, and for the development of the higher faculties of our nature, to subject us to suffering. Our lives would become hard and unlovely were it not for the soft sorrows that fall on us, the trials that beat on us, and the clouds that drench us. But whatever the sorrows that overtake us, when they have accomplished their mission they pass away. (*W. T. Bull, B.A.*) *The bright light on the clouds*:—There are a hundred men looking for storm where there is one man looking for sunshine. My object will be to get you and myself into the delightful habit of making the best of everything. I. YOU OUGHT TO MAKE THE BEST OF ALL YOUR FINANCIAL MISFORTUNES. During the panic a few years ago you all lost money. Compression: retrenchment. Who did not feel the necessity of it? Did you make the best of this? Are you aware of how narrow an escape you made? Suppose you had reached the fortune toward which you were rapidly going? You would have been as proud as Lucifer. How few men have succeeded largely in a financial sense, and yet maintained their simplicity and religious consecration! Not one man out of a hundred. The same Divine hand that crushed your storehouse, your bank, your office, your insurance company, lifted you out of destruction. The day you honestly suspended in business made your fortune for eternity. "Oh!" you say, "I could get along very well myself, but I am so disappointed that I cannot leave a competence for my children." The same financial misfortune that is going to save your soul will save your children. The best inheritance a young man can have is the feeling that he has to fight his own battle, and that life is a struggle into which he must throw body, mind, and soul, or be disgracefully worsted. II. AGAIN, I REMARK, YOU OUGHT TO MAKE THE BEST OF YOUR BEREAVEMENTS. The whole tendency is to brood over these separations, and to give much time to the handling of mementoes of the departed, and to make long visitations to

the cemetery, and to say, "Oh, I can never look up again; my hope is gone; my courage is gone; my religion is gone; my faith in God is gone! Oh, the wear, and tear, and exhaustion of this loneliness!" The most frequent bereavement is the loss of children. Instead of the complete safety into which that child has been lifted, would you like to hold it down to the risks of this mortal state? Would you like to keep it out on a sea in which there have been more shipwrecks than safe voyages? Is it not a comfort to you to know that that child, instead of being besoiled and flung into the mire of sin, is swung clear into the skies? So it ought to be that you should make the best of all your bereavements. The fact that you have so many friends in heaven will make your own departure very cheerful. The more friends here, the more bitter good-byes; the more friends there, the more glorious welcomes. Though all around may be dark, see you not the bright light in the clouds—that light the irradiated faces of your glorified kindred? III. So also I would have you MAKE THE BEST OF YOUR SICKNESSES. When you see one move off with elastic step and in full physical vigour, sometimes you become impatient with your lame foot. When a man describes an object a mile off, and you cannot see it at all, you become impatient of your dim eye. When you hear of a healthy man making a great achievement, you become impatient with your depressed nervous system or your dilapidated health. I will tell you how you can make the worst of it. Brood over it; brood over all these illnesses, and your nerves will become more twitchy, and your dyspepsia more aggravated, and your weakness more appalling. But that is the devil's work, to tell you how to make the worst of it: it is my work to show you a bright light in the clouds. Which of the Bible men most attract your attention? You say, Moses, Job, Jeremiah, Paul. Why, what a strange thing it is that you have chosen those who were physically disordered! Moses—I know he was nervous from the blow he gave the Egyptian. Job—his blood was vitiated and diseased, and his skin distressfully eruptive. Jeremiah had enlargement of the spleen. Who can doubt it who reads Lamentations? Paul—he had a lifetime sickness which the commentators have been guessing about for years, not knowing exactly what the apostle meant by "a thorn in the flesh." I gather from all this that physical disorder may be the means of grace to the soul. The best view of the delectable mountains is through the lattice of the sick-room. IV. Again, you ought TO MAKE THE BEST OF LIFE'S FINALITY. There are many people that have an idea that death is the submergence of everything pleasant by everything doleful. Oh, what an ado about dying! We get so attached to the malarial marsh in which we live that we are afraid to go up and live on the hilltop. We are alarmed because vacation is coming. Eternal sunlight, and best programme of celestial minstrels and hallelujah no inducement. Let us stay here and keep cold and ignorant and weak. Do not introduce us to the saints of old. I am amazed at myself and at yourself for this infatuation under which we all rest. Men, you would suppose, would get frightened at having to stay in this world instead of getting frightened at having to go toward heaven. I congratulate anybody who has a right to die. By that I mean through sickness you cannot avert, or through accident you cannot avoid—your work consummated. "Where did they bury Lily?" said one little child to another. "Oh!" she replied, "they buried her in the ground." "What! in the cold ground?" "Oh no, no! not in the cold ground, but in the warm ground, where ugly seeds become faithful flowers." (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The bright light in the cloud*:—Take text to illustrate the disposition of men to look upon the dark side of things. I. THE TEXT WILL APPLY TO THE SCEPTIC IN RELATION TO THE DARK THINGS OF REVELATION. These men see the clouds, and through the unbelief of their heart these clouds blacken and spread until they cover the whole firmament of revelation. That there are clouds hanging over this Book, it is far more Christian to admit than to deny. But, thank God, though we see the clouds, the clouds which the sceptic sees, we do not see them like him. We see a bright light upon them. There are several things which give the darkest of them a bright light. 1. There is the love of the Infinite Father. This shines through all its pages. 2. The unspotted holiness of our Great Example. 3. The provision He has made for our spiritual recovery. 4. The existence of a blessed immortality. Immortality is a bright light upon all the clouds of revelation. The clouds give variety and interest to the scene—they soften and cool the brilliant and burning rays. II. THE TEXT WILL APPLY TO THE FACTIOUS FAULTFINDERS OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE. Some people are everlastingly musing on the difficulties of providence. 1. The per-

mission of moral evil is a cloud. 2. The apparent disregard of God to the moral distinctions of society is a cloud. "All things come alike to all," &c. 3. The power which wickedness is often allowed to exercise over virtue, is a cloud—chains, dungeons, stakes. 4. The premature deaths of the good and useful are a cloud. We feel these clouds. But there is a bright light upon these clouds. The belief that they are local, temporary, transitional, is a bright light upon all the clouds. Out of their darkness and confusion will one day come a beautiful system. "Our light afflictions which are but for a moment," &c. III. THE TEXT WILL APPLY TO THE MISANTHROPIC IN RELATION TO THE CHARACTER OF RACE. There are men who have gloomy and uncharitable views of the character of mankind. All men are as corrupt as they can be—virtue is but vice in a pleasing garb. Very dark indeed are the clouds which these men see hanging over society; there is no ray to relieve their darkness. Still, we see bright light upon the clouds—there is not unmitigated, unrelieved corruption. There is the light of social love which streams through all the ramifications of life. There is a light of moral justice which flames forth when the right and the true are outraged. There is the light of true religion. There are men who are throwing on society the right thoughts, putting forth the right efforts, and breathing to heaven the right prayers. IV. THE TEXT WILL APPLY TO THE DESPONDING CHRISTIAN IN RELATION TO HIS EXPERIENCE. There are hours in the experience of many of the good when all within is cloudy. The proneness to fall into sin, the coldness of our devotional feeling, the consciousness of our defects, the felt distance between our ideal and ourselves, sometimes bring a sad gloom over the heart. "We walk in darkness, and have no light." But there are bright lights, however, upon this cloudy experience. In the first place, the very feeling of imperfection indicates something good. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," &c. "Blessed are they that mourn," &c. In the second place, most of those who are now in heaven once felt this. Christ is ready to help such as you. From this subject we learn—1. To cultivate the habit of looking upon the bright side of things. 2. To anticipate the world of future light. (*Homilist.*) *The light in the clouds*:—1. We live on the unilluminated side of the cloud between God's throne and His earthly children, and only needful rays shine through; and yet the rays are quite sufficient for your guidance and for mine. We have quite sufficient truth shining through the cloud for us to walk in the paths of obedience, waiting for the time when we shall get above the cloud, and behind the cloud, into the overwhelming brightness that plays for ever round the throne. 2. The infinite light behind the throne is infinite love. That cloud is light and love, and every ray that streams through to us is a love-ray from the infinite, the abounding and inexhaustible love in the eternal Godhead. God governs the world by most beautiful laws of compensation. Suffering has many compensations, not only in its influence upon the sufferer, in humbling him, bringing him into a sense of dependence, inspiring in him a spirit of prayer, quickening his faith, and working out the principles of righteousness, but suffering hath its happy influence upon others. 3. The future will clear up many a mystery. By-and-by shall come the last great day of revelation, when nothing that is right shall be found to have been vanquished, and nothing that is wrong shall be found to have triumphed. Learn—(1) God is often inscrutable, but never wrong. (2) On this side the cloud we have nothing to do but to receive the truth that comes through, and walk by it. (3) Never get frightened at God's clouds. (4) Clouds of trial often rain down truth to be gathered from no other source. God usually orders it that through penitence come praise and forgiveness, through trial comes triumph; yea, the cloud itself sends down mercy. (*T. L. Cuyler, D.D.*) *Clouds with silver linings*:—How much is said in Scripture about clouds! Clouds are the appropriate signs of mystery, and majesty, and mercy. It is impossible to look upon a cloud without being impressed perhaps more with the appropriateness of it as a vesture of God's greatness and His divinity, than even sea or mountain. Clouds have an interpreted force. They have gentle and bright teachings. They are capable of daguerreotyping upon our paths bright letters, if we will but stop to read them. See whether we can detect some of the light. 3. In the character of God, the cloud has silver linings. "Dark with excessive light His skirts appear." In nature, God appears to us very much more as the God of mystery than as the God of mercy. To me nature is no gospel. The character of God is a great, strange, dark cloudland; but it has its silver lining. He dwells in incommunicable, inaccessible light. Yet on the fringes of that cloud which vests Him, and

passes before His throne, we see indications and traces of the benignity and beauty of His character. The Bible is only something like a cloud before the throne of God. He holds back the splendour of His own Being, for we could not bear it. 2. In the pathway of providence the clouds have a silver lining. The providence in which God moves is frequently as cloudy as even the vesture that robes round His own being and character. How unreasonable it is for us to suppose that all providential arrangements are to be known and seen by us. God's justice is terrible, but it is lined with mercy; God's terror is terrible, but it is lined with love; God's power is terrible, but it is lined with wisdom. 3. In the interpretation of truth, the cloud has often a silver lining. The words of the Book have great darkness in them. It is much easier to ask questions on the difficulties of Scripture than it is to answer them. 4. In the ordinances of religion the cloud has a silver lining. Learn that we must be cheerful under the darkness. Finally, there are clouds in some parts of the universe that have no silver linings. (*E. Paxton Hood.*) *The bright light in the cloud*:—God appears, the last of the *dramatis personæ*. He comes in the whirlwind, and out of the cloud, sweeping through the heavens: He proclaims His majesty: "Gird up now thy loins like a man, for I will demand of thee, and answer thou Me." The cloud is God's pavilion. It is the appropriate medium through which the Infinite reveals Himself to man. In the nature of the case it is not possible to have a revelation without a corresponding adumbration of Him. He is like the sun, which cannot be seen without a dimness intervening between it and the naked eye. This is God's way of revealing Himself: He must needs obscure His glory in manifesting it. The complaint of Elihu is that men behold the cloud, but not the bright light within it. I. As to God's personality. To know Him is the summit of human aspiration. This is life eternal, to know God, and Jesus Christ who is the manifestation of God. It is an easy thing to utter His name; but who can apprehend the tremendous truth suggested in that little word of three letters! Infinitude is embraced in it. When Simonides was entrusted by King Hiero with the duty of defining God, he returned at the close of the day to ask for further time. A week, a month, a year passed by, and then he reported, "The more I think of Him, the more He is unknown to me." There have been campaigns of controversy, centuries of research, libraries of theology, and still here we are asking, What is God? The cloud bewilders us. But one thing we know, God is Love. This is the bright light. Whatever else we fail to grasp, this we may fully apprehend. If Jesus Christ had done no more, as Madame de Gasparin said, than to reveal the Divine Fatherhood, that would have compensated for His incarnation. II. As to God's character. His attributes of truth, justice, and holiness, are the habitation of His throne. The thought of the Divine holiness appals us, for we are defiled, and by our sins infinitely separated from Him. But again, love is the bright light. The cross stands in the midst of the Divine holiness. The cross is pre-eminently the manifestation of the Divine love. At the moment when Jesus died, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain, and a new and living way was opened up for sinners into the Holiest of all. III. As to the Divine decrees. Or, God's dealings with us from the eternal ages. The very suggestion offends us. Yet we must be aware that God would not be God if He had not foreknown and foreordained whatsoever cometh to pass. It is vain, however, to undertake to simplify the doctrine. But here, again, love is the bright light. God's decrees are founded in His mercy. Election has never kept one out of heaven, but it has brought an innumerable multitude into it. IV. As to Divine Providence. Here, surely clouds and darkness are round about Him. Pain, sorrow, disappointment, are our common portion. We are all burden-bearers. Why must we be? Here, again, love is the bright light. All God's dealings with us are illumined by the thought that He does not willingly afflict us. He is making all things work together for our good. Not long ago, in the Chinese quarter at San Francisco, under one of the theatres, I saw a child of six years with her mother in a narrow room, with joss-gods all round them. For a coin, the little one sang to us. It was a strange place for a gush of heaven's melody. This is what she sang:—

"Jesus loves me, this I know,
For the Bible tells me so."

Oh, that we might all carry away with us the assurance of our Father's love! Whatever darkness may gather, this is the bright light. (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*)

Light in the cloud :—Few things are so indefinite, or at least undefined, as darkness and light. Grief and gladness are not any more alike to all, than darkness and light are the same to every one of us. As I reckon my happiness according to the memory of some past affliction, so I estimate my troubles by remembering my joys. My past and future make one another. I never can take the weeping that endures for a night, without preparing the way for the joy that cometh in the morning. This cannot be other than a very gracious doctrine. 1. Nothing is more brilliant, nothing more simple, more available, than the gospel of Christ; but nothing is more easily injured or covered up by the fancies and fictions exhaling upwards from ourselves. Truth is truth, always the same, do what you will with it; but you may put curtains and clouds between truth and yourselves that shall leave you in the darkness of error. It is not the fault of the sun when the clouds eclipse it. 2. We bring you to Christian hope as the light of the new life—the sense of pardon through a surety, and the hope of glory as the purchase of another. Only remember that your iniquities may have separated between you and your God. 3. The countenance of the Father of lights may be covered and concealed, when there is no false doctrine, no backsliding, directly from us to make the barrier our own. (*H. Christopherson.*) *The bright light in the clouds* :—Here appears to be a figurative allusion to the occurrences which are under the control of Divine providence, under the similitude of the clouds, and the bright design which is sometimes beyond the reach of the human mind to understand. I. THESE OCCURRENCES RESEMBLE THE CLOUDS SOMETIMES. 1. In their sudden appearance. 2. In their various magnitude. 3. In their happy effects. Every cloud brings its proportion of gloom, yet each cloud is a vehicle of blessing. II. THERE IS SOMETHING CHEERING IN ALL THE DISPENSATIONS OF PROVIDENCE. 1. The character of God is a bright light. Giving splendour and beauty to the events of Providence, as the rising sun fringes with golden brightness the darkest cloud it meets in its course. 2. The promises are a bright light in the clouds. This is the light of truth, bright with the faithfulness of the Eternal. There is no exigency can arise, but there is an appropriate promise. Some of them are very comprehensive. It is well to have the memory stored with these promises. 3. The past conduct of the Lord is a bright light in the clouds. The review of the past should encourage confidence in reference to the present and the future. The moral influence of reflection on past mercies is to awaken hope even when God appears to clothe Himself with clouds and thick darkness. III. CAUSES WHICH PREVENT US FROM SEEING THE BRIGHT LIGHT IN THE CLOUDS. 1. Constitutional or physical dejection will do this. The health or sickness of the body has a much greater influence over our spiritual enjoyments than some Christians imagine. Body and soul are too closely allied not to sympathise most deeply with each other. 2. There are, however, other causes, both intellectual and moral, such as defective views of Divine truth. Some have such imperfect and erroneous views of God's Word that they seem to have no consolation in any time of trouble. 2. Want of faith in the wisdom and goodness of God. Faith is just that to the soul which sight is to the body. The sun shines though the blind man sees it not: so Christ, "The Light," shines, but only the believing mind sees Him. Others see not this bright light. (*Evangelical Preacher.*) *The clouds, the light, and the wind* :—Three objects. 1. The "bright light," which is the symbol of God's personality. 2. The "clouds," which are a symbol of those obscurities which hide God from our eyes. 3. The "wind," which is the symbol of that Divine power by which these obscurities are removed, so that men may see God. The whole difficulty of Job was that he could not see God. He could not understand why God afflicted him. I. THE DIFFICULTIES OF FINDING GOD ARE HERE SET BEFORE US. The obscurity is often in ourselves. It is often traceable to the infinite and illimitable nature of God. How is God to reveal Himself so as to satisfy the human mind and heart? Only in the way which God has chosen, could God effectually reveal Himself to creatures like ourselves. There must be gradual approaches of His mind to ours. There must be a condescension to our finiteness. God makes the path to Himself as plain as He can, considering the difficulties which are naturally in our way. Look first at the clouds. Our ignorance is a cloud. Finiteness is another name for this ignorance; and finiteness means fallibility, *i.e.* liability to err. The nature of man, limited and feeble in comparison with the subject on which his thoughts have to be engaged, makes man feel that about him are mists and shadows which he cannot penetrate. II. THE REMOVAL OF THE DIFFICULTIES They can only be removed

by God. God can drive away man's feebleness by His own freely given grace. The will of God is engaged in our salvation. III. FEW THINGS IN NATURE ARE STRONGER THAN THE WIND. The wind is the symbol of God's Spirit. God has come to us in His Son Jesus Christ, and God speaks by His Spirit, through His Word. (*Samuel Pearson, M.A.*)

Ver. 22. **Fair weather cometh out of the north: with God is terrible majesty.** —*The testimony of nature to the terrible majesty of God* :—These words occur towards the close of that remonstrance of Elihu which he addressed to Job his friend, and is immediately followed by the answer of the Lord Himself out of the whirlwind. The text is simply one of those propositions or evidences by which the speaker sought to establish the greatness and inscrutableness of God. The operations of God in nature are given in evidence of the wrongness of expecting to comprehend God Himself. If you cannot understand the works and ways of the Almighty, is it any marvel that the Almighty Himself quite baffles your scrutiny? Why should the fact that fair weather cometh out of the north, suggest the inference that with God is terrible majesty? If every operation and production of nature may be ascribed immediately to the agency of God, then is every such operation and production a direct evidence of the wonderfulness of God, not to be surveyed by a devout and thoughtful mind, without emotions of awe as well as delight! It gives a dignity to every blade of grass, that it may be considered as the handiwork of God. It is not that each or any of the operations or productions is in itself overwhelming in testimony to the greatness of God, but that each is part of one vast system, each bears witness to the same stupendous fact, that God is nature, or that nature is but God, perpetually and universally at work. And I want nothing else to make me look on God with unbounded amazement and awe. If I think of fair weather as coming out of the north, I must think of God as acting in all the laboratories of nature, disposing the elements, bringing the winds out of His treasures, gathering the clouds, and giving the sunshine. Nature, nothing but nature's God everywhere busy, —this is God in His inscrutableness; this is God in His magnificence; this is God in His wonderfulness. "With God is terrible majesty." In the text there is also a testimony to the constancy and the uniformity of the actings of God in the material world. "Fair weather cometh out of the north." You may always reckon on this. It has been thus from the beginning; and so fixed and stable is the course of nature, that by observing the signs you may calculate the changes with a precision little short of certainty. Consider what effect ought to be produced on men, and will be produced on the righteous, by the constancy which seems to encourage the scoffers. If God be unchangeable in the operations of nature, does not even this furnish some kind of presumption that He will be unchangeable in all other respects? Our present lesson is not so much one taught by creation, when viewed by itself, as one which creation traces in illustration or corroboration of the Bible. If it be ordinarily true, that "fair weather cometh out of the north," then is this coming of fair weather another evidence of the constancy or uniformity of nature, and because we are so made and constituted, that we expect and reckon on this constancy or uniformity, therefore it is another evidence of that faithfulness of God which insures the accomplishment of every tittle of His word. Thus is there a voice to me in the constancy of nature, confirming that voice which comes forth to me from the pages of Scripture. Fair weather from the north, is neither more nor less than God's accomplishment of His word—a word which if neither spoken nor written, is to be found in the expectation which Himself hath impressed, that nature will be fixed in her workings; and whatever tells me afresh that God is faithful to His word, tells me that vengeance may be deferred, but that it shall yet break forth on the wicked in unimaginable fury, and that the righteous may wait long, but cannot wait in vain, for an incorruptible inheritance that shall not fade away. And there is yet a peculiarity in the text, which ought not to be overlooked, and in considering which we shall again be led to the theology of revelation, yea, to find the Gospel in our text. The expression which Elihu uses in reference to God, is evidently one which marks dread and apprehension—"With God is terrible majesty"; words which show the speaker impressed with a sense of the awfulness of the Creator, rather than drawn towards Him by thoughts of His goodness and compassions. And it would hardly seem as if this were to have been expected, considering what the fact is on which the speaker's attention

had been professedly fixed. I know when it is that God's majesty is most commonly recognised by those who observe the phenomena of nature. It is not when "fair weather cometh out of the north"; it is rather when the Almighty rideth on the hurricane—when He darkeneth the firmament with His tempests, and sendeth forth His lightnings to consume. If any one of you be witness to the progress of a storm, as it sweeps along in its fury, your sensations as the winds howl, and the torrents descend, and the thunders roll, and the waves toss, are sensations of dread and alarm; and if in the midst of this turmoil of elements your thoughts turn upwards to God, who hath His way in the whirlwind, and at whose feet the clouds are the dust, you are disposed to regard Him with unmingled fear—to shrink from Him as manifesting, in and through this tremendous emblazonry, the heavenly attributes at war with such creatures as yourselves. And then if there come the hushing of the tempest, and the darkened firmament be suddenly cleared, and the landscape which just before had been desolated and drenched, be beauteously lit up with the golden rays of a summer sun, oh, then it is that there will be awakened within you grateful and adoring emotions, and that God whose terrible majesty you had been ready to acknowledge as the voice of His thunders was heard, will appear to you a bountiful and beneficent Being, whom even the sinful may approach, and by whom the unworthy may be shielded. But you will observe that it was just the reverse with Elihu. It is the fair weather from the north which would make you exclaim, "How good, how gracious is God"; but it was the fair weather from the north which made Elihu exclaim, "How terrible is God." And there is the theology of revelation in this, if there be not the theology of nature. It is not so much the storm, it is rather the calm, which should lead me to think on the tremendousness of God. (*Henry Melvill, B.D.*)

Ver. 23. **Touching the Almighty, we cannot find Him out.**—*An unknown quantity*:—It is well that there should be an immeasurable and unknown quantity in life and in creation. Even the unknown has its purposes to serve; rightly received, it will heighten veneration; it will reprove unholy ambition; it will teach man somewhat of what he is, of what he can do and can not do, and therefore may save him from the wasteful expenditure of a good deal of energy. "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find Him out." All space leads up to the infinite. There comes a time when men can measure no longer; they throw down their instrument, and say, This is useless; we are but adding cypher to cypher, and we can proceed no further. Space has run up into infinity, and infinity cannot be measured. Nearly all the words, the greater words, that we use in our thinking and converse, run up into religious greatness. Take the word "time." We reckon time in minutes and hours, in days and weeks and months and years and centuries, and we have gone so far as to speak of millenniums; but we soon tire; arithmetic can only help us to a certain point. Here again we draw up the measuring line or calculating standard, and we say, It is useless, for time has passed into eternity. These are facts in philosophy and in science, in nature and in experience,—space rising into infinity; time ascending into eternity: the foot of the ladder is upon earth, but the head of the ladder is lost in infinite distance. Take the word "love.' To what uses we put it! We call it by tuneful names; it charms us, it dissipates our solitude, it creates for us companionship, interchange of thought, reciprocation of trust, so that one life helps another, completing it in a thousand ways, great or small. But there comes a point even in love where contemplation can go no further; there it rests—yea, there it expires, for love has passed into sacrifice; it has gone up by way of the Cross. Always in some minor degree there has been a touch of sacrifice in every form of love, but all these minor ways have culminated in the last tragedy, the final crucifixion, and love has died for its object. So space has gone into infinity, time into eternity, love into sacrifice. Now take the word "man." Does the term terminate in itself—is the term man all we know of being? We have spoken of spirit, angel, archangel; rationally or poetically, or by inspiration, we have thought of seraphim and cherubim, mighty winged ones, who burn and sing before the eternal throne, and still we have felt that there was something remaining beyond, and man is ennobled, glorified, until he passes into the completing term—God. They, therefore, are superficial and foolish who speak of space, time, love, man, as if these were self-completing terms; they are but the beginnings of the real thought, little vanishing signs, disappearing

when the real thing signified comes into view, falling before it into harmonious and acceptable preparation and homage. So then, faith may be but the next thing after reason. It may be difficult to distinguish sometimes as to where reason stops and faith begins; but faith has risen before it, round about it; faith is indebted to reason; without reason there could have been no faith. Why not, therefore, put reason down amongst the terms, and so complete for the present our category, and say, space, time, love, man, reason,—for there comes a point in the ascent of reason where reason itself tires, and says, May I have wings now? I can walk no longer, I can run no more; and yet how much there is to be conquered, compassed, seized, and enjoyed! and when reason so prays, what if reason be transfigured into faith, and if we almost see the holy image rising to become more like the Creator, and to dwell more closely and lovingly in His presence? All the great religious terms, then, have what may be called roots upon the earth, the sublime words from which men often fall back in almost ignorant homage amounting to superstition. Begin upon the earth; begin amongst ourselves; take up our words and show their real meaning, and give a hint of their final issue. He who lives so, will have no want of companionship; the mind that finds in all these human, social, alphabetical signs of great religious quantities and thoughts, will have riches unsearchable, an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Why dwarf our words? Why deplete them of their richer and more vital meanings? Why not rather follow them in an ascending course, and rejoice in their expansion, and in their riches? The religious teacher is called upon to operate in this direction, so far as he can influence the minds of his hearers; it is not his to take out of words all their best significations, but rather to charge every human term with some greater thought, to find in every word a seed, in every seed a harvest, it may be of wheat, it may be of other food, but always meant for the satisfaction and strengthening of our noblest nature. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *The inscrutable*:—Inscrutable —first connect this word with two other words, responsibility and goodness. Did you say that only decrees that are indicated by overwhelming misfortunes are inscrutable? Why, everything, the simplest, runs towards and finally runs into the inscrutable. The more we know the more are we brought into consciousness of the unknown, of the unknowable. "Behold, we know not anything," says the poet, and as he contemplates the good that shall fall "at last —far off—at last, to all," he adds, "So runs my dream: but what am I?" Ah, there is the inscrutable thing. What am I? What are you? Is not each of us an enigma? What strange, various, sometimes contradictory, opposing, conflicting influences and forces have gone to make us the curious bundles of inconsistencies that we are! Heredity, circumstances, companionships, and so on, we say, have all gone to mould us, to cabin us, to confine us, to expand us, or to contract us; to constitute, to define our liberty. Myself—thyself, that is the inscrutable. And yet, for thyself thou art responsible! Whatever theorists may argue or however they may talk, society—the world—holds a man responsible for himself, the inscrutable. That it is the inscrutable does not deny the responsibility. Neither does it with regard to the world in general. At every point we feel ourselves fall against the inscrutable. There is not a day, there is not a condition in life in which we are not brought face to face with that which we cannot understand. Everywhere, and in all things there is the inscrutable, and there is a responsibility for the world. There is somewhere a will that is responsible for it. There is a government in it. The world is a charge to some will, because if there is one thing that asserts itself in this world it is will power. Things may be very strange, and they often are so strange that we get bewildered, even frightened; but the very strangest thing that could be, that which is disowned by the whole universe, by a certain stream of tendency that runs through the whole universe, would be that it is all a disorder, a blind drive and drift. Most certainly it is not that. If you realise that you are responsible for the mass of inscrutability that you call yourself, why should you hesitate to recognise that there is providence—that is, a mind supremely responsible for the wide, vast inscrutableness which we call the world? But are not the inscrutable decrees which make it hard to submit incompatible with a perfect goodness? Ah, you are putting a question on which treatises without number have been written since the world began, and treatises without number may be written still, and the question puzzle on. It is one not to be discussed now. Only, I pray you to note two things. There is always a voice whispering that good-

ness will have the last word, even in what is overwhelming. An appalling calamity happens. Yes, "Terrible, terrible," you say; but that appalling calamity calls attention—attention that would not have been called if it had not been appalling—to evils that can be remedied and should be remedied. It sets people in motion for remedies. There is immediate suffering, and it may be on even a terrible scale, but there is immediate gain, on a far greater scale, for the world. The prince cut off in the flower of his age, your boy taken away in the flower of his days—ah, broken hearts, indeed; but see how this young prince, taken away, has preached to the whole nation. He has united the empire in a wonderful sympathy, and so from a wide induction it might be proved temporal loss transformed into spiritual and moral gains. Even when you feel that the iron hand of judgment has descended terribly, there is a touch of the velvet in that hand which speaks of mercy. And further, when you speak of perfect goodness, remember that you and I do not know what perfect goodness is. We know only in part. Our point of view is that of very limited conception. We speak of nature, but who knows all nature? We speak of providence, but who knows all providence? We would need to bring in eternity, the eternity in which God works. But one full of promise, cut off in the flower of his age! Well, well. But does not this suggest that a promise cannot be lost? Nothing—nothing is lost. Potencies are not destroyed. There is a potency in that life which surely, surely is not annihilated. May not the call hence be a way of bidding the young man arise into a higher and nobler royalty? And those bereaved, may it not be a way of purifying and cleansing in the fire, bidding them to arise and live more earnestly, and live more nobly, and grasp the crown of life which the Lord has promised? We cannot tell all that perfect goodness means. The surgeon hesitates not to thrust his knife into the quivering flesh, and the poor patient cries. It is agony, but agony for future blessing; and so is there not many an agony for a future blessing, with an eternal weight of glory before it? Ah, we must be still, or if not still we must stretch hands of faith, lame hands of faith, and gather dust and chaff, and call to what we feel is Lord of all. (*J. M. Lang, D.D.*) *God a mystery*:—Ignorance of the modes of the Divine operation forms no ground for doubting the Divine intervention in human affairs. "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find Him out," because our faculties are unable to comprehend infinity; but this disability no more warrants us in questioning the fact of His active providence, than would the mystery of the works of a watch warrant us in denying their existence or active operations. Consider this remark of Elihu in reference to the Almighty. As to His being. Its nature is wrapt in impenetrable mystery. We know that God is a Spirit, but what a spirit is we know not. Our ideas on this subject are negative; we know what a spirit is not. In the Scriptures no attempt is made to define the Divine nature. It is described only by its attributes and perfections. But as to the Divine attributes, we are in equal ignorance. We call God omnipotent, omniscient, eternal, infinite; but all we can understand by these terms is, that He is not limited as to power, knowledge, time, and space. Nor are we much more enlightened as to the work of creation. With the broad fact we are acquainted, but of the mode we know nothing. But how matter came into existence, and the mode by which it was formed into these various shapes, we are entirely ignorant. If we presume to penetrate the ways of providence, we find ourselves equally involved. Beyond the bare fact we are lost. God is shrouded in mystery. And what is life? Of what is it composed? Where does it reside? On what combinations does it depend? How untraceable are the dispensations of providence as to the affairs of men! The history of the world is an enigma. Nor is God less concealed in the operations of grace. And the mode in which Christianity has been propagated is full of mystery. As to the future, we are in almost equal ignorance. Think also of the permission of evil in the world; the condition of the soul in its intermediate state; and of humanity after judgment. What our text teaches is, that ignorance of the mode of the providential dispensations forms no justification for disbelief of their Divine origin, nor for doubts of their equity. Many things are mysterious, because too abstruse for our faculties; but assuredly God is originating and directing them in a spirit of wisdom and goodness, which will make them issue in benefit to all. The more mysterious the Almighty is, the more we are bidden to study Him. His works and His Word are the deep things of God, of which a superficial reading is worse than useless. What subjects there are for meditation! The grandest and most

interesting beyond all others—subjects which concern the High and Mighty One, creation, providence, grace, the things of time and eternity, life, death, and resurrection—subjects which even the "angels desire to look into." But let our studies be conducted with cautious reverence. Generally, freedom of inquiry is safe; but there are points into which it is dangerous to pry. Usually, all facts are open to inspection, but not speculation on mode and means. (*J. Budgeon, M.A.*) *Inscrutable providence*:—It is no uncommon thing in these times to hear people saying that it seemed as if God was careless—as if He had forgotten His people. Men call upon God, but call upon Him to all appearance in vain. He does not hear them; at least, no answer comes. But God did hear, and did answer. There is mystery regarding the why of God's working, and there is mystery regarding the how. We cannot explain the one or the other. The path is invisible to us; but the path is there. Chemists and students of nature generally hold that there is nothing in nature deserving the name of providence; that force is eternal and that all things go on in obedience to immutable law. But these students of nature presume too much. It is a way they have. Self-conceit has made them blind. There is much in nature which they do not know, and much which they can not know. Can they indicate the lightning's track or trace the course of the wind? Even admitting that science has made a change in men's minds regarding material phenomena, what is to be said of the mind itself? Why was George Washington saved amid the wreck of Braddock's command? What if Major André had not been captured? How different the history of those later years if General Grant had been shot at Belmont! At that critical moment of the cornfield what restrained the hands of the Confederates that they did not fire? And at a brief period thereafter what tempted him to leave his tent and thus avoid the fatal bullet? What is it that so miraculously preserves the equality of the sexes? But these are stray examples of which there are millions. There is mystery everywhere. There are three things which it is well always to bear in mind when thinking of the ways of God. First, God may interfere in the affairs of the world without men knowing it; second, God may influence motives without men knowing it; third, God may touch the secret and subtle springs of nature without men knowing it. Experience is a better teacher than science. (*Judson Sage, D.D.*) **He is excellent in power, and in judgment.**—*God excellent*:—"He is excellent . . . in judgment." Is there any judgment displayed in the distribution of things? Is the globe ill-made? Are all things in chaos? Is there anywhere the sign of a plummet-line, a measuring-tape? Are things apportioned as if by a wise administrator? How do things fit one another? Who has hesitated to say that the economy of nature, so far as we know it, is a wondrous economy? Explain it as men may, we all come to a common conclusion, that there is a marvellous fitness of things, a subtle relation and inter-relation, a harmony quite musical, an adaptation which though it could never have been invented by our reason, instantly secures the sanction of our understanding as being good, fit, and wholly wise. "And in plenty of justice." Now Elihu touches the moral chord. It is most noticeable that throughout the whole of the Bible the highest revelations are sustained by the strongest moral appeals. If the Bible dealt only in ecstatic contemplations, in religious musings, in poetical romances, we might rank it with other sacred books, and pay it what tribute might be due to fine literary inventiveness and expression; but whatever there may be in the Bible supernatural, transcendental, mysterious, there is also judgment, right, justice: everywhere evil is burned with unquenchable fire, and right is commended and honoured as being of the quality of God. The moral discipline of Christianity sustains its highest imaginings. Let there be no divorce betwcen what is spiritual in Christianity and what is ethical,—between the revelation sublime and the justice concrete, social, as between man and man; let the student keep within his purview all the parts and elements of this intricate revelation, and then let him say how the one balances the other, and what co-operation and harmony result from the inter-relation of metaphysics, spiritual revelations, high imaginings, and simple duty, and personal sacrifice, industry as of stewardship, of trusteeship. This is the view which Elihu takes. God to him was "excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice; He will not afflict." A curious expression this, and differently rendered. Some render it, He will not answer; or, He will not be called upon to answer for His ways; He will give an account of Himself to none; there is a point beyond which He will not permit approach. Yet

the words as they stand in the Authorised Version are supported by many collateral passages, and therefore may be taken as literal in this instance. He will not willingly afflict; He is no tyrant; He is not a despot who drinks the wine of blood, and thrives on the miseries of His creation: when He chastens it is that He may purify and ennoble the character, and bring before the vision of man lights and promises which otherwise would escape his attention. Affliction as administered by God is good; sorrow has its refining and enriching uses. The children of God are indeed bowed down, sorely chastened, visited by disappointments; oftentimes they lay their weary heads upon pillows of thorns. Nowhere is that denied in the Bible; everywhere is it patent in our own open history; and yet Christianity has so wrought within us, as to its very spirit and purpose, that we can accept affliction as a veiled angel, and sorrow as one of God's night-angels, coming to us in cloud and gloom, and yet in the darkest sevenfold midnight of loneliness whispering to us Gospel words, and singing to us in tender, minor tones as no other voice ever sang to the orphaned heart. Christians can say this; Christians do say this. They say it not the less distinctly because there are men who mock them. They must take one of two courses; they must follow out their own impressions and realisations of spiritual ministry within the heart; or they must, forsooth, listen to men who do not know them, and allow their piety to be sneered away, and their deepest spiritual realisations to be mocked out of them, or carried away by some wind of fool's laughter. They have made up their minds to be more rational; they have resolved to construe the events of their own experience, and to accept the sacred conclusion, and that conclusion is that God does not willingly afflict the children of men, that the rod is in a Father's hand, that no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless, afterward it worketh out the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Believe me, they are not to be laughed out of that position. They are reasonable men, men of great sagacity, men of affairs, men who can deal with questions of state and empire; and they, coming into the sanctuary—the inmost, sacred sanctuary—are not ashamed to pray. This is the strength of Christian faith. When the Christian is ashamed of his Lord the argument for Christianity is practically, and temporarily, at least, dead. Why do we not speak more distinctly as to the results of our own observation and experience? Great abstract truths admit of being accented by personal testimony. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God," said one, "and I will declare what He hath done for my soul." If a witness will confine himself to what he himself has known, felt and handled of the Word of Life, then in order to destroy the argument you must first destroy his character. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) **In plenty of justice.**—*The excellence of the Divine justice:*—Perhaps the foremost characteristic of God that men are tempted to disparage is His justice. They do not relish that which is opposed to their enjoyment, and to the successful issue of their purposes. And as they have a sense of guilt, and cannot fail to see that their conduct brings them into conflict with the Almighty, since He must be offended with the violation of His law, they first wish that He were not the righteous Being that He is, and then they deny Him this essential quality. By so weak a process is it they create a God to their liking. 1. Justice ranks high from its own inherent character. In the old mythology of Greece the Goddess of Justice sat by the side of Jupiter. In all lands the tribunals of justice are next the altars of religion. When men would ask for that which they prize the most among their fellow-men, they ask for justice. When the Athenians would most honour Aristides, they called him "the just." Justice is the parent of many virtues. The moral sense of every man pronounces the excellence of this noblest virtue. It is excellent in God. It gives a sense of security and repose that our God is a God of justice. 2. Justice is an attribute essential to the complete revelation of God. This quality some men deny in God; if they do not deny it, they degrade it. The first excellence in a judge is that he be just. God administers His government with no respect of persons, and with an undeviating regard to the principles of equity. 3. Justice guards the manifold interests of the Divine empire. Justice to each and all is the result of only the choicest wisdom. No neglect, or partiality, or injustice, can be charged against Him. 4. Justice ministers to the greatest happiness of God's subjects. This sense of the Divine justice gives solace in the trials of the world. 5. Justice admits the exercise of mercy. Biblical theology allows no rivalry between these two cardinal attributes of God. God has devised an atonement of such a character

that, on the one hand, the majesty and sanctity of His law are vindicated, and on the other hand, a full pardon can be granted to sinners who embrace this Divine provision. That which it would not be safe to do in civil society, it is safe to do under this Divine plan for human redemption. 6. Justice demands the punishment of the guilty. Under the economy of grace it demands the punishment of the finally impenitent. It is a strange infatuation that has seized some minds, sensible on every other subject, that there is to be no suitable punishment of sin hereafter. They claim that God is too good to inflict merited penalty; that the doctrine of eternal punishment is a censure upon His fatherhood; that hell has no place under the Divine administration. But sin is here, and suffering is here. Sin causes suffering now, and the penalties of wrong-doing are before our eyes everywhere. The hardest problem is not to account for hell and future punishment, but it is to account for sin and suffering at all. Under the government of a supremely good and powerful God, why is there sin and its necessary woe? We know that sin is. We know that dreadful penalty is. If sin shall go into the future life, if it shall wax great and strong there, if it shall for ever lift its defiance against the eternal throne, it will bear—it must bear—its eternal penalty. It is not the eternity of sin, nor the eternity of punishment, which challenges our belief, it is not the duration of them, but the existence of them. Of their existence we know. If, then, endless sinning continues, endless punishment should. God is just. He has issued a just law, harmonious with His own character, as an authoritative guide to men. Inasmuch as they have all broken this law, He has graciously devised, if we may say so, a plan of salvation, by which they can be pardoned and justified, while yet the law is sustained. Now, if they reject this plan, if they will not be saved through Christ, if they prefer to stand on the old basis of the law, it only remains that judgment shall be given by the law. It demands perfect obedience. It imposes death as the penalty of sin. The law, with its announced penalty, God, as a just God, must sustain. The unbeliever in Christ, must, therefore, meet the penalty. There is no recourse. Divine justice demands the punishment of the guilty. It will inflict upon no one more than he deserves. (*Burdett Hart, D.D.*)

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

VERS. 1–3. **Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said.**—*The address of the Almighty*:—This sublime discourse is represented as made from the midst of the tempest or whirlwind which Elihu describes as gathering. In this address the principal object of God is to assert His own greatness and majesty, and the duty of profound submission under the dispensations of His government. The general thought is, that He is Lord of heaven and earth; that all things have been made by Him, and that He has a right to control them; and that in the works of His own hands He had given so much evidence of His wisdom, power, and goodness, that men ought to have unswerving confidence in Him. He appeals to His works, and shows that, in fact, man could explain little, and that the most familiar objects were beyond his comprehension. It was therefore to be expected that in His moral government there would be much that would be above the power of man to explain. In this speech the creation of the world is first brought before the mind in language which has never been equalled. Then the Almighty refers to various things in the universe that surpass the wisdom of man to comprehend them, or his power to make them—to the laws of light; the depths of the ocean; the formation of the snow, the rain, the dew, the ice, the frost; the changes of the seasons, the clouds, the lightnings; and the instincts of animals. He then makes a particular appeal to some of the more remarkable inhabitants of the air, the forest, and the waters, as illustrating His power. He refers to the gestation of the mountain-goats; to the wild ass, to the rhinoceros, to the ostrich, and to the horse (ch. xxxix.). The ground of the argument in this part of the address is that He had adapted every kind of animal to the mode of life which it was to lead; that He had given cunning where cunning was necessary, and where unnecessary, that He had withheld it; that He had endowed with rapidity of foot or wing where such qualities were needful; and that where power was demanded,

He had conferred it. In reference to all these classes of creatures, there were peculiar laws by which they were governed; and all, in their several spheres, showed the wisdom and skill of their Creator. Job is subdued and awed by these exhibitions. To produce, however, a more overpowering impression of His greatness and majesty, and to secure a deeper prostration before Him, the Almighty proceeds to a particular description of two of the more remarkable animals which He had made—the behemoth, or hippopotamus, and the leviathan, or crocodile; and with this description, the address of the Almighty closes. The general impression designed to be secured by this whole address is that of awe, reverence, and submission. The general thought is, that God is supreme; that He has a right to rule; that there are numberless things in His government which are inexplicable by human wisdom; that it is presumptuous in man to sit in judgment on His doings; and that at all times man should bow before Him with profound adoration. It is remarkable that, in this address, the Almighty does not refer to the main point in the controversy. He does not attempt to vindicate His government from the charges brought against it of inequality, nor does He refer to the future state as a place where all these apparent irregularities will be adjusted. (*Albert Barnes.*) *The theophany*:—As Elihu's eloquent discourse draws to a close, our hearts grow full of expectation and hope. The mighty tempest in which Jehovah shrouds Himself sweeps up through the darkened heaven; it draws nearer and nearer; we are blinded by "the flash which He flings to the ends of the earth," our hearts "throb and leap out of their place," and we say, "God is about to speak, and there will be light." But God speaks, and there is no light. He does not so much as touch the intellectual problems over which we have been brooding so long, much less, as we hoped, sweep them beyond the farthest horizon of our thoughts. He simply overwhelms us with His majesty. He causes His "glory" to pass before us, and though, after he has seen this great sight, Job's face shines with a reflected lustre which has to be veiled from us under the mere forms of a recovered and augmented prosperity, we are none the brighter for it. He claims to have all power in heaven and on earth, to be Lord of all the wonders of the day and of the night, of tempest, and of calm. He simply asserts, what no one has denied, that all the processes of nature, and all the changes of providence are His handiwork, that it is He who calleth forth the stars, and determines their influence upon earth, He who sendeth rain and fruitful seasons, He who provides food for bird and beast, arms them with strength, clothes them with beauty, and quickens in them the manifold wise instincts by which they are preserved and multiplied. He does not utter a single word to relieve the mysteries of His rule, to explain why the good suffer and the wicked flourish, why He permits our hearts to be so often and so cruelly torn by agonies of bereavement, of misgiving, of doubt. When the majestic voice ceases we are no nearer than before to a solution of the haunting problems of life. We can only wonder that Job should sink in utter love and self-abasement before Him; we can only ask, in unfeigned surprise—and it is well for us if some tone of contempt do not blend with our surprise,—"What is there in all this to shed calm, and order, and an invincible faith into Job's perturbed and doubting spirit?" We say, "This pathetic poem is a logical failure after all; it does not carry its theme to any satisfactory conclusion, nor to *any* conclusion; it suggests doubts to which it furnishes no reply, problems which it does not even attempt to solve; charmed with its beauty we may be, but we are none the wiser for our patient study of its argument." But that would be a sorry conclusion of our labour. And before we resign ourselves to it, let us at least ask: 1. Is it so certain as we sometimes assume it to be that this poem was intended to explain the mystery of human life? Is it even certain that a logical explanation of that mystery is either possible or desirable to creatures such as we are in such a world as this? The path of logic is not commonly the path of faith. Logic may convince the reason, but it cannot bend the will or change the heart. God teaches us,—Jehovah taught Job,—as we teach children, by the mystery of life, by its illusions and contradictions, by its intermixtures of evil with good, of sorrow with joy; by the questions we are compelled to ask even though we cannot answer them, by the problems we are compelled to study although we cannot solve them. And is not this His best way? 2. But if the "answer" of Jehovah disappoints us, it satisfied Job; and not only satisfied him, but swept away all his doubts and fears in a transport of gratitude and renewed love. Expecting to hear some conclusive argument, we overlook the immense force and pathos of the fact, that Jehovah spake to Job

at all. What Job could not bear was that God should abandon as well as afflict him. It was not what God said, but that God did speak to him, brought comfort. 3. Still the question recurs: What was it that recovered Job to faith and peace and trust? Was there absolutely nothing in the answer of Jehovah out of the tempest to meet the inquest of his beseeching doubts? Yes, there was something, but not much. There is an argument of hints and suggestions. It meets the painful sense of mystery which oppressed Job. God simply says, we should not let that mystery distress us, because there are mysteries everywhere. Another argument is, Consider these mysteries and parables of Nature, and what they reveal of the character and purpose of Him by whom they were created and made. You can see that they all work together for good. May not the mystery of human life and pain be as beneficent? God does not argue with us, nor seek to force our trust: for no man was ever yet argued into love, or could even compel his own child to love and confide in him. Trust and love are not to be forced, but won. God may have to deal with us as we deal with our children. Not by logical arguments, which convince our reason, but by tender appeals which touch and break our hearts, our Father conquers us at last, and wins our love and trust for ever. (*Samuel Cox, D.D.*) *The appearance of Jahve*:—As Job has at last exhausted all mortal powers in order to prevail upon God without defiance and without murmuring, and to behold the solution of the dark enigma, He who has so long been desired and entreated cannot longer withhold His appearance. He now appears at the right time, since an earlier appearance would either have been perilous to the man who was still insufficiently prepared for it, because it would then necessarily have been an angry and destructive response to the defiant or murmuring challenge of man, or else have been incompatible with the proper majesty of God, supposing it had been mercifully condescending and conciliatory, as if man in his ignorance could force such a gracious appearance by rebellion. But now, after the sufferer has tried every human means of prevailing upon God in the proper manner, and already, as conqueror over himself, endeavours without passionate feeling to obtain a higher revelation and final deliverance, this is granted to him at the right moment. It thus appears as if Jahve had so long delayed simply because He had from the beginning anticipated and known that such a brave sufferer as Job would not wholly lose himself, even in the utmost temptation and danger, but would triumphantly go forth from it with higher power and capacity, so as to be able to experience the awful moment of the revelation of a truth and glory such as had been previously never thought of. A revelation coming in this manner must be for Job a friendly and gracious one. (*Heinrich A. Von Ewald.*) *The revelation in the whirlwind*:—We are reminded by these words of the similar experience of Elijah when, in the midst of the grandest manifestations of nature, he was brought into direct contact with God. The Lord, we are told, was not in the mighty wind that passed before Elijah on Horeb. He did not choose the whirlwind as the symbol of Himself; because what Elijah required was not the display of God's power, but the revelation of His love—not the stormy, but the gentle side of God's nature. He Himself was a tempestuous spirit, an incarnate whirlwind. To such a stormy nature a lesson came to teach him the secret of his failure, and to show him that there were greater powers than those which he had employed, and a better spirit than that which he had displayed. He believed that the most effective way of freeing the land from its idolatry was by threatening and judgment. There was nothing in these judgments to appeal to Israel's better nature—to convince them of their sin, and to rouse them to a sense of duty; and the Baal-worship, which they were compelled by fear to renounce for a day, resumed its old spell over them when the storm subsided, and the sky became once more serene. But not thus did God reveal Himself to Job. He revealed Himself in the still, small voice to Elijah, because there was too much of the whirlwind in his own character, and in his work of reformation for Israel, and he needed to be taught the greater power of gentleness and love. He revealed Himself in the whirlwind to Job, because there was too much of the still, small voice in his own disposition and in his circumstances, and he needed to be stirred up by trials and troubles that would shake his life to the very centre. The lot of Job was at first extraordinarily prosperous. His nature became like his circumstances; his soul was at ease; he lived upon the surface of his being; he was contented with himself and with the world. Job's worship was practically a similar bargain of faith. He would offer sacrifice to God as a preventive of worldly evil, and as the safeguard of his

prosperity. We know what happens in nature after a long continuance of sunshine and calm. It needs a storm to agitate the stagnant waters, and fill the foaming waves with vital air for the good of the creatures of the sea. And so the man whose prosperous life settles down upon the lees of his nature, and partakes of their sordidness, requires the storm of trial to purify the atmosphere of his soul, to rouse him from his selfishness, to brace up his energies, and to make him a blessing to others, and a grander and truer man in himself. It was for this reason that the overwhelming troubles that came upon Job were sent. "The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind." That Divine speech was entirely different from the arguments of Elihu and Zophar, Bildad and Eliphaz. There were no upbraidings in it; no replies to specious sophistries and short-sighted charges. It seemed to ignore altogether the questions at issue; it appealed not to the intellect, but to the heart. He grew wiser the more he suffered; and the storm that purified his soul gave him a deeper insight into the mysteries of Divine providence, so that he could rise superior to the doubts of his own heart, and vindicate the ways of God to man against all the dishonouring arguments of his false friends. As a candle within a transparency, so the fire of pain illumined the truth of God to him, and made plain what before had been dark. He had lost everything which men of the world value, but he had found what was more than a compensation. And so God deals with us still. He speaks to different persons in different ways: to one who is self-sufficient because of his prosperity, by the loud roar of the whirlwind; to another who is despondent and depressed because of failure and blighted hopes arising from wrong methods of doing good, He speaks in the still, small voice, and assures him that fury is not in Him. The Divine method is ever by the still, small voice. God would prefer to deal with us in gentle, loving, quiet ways. Judgment is His strange work. God's continued goodness to us too often leaves us careless and godless. The still, small voice speaking to us in the blessings of life with which day after day our cup is filled, is unheeded, and God requires to send His whirlwind to speak to us in such a way that we shall be compelled to hear. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*) *Spiritual tempests*:—Numerous instances might be cited where God manifested Himself out of a cloud. But as well in the dewdrop, out of the calm and silent lake, as well as from the billowy ocean. In all ways He seeks to reach and impress men with His greatness and goodness. But I believe men are more impressed when in the pathway of the cyclone, where the ordinary provisions of safety are inadequate, and men lift up their voices, and implore the mercy of the great Jehovah. I. The first thing to consider is, how EASILY THE MOST INNOCENT THINGS MAY BECOME HARMFUL AND DANGEROUS. A child may sleep in the morning breeze. What is softer than the dewdrop as it releases the aroma of the fields that we drink in with so much pleasure? And yet with what terrific force it sweeps on when changed into the tornado and flood! How great, therefore, the power for destruction in the simplest. In the souls of men there are forces no less terrible than those in physical nature that, held by a slight restraint, keep in check vices, which, were they loose, would carry devastation into society. II. The second principle TEACHES THAT DESTRUCTIVE THINGS MAY BECOME BENEFICIAL. At first we shrink from the approaching storm, property is lost, homes destroyed, and yet we learn from viewing the scene of desolation that storms may be beneficial. Do we think of the poison in the atmosphere, and how the storm has taken it up and blown it away, giving us in its place a pure atmosphere? A few lives may be given to the tornado, but you and I have been given purer air. The soldier in the same manner dies for his country. These may be great mysteries. The storm may destroy much, but it blesses us all. The cyclones in the spiritual world strike us, but give us a better vision; they purify our spiritual atmosphere, and let us see nearer the world to which we are journeying. III. The third teaching of the tornado is HOW THE SIMPLE THINGS BECOME INSCRUTABLE. Man's knowledge seems to extend to a certain point. God said to the sea: "Thus far shalt thou go and no farther." But the storm may bring great blessings. We live in a little circle of light; we see but a few feet, and know not but the next step may be into infinite blackness; but if God is with us it does not matter. The three lessons, considered together, teach us that this world is an island in the midst of a great ocean. We are like the mariners on the lake—the more the storm rages the more lights will be turned toward the haven. We all need a refuge from the storm. Some seek it in the sciences and philosophy; but the only haven is in the arms of Jesus, where there is at

least heaven, sweet, blessed heaven, for the burdened and weary. (*George C. Lorimer, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. **Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?**—*Ignorance of the world's origin*:—God would impress on Job his utter ignorance of the world in which he lived, and his incompetency to interpret His moral administration. The moral is this—Be concerned, Job, for a moral trust in My character, rather than for a theoretical knowledge of My ways. In the text there is a Divine challenge in relation to the when and how of the origin of the world. I. THE WHEN. His ignorance as to when He began His creation. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the earth?" II. THE HOW. "Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?" Conclusion—The subject serves—1. To rebuke all disposition to pronounce an opinion upon the ways of God. 2. To suggest that our grand effort ought to be to cultivate a loving trust in the Divine character, rather than to comprehend the Divine procedure. Comprehend Him—we never can. 3. To enable us to appreciate the glorious services of Christianity. The question, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" confounds and crushes me. I feel powerless before it, it overwhelms me with a sense of my own insignificance. Christianity comes to my relief. It tells me that although I am insignificant, I am still a child, a beloved child of the Everlasting, and that it is not the will of my Father that any, even of His "little ones," should perish; nay, that it is His good pleasure that I should have a kingdom. (*Homilist.*) *The insignificance of man as a creature*:—1. WHAT IS THINE INTELLECT TO MINE? II. WHAT IS THINE AGE TO MINE? III. WHAT IS THY POWER TO MINE? IV. WHAT IS THY INDEPENDENCE TO MINE? He is—1. Independent in being. 2. In action. This subject serves—(1) To rebuke all disposition to pronounce an opinion upon the ways of God. (2) To suggest that our grand effort ought to be to cultivate a loving trust in the Divine character, rather than to comprehend the Divine procedure. 3. To enable us to appreciate the glorious service of Christianity. (*Ibid.*) *The creation of the world*:—I. SOME LEADING IDEAS RESPECTING THE DIVINE WORK OF CREATION. Notice—1. The hoary and venerable antiquity of the work, and its entire independence of the power and wisdom of man. Many an upstart of yesterday imagines himself capable to investigate and define every subject. The questions of the text lead us to contemplate the creating work as mysterious and unsearchable. II. THE MANNER IN WHICH MEDITATIONS ON THIS WORK OF CREATION MAY BE MOST PROFITABLY CONDUCTED. Philosophers will afford delightful aid to the more studious observer of the universe. The grand philosophy is in the Bible, where resounds the voice of God Himself, describing His own operations. But there is still needed the specially illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit of God. This influence is to be sought by prayer, while the proper means are diligently used. III. THE IMPORTANT ENDS AND USES TO WHICH MEDITATIONS OF THIS KIND OUGHT TO BE DIRECTED AND APPLIED. The agency of the Spirit is particularly manifest in sanctifying devout meditations to their proper end. By meditations properly conducted, a habit of spirituality is acquired, and an ability to bring the mind close to the contemplation of Divine things. Here is the porch of the temple of wisdom. There is the foot of the ladder, whereby the soul at length ascends to heaven. Nor is the utility of such meditations confined to the infancy of religious wisdom; it follows us up to the very gates of heaven, yea, into heaven itself. (*J. Love, D.D.*)

Vers. 6, 7. **Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened?**—*The laying of the earth's foundation-stone*:—Our text brings before us a period long antecedent to the creation of man, when the first step was taken towards building up and furnishing this planet for the abode of its future inhabitants. The text brings before us the truth in a parable. The transactions of another sphere are represented in an image drawn from this, in order that our conceptions of the truth may be lively and intelligent. These parables are no mere plays of the fancy—they are founded upon real analogies. Earthly things are really a shadow of heavenly things. The ways of nature are a real type of the ways of grace. The dealings of men with one another are really and objectively a figure of God's dealings with man. God here sets forth heavenly transactions under a figure, drawn from the laying of a foundation-stone. To lay the first stone of a great building is in itself, however auspicious, a solemn event. The structure, whose foundations

we are laying, will witness a great fluctuation of human interests, and be associated with some great and critical event. Suppose that the building be dedicated to the edification of man, or to the worship of the Most High God—a great seminary, for example, or a great church. Here our feelings of solemnity and awe would be far more largely tempered with joy. There is ground for rejoicing, inasmuch as the good which may reasonably be expected to result from the work which we are inaugurating, so vastly preponderates over the evil, which may be accidentally associated with it. The text carries us back to a period of thought, antecedent to the creation of man—to the period when the first substratum of the globe was laid—to the period, when by the operation of laws, which it has taken man upwards of five thousand years to discover, this planet was poised in mid-air—a little ball in the midst of suns and systems innumerable, with infinite space stretching round it on all sides. Man existed not yet, nor the place of his habitation; but that intelligent and rational creatures existed, our text itself furnishes sufficient proof. . . . Angels assisting at the foundation of the earth, and sending forth God's high praises in jubilant strains of triumph—it is a grand subject of meditation. What were the grounds for their solemn rejoicing? Their knowledge of the earth's destiny could not have been of a prophetic character. The earth might be regarded by them in reference either to its future inhabitants, or to God, or to the evil which had already found its way into the universe. I. ITS FUTURE INHABITANTS. It was to be the house of a great family, and the school of a great character. 1. It was designed for the abode of a race, and not merely of those two individuals who were first placed in solitude and innocence upon it; and the destinies of that race, as of the individuals composing it, would fluctuate. 2. It was to be the school of human character. Earth was to be a scene of probation and discipline. The creature who was to be formed upon it was to be susceptible of improvement and progress. If the creature have capacities for the infinite, while the sphere on which it moves is finite, this must prove that the sphere is only preparatory—an introduction to a higher stage. II. TO GOD. Earth was destined to be a temple of God, from every corner of which should ascend to Him continually the incense of praise—where He should signally manifest His glory, and develop His perfections. III. TO THE STRIFE WITH EVIL. Man should become a sinner, and alienate himself from God. Then arose this difficulty—How was this moral mischief to be repaired? (*E. M. Goulburn, D.C.L.*)

Ver. 7. **When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?**—*The song eternal*:—The mere creation of matter would be wonderful; but, to think that God put in that matter all that might be necessary for all that intelligent beings could desire, or think about, or need, for millions of years! God prepared the earth for millions of people upon it, and He prepared everything to meet their wants. These worlds have been long in being, but they have kept in motion all the time. And they keep time with each other; they have not come into collision. God marked out their pathway. I do not wonder the morning stars sang together, when they saw all this machinery set in motion. It is more wonderful as the ages roll on, for through all these years it keeps time, and the song is still sounding in the heaven. Shall we be less interested? The angels know God as their Creator, the wonderful God. They see His majesty, His power. But He comes near to us, and calls us children. Here our eyes see, our ears hear, and our hearts glow with admiration at what our Father has made—made for us. Sometimes, when I think of the heaven that He has given, just beyond all these worlds, I look through the worlds with joy, and I see something more glorious beyond. This song still goes on. The music is still rolling on over our heads. We do not hear it, but occasionally we get glimpses of the world that re-echoes with it. . . . Christ was coming to suffer sorrow and death upon the earth. Why should the angels (at Bethlehem) be glad? If He came to suffer death, it was but to enter into His glory. The angels opened the doors, and welcomed Him up the pathway to the throne. The joy is perpetual. John had a vision of it in the Isle of Patmos. The angels sang at creation, and angels sang of dominion and glory; but there is a new song,—"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us in His own blood," &c. What a song! It is a song ever new, because there are new strains in it, new voices in it. (*Bishop Simpson.*) *The angels rejoicing at the creation of the world*:—Here is something that took place when our world was created, but not in our world. Heaven was the scene of it; and it is told us in order to carry up our thoughts to heaven, and make us

better acquainted with it. In the text find—I. THOSE SPOKEN OF IN IT. "Morning stars," "Sons of God." With a star we connect the ideas of brightness and beauty, but with a morning star, peculiar brightness and beauty. "My angels," God says to us, "are morning stars." Angels are not "sons" as the Everlasting Son is. They are called sons by mere grace and favour. The name shows the abundance of God's love to them. II. WHAT THESE ANGELS ARE SAID TO HAVE DONE. They sang. Singing is the language of happy feeling. They "sang together." Here comes in the idea of union, harmony, oneness of feeling and joy, among these morning stars. God loves this oneness of feeling. They "shouted for joy." This invests the figure with a sublimity and majesty. III. THE OCCASION FOR ALL THIS REJOICING. It was called forth by the creation of the world. 1. The joy of these angels was a joy of admiration. They sang together, because they were struck together with the beauty of the world. 2. It was a song of praise. Because the world discovered to them in every part of it the perfections of God. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *The joy of angels at the creation of the world* :—I. THE PERSONS, OR BEINGS, HERE SPOKEN OF. They must be the "angels," those glorious spirits who were formed before the earth. For "sons of God" the Greek has, "all my angels"; and an ancient Jewish paraphrase has "all the armies of heaven." The angels are called "morning stars" on account of their lustre, and the purity of their natures. In Scripture, persons of eminent stations are described as "stars." They are called "sons of God," because produced by Him, who is the Father of spirits, the Father of the whole family in heaven and earth. They may be so styled, because they resemble Him in their natures, partake of His Divine and glorious image; or they may be called His "sons" as men are. II. WHAT OCCASIONED THEIR JOYFUL SONGS AND SHOUTS OF PRAISE? 1. The magnificence and beauty of the creation. 2. The glories of the Divine architect displayed in it. 3. They rejoiced on account of the uses for which the earth was designed. The angels are benevolent beings, and bear the image of God in love. Application—(1) The creation was a glorious work, and claims our admiration and our praise. (2) The works of God are worthy our serious and diligent study. (3) Did the angels rejoice in the creation of God, then, they must be grieved at everything that defaces and dishonours the creation. (4) They would more rejoice in the new creation. The new creation by Jesus Christ is chiefly a display of God's moral perfections, His justice and patience, his faithfulness and goodness, His holiness and mercy. It is a scheme which at once secures the honour of the Divine government, and the recovery and happiness of fallen creatures. (5) What joy and shouting will there be among the angels at the last day. When the mystery of God shall be accomplished, and the redemption of all His people shall be completed. (*Job Orton, S.T.P.*)

Ver. 11. Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further.—*Drawing the line* :—Everybody draws the line somewhere or other. 1. The Lord Chancellor, speaking on the Burials Bill, remarked that we English people must draw the line as to the requirements of the religious ceremony in the churchyards of our country, by saying that it must be a Christian service. Every rational person will consent to that drawing of the line at the word "Christian," by which I understand is meant a service which acknowledges God and a life beyond the grave. 2. We draw the line in giving evidence in Courts of Justice and in entering Parliament. A man cannot be believed and trusted unless he either takes an oath, or affirms that he will be truthful and faithful. It is absurd as well as insulting to an Englishman to make him swear that he is telling the truth; and I hope that, before long, in our courts of justice we shall simply affirm before giving evidence—"I promise, on my word of honour, to tell the truth." 3. The line is also drawn in things of great social and moral importance. In questions of modesty. There are some books against which you have to draw the line of exclusion, and to say, "No, I draw the line at these books; they shall not enter my house." It is right to draw the line somewhere. With all due deference to those who say, "To the pure all things are pure," a line ought to be drawn in the admission of pictures to public exhibitions. A line ought to be drawn against such demoralising works of art, no matter if a prince were the artist. Draw the line too in your conversation. Do not join in any jokes or stories which go too far over the edge of modesty, but rebuke it in every shape and way. Modesty is woman's sweetest glory, and man's richest crown. 4. Draw the right line in the respect due one to another. Let us not respect a man for his money, but for his manhood. 5. Draw the right line in

questions of religion. Not a line of intolerance and exclusiveness. Some people presumptuously draw a line around God's heart; they encroach on the prerogative of God, saying that He cannot save every man. What a libel on God. (*W. Birch.*)

Ver. 10. **Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth?**—*High tides*:—What a fascination there is about a high tide! Passing through Manchester, I noticed that the railway company were running cheap trips to Blackpool, so that the people might witness the prevailing high tides. We love to see the triumphant march, to hear the shout of many waters. That there are similar tides "in the affairs of men" the greatest of poets noted long ago. Occasionally, or it may be only once, men are signally favoured by happy conjunctions of circumstances which send them bounding to a coveted haven. The politician achieves an extraordinary popularity, and exults that the flowing tide is with him; commercial men fondly recall years when the ships they sent for gold steadily and swiftly returned with propitious wind and wave. Usually the currents of life are sluggish. The spirit within us also has its spring tides, privileged periods when it transcends the dull levels of ordinary experience, when the billows of God lift it on high and it knows itself caught in irresistible currents of spiritual influence and grace. Most people know that oceanic tides are regulated by the sun and moon, and they know also that when these greater and lesser lights act in conjunction, as they do at new and full moon, the ebb and flow are each considerably increased, producing what we know as spring tides. The moon in her monthly revolution is at one time thousands of miles nearer the earth than she is at another; the sun also is nearer our earth in winter than in summer; and the highest tides are produced when the sun and moon both pull together at a time when each orb is in that part of its path nearest to the earth. The attraction of these orbs and their nearness to our planet have everything to do with the glorious tides we love to witness, although the crowd of trippers may not remember the firmamental cause. And thus the celestial universe governs the tides of the soul. We do not always remember the fact, but the eternal world acts directly upon our spirit, agitating it, setting in motion its faculties and forces, directing its currents to consequences of utmost blessing. There are hours and days when God comes specially near to us, as there are seasons when sun and moon approach near the earth, creating a majestic gathering of the waters. At those wonderful periods of spiritual visitation doubts are dissolved; we see clearly what at other times we miss or see but darkly; we conceive the thoughts and form the purposes which give new nobility to life. There is to the uninstructed mind much that is mysterious and inexplicable in the influence of the stars upon the tides which flow on our coasts, in consequence of the numerous complications—astronomical, meteorological, and geographical—which obscure the laws governing the tides. The greatest philosophers find it difficult, nay, impossible, to explain to the average man the wonderful phenomenon; and the action of the eternal world upon our spirit is a still greater mystery which none may comprehend or explain; but every spiritual man is assured of the fact, and has felt the rapture of extraordinary visitations of grace, when tides of spiritual influence surge through his heart and mind, making everything to live, move, and bloom. How precious are those days when God draws nigh to us, and our spirit is deeply moved! These rising and falling tides of emotion are in many ways most blessed. A soul like a duck-pond is not the ideal state; our grandest days are those when mysterious effluences course through every artery of our being. They are days of purification. The mud and débris which would otherwise choke our rivers are cleansed by high tides. These high tides of blessing serve in another way; they free us from various injurious moods and habits which arise in ordinary life and which with ordinary grace we find almost impossible to overcome. Ways of thinking and acting, habits and associations that circumscribe us, that render us shallow, that may prove occasions of stagnation and shipwreck, are easily broken through and destroyed when a great tide of life surges through the soul. These days of spiritual effluxion are also days of power and attainment. What intellectual men strive after in vain during neap tides they reach splendidly in moments of inspiration. Pentecostal times are high-water marks, when the believer letting himself go is carried into higher, wider, and more satisfying experiences and attributes. These seasons of outpouring of love and grace, of pervading fulness, of vital influence penetrating the innermost recesses

of the soul, are days of sweet and memorable delight. Andrew Bonar says, "I often cannot give praise or thanks in any words but those of such songs as 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty'!" These are the days of high tides. Blessed days when there is no surf, no mud bank, no weeds, no noxious sights or odours, but when, filled with the Spirit, everything evil is gone from us and everything human and temporal has become beautiful in the light of the Divine, as the tide racing up the beach turns the dull sand into yellow gold and the common pebbles into glittering gems. Let us beware lest in any way we impede the glorious flow when the Spirit comes in as a flood. Scientists teach that the observed tides do not correspond with the times of the moon's setting, but that they are always behindhand by a greater or less interval. There is friction, such as is caused by currents flowing past the jagged edges of continents and islands, which more or less retard tidal action; and there is also the conflicting influence of contrary currents. And just so we may retard spiritual action by unbelief, worldliness, and unfaithfulness of life. Let us be sure that we get all that the great tides bring. All the purity they bring, until our soul is like the sea of the Apocalypse, glass mingled with fire. All the power they bring. Our scientists regret the wasted power of the tides, and anticipate the day when the energy now expending itself uselessly on our coasts will be utilised as a motive power. If we trifle away the strong, gracious impulses of God's Spirit, our life will be bound in shallows and in miseries of weakness, depression, and failure; and many souls are so poor and unhappy because they have omitted to improve those precious visitations of extraordinary grace vouchsafed to all. We cannot tell when we shall be the subjects of these blessed and memorable visitations. Long experience and observation have enabled astronomers to overcome all the difficulties implied in solving the actual problem of the tides, and they put at the service of mariners and others accurate tables of tides and tidal currents, in addition to the times of high and low water for every part of the civilised world. But we cannot thus calculate the inflowing of the Divine tides upon the souls of men. All great artists and poets testify to the apparent arbitrariness of their inspiration. The heart is strangely warmed in an unexpected hour; the air suddenly becomes clear, and things unseen display themselves, with strong, commanding evidence. We cannot command these seasons; if we fail to improve them we cannot recall them. When "the set time to favour Zion" is come, there are unmistakable signs of the present Lord; when the "set time" to favour any soul is come, there are solemn and yet delightful agitations within that soul. Let us be tremulously alive to these tides which bear us out to God. If we are busy here and there, the Spirit will be gone and the infinite blessings of the full sea lost. (*W. L. Watkinson.*)

Ver. 17. **Have the gates of death been opened unto thee?**—*The gates of death:*—The allusion here is to the state which in the Hebrew is called Sheol, and in the Greek, Hades; which means the dark abode of the dead. I. THE MENTAL DARKNESS THAT ENSHROUDS US. All the phenomena of the heavens, the earth, and the multiform operations of the Creator, referred to in this Divine address, were designed and fitted to impress Job with the necessary limitation of his knowledge, and the ignorance that encircled him on all questions; and the region of death is but one of the many points to which he is directed as an example of his ignorance. How ignorant are we of the great world of departed men! What a thick veil of mystery enfolds the whole! What questions often start within us to which we can get no satisfactory reply, either from philosophy or the Bible! I am thankful that we are left in ignorance—1. Of the exact condition of each individual in that great and ever-growing realm. In general, the Bible tells us that the good are happy and the wicked miserable. This is enough. We would have no more light. 2. Of our exact proximity to the great realm of the departed. We would not have the day or the hour disclosed. II. THE SOLEMN CHANGE THAT AWAITS US. "The gates" have not opened to us, but must. 1. The gates are in constant motion. No sooner are they closed to one, than another enters. 2. The gates open to all classes. There are gates to be only entered by persons of distinction. 3. The gates open only one way—into eternity. 4. The gates separate the probationary from the retributionary. 5. The gates are under supreme authority. III. THE WONDERFUL MERCY THAT PRESERVES US. 1. We have always been near those gates. 2. Thousands have gone through since we began the journey of life. 3. We have often been made to feel ourselves near,

In times of personal affliction; and in times of bereavement. IV. THE SERVICE CHRISTIANITY RENDERS US. 1. It assures us there is life on the other side the gates. 2. It assures us there is blessedness on the other side the gates. 3. It takes away the instinctive repugnance we feel in stepping through those gates. "It delivers those who through fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage." It takes the sting of death away, &c. (*Homilist.*) *The invisible gates*:—Nothing could well be conceived of as more truly sublime than the whole discourse of which the above quotation is a part. Job is convicted by the great Teacher both of ignorance and of weakness. How little did he know of the plans and workings of providence. Whithersoever he turned himself, he was surrounded with mystery. There was another state of being, too, over which clouds and darkness rested. It was a land from which no traveller had ever returned; a land of spiritual essences, and incorporeal natures alone. "Have the gates of death been opened unto thee?" 1. The metaphor suggests to us how ignorant we are of the period at which our mortal lives must terminate. Canst thou look into the secret chambers of the Almighty, and say which of the ten thousand ways of leaving this world, is the precise one thou shalt be under the necessity of taking? How often does the king of terrors take one and pass another by. The number of years we are to fill; the nature of the death we are to die; the spot where and the manner how; all are infallibly known to God; nay, were so long before we were born, or the earth itself was formed on which we dwell. From us these futurities are wisely and mercifully concealed. "Death's thousand doors stand open," as the poet says, but through which of them we are to pass is only known unto Him who hath appointed to all flesh the bounds of their habitation. 2. The metaphor suggests to us that we are very much in the dark as to the nature of the invisible world. Canst thou clearly discern, through the opened gates, the condition of that world which lies beyond the present, the occupation of its inhabitants, the pursuits in which they are engaged, or the views they entertain? We know there is such a state. We are told it shall for ever be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked. But we are left very much in the dark as to particulars. Many curious and interesting questions naturally occur to a thinking mind. Some think that from the moment the breath departs, all spiritual life and consciousness are suspended until the day of resurrection. But such a theory can easily be shown to be preposterous and untenable. All things go to prove that, as it is appointed unto all men once to die, so immediately after death cometh judgment, not the general judgment of the last day, but the particular judgment that shall pass on every individual. 3. The metaphor suggests that it becomes us to express ourselves with great caution when at any time we speak of the dead. There are two propositions of which we cannot be too confident. (1) That they who die in the Lord are blessed. (2) That such as die unregenerate shall be eternally miserable. But we may err widely in the application of them. We cannot know, with absolute certainty, the state of another man's soul. God has not constituted us judges in the matter. Learn—1. The propriety of considering our latter end. 2. The folly of rash speculations upon the nature of the invisible world. What God has taught us, it becomes us diligently to ponder; what He has thought proper to conceal, let us religiously abstain from intermeddling with. 3. To see abundant cause of thankfulness to God for the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. What, but for this, must have been our future prospects? He who lay in mortal slumber in Joseph's tomb has come back to tell that death shall be swallowed up in victory, and that they who believe on Him shall never perish. (*J. L. Adamson.*) *Gates of death*:—This world, and that which is to come, are thus scripturally connected on the border land. David came very near them once, yet broke out into thanksgiving, "Thou liftest me up from the gates of death." Good Hezekiah said, "I shall go to the gates of the grave," using a more material form for the same idea. These "gates of death" spoken of in Job xxxviii. 17, Psalm cvii. 18, and Psalm ix. 13, are synonymous with the "gates of hell," spoken of by our Lord in Matthew xvi. 18, meaning the gates of Hades, or the vast regions of the unseen state. They are all at the terminus of life's pilgrimage, and the believer who has passed through the "gates of righteousness," spoken of in Psalm cxviii. 19, when he approaches these amazing portals, may use the triumphant language of David, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors." These gates, as John says, have names written thereon. Over the first is written—1. Mystery. One pillar seems to rest on time, and the other on eternity, opening into the unknown, where from this side the deepest shadows lie; and some say,

"There is nothing beyond"; others, "With what body do they come?" others, "What are their employments, company, and conditions?" and yet others, "Do they know us there, and can they visit us there?" 2. Change is written over another. To the most it opens as a surprise. On this side men say, "A man is dead," and on the other, "A man is born." As they go through, the old become young, the poor rich, the despised honourable, and the little great; so that all are not on the other side what they were on this. 3. Immortality is written upon the next, clearly read by the Christian, yet to the mass of mankind in the past, traceable only in shadowy hieroglyphics. 4. Infinity is another. Here all is rudimental—our works, successes, attainments, yet suggestive of immense possibilities, awakening curiosity, and animating to activity. Our field of action is here limited by the very conditions of our existence; yet with the barriers of sense removed, we shall have unlimited ideas of space, power, employment, knowledge, and progress. 5. Reward is the title of another, which will receive us into the presence of the King, saying, "My reward is with Me, and I will give unto every man as his work shall be"; rewards according to our works, and not for them, yet all the better because through the riches of His grace; every man in his own order, yet each compensated according to his capacity. There are those who shall be great in the kingdom of heaven, and others who shall be least. (*J. Waugh.*)

Ver. 22. **Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow?**—*The treasures of the snow*:—I. THE BEAUTY OF THESE "TREASURES." The manifold pleasing forms shaped by the different objects on which it falls; the broad white coverlet of the expansive plain; the undulating hills; the mountain peaks, whose white vestures are seen afar off like interceding high priests. Suggesting to the spiritual eye the infinite resources at the command of the Creator, and the incomprehensible variety and fulness of moral splendours that lie folded up in His character and revelations. II. THE PRESERVING AND FRUCTIFYING POWERS CONTAINED IN THESE "TREASURES." Their power to preserve vegetable life and make the soil richer for its temporary white shroud. Suggestions here arise of the Divine love and wisdom that visit the souls of men in the cold garb of sorrow and pain. The killing process is always one of pain in the human world; the analogy of which, without the pain, we have in the vegetable kingdom. The snow kills and destroys. So does pain and sorrow; but it kills only those influences that are opposed to the life and fruitfulness of after-growths. Are not the purposes of affliction equally beneficial? What a garden of spices has the heart become through some cold and biting winter's visitation of sorrow! III. There is, then, A PURGING AND PURIFYING POWER IN THESE TREASURES OF THE SNOW. In moral and spiritual discipline we have seen this to be the case. But have we "entered into" the truth that lies still deeper, and is vital to all soul purifying? Where shall we look for the power to stay the death weeds of sin, and the world's wide-spread guilt, if we discover it not in the power that is beautifully typified by the Psalmist in the snow? "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psa. li. 7). God's "treasures" of wisdom, and knowledge, and salvation, are locked up in Him who, in His love and humiliation, spread the mantle of His torn flesh over the world's festering evil. And out of the death has come the world's life—purity, peace, hope, radiant with celestial plumage. IV. WHAT SILENT FORCES BELONG TO THE SNOW! During the quiet hours of night, it falls—falls—falls—so softly, so stealthily, that its descent does not disturb even the invalid's slumbers; but as we look out in the morning dawn we see broad acres covered with high heaps of compact snow. What busy hands and noisy machinery would be needed to convey a one thousandth part of what you see from your window, from one locality to another, within the same space of time that elapsed during its fall! And how would the chaste and fleecy material be spoilt by the transit, no longer pure as it came from its heavenly birthplace. The Church needs, with its soul-eye, to "enter into" this lesson of the "treasures" of silent forces. The disciples of the Master have too long been making a great deal of noise in the discharge of their mission, and in many cases substituting the noise for the work. The true workers are a silent band who in much prayer and few words, with Christlike examples and little interest in verbal creeds, whose voices are seldom heard in the streets, and whose names are seldom announced in the papers, are, nevertheless, among the real moral and spiritual forces of the world. V. HAVE WE CONSIDERED, IN THE HOUR OF OUR GREAT BEREAVEMENTS,

THE "TREASURES" OF CONSOLATION SUGGESTED BY THE SNOW? What a spring-tide of immortal splendours will yet issue from the human seeds that lie covered over by the cold pall of death! In the light of the resurrection we sometimes feel very rich in the "treasures" of which death has made us conscious,—"the roses that are to come out of the snow." (*The Study.*) **Hast thou seen the treasures of the hail?**—*The treasures of the hail:*—This description would serve to impress upon Job the truth that all natural forces are rigidly under God's control. There are no chance whirlwinds, or lightnings, or snow, or hail storms; all are in His hands. The forces that had stricken Job and his family to the ground were part of God's well-ordered host. This being so, all these forces exist and act for the highest ends. They fight God's battles, and are ministers of His glory. So we have a clear assertion of two truths. I. THE SUPERNATURALNESS OF PHYSICAL FORCES. Modern science tends to habituate us to regard the world as a machine, the play of blind forces, requiring no explanation beyond its own nexus of causes and effects. Our text contains a far grander and more inspiring conception, telling us that the profoundest fact in creation is not "law," but "life." Natural laws are the expression of the Divine life, but do not exhaust it. II. THE ETHICAL END OF PHYSICAL FORCES. They are God's warriors, treasured up for the day of battle. And what does God fight for? That He may universalise the kingdom of love, that He may see in the world as in a perfect mirror His own image. Clearly, then, creation is not a dull round of cause and effect, perpetual motion without a meaning. Nay, it is all set in the kingdom of love. Love lights the stars, and speeds them on their way. The treasured snow and hail fight for the kingdom of love, or else they would cease to be treasured up. For everything that will not help to bring in the reign of love shall perish. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain, waiting for the glory of the sons of God. (*Anon.*)

Ver. 23. **Against the day of battle and war.**—*War from heaven:*—In some parts of Scripture Jehovah is represented descending in clouds and tempests, and fixing for Himself in the air a tent or pavilion, where the elementary forces attend and receive commissions and arms for the service in which each meteor, or element, is to be employed (Psa. xviii.). I. THE TREASURES IN THE ARMOURY OF JEHOVAH. 1. Treasures of snow and hail. That vapour, ascending from the earth, and floating over our heads in the air, descends in small white flakes, is a sensible truth; but how the particles of vapour condense and adhere, how they assume the shape, and colour, and quality of snow, are questions too high for us, and must be resolved into the will and power of God. Hail, as a body of condensed vapour, is well known. Dreadful is the execution which it has done among the enemies of the Lord (Exod. ix. 25; Josh. x. 11). 2. The air is the storehouse where snow and hail are collected and laid up. This magnificent fabric, the dimensions of which are unknown, is a glorious effect of the wisdom and power of the great Builder. Storey is founded upon storey, and sphere raised over sphere. At God's command every exhalation appears, and without resisting His will, assumes the shape and fills the place which He hath appointed. 3. The treasures of snow and hail are under the care and direction of the Lord of heaven and earth. Over these His power is unlimited, and in and by these He doth whatsoever pleaseth Him. 4. These treasures are inaccessible to man. Are there secrets in the air which we cannot discover, and operations in that storehouse of vapour which we are not able to explain; then why do men of penetration stumble at mysteries in religion, or reject truths which God has revealed, because these are not comprehensible by reason? "Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?" II. THE TIME OF TROUBLE AND THE DAY OF BATTLE AND WAR. There may indeed be trouble when there is not war, but a day of war is always a time of trouble. 1. Rebellion is the cause of these operations. The existence of rebellion against the Lord, the God of the whole earth, cannot be denied. Enemies and rebels are the real characters of multitudes in this generation. 2. These operations are penal operations, or punishments of rebellion against the laws of His kingdom. 3. These operations of Divine wrath and power are just and holy proceedings against the rebellious. III. THE RESERVATION OF THE SNOW AND THE HAIL IN THE TREASURES OF THE LORD. In the expression there is a greatness becoming the majesty of the Speaker, and the state and grandeur of the Sovereign. The following particulars will help us to understand the sublime expression which the Lord of all uses concerning His operations. 1. The vapour, which fills the treasures of the snow and the hail, is raised, collected, condensed, and stored by the power of

God. 2. The treasures, which are filled and stored by the power of God, are poised and balanced by His wisdom. These wondrous works are executed according to a determined and pre-conceived plan. 3. The snow and the hail are detained in the treasures until the time of trouble, and the day of battle and war. Inferences—(1) In war from heaven the inhabitants of the earth are the aggressors. (2) Provoking the Lord of hosts to battle is the folly of wickedness. (3) "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft." (4) Humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of the Lord, and taking hold of the covenant of peace, is present duty and true wisdom. (*A. Shanks.*)

Vers. 25-27. **To cause it to rain on the earth.**—*Rain and grace—a comparison:*—We shall work out a parallel between grace and rain. I. GOD ALONE GIVETH RAIN, AND THE SAME IS TRUE OF GRACE. We say of rain and of grace,—God is the sole author of it. He devised and prepared the channel by which it comes to earth. He hath "divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters." The Lord makes a way for grace to reach His people. He directs each drop, and gives each blade of grass its own drop of dew,—to every believer his portion of grace. He moderates the force, so that it does not beat down or drown the tender herb. Grace comes in its own gentle way. Conviction, enlightenment, &c., are sent in due measure. He holds it in His power. Absolutely at His own will does God bestow either rain for the earth, or grace for the soul. II. RAIN FALLS IRRESPECTIVE OF MEN, AND SO DOES GRACE. Grace waits not man's observation. As the rain falls where no man is, so grace courts not publicity. Nor his co-operation. It "tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men" (Mic. v. 7). Nor his prayers. Grass calls not for rain, yet it comes. "I am found of them that sought Me not" (Isa. lxv. 1). Nor his merits. Rain falls on the waste ground. III. RAIN FALLS WHERE WE MIGHT LEAST HAVE EXPECTED IT. It falls where there is no trace of former showers, even upon the desolate wilderness; so does grace enter hearts which had hitherto been unblest, where great need was the only plea which rose to heaven (Isa. xxxv. 7). It falls where there seems nothing to repay the boon. Many hearts are naturally as barren as the desert (Isa. xxxv. 6). It falls where the need seems insatiable; "to satisfy the desolate." Some cases seem to demand an ocean of grace; but the Lord meets the need; and His grace falls where the joy and glory are all directed to God by grateful hearts. Twice we are told that the rain falls "where no man is." When conversion is wrought of the Lord, no man is seen: the Lord alone is exalted. IV. THIS RAIN IS MOST VALUED BY LIFE. 1. The rain gives joy to seeds and plants in which there is life. Budding life knows of it; the tenderest herb rejoices in it; so is it with those who begin to repent, who feebly believe, and thus are just alive. 2. The rain causes development. Grace also perfects grace. Buds of hope grow into strong faith. Buds of feeling expand into love. Buds of desire rise to resolve. Buds of confession come to open avowal. Buds of usefulness swell into fruit. 3. The rain causes health and vigour of life. Is it not so with grace? 4. The rain creates the flower with its colour and perfume, and God is pleased. The full outgrowth of renewed nature cometh of grace, and the Lord is well pleased therewith. Application—Let us acknowledge the sovereignty of God as to grace. Let us cry to Him for grace. Let us expect Him to send it though we may feel sadly barren, and quite out of the way of the usual means of grace. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **Wherein there is no man.**—*Fertility of uninhabited part of the earth:*—A distinguished naturalist, who is a Fellow of the Royal Society, describes how such a mistaken idea was corrected in his experience. Once he was pushing his way through a dense and tangled thicket in a lone and lofty region of Jamaica. Suddenly he came upon the most magnificent terrestrial orchid, in full bloom, which he had ever seen. It was a noble plant, crowned with the pyramidal spike of lily-like flowers, whose expanding petals seemed to his ravished gaze the very perfection of beauty. Then he began to reflect how long that exquisite plant had been growing in a wild, unvisited spot, every season filling the air around with its glory, and yet it could never have met a human gaze before. "To what purpose is this waste?" he asks himself. But ere long the true reply entered his mind. "Speak not of waste! Can man alone admire beauty? Can man alone exult in it? Surely the eye of the Lord rests with delight on the perfect work of His hands, on the apt expression of His own sublime thought!"

Vers. 28, 29. **Hath the rain a father?**—*The weather provider:*—Two ships

meet mid-Atlantic. The one is going to Southampton and the other is coming to New York. Provide weather that, while it is abaft for one ship, it is not a head wind for the other. There is a farm that is dried up for the lack of rain, and here is a pleasure-party going out for a field-excursion. Provide weather that will suit the dry farm and the pleasure-excursion. No, sirs, I will not take one dollar of stock in your weather company. There is only one Being in the universe who knows enough to provide the right kind of weather for this world. "Hath the rain a father?" (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) **Who hath begotten the drops of dew?** — *Dewdrops:* — Dew is moisture dropped from the atmosphere upon the earth. During the daytime the earth both receives and returns heat; but after sunset it no longer receives, and yet it continues for a time to throw off the heat it has received. In a little while the grass, flowers, and foliage are quite cool; yet the atmosphere still retains the heat of the day, which, as the evening grows cooler, it gradually deposits on the earth beneath. This deposit is dew. How wise and wonderful are the ways of God! The effects of dew are like the influence we exert over one another. 1. Dew is powerful. There are some countries, or parts of them, whose vegetation almost entirely depends on the dew. Ahab was heavily punished when told that for three years there should be no rain, and the punishment was greatly increased by the withdrawal of the dew as well. Similarly the power we exert over one another is very great. 2. The dew is perfectly silent. So is influence. You cannot hear the sun rise, the snow fall, or the corn grow. The greatest powers in nature are silent. Our influence, be it sweet or sour, is slipping out from us every hour, and we are all making the world a better or a worse place for living in every day. 3. The dew is very precious. When Isaac gave his dying blessing to his boys, he prayed, "God give thee of the dew of heaven." Even so influence, good influence, is very precious. I believe more good is wrought by quiet influence than by all the talking. 4. Last of all, let us remember, the dew soon passes away. Hosea complains that the "goodness of Israel goeth away as the early dew." That is to say, the dew is quickly dried up unless absorbed by the flowers and grass, just as influence is soon forgotten unless obeyed. (*J. C. Adlard.*) **And the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it?** — In the 38th chapter of that inspired drama the Book of Job, God says to the inspired dramatist, with ecstatic interrogation, "The hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it?" God there asks Job if he knows the parentage of the frost. He inquires about its pedigree. He suggests that Job study up the frost's genealogical line. A minute before God had asked about the parentage of a raindrop in words that years ago gave me a suggestive text for a sermon: "Hath the rain a father?" But now the Lord Almighty is catechising Job about the frost. He practically says, "Do you know its father? Do you know its mother? In what cradle of the leaves did the wind rock it? 'The hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it?'" He is a stupid Christian who thinks so much of the printed and bound Bible that he neglects the Old Testament of the fields, nor reads the wisdom and kindness and beauty of God written in blossoms on the orchard, in sparkles on the lake, in stars on the sky, in frost on the meadows. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

Ver. 31. **Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?**—*Light unrestrainable:*—Who can "bind" or "restrain" the light? The subject before us is the self-revealing power of the Gospel. Men may love darkness, but they cannot hide the advent of light, and can never be, in conscience and accountability, as if they had not seen the light. Evil men may wish the Christ out of the world, but they cannot hide His glory. All Christian light, whether its medium be teaching, or character, or life, or conversation, cannot be restrained. We cannot tell where influence reaches. It may leap forth long after we have finished our course. Men being dead, yet speak to us; facts in their history are disentombed, and we receive the light of their fidelity and heroism. I. THE LIGHT OF PLEIADES IN A HUMAN SENSE. What the world wants is more light—the light of love. That sweetens all relationships, and is the only cement of all classes in our crowded communities. Love is the light of the universe. Let the rosy beams of affection shine in the character, its potent charm will be as irresistible as is the health-giving, gladdening light. II. THE LIGHT OF THE PLEIADES IN A DIVINE SENSE. Love is never impotent—never doubtful of its triumph. Our Saviour never distrusted the issues of the Cross. While men are questioning about Him, His influences

are going forth. Sin, grief, and death are still here. But men cannot take Christ out of the world. III. THE LIGHT OF THE PLEIADES IN A HISTORIC SENSE Light does not die. The great influence of the reformers will never be lost. You can bind mere opinion; you can bind mere ecclesiasticism; you cannot bind the renewed Christlike soul. IV. THE LIGHT OF THE PLEIADES IN A PERSONAL INFLUENCE SENSE. Words live long after their authors have uttered them. Deeds are vital long after great empires have passed away. Words and deeds go through the electric chain of schools, and families, and churches. None can bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades at home or abroad. (*W. M. Statham.*)

Spring:—The Pleiades are a constellation, or group of seven stars, seen in the astronomical sign Taurus, making their appearance in the spring, and thence called spring signs, or tokens. The Hebrew term is expressive of beauty. In the text, the word translated "bind" signifies to compel or constrain. "Canst thou compel the sweet influences of the Pleiades, or loosen the bands of Orion?" (winter). Canst thou force forward the spring, and abruptly break up the rigidity of winter? I. HOW ABSOLUTE IS THE RULE OF THE MOST HIGH IN THE NATURAL WORLD. Can man alter the Divine dispensations, or so much as either hasten or delay them? Let us mark our absolute dependence, and humble ourselves before the Almighty Ruler. II. HE WHO RULES IN THE KINGDOM OF NATURE RULES ALSO IN THAT OF PROVIDENCE. The events of life are no less under His control than are the stars in their courses. Canst thou compel or retain the sweet influences of prosperity; or canst thou loosen the bands of adversity? All our comfort and satisfaction, whether of a bodily or mental kind, is received from Him; and, when He pleases, is in a moment wrested from us. Joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, come and go at His command. It is true that men themselves, being free and intelligent creatures, do by their character and conduct modify and influence their fate and fortune; but this they do only in accordance with the laws of providence. How important it is that we should be earnest and faithful in improving the varying dispensations of providence which are successively appointed for our trial. III. HE WHO RULES IN NATURE AND PROVIDENCE RULES ALSO IN THE KINGDOM OF GRACE. If we look within, we shall find new proofs of our ignorance and weakness, and absolute dependence on the Author of our being. Can you loose the bands of guilt, or compel the sweet influences of pardoning mercy? God only can remit our offences; and the means He has employed for this end, in the incarnation, sufferings, and death of His own dear Son, afford the clearest demonstration of the foolishness of human wisdom, and the impotence of human power in this high concern. (*H. Grey, D.D.*)

Delightful influences of spring-tide:—The Pleiades are a well-known cluster of stars in the constellation of Taurus. The ancients were in the habit of determining their seasons by the rising and setting of certain constellations. The Pleiades were regarded as the cardinal constellations of spring. These seven stars appear about the middle of April, and hence are associated with the return of spring, the season of sweet influences. The Hebrew word is derived from a word signifying delights. The influences of spring are delightful in many ways—I. AS TEMPORAL MINISTRIES. These influences come to bring great blessings to man, as a tenant of the earth. 1. Supplies of food. They come to mollify the earth, fertilise the soil, germinate the seed out of which come the material provisions for man and beast. 2. Pleasures to the senses. Spring mantles the world with a thousand robes of beauty, all with endless variety of hue and shape. 3. Exhilarates the spirit. The influences of spring are delightful—II. AS DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS. Spring-tide is a new revelation of God. It reveals—1. The profusion of His vital energy. Every spot teems with a new existence, and every new life is from Him. 2. The wonderful tastefulness of God. Spring brings a universe of fresh beauties to the eye. 3. The calm ease with which He works. How quietly He pours forth those oceans of new life that are now rolling over the earth. 4. The regularity of His procedure. For 6000 years spring has never failed to come. III. AS INSTRUCTIVE EMBLEMS. 1. Spring is an emblem of human life. Both have vast capabilities of improvement. Both are remarkably changeable. Both are fraught with fallacious promises. 2. Spring is an emblem of spiritual renovation. (1) The new spiritual life is like the spring in the season from which it has emerged. (2) In the tenacity with which the past strives to keep its hold. (3) It tends to a perfect future. The power of winter will gradually give way; summer will come, and then the golden autumn. 3. Spring is an emblem of the general resurrection. The Bible looks at it in this light (1 Cor. xv.

30, 41). (1) Spring life is a resuscitation; it is not properly a new creation, it grows out of the past. (2) Spring life is a resuscitation from an apparently extinct life. "That which thou sowest is not quickened unless it die." (3) Spring life is a resuscitation against which many antecedent objections might have been raised. So with the resurrection of the body. (*Homilist.*) *Influence and power*:—The Pleiades was looked upon as the constellation of spring; Orion, of winter. "The sweet influences of the Pleiades" were the life forces which caused the grass to spring, the plant to grow, and the flower to bloom. "The bands of Orion" were made of ice. They only could bind the sweet influences of spring; spring only, at its return, could loose them. Nothing but silent influence is strong enough to overcome silent influence. The greatest forces in this world are those which work, like the warmth of spring and the cold of winter, in silence. There is, in every man's life, spring and winter; and there is war between them. In this world good influence has all the time to do battle with bad influence. A legend says that after the battle of Chalons the spirits of the slain soldiers continued the conflict for several days. And after we are dead, the silent, invisible influences we have brought into being will continue their battle for good or evil. Theodore Parker spoke a great truth when, dying in Italy, he said, "There are two Theodore Parkers; one of them is dying in Italy; the other I have planted in America, and it will continue to live." We have, in spite of ourselves, an immortality upon earth. So far from blotting us out, death often intensifies our personality. But in Christianity there is more than influence. "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Influence is the sum-total of all the forces in our lives—mental, moral, financial, social. Power is God at work. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore and make disciples, and lo, I am with you." God does not delegate power. He goes along with us, and exerts that power Himself. Christian influences are not sufficient for the needs of the Church. The success of the Gospel at first did not depend upon influence. The only time the word is used in the Bible is in this text from Job. The apostles were not men of influence. Few disciples were made from the influential classes, and as soon as made, they lost by their faithfulness most of the influence they had before. Christ did not choose to become a man of influence. God hath chosen power rather than influence. Mere influence never converted a soul. The Spirit can, of course, use influences. Influence without the Spirit never saved anybody. We should seek power even at the expense of influence. There is such a thing as gaining and retaining influence over a person in such a way as to lose all power with God. And there is such a thing as losing influence while we gain power. Paul had a good opportunity for gaining influence with Felix by flattering him in his sins, and could have made a splendid impression for himself by such a course. But as he gained influence with Felix, he would have lost power with God. He chose power before influence, and "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come" till Felix trembled under the hand of God. Paul and Silas did not have influence enough to keep them out of jail, but there was power enough with them to shake the old jail open. By a compromising course they might have pleased the authorities, and kept out of prison, but they would have lost all power. The disciples at Pentecost had little influence. They were the followers of One who had been crucified as a malefactor. The doctrines He preached were very unpopular. But they had power, and Christians with power can get along without much influence. If they had depended upon influence they would have set about the building of such houses and the establishment of such institutions as would have promoted it. All this would have taken time. Influences, like the forces of spring, work slowly. Power works suddenly. Not evolution, but revolution, was the effect of power at Pentecost. Not a word have I to say, let me repeat, against the use of all influences for good. What I insist upon is, that this world is not going to be converted by influences. (*A. C. Dixon, D.D.*) *Pleiades*:—The isolated group of the "Seven Stars," from the singularity of its appearance, has been distinguished and designated by an appropriate name from the earliest ages. The learned priests of Belus carefully observed its risings and settings nearly two thousand years before the Christian era. By the Greeks it was called Pleiades, from the word *pleein*, to sail, because it indicated the time when the sailor might hope to undertake a voyage with safety. It was also called Vergiliæ, from *ver*, the spring, because it ushered in the mild vernal weather, favourable to farming and pastoral employments. The Greek poets associated it with that beautiful mythology

which, in its purest form, peopled the air, the woods, and the waters with imaginary beings, and made the sky itself a concave mirror, from which came back exaggerated ideal reflections of humanity. The seven stars were supposed to be the seven daughters of Atlas, by Pleione, one of the Oceanides—placed in the heavens after death. Their names are Alcyone, Merope, Maia, Electra, Taygeta, Asterope, and Celæno. They were all united to the immortal gods, with the exception of Merope, who married Sisyphus, King of Corinth, and whose star, therefore, is dim and obscure among her sisters. The "lost Pleiad," the "sorrowing Merope," has long been a favourite shadowy creation of the poetic dream. But an interest deeper than any derived from mythical association or classical allusion, is connected with this group of stars by the use made of it in Scripture. I believe that in the apparently simple and passing allusion to it in Job, lies hid the germ of one of the greatest of physical truths—a germ lying dormant and concealed in the pages of Scripture for ages, but now brought into air and sunlight by the discoveries of science, and developing flowers and fruit of rare value and beauty. If our translators have correctly identified the group of stars to which they have given the familiar name of Pleiades—and we have every reason to confide in their fidelity—we have a striking proof here afforded to us of the perfect harmony that exists between the revelations of science and those of the Bible—the one illustrating and confirming the other. So far as Job was concerned, the question, "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?" might have referred solely to what was then the common belief—namely, that the genial weather of spring was somehow caused by the peculiar position of the Pleiades in the sky at that season; as if God had simply said, "Canst thou hinder or retard the spring?" It remained for modern science to make a grander and wider application of it, and to shew in this, as in other instances, that the Bible is so framed as to expand its horizon with the march of discovery—that the requisite stability of a moral rule is, in it, most admirably combined with the capability of movement and progress. If we examine the text in the original, we find that the Chaldaic word translated in our version Pleiades is *Chimah*, meaning literally a hinge, pivot, or axle, which turns round and moves other bodies along with it. Now, strange to say, the group of stars thus characterised has recently been ascertained by a series of independent calculations—in utter ignorance of the meaning of the text—to be actually the hinge or axle round which the solar system revolves. It was long known as one of the most elementary truths of astronomy, that the earth and the planets revolve around the sun; but the question recently began to be raised among astronomers, "Does the sun stand still, or does it move round some other object in space, carrying its train of planets and their satellites along with it in its orbit?" Attention being thus specially directed to this subject, it was soon found that the sun had an appreciable motion, which tended in the direction of a lily-shaped group of small stars, called the constellation of Hercules. Towards this constellation the stars seem to be opening out; while at the opposite point of the sky their mutual distances are apparently diminishing—as if they were drifting away, like the foaming wake of a ship, from the sun's course. When this great physical truth was established beyond doubt, the next subject of investigation was the point or centre round which the sun performed this marvellous revolution: and after a series of elaborate observations, and most ingenious calculations, this intricate problem was also satisfactorily solved—one of the greatest triumphs of human genius. M. Mädler, of Dorpat, found that Alcyone, the brightest star of the Pleiades, is the centre of gravity of our vast solar system—the luminous *hinge* in the heavens, round which our sun and his attendant planets are moving through space. The very complexity and isolation of the system of the Pleiades, exhibiting seven distinct orbs closely compressed to the naked eye, but nine or ten times that number when seen through a telescope—forming a grand cluster, whose individuals are united to each other more closely than to the general mass of stars—indicate the amazing attractive energy that must be concentrated in that spot. Vast as is the distance which separates our sun from this central group—a distance thirty-four millions of times greater than the distance between the sun and our earth—yet so tremendous is the force exerted by Alcyone, that it draws our system irresistibly around it at the rate of 422,000 miles a day, in an orbit which it will take many thousands of years to complete. With this new explanation, how remarkably striking and appropriate does the original word for Pleiades appear! What a lofty significance does the question of the Almighty receive from this interpretation! "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of

Pleiades ?" Canst thou arrest, or in any degree modify, that attractive influence which it exerts upon our sun and all its planetary worlds, whirling them round its pivot in an orbit of such inconceivable dimensions, and with a velocity so utterly bewildering ? Silence the most profound can be the only answer to such a question. Man can but stand afar off, and in awful astonishment and profound humility exclaim with the Psalmist, "O Lord my God, Thou art very great!" (*Hugh Macmillan, D.D.*) *Orion*:—This cluster of stars—the *Kesil* of the ancient Chaldeans—is by far the most magnificent constellation in the heavens. Its form must be familiar to everyone who has attentively considered the nocturnal sky. It resembles the rude outline of a gigantic human figure. By the Greek mythologists, Orion was supposed to be a celebrated hunter, superior to the rest of mankind in strength and stature, whose mighty deeds entitled him after death to the honours of an apotheosis. The Orientals imagined him to be a huge giant who, Titan-like, had warred against God, and was therefore bound in chains to the firmament of heaven; and some authors have conjectured that this notion is the origin of the history of Nimrod, who, according to Jewish tradition, instigated the descendants of Noah to build the Tower of Babel. The constellation of Orion is composed of four very bright stars, forming a quadrilateral, higher than it is broad, with three equidistant stars in a diagonal line in the middle. The two upper stars, called Betelgeux and Bellatrix, form the shoulders; in the middle, immediately above these, are three small, dim stars, close to each other, forming the cheek or head. These stars are distinctly visible only on a very clear night; and this circumstance may have given rise to the old fable that Œnopion, King of Chios,—whose daughter Orion demanded in marriage,—put out his eyes as he lay asleep on the sea-shore, and that he recovered his sight by gazing upon the rising sun from the summit of a neighbouring hill. The constellation is therefore represented by the poets, as groping with blinded eyes all round the heavens in search of the sun. The feet are composed of two very bright stars, called Rigel and Saiph; the three stars in the middle are called the belt or girdle, and from them depends a stripe of smaller stars, forming the hunter's sword. The whole constellation, containing seventeen stars to the naked eye, but exhibiting seventy-eight in an ordinary telescope, occupies a large and conspicuous position in the southern heavens, below the Pleiades; and is often visible, owing to the brightness and magnitude of its stars, when all other constellations, with the exception of the Plough, are lost in the mistiness of night. In this country it is seen only a short space above the horizon, along whose ragged outline of dark hills its starry feet may be observed for many nights in the winter, walking in solitary grandeur. It attains its greatest elevation in January and February, and disappears altogether during the summer and autumn months. In Mesopotamia it occupies a position nearer the zenith, and therefore is more brilliant and striking in appearance. Night after night it sheds down its rays with mystical splendour over the lonely solitudes through which the Euphrates flows, and where the tents of the patriarch of Uz once stood. Orion is not only the most striking and splendid constellation in the heavens, it is also one of the few clusters that are visible in all parts of the habitable world. The equator passes through the middle of it; the glittering stars of its belt being strung, like diamonds, on its invisible line. In the beginning of January, when it is about the meridian, we obtain the grandest display of stars which the sidereal heavens in this country can exhibit. The ubiquity of this constellation may have been one of the reasons why it was chosen to illustrate God's argument with Job, in a book intended to be read universally. When the Bible reader of every clime and country can go out in the appropriate season, and find in his own sky the very constellation and direct his gaze to the very peculiarity in it, to which the Creator alluded in His mysterious converse with Job, he has no longer a vague, indefinite idea in his mind, but is powerfully convinced of the reality of the whole circumstance, while his feelings of devotion are deepened and intensified. The three bright stars which constitute the girdle or bands of Orion never change their form; they preserve the same relative position to each other, and to the rest of the constellation, from year to year, and age to age. They afford to us one of the highest types of immutabilty in the midst of ceaseless changes. (*Ibid.*) *Interrogations humble pride*:—The probability is that Job had been tempted to arrogance by his vast attainments. He was a metallurgist, a zoologist, a poet, and shows by his writings he had knowledge of hunting, of music, of husbandry, of medicine, of mining, of astronomy, and perhaps was so far ahead of the scholars and scientists of his

time, that he may have been somewhat puffed up. Hence this interrogation of my text. And there is nothing that so soon takes down human pride as an interrogation point rightly thrust. Christ used it mightily. Paul mounted the parapet of his great arguments with such a battery. Men of the world understand it. Demosthenes began his speech on the crown, and Cicero his oration against Catiline, and Lord Chatham his most famous orations with a question. The empire of ignorance is so much vaster than the empire of knowledge that after the most learned and elaborate disquisition upon any subject of sociology or theology the plainest man may ask a question that will make the wisest speechless. After the profoundest assault upon Christianity the humblest disciple may make an inquiry that would silence a Voltaire. Called upon, as we all are at times, to defend our holy religion, instead of argument that can always be answered by argument, let us try the power of interrogation. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The "sweet influences" of life*:—My text called Job and calls us to consider "the sweet influences." We put too much emphasis upon the acidities of life, upon the irritations of life, upon the disappointments of life. Ammianus Marcellinus said that Chaldea was, in olden times, overrun with lions, but many of them lost their power because the great swamps produced many gnats, that would get into the eyes of the lions, and the lions, to free themselves of the gnats, would claw their own eyes out, and then starve. And in our time many a lion has been overcome by a gnat. The little, stinging annoyances of life keep us from appreciating the sweet influences. And how many of these last there are! Sweet influences of home, sweet influences of the wife of friendship, of our holy religion. Of all the sweet influences that have ever blessed the earth those that radiate from Christ are the sweetest. (*Ibid.*) *Influence cannot be restrained*:—You are in no danger of over-estimating your influence upon others. The real danger lies in the other direction. You influence others and mould their characters and destinies for time and for eternity far more extensively than you imagine. The whole truth in this matter might flatter you; it would certainly astonish you if you could once grasp it in its full proportions. It was a remark of Samuel J. Mills that "No young man should live in the nineteenth century without making his influence felt around the globe." At first thought that seems a heavy contract for any young man to take. As we come to apprehend more clearly the immutable laws of God's moral universe, we find that this belting of the globe by His influence is just what every responsible being does—too often, alas, unconsciously. You have seen the telephone, that wonderful instrument which so accurately transmits the sound of the human voice so many miles. How true it is that all these wonderful modern inventions are only faint reflections of some grand and eternal law of the moral universe of God! God's great telephone—I say it reverently—is everywhere, filling earth and air and sea, and sending round the world with unerring accuracy, and for a blessing or a curse, every thought of your heart, every word that falls thoughtfully or thoughtlessly from your lips, and every act you do. It is time you awoke to the conviction that, whether you would have it so or not, your influence is world-wide for good or for evil. Which? (*Peter Pounder.*) *Moral gravitation* is as powerful as material gravitation, and if, as my text teaches, and science confirms, the Pleiades, which are 422,000 miles from our earth, influence the earth, we ought to be impressed with how we may be influenced by others far away back, and how we may influence others far down the future. That rill away up amongst the Alleghanies, so thin that you think it will hardly find its way down the rocks, becomes the mighty Ohio rolling into the Mississippi and rolling into the sea. That word you utter, that deed you do, may augment itself as the years go by, until rivers cease to roll, and the ocean itself shall be dried up in the burning of the world. Paul, who was all the time saying important things, said nothing more startlingly suggestive than when he declared, "None of us liveth or dieth to himself." Words, thoughts, actions, have an eternity of flight. As Job could not bind the sweet influences of the Seven Stars, as they were called, so we cannot arrest or turn aside the good projected long ago. Those influences were started centuries before our cradle was rocked, and will reign centuries after our graves are dug. Oh, it is a tremendous thing to live. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

Ver. 32. **Canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?**—*The fourth "canst"*:—To perceive what we can do, on the one hand, and what we cannot do, on the other, is to hold the key of success. Canst thou? The oft-repeated question

is introspective. Inward to the thoughts, backward to the source. It is well to add that the word "canst" runs through the whole of this penultimate section of the Book of Job. The word is not absent from the earlier chapters; but as you approach the end, this and kindred queries, such as "Knowest thou?" "Hast thou?" &c., appear with ever-increasing frequency. To put it somewhat plainer, it is God revealing Job to himself—both in what he can and cannot be or do, and then leading him to find rest and refuge in another, grander fact: "I know that Thou canst do everything" (xlii. 2). Our Bible abounds in pronouns: the "thou" of this verse is a sample. Oh! star-crowded sky, full of messages, full of God! thou art speaking to me, and thy words go right down into my heart. From every corner of that celestial map God's heralds proclaim His Word. High up in the northern heavens the Seven Stars, brightest of which shineth Alcyone, speaking for north and eastern sky, and regarded as the centre of the solar system, saith to man: "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades?" Then, from the southern quarter, that large constellation, belted by three fixed stars, repeats God's own question: "Canst thou . . . loose the bands of Orion?" The third "canst" is from the Zodiac, such it is believed we find in the Mazzaroth of the former clause of the text. Thus do we lead up to, and the better understand, the connection of the last of these "canst." Arcturus is a constellation familiar to us alike under the name of the "Plough," or "Charles's Wain." Job makes reference to this along with the other groups in the ninth chapter. There he speaks of God as the Maker of these various luminaries, now that God is giving him further instruction on the very same matter. We may well ask the meaning of the words "Arcturus with his sons." Mythology gives the answer. Arcturus is named from Arcas. Arcas had three sons. The constellation known as the Great Bear, and styled the glory of the northern hemisphere, has a star in the tail part called Arcturus, its very name meaning Bear Tail. It rises in the autumn, and is the precursor of tempest. The sons of Arcturus are placed in the group as three stars, somewhat similarly to Orion's belt. Are you able to guide? That is what this fourth "canst" inquires. In doing so it reminds us of the regulative influences of life. I. THE REGULATIVE INFLUENCES OF LIFE AFFECTING A DEEP-SEATED HUMAN DESIRE. This last "canst" appeals to us even more forcibly than each or all of the other three. In some particulars it includes them, for to guide is more or less to bind and loose, check and restrain, while leading out and urging on. But even when we have no great desire to restrain influences that are operative, or to loose those that are imprisoned, and bring them into play—we have the wish to guide, arrange, and direct those already and at present in action. In its own domain such desire is quite legitimate. Its absence, indeed, would be a surprise and disappointment. Have you the guiding power? I am sure you want to say yes. I am sure you have the hope that, aided by Divine wisdom and supported by Divine grace, you can make your way through life, well and wisely. Lovers of change are ever "idly busy," seeking to rearrange the plans of others, and have their fingers in and over all that they can. Here they have no scope. Arcturus and his three sons have found place, and use, and movement in the seven lights of the Plough; guided by a Higher than thou, they can guide thee, but thou canst not guide nor interfere with them. Thou canst not guide Arcturus, but, high privilege! thou canst guide thyself, if, in the first instance, you submit to the over-guidance, overruling of God. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. x. 23). The Lord of Arcturus is the Lord of His people, the Guide of His servants as well as the guide of His stars. God helps us that we may help ourselves, and that we may help others. He awakens in us those powers and faculties, crushed and stifled by sin. How then, through Him, in what way shall we guide ourselves? Training ourselves, and our powers. It is "ruling our spirit," "bridling our tongue," "mortifying our desires" (evil), &c. All these culminate in the one thought of self-control. Canst thou then guide thyself, and, in guiding, so strengthen and enrich that better selfhood that it may become a lodestar of influence? Guide myself, but not by narrow aims that end in self. Canst thou guide Arcturus and his sons? No. The world is all the better that you can't. Canst thou help some poor family of earth's sons to gain a footing or earn a living? Yes. The world is all the worse if you don't. But if you do, if you help a brother up any rugged steep of trial or duty, or steer him onward through the cross currents of temptation, then not only do you benefit others, but you also fairly and fully gratify that altruistic longing, so inwrought as to

be a part of our human nature and heritage. II. THE REGULATIVE INFLUENCES OF LIFE VIEWED IN THEIR OPERATION. We have noticed the fact that the stars we cannot guide are nevertheless guided—always, swiftly and surely, silently and well. Each fills its place or goes on its way. It requires great skill and accurate system in order to manage our railways. What far greater skill and more perfect system are required to guide the constellations—to protect from and to avert all the terrible collision and combustion that would otherwise occur! The fact is one, call it Providence, or let it be known as the gigantic machinery of life, or if you will—the age-long balancings, or pause over this phrase—the Eternal Thought. The ever-living, vigorous thought. Thought that thinks into effort, plans, purposes, leads and arranges, makes and moulds the universe, counts and carries the stars, creates and continues the life of man, rules and regulates by guiding, governing, and directing to its final goal—all that is, and all that is to be. III. THE REGULATIVE INFLUENCES OF LIFE GLORIFYING GOD IN REDEEMING MAN. They are Christocentric—God incarnate. That is the first of a series of clearer explanations: their first translation into the mother tongue of human understanding and heart need. All that was anterior, and there was much, received its value from this nascent light; whether ornate ritual or inspired oracle, sacred bard or mystic seer. To economise, and at the same time best utilise our words, let us say that Blessed Life was the great antidote and corrective of all sin and selfishness, of all folly and meanness, all distortion and dishonour; while it furthered and fostered, guided, regulated, developed all that was worth being, because it had originally come from the Father. The Cross is in the sky, illumined and illumining. Illumined by the clear, silver starlight of the Eternal Providence, of that Providence its most comprehensive range, its farthest sweep, its largest provision. Of God's mind the highest and deepest conception; of God's thought the most sublime idea—this is the light on the Cross. There is also the light from the Cross. It is the guide of the wandering. Our present purpose forbids the further tracing out in the Resurrection and post-Resurrection work of the Redeemer the almighty and regulative influences, the more advanced stages, through which the earth rolls onward into this ever-increasing light. Putting it all together, this is the conclusion of the matter. It is a great work to guide Arcturus, to support as well as to suspend "Charles's Wain," to regulate and maintain the sidereal system, to bind, or loose, or bring forth one, or any, of the heavenly bodies; but God has performed a greater work. God's great work is this, to guide our feet into the way of peace (Luke i. 79). (*H. B. Aldridge.*)

Ver. 35. **Canst thou send lightnings?**—*Spiritual telegraphy:*—Lightning is not a thing of yesterday. Whether Job knew the philosophy of lightning, or the facts of science, as taught in modern times; or whether, when he spoke of "sending lightning," he only uttered an unconscious prophecy of what was to be actualised in the future, we of course cannot positively say. Nature's great laws and forces are the steeds of the Almighty. The degree of civilisation and progress attained by any people or nation is exactly indicated by the extent to which mere human power is supplemented or superseded by these great laws and forces, in the industries of the people. Since the days of Franklin, what marvellous progress has been made in the study of electricity, and how it has been utilised for the benefit of man. What marvels it has wrought in annihilating time and space! These constantly improving methods of human intercourse I shall use to illustrate the more perfect medium of communication between earth and heaven, a medium planned and perfected through the atonement of Christ. In Eden man had no need to send communications, or make requests known to a distant God. The terrible catastrophe of the Fall broke the bond of harmony between man and God; and by this fearful moral convulsion, man's spiritual gravity was shifted, and turned the other way, and to some dread, unknown, infernal centre, downward weighed. God was no longer a magnet to attract, but a Being to repel. Continents of moral space and gloom lay between them, with neither power nor desire on the part of man to return, and as yet no medium of recovery announced. A medium of communication was announced in "the seed of the woman." These, as the condition of approach to God, the blood of Calvary began to be typically poured forth, and flaming altars rolled their incense to the skies. On downwards, through the patriarchal dispensation, men held intercourse with God through the blood of the promised Saviour typically shed, in their sacrifices. The economy of

Moses was afterwards instituted, during which time men held intercourse with God through the medium of divinely appointed priests. In the fulness of time Jesus came "to open up a new and living way to the Father." Single-handed and alone, and in the face of the most terrible discouragements, He prosecuted and completed the work of laying this glorious line of intercommunication between earth and heaven. This new line was not in thorough working order until the day of Pentecost. Jesus Christ is the only medium through which fallen man can approach and hold fellowship with God. This glorious medium of intercourse is permanent and lasting, in every practical phase of its working. Now, after fully nineteen hundred years of trial, it abides as perfect and as serviceable as ever, equal to every emergency,—the joy of the present, and the hope of the future. It is one of the most perfect and wonderful spiritual devices in God's moral universe. There are no delays or disappointments, as there often are with the electric telegraph. The great operator is always at His post, is never too busy to hear, is never confused, and is always ready to reply to every message. (*T. Kelly.*) *Man's utilisation of electricity*:—Yes, we can. It is done thousands of times every day. Franklin, at Boston, lassoed the lightnings, and Morse put on them a wire bit, turning them around from city to city, and Cyrus W. Field plunged them into the sea; and whenever the telegraphic instrument clicks at Valentia, or Heart's Content, or London, or New York, the lightnings of heaven are exclaiming in the words of my text, "Here we are!" we await your bidding; we listen to your command. What painstaking since the day when Thales, 600 years before Christ, discovered frictional electricity by the rubbing of amber; and Wimbler, in the last century, sent electric currents along metallic wires, until in our day, Faraday, and Bain, and Henry, and Morse, and Prescott, and Orton—some in one way and some in another way, have helped the lightnings of heaven to come bounding along, crying, "Here we are!" (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

CHAPTER XXXIX.

VERS. 1–4. **Knowest thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth?**—*The study of zoology a religious duty*:—God is here represented as calling the attention of Job to various orders of animal life. Reasons for such study. I. BECAUSE IT GIVES TO MAN A HIGH REVELATION OF GOD. Next to mental and moral philosophy, there is no subject in nature that gives us so high a view of God. There is more of Him seen in the humblest sentient creature than in the orbs of heaven, the billows of ocean, the flowers of the field, or the trees of the forest. In these creatures we discover sensation, self-motion, choice; and these are not merely Divine productions, but rather Divine emanations. Whilst I would not underrate the study of physics, chemistry, botany, astronomy, I hold that zoology is a grander, more quickening, and a more religious study than either. It brings the soul into contact with much that is akin to itself, the "seeing eye, the hearing ear," the quivering sensation, and the guiding instinct. II. Because it TENDS TO PROMOTE OUR SPIRITUAL CULTURE. 1. It tends to encourage our faith in the goodness of God. The creatures specified in this chapter are all objects of His kindly regard. Surely the God who takes care of these creatures will not neglect His human children. 2. It tends to destroy our egotism. What are we in the presence of some of these creatures? What is our strength to that of the unicorn or the buffalo, our courage to that of the war-horse, our vision to that of the eagle or the hawk, our speed to that of the ostrich and the wild ass? Where is boasting then? 3. It tends to promote a kindly feeling towards all sentient life. III. They SUPPLY ILLUSTRATIONS OF HUMAN LIFE. Let us look for this purpose at the three creatures mentioned here—the "wild ass," the "ostrich," and the "war-horse." The "wild ass" may be taken to illustrate—1. The genius of freedom. 2. The "ostrich" may be taken to illustrate an intensely selfish character; and she does so in three respects—heartlessness, cowardice, and pride. How heartless she is! She "leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in dust, and forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them." "She is hardened against her young ones," or treateth her young ones harshly. No creature in creation seems so indifferent to its young. To an intensely

selfish man, self is everything; neighbours, and even children, are sacrificed to self-gratification. In her cowardice she illustrates a selfish character. Naturalists tell us that when danger appears, she puts her head into the sand, so as not to hear or see the approaching perils. She will not look danger in the face and grapple with it. A selfish man is always cowardly, and that in proportion to his selfishness. In fact, there can be no bravery and intrepidity where there is not a generous love; it is love alone that makes the hero. How proud is the ostrich! "She lifteth up herself on high, she scorneth the horse and his rider." This creature seems to be remarkably proud of its wings, although it cannot fly, and of its power of speed. When the fleetest horse with its rider approaches, she flaps her wings as if in proud scorn, conscious that she can leave the swiftest horseman behind. So in truth she can; it is said, with the help of her wings, she can run at the rate of sixty miles an hour. In this she seems to glory. The more selfish a man is, the more he prides himself in a something that he has which others do not possess. The "war-horse" here presented in such majestic poetry as bounding and quivering with the spirit of the campaign, may be taken to illustrate—3. Those noble workers in the cause of human progress who are found fixed and filled with the spirit of their mission. Difficulties to them are nothing. They laugh at impossibilities; for dangers they care not; opposition they defy. Such were Paul, Luther, Garibaldi. No man can fulfil his mission whose whole nature does not glow with his spirit. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 10. **Will he harrow the valleys after thee?**—*Will he harrow the valleys after thee?*—What more humiliating proof have we of the depravity of the human heart, than the arrogant assumption of deciding on God's plans, and censuring His providential government, when we are so entirely ignorant of the most simple and ordinary occurrences in Nature? This was the error into which Job had fallen. Harrowing so tears and disturbs the ground, that it has, from the earliest ages, been considered as a fit emblem of very heavy and complicated trial. Here it suggests the necessity and benefits of frequent adversity. 1. The human heart, naturally haughty, requires much to reduce it, and break it into subjection to Christ; events adverse to our wishes, and which cross our inclinations, graciously effect this useful purpose. As the ground is torn and reduced by the harrow, so adversities administered by the Almighty lower the haughty temper and subdue the unhallowed dispositions of His people. 2. By this method of tillage the surface of the earth is smoothed and rendered level. Our minds are brought into an orderly and submissive state by trials of extraordinary severity and pressure. So ruffled and rugged are our tempers that, for our own sakes, this chaos must be brought to order, this confusion into regularity. The unequality of a ploughed field is too feeble a representation of this state of mind. 3. Adverse providences occasion the good seed of the Word to be covered and hidden in our hearts, as the grain literally is covered from injury, and concealed from the birds, by the process of harrowing. An analogy may be traced between the field sown and yet unharrowed, and the mind stored with moral and even religious instruction, but undisciplined by trial. 4. The resemblance between the usefulness of harrowing, to collect the dead weeds, and cleanse the land of old roots, and the good effects of holy trouble, to detach those many moral weeds and those pernicious roots of evil which yet remain in our hearts. (*W. Clayton.*)

Vers. 19–30. **Hast thou given the horse strength?**—*The higher teaching of Nature:*—The intent of all these beautiful references to the works of Nature is to teach us, from the wisdom, skill, and curious designs discoverable in the formation and the instincts of various birds and beasts, to impress ourselves with a worthy notion of the "riches of the wisdom" of Him that made and sustaineth all things. These impressions we are to carry with us when we consider the dealings of God in the way of Providence, and in His ordering of all events, as the great Governor of the universe. Can we suppose that there is anything wrong here, or without the design of the most consummate wisdom, when He has put forth so much of His skill and contrivance in the formation and ordering of these inferior animals? May He not be trusted to do all things well, concerning the destiny of man, the greatest of His works? In this higher economy, are we to suppose there is less wisdom and design to be manifested, than in this, which displays itself so visibly in these inferior works of His hand? Thus would our blessed Lord increase the confidence of His disciples in His providential care of

them, by observing, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and not one of them falleth to the ground without your Father?" "Fear not," "are ye not much better than they?—of more value than many sparrows." It was the want of such due impressions concerning the designing wisdom of God, ever present, and ever operating in all things, that had led Job to think and speak unworthily of that dispensation of Providence under which he now lived, as being altogether arbitrary, discovering no design and discriminating wisdom, nor manifesting the righteous Governor of all things. His despairing mind seemed to think that the Lord had forsaken the earth; and such confusion and misrule permitted that the wisdom and justice and goodness of God could only be manifested in what was hereafter to take place in a future state. Therefore had Job despaired of life, and longed for death. And we remember what it was that led Job into this unhappy state of mind. On account of his moral and religious attainments, he had been so lifted up with pride, that when it pleased God, in His secret wisdom, to suffer him to be afflicted, he dared to say he did not deserve it: and in order to reconcile the possibility of that, with the notions that he held in common with his friends, respecting the Providence of God,—as certainly willing and accomplishing all things which come to pass,—he was led to express those unworthy notions of the present dispensation of things which we have seen exposed, first by His messenger Elihu, and now by Jehovah Himself. (*John Fry, B.A.*) *The horse*:—As the Bible makes a favourite of the horse, the patriarch, and the prophet, and the evangelist, and the apostle, stroking his sleek hide, and patting his rounded neck, and tenderly lifting his exquisitely-formed hoof, and listening with a thrill to the champ of his bit, so all great natures in all ages have spoken of him in encomiastic terms. Virgil in his *Georgics* almost seems to plagiarise from this description in the text, so much are the descriptions alike—the description of Virgil and the description of Job. The Duke of Wellington would not allow anyone irreverently to touch his old war-horse Copenhagen, on whom he had ridden fifteen hours without dismounting at Waterloo; and when old Copenhagen died, his master ordered a military salute to be fired over his grave. John Howard showed that he did not exhaust his sympathies in pitying the human race, for when ill he writes home, "Has my old chaise horse become sick or spoiled?" There is hardly any passage of French literature more pathetic than the lamentation over the death of the war charger Marchegay. Walter Scott had so much admiration for this Divinely honoured creature of God, that, in *St. Ronan's Well*, he orders the girth to be slackened and the blanket thrown over the smoking flanks. Edmund Burke, walking in the park at Beaconsfield, musing over the past, throws his arms around the worn-out horse of his dead son Richard, and weeps upon the horse's neck, the horse seeming to sympathise in the memories. Rowland Hill, the great English preacher, was caricatured because in his family prayer he supplicated for the recovery of a sick horse; but when the horse got well, contrary to all the prophecies of the farriers, the prayer did not seem quite so much of an absurdity. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Horses in battle*:—In time of war the cavalry service does the most execution; and as the battles of the world are probably not all past, Christian patriotism demands that we be interested in equinal velocity. We might as well have poorer guns in our arsenals and clumsier ships in our navy than other nations, as to have under our cavalry saddles and before our parks of artillery slower horses. From the battle of Granicus, where the Persian horses drove the Macedonian infantry into the river, clear down to the horses on which Philip Sheridan and Stonewall Jackson rode into the fray, this arm of the military service has been recognised. Hamilcar, Hannibal, Gustavus Adolphus, Marshal Ney were cavalrymen. In this arm of the service Charles Martel at the battle of Poictiers beat back the Arab invasion. The Carthaginian cavalry, with the loss of only seven hundred men, overthrew the Roman army with the loss of seven thousand. In the same way the Spanish chivalry drove back the Moorish hordes. Our Christian patriotism and our instruction from the Word of God demand that first of all we kindly treat the horse, and then, after that, that we develop his fleetness, and his grandeur, and his majesty, and his strength. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 27. **Doth the eagle mount up at thy command**?—*The captive set free*:—Many years had a noble eagle been confined in such a manner that no one had seen it even attempt to raise a wing. It had been cherished and fed that it might be exhibited to visitors and friends. Perfectly subdued, unconscious now of its

native power, it remained inactive, and apparently contented, oblivious of the heights it once could soar. But its owner was about to leave for a far country, never to return. He could not take the eagle with him. "I will do," said he, "one act of kindness before I go, which shall be remembered long after me." He unloosed the chain from the captive. His neighbours and children looked on with regret that they should see the eagle no more. A moment, and it would be gone for ever! But no. The bird walked the usual round, which had been the length of his chain, looked tamely about, unconscious that he was free, and at length perched himself at his usual height. The gazers looked on in wonder and in pity. Brief, however, was their pity. The slow rustling of a wing was heard. It was projected from the body, then folded. Anon it moved again. At last, stretched to its full expansion, it quivered a moment in the air, then folded softly against its resting-place. Now slowly and cautiously the eagle expanded the other, and stood at last upon his perch with both wings spread, looking earnestly in the blue sky above. One effort to mount, then another. The wings have found their lost skill and strength. Upward, slowly, still upward—higher and speedier he mounts his way. The eye follows him in vain. Lost to sight, far above the mountain-top he is bathing his cramped wings in misty clouds, and revels in his liberty. Hast thou, O child of God, been pinioned long to the cares and toils of earth, so that thy wings of faith and love have lost all power to rise? Long bound to earth, its hopes and visions, thou canst not shake thy wings at once. The heart tries to mount in prayer, but it tries in vain. Scenes of earth are floating still before the vision, and sounds of earth ring in the ears. But cease not thy efforts. Expand thy soul once more, if only for a little. Raise the wing of thought first—still more, raise it higher yet. (*Preacher's Lantern.*)

The eagle:—The eagle is built for a solitary life. There is no bird so alone; other birds go in flocks—the eagle never, two at most together, and they are mates. Its majesty consists partly in its solitariness. It lives apart because other birds cannot live where and as it lives, and follow where it leads. The true child of God must consent to a lonely life apart with God, and often the condition of holiness is separation. (*A. T. Pierson.*)

CHAPTER XL.

VERS. 1-24. **Moreover, the Lord answered Job, and said.** — *Jehovah's answer*:—Its language has reached, at times, the "high-water mark" of poetry and beauty. Nothing can exceed its dignity, its force, its majesty, the freshness and vigour of some of its pictures of nature and of life. But what shall we say next? It is no answer, we may say, to Job's agonised pleadings. It is no answer to the riddle and problem which the experience and history of human life suggests, even to ourselves. Quite true. There is no direct answer at all. Even those partial answers, partial yet instructive, which have been touched on from time to time by speaker after speaker, are not glanced at or included in these final words. It is as though the voice of God did not deign to repeat that He works "on the side of righteousness." He only hints at it. Job is not even told the purpose of the fiery trial through which he himself has passed, of those in other worlds than his own who have watched his pangs. No! God reveals to him His glory, makes him feel where he had gone wrong, how presumptuous he had been. That is all. He does not say, "All this has been a trial of thy righteousness: thou hast been fighting a battle against Satan for Me, and hast received many sore wounds." Nothing is said of the truth, already mooted and enforced in this Book, that suffering does its perfect work when it purifies and elevates the human soul, and draws it nearer to the God who sends or permits the suffering. Nor is any light thrown on that faint and feeble glimmer of a hope not yet fully born into the world, of a life beyond the grave; of a life where there shall be no more sorrow or sighing, where Job and his lost sons and daughters shall be re-united. The thoughts that we should have looked for, perhaps longed for, are not here. Those who tell us that the one great lesson of the whole book is to hold up the patriarch Job as the pattern of mere submission, mere resignation—those who search in it for a full Thodice, a final vindication, that is, and

explanation of God's mode of governing the world—those, lastly, who find in it a revelation of the sure and certain hope of a blessed immortality, can scarcely have studied either Job's language or the chapters before us to-day. One thought, and one only, is brought into the foreground. The world is full of mysteries, strange, unapproachable mysteries, that you cannot read. Trust, trust in the power, and in the wisdom, and in the goodness of Him, the Almighty One, who rules it. "Turn from the insoluble problems of your own destiny," the voice says to Job, and says to us. "Good men have said their best, wise men have said their wisest. Man is still left to bear the discipline of some questions too hard for him to answer. We cannot solve them. We must rest, if we are to rest at all, in the belief that He whom we believe to be our Father in heaven, whom we believe to have been revealed in His Son, is good, and wise, and merciful; that one day, not here, the riddle will be solved; that behind the veil which you cannot pierce, lies the solution in the hand of God." (*Dean Bradley.*) *The Lord's answer:*—I. A DIVINE REPROOF THAT WAS EFFECTUAL. 1. Observe the reproof. "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct Him?" (1) What is thy intellect to His? The glimmering of a glow-worm to the brilliancy of a million suns. (2) What is thy sphere of observation to Mine? Thou art a mere speck in space. I have immensity under My eye. (3) What is thy experience to Mine? Thou art the mere creature of a day, observing and thinking for a few hours. I am from everlasting to everlasting. 2. Observe the effect. What was the effect of this appeal? Here it is. "Then Job answered the Lord, and said, Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer Thee?" &c. (1) A sense of moral unworthiness. "I am vile." (2) A resolution to retract. "I will proceed no further." He regrets the past, and resolves to improve in the future. This is what every sinner should do, what every sinner must do, in order to rise into purity, freedom, and blessedness. II. A DIVINE COMPARISON THAT WAS SILENCING. 1. It is a comparison between himself and the Great Creator. "Gird up thy loins now like a man: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto Me." What is thy power to Mine? "Hast thou an arm like God?" What is thy voice to Mine? Canst thou speak in a voice of thunder? What is thy greatness to Mine? "Deck thyself with majesty," &c. What is thy wrath to Mine? "Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath." What art thou in My presence? The only effective way of hushing the murmurings of men in relation to the Divine procedure, is an impression of the infinite disparity between man and his Maker. 2. It is a comparison between himself and the brute creation. "Behold now behemoth." Study this huge creature, and thou wilt find in many respects thou art inferior to him. Therefore be humble, and cease to contend with Me. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 2. **Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct Him?**—*The equality of God's dealings:*—While Job is held up as the model of patience and resignation under God's chastening hand, we are continually reminded of a certain irritability and restlessness which surprises and distresses us. But a similar difficulty is elsewhere found. David is the model of purity, while there is no saint whose memory is so stained with impurity. Moses is emphatically the type of meekness, while the salient point of his life which attracts our notice is extreme irritability. Manly straightforwardness is the leading feature in the character of Abraham, while a shuffling trick is the one fault by which his memory is marked. Examine this apparent inconsistency in Job. He is brought before our attention as a man deeply impressed with the sense of common fairness, and a dread at seeing success awarded to the wicked, and adversity to the good. His own case fell under the latter clause, and with no selfish or interested view he makes his own position the opportunity of impugning God's providence. The leading inconsistency which we have to reconcile is the fact that God should have suspended the law of His moral kingdom in Job's case, and awarded suffering to the righteous. But if we look a little deeper, we shall see at once that the fairness and justice of God were vindicated and asserted, not infringed, in Job's case. A challenge had been made by Satan which impugned the justice of God's estimate of His servant in heaping upon him so many and such abundant blessings. No test could have been more severe than that to which Job was put, and in the end the entire and humble submission of the patriarch to the will of his Maker declared beyond controversy the justice of God's estimate of His servant, and manifested before Satan and the world the power of saving grace. The object

of God is not simply the reward of the good by prosperity, and the punishment of the wicked, but it is also the vindication of His grace and power by the subjection of man to His will, and the manifestation of the sanctity of His elect. There is a seeming inconsistency between Job's actual life and the character given him. But it must be remembered that the character of the man is generally not the upper surface which catches the eye. It is not the irritated waves and billows of the sea, but that vast belt of waters which girdles the earth below the ever-moving and heaving bosom of the deep, which constitutes the nature of the ocean. That undercurrent of a man's will and ways is the result of many a contradiction to his natural disposition, and he does not deserve the title of a peculiar character until he has vindicated his right to it by overcoming the influences which are contradictory to it. The natural tendency of Job was that of patient trust in God; it needed the contradiction of circumstances most adverse to that disposition to test and confirm its tendency. Lessons—1. We little know the reason and cause of God's dealing with us; we see the handwriting on the wall, but we see not the hand. We know nothing of remote and hidden causes; we only shall know them and understand them, when, at the end of the world, the handwriting is interpreted. We are inclined to blame God's fairness. But He is fair, He is just. But it is in the whole and complete fulfilment of His scheme that fairness is to be manifested—in the integrity of the drama, not in the isolated scenes. 2. Note the apparent inconsistency of Job's own character. He began with implicit, unquestioning resignation; his after-conduct betrays impatience, and an inclination to argue against those who were apparently pleading the cause of God. The key is found in the last chapter. At the end, his resignation was the result of deep experience, of profound humiliation, and of personal intercourse with God. It is so with us all. A man's character involves the whole octave—the highest note of it is played in youth, the deepest at the end of the journey of life; the whole is played together in the perfect harmony of heaven. 3. Where lay the fault of Job's friends? They argued on false premises, and in an improper manner. Censoriousness and love of prejudging human actions are faults which interfere with God's prerogative, and violate the spirit of true charity. 4. Learn the power of intercession. 5. Very beautiful is the end of Job. Job is a type of the resurrection. (*E. Monro.*)

Mystery in science and revelation:—We may paraphrase the text as follows: Shall man, rebelling against the authority of God, assume to be wiser than the All-wise? Shall he pronounce the ways of God unequal in order to vindicate his own integrity? Is it wisdom in men, surrounded by mysteries and conscious of ill-desert, to fly in the face of heaven and lay their complaints against the God with whom they contend? In that ancient poem, the Book of Job, are embedded some of the profoundest discussions of the problems of life. Most of us are brought, at times, face to face with the question which troubled the man of Uz, "Why is this world one of sin and death?" Why is it that a loving and all-perfect God has permitted such wide-wasting woe? for the suffering is not limited to humankind, but reaches from the worm that crawls beneath our feet through all gradations of animal life, through human and angelic existences up to the right hand of the everlasting throne, where sitteth the crowned Sufferer who wept over Jerusalem, and is the exalted Lamb of Sacrifice, slain from eternity. The question, as I have said, is not new, but old as history. It has been turned over in unnumbered shapes. It has been answered by numberless sages, but reappears in the speculations of every thoughtful mind. It is the shadow that follows us toward the sun, and will disappear only when we walk into the sun, and know even as we are known. And I believe that sometimes nothing will quiet the mind, troubled by the perplexing riddles of evil and pain, so effectually as to consider why it is best for us not to know certain things, or to see how our ignorance in the department of moral evil is equalled by our ignorance in other spheres of truth. This is the lesson which the Lord taught Job. We are surrounded in this world by mysteries which baffle us, or, if we explain one, another lies back of it which defies explanation. These mysteries abound in the realm of science. Says Henry Drummond, "A science without mystery is unknown; a religion without mystery is absurd." Modern investigation has answered many of the questions which the Lord put to Job; vast additions to human knowledge have been the spoils of hardy efforts; but the unknown is a vaster field now than even then. The circle of knowledge is surrounded by an ever-widening zone of mystery. Geology may have helped us to understand how the corner-

stone of the earth was laid, but the question now is, "What is that corner-stone? Whence came it?" Every step backward leads us to mystery, where science closes her lips, and faith speaks out the name of God. Man thinks of the immensities of nature, and he is nothing. He thinks of the minuteness of atoms and molecules, and he seems almost everything. We trespass continually on the domain of the supernatural, the spiritual, the invisible, the Divine; and the Cross of Jesus may well be seen wherever His hand has wrought in the mysteries of creation. God does not think it best to give us completed knowledge, any more than He gives us complete bodily strength, or complete soul development. He demands work of us. Salvation is wrought out with fear and trembling, and we ought to thank God that we are not treated as some rich men treat their sons. God does not want spoiled and pampered children. (*John H. Barrows, D.D.*)

Vers. 3, 4. **Behold, I am vile.**—*A humbling confession*:—Self-examination is of unspeakable importance. The most useful knowledge of ourselves is not that which is physical, but that which is moral; not a knowledge of our worldly affairs, but of our spiritual condition. I. THE SELF-ACCUSATION. "Behold, I am vile." 1. The quality acknowledged. "Vileness." "Behold, I am vile." "Vile," says Johnson in his Dictionary, is "base, mean, worthless, despicable, impure." There is nothing in the world to which this will so much apply as sin; and to sin Job referred when he said, "Behold, I am vile." He does not call himself vile because he was a man reduced, poor, and needy; no man of sense ever would do so. Character intrinsically does not depend upon adventitious circumstances. If poverty were vileness, as by their discourse some people seem to think, how vile must the apostles have been, who said, "Even to this very hour, we hunger, and thirst, are naked, are destitute, and have no certain dwelling-place!" How vile must that be which leads God to hate the work of His own hands; which leads a God of love to threaten to punish with everlasting destruction from His presence and His power, and which would not allow of His pardoning without the sacrifice of His own Son! 2. Who made this confession? Surely it was some very gross transgressor? No. It was some newly-awakened returning penitent? No. It was Job; a saint of no ordinary magnitude. What, then, do we learn from hence, but that the most eminent saints are the most remote from vain thoughts of themselves? We know that the nearer a man approaches to perfection in anything, the more sensible he becomes of his remaining deficiency, and the more hungry and thirsty he is after improvement. Take knowledge; advancement in knowledge is like sailing down a river; it widens as you proceed, till you are out at sea. A little knowledge puffs a man up, but Sir Isaac Newton was the most modest of men. Not that there is no difference between a saint and a sinner. Job does not mean to intimate that he loves sin, or that he lives in it. His friends accused him of this, which he denied, saying, in his address to God, "Thou knowest that I am not wicked." "Behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high." But he knew that sin, though it did not reign in him, yet lived in him, yet opposed him, yet vexed him, yet defiled him; so that he could not do the thing that he would. 3. When was the acknowledgment here uttered, "Behold, I am vile"? It was immediately after God's interview with him, God's intercourse with him, God's addressing him. "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man, for I will demand of thee, and answer thou Me." It was after God had further displayed Himself in the perfection of several of His works; it was then that "Job answered the Lord, and said, Behold, I am vile." And what does this teach us but this—that the more we have to do with God, the more we shall see and feel our unworthiness. Those who have never been abroad to see great things are pleased with littleness, but travelling expands and enlarges the mind, furnishes it with superior objects and images; so that the man is no longer struck, upon his return, with the little rivulet and the little hill, which seemed to astonish him before he went from home, and during his infancy. And when a man has gone far enough, so to speak, to be introduced to God Himself, he will be sure to think afterward very little of himself. Yes, if anything can make us feel our littleness, it must be a view of His wisdom; if anything can make us sensible of our weakness, it must be the view of His almighty sovereignty; if anything can make us feel our depravity, it must be the view of His spotless purity,—the spotless purity of Him "who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and in whose sight the very heavens are not clean." II. TO OBSERVE HOW THIS CONVICTION

IS PRODUCED. You will observe here, that our inquiry is not after the fact itself. The fact itself is independent of our conviction, or of our belief. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"; and the heavens will reveal our iniquity, and the earth will rise up against us. Yes, it is a truth, whether we acknowledge it or not, that we are vile; vile by nature, and vile by practice. Let us, therefore, remark the Author and medium alone of this discovery. As to the Author, we make no scruple to say, that it is the Spirit of the blessed God; according to our Saviour's own declaration, "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not on Me." All that is really good in the souls of the children of men is from Him. From Him comes the first pulse of life. Now as to the medium, or instrumentalities, we would observe that these are, principally, the law and the Gospel. The law is one of the principal instrumentalities; for "by the law is the knowledge of sin." "Sin is the transgression of the law." The law is always to be used so; and for this purpose the Gospel also is equally instrumental with it. The Gospel teaches us the nature of our disease, by showing us the nature of our remedy. Now this being the Author, and this being the medium of the discovery, observe the mode in which it is accomplished. This is gradual. The thing does not take place all at once; it is effected by degrees. Usually, indeed, it begins with a charging home of one single sin upon the conscience of the man; the sin to which he has been peculiarly addicted, and by which his conscience, therefore, is now alarmed. It is increased by the various events, and by the various dispensations of providence. Little do we know of ourselves, indeed, until we are enlightened, until we meet with our own proper trial. The Christian often supposes that he is worse, because he is wiser than he was. Because he sees more of his inward corruptions, he thinks there are more. He resembles a man in a disagreeable, loathsome dungeon; before the light enters he sees nothing offensive; he knows not what there is there; but as the light enters he sees more and more. "I have heard some people," says Mr. Newton, "pray that God would show them all the wickedness of their hearts. I have said to myself, It is well that God will not hear their prayer; for if He did, it would drive them to madness or despair; unless at the same time they had a proportionate view of the work, and the ability, and the love of their Lord and Saviour." III. LET US OBSERVE THE EFFECTS OF THIS CONVICTION. 1. One of these effects is evermore wonderment. As if a person had been born and bred up in a subterranean place, and had been raised up and placed upon the earth; the first emotion he would feel would be wonder. Peter tells us that God calls us "out of darkness into His marvellous light." Not only "light," but "marvellous light"; seeing as well as wondering. Nothing is more wonderful to the man than what he now sees of himself. That he should have acted in such an ungrateful, such a foolish, such a base manner as he has been doing! 2. Humiliation will be another result of this discovery. Ignorance is a pedestal upon which pride always stands. Self-complacency then will be at an end, and the man will abhor himself, repenting in dust and ashes. Self-justification will also be at an end, and the man will condemn himself. 3. The endearment of the Saviour is another result of this discovery. Why is it there are so many to whom He has no form nor comeliness, nor any beauty that they should desire Him?—that they can read of Him, that they can hear of Him, that they can talk of Him without feeling any attachment to Him? Why is it, but that, to change the image, as Solomon says, "the full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet"? Or, to use our Lord's own words, "They that are whole need not a physician." 4. Submission under afflictive dispensations of providence will be another effect of this discovery. I remember Bunyan says, "Nothing surprised me more when I was first awakened and enlightened, than to see how men were affected by their outward troubles. Not that I was without my troubles, God knows I had enough of them; but what was everything else beside compared to the loss of my poor soul!" So will it be with us if we have the same views and the same feelings. So it is, that an old divine says, "When a sense of sin lies heavy upon the soul, the sense of trouble will be light." 5. Then gratitude will be another result of this discovery of our vileness. The proud are never grateful. Do what you will—heap whatever favours you please upon them—what reward have you? what thanks have you? They only think you are doing your duty; they think they are deserving of all this. But when a man feels that he is unworthy of the least of all his mercies, how will he feel with regard to the greatest of them? 6. Charity and tenderness

towards the faults of others will be a result from this conviction. There is a knowledge of human nature that is far from being sanctified; so far from it that it is even an injury to him that possesses it. Read Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*; read Rochefoucauld's *Maxims*; read some of Lord Byron's works: do you not perceive how they discover, how fully they discover, in a sense, the vileness of human nature? Yes, and they love to dwell upon it; they love to expose the nakedness of our common nature. They always speak of these things with complacency; never with regret; never with anything like reproach of themselves and others. But it is otherwise with the man who has been taught his depravity at the foot of the Cross; who has there been made to say, with Job, "Behold, I am vile." Such a man will not look for perfection in others, because he is conscious he is destitute of it himself. IV. THE RELIEF OF THIS COMPLAINT. For I am persuaded there are persons who are saying, "Well, whatever others may think of themselves, Job's language is mine. I daily feel it. Whether I am alone or in company—whether I am in the sanctuary or at the table of the Lord—nothing fits my lips but this acknowledgment, "Behold, I am vile." Is there any consolation for such? There is much every way. 1. Because God has commanded us, as ministers, to comfort you. We are to tell those whom He has thus made sad that God has commanded them to make merry. Because "the joy of the Lord is their strength." They never feel gratitude so well as when they are walking in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. You do not remember that the Jews in their passage, when they crossed the Red Sea, came to Marah, where the waters were bitter, as well as to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water, and threescore and ten palm trees. You do not remember in the immortal *Pilgrim's Progress* that there were in the way of the shining light the valley of humiliation and the valley of the shadow of death, as well as the delectable mountains. 2. Remember that this experience is a mercy, and a great mercy; that this experience is essential to all real religion; that it is previous to all true consolation; that it is a proof of the Divine agency in you. "I will take away the heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh." 3. Remember that all in you is not evil now. Beware, therefore, that you never depreciate not only what God has done for you, but what He has done in you. The work of His Holy Spirit is called a good work; and it is a good work. 4. As all is not vile in you now, so nothing will be vile in you long. No. "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand"; and your warfare will soon be accomplished. (*W. Jay.*) *Consciousness of sin the result of the manifestation of God*:—Jehovah's mode of dealing with Job is very remarkable. He did not enter at all upon the point about which the disputants could not agree. He said nothing whatever about the dispensations of His providence. Nor did He declare whom He chastened, and whom He left unchastened in the world. Of what, then, did He speak? Of the great mysteries of creation and nature, as displaying His glorious majesty, His creative power, His perfect wisdom. The result was striking. Job was strongly convinced of his own ignorance and sinfulness. I. JOB'S DEEP CONSCIOUSNESS OF SIN. No words could express it more strongly than these, "Behold, I am vile!" It is just the most eminent saints—just those who are most advanced in the knowledge of God, who make use of such words. (See case of Isaiah; and Psa. li. 3.) "Behold, I am vile!" is no exaggerated statement; it is a state and a feeling to which we ought all to be brought—a confession which we ought all to make. If we try to analyse the state of mind expressed by these words, it is quite evident that it is one in which the sinfulness of sin is most deeply felt—in which sin is regarded with great abhorrence, and the sinner views himself with deep self-abasement. There is a Scripture term that suits the idea—"self-loathing" (Ezek. xxxvi. 31). If we endeavour to go a little deeper into this state of mind, we shall find that there are two feelings, carefully to be distinguished from each other, which elicit this solemn confession. The one is "remorse," the other is "the consciousness of ingratitude towards God." There is a great difference between remorse and true repentance. Remorse may, and often does, lead to repentance, but very often it stops short of it. Remorse is repentance without grace—the working of the natural heart; whereas repentance is a change of mind, showing itself in real sorrow for sin. The chief difference between the two lies in the motives. Have you then felt the ingratitude of your heart? Have you realised that every act of sin in which you indulge is an act of ingratitude towards God? II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS DEEP CONSCIOUSNESS OF SIN. One only is mentioned here—silence before God. The natural heart is very prone to

arraign God's ways. Never, in the language of the world, do you find such words as these, "I will lay my hand upon my mouth." But the true Christian places authority on her right throne—in God, and not in man,—and aims continually at the grace of silent submission. If you wish to be submissive, pray that you may feel your utter sinfulness. You wish, it may be, to feel your utter sinfulness, pray that God may be manifested to you by the Spirit in Jesus Christ through His Word. (*George Wagner.*) *Indwelling sin*:—I. THE FACT THAT EVEN THE RIGHTEOUS HAVE IN THEM EVIL NATURES. Job said, "Behold, I am vile." He did not always know it. All through the long controversy he had declared himself to be just and upright. But when God came to plead with him, he at once put his finger on his lips, would not answer God, but simply said, "Behold, I am vile." How many daily proofs you have that corruption is still within you! Mark how easily you are surprised into sin. Observe how you find in your heart an awful tendency to evil, that it is as much as you can do to keep it in check, and say, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further." Then how wrong it is, if any of us, from the fact of our possessing evil hearts, think to excuse our sins. Some Christians speak very lightly of sin. There was corruption still remaining, and therefore they said they could not help it. The truly loving child of God, though he knows sin is there, hates that sin. II. WHAT ARE THE DOINGS OF THIS INDWELLING SIN? 1. It exerts a checking power upon every good thing. 2. Indwelling sin not only prevents us from going forward, at times it assails us, and seeks to obstruct us. It is not merely that I fight indwelling sin; it is that indwelling sin makes an assault upon me. 3. The evil heart which still remaineth in the Christian, doth always, when it is not attacking or obstructing, still reign and dwell within him. My heart is just as bad when no evil emanates from it, as when it is all over vileness in its external developments. III. THE DANGER WE ARE UNDER FROM SUCH EVIL HEARTS. It arises from the fact that the sin is within us. Remember how many backers thy evil nature hath. Remember also that this evil nature of thine is very strong and very powerful. IV. THE DISCOVERY OF OUR CORRUPTION. To Job the discovery was unexpected. We find most of our failings when we have the greatest access to God. V. IF WE ARE STILL VILE, WHAT ARE OUR DUTIES? We must not suppose that all our work is done. How watchful we ought to be. And it is necessary that we should still exhibit faith in God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Self-abasement*:—On the whole, the design of this portion of Scripture is to teach men that, having a due respect to the corruption, infirmity, and ignorance of human nature, they are to lay aside all confidence in themselves, they are to labour continually after an unwavering and unsullied faith, which is the gift of God only, and to submit, with becoming reverence, to the trials which He may call them to endure in this their probationary state. In this book the state of man as a fallen creature is to be manifested. Job's expressions prove him, at worst, not to be an irreligious man, but a man possessed of integrity, and too confident in it. And they give peculiar interest to his deep self-abasement and repentance when convinced of sin. . . . What further light, what directions, does the Gospel supply in doing this necessary work of repentance and self-humiliation? We are all in danger, while performing the very duties which we owe to God, of placing too great a reliance upon them. Our virtues may be a snare to us. We may misapply to the injury of our soul's health those very things which are set forth for our good. The great scope and end of Christian doctrine is the consolation, not of those who are vainly puffed up with such fleshly conceits, but of those whose hearts are overcharged with the burden of their sins. There never was, nor is there, any mere man absolutely righteous and free from sin. If Christ hath paid the ransom for all, then were all captives and bondsmen of the great enemy, and under sentence of death. If one have died for all, then were all dead in sin, and none is able to justify himself. (*J. C. Wigram, M.A.*)

Ver. 8. **Wilt thou also disannul My judgment? Wilt thou condemn Me, that thou mayest be righteous?**—*The excuses of sinners condemn God*:—I. EVERY EXCUSE FOR SIN CONDEMNS GOD. 1. Nothing can be sin for which there is a justifiable excuse. 2. If God condemns that for which there is a good excuse, He must be wrong. 3. But God does condemn all sin. 4. Consequently, every excuse for sin charges blame upon God, and virtually accuses Him of tyranny. Whoever pleads an excuse for sin, therefore, charges God with blame. II. CONSIDER SOME OF THESE EXCUSES. 1. Inability. It is affirmed that men cannot do what

God requires of them. This charge is blasphemous against God. Shall God require natural impossibilities, and denounce eternal death upon men for not doing what they have no natural power to do? Never. 2. Want of time. If God really requires of you what you have not time to do, He is infinitely to blame. 3. A sinful nature. 4. Sinners, in self-excuse, say they are willing to be Christians. But this is insincere, if they persist in remaining in their sins. 5. Sinners say they are waiting God's time. 6. They plead that their circumstances are very peculiar. 7. Or that their temperament is peculiar. 8. Or that their health is so poor they cannot get to meeting, and so cannot be religious. 9. Another excuse takes this form—My heart is so hard, that I cannot feel. Learn—(1) No sinner lives a single hour in sin without some excuse, by which he justifies himself. (2) Excuses render repentance impossible. (3) Sinners should lay all their excuses at once before God. (4) Sinners ought to be ashamed of their excuses, and repent of them. (*C. G. Finney.*)

Ver. 23. **Behold, he drinketh up a river.** — *Christian confidence:* — We have often wondered what was meant by the singular action of behemoth in chapter xl. 23, "Behold, he drinketh up a river, and hasteth not: he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth." What does that mean? It means nothing. The revisers set forth the meaning very clearly, "Behold, if a river overflow he trembleth not: he is confident though Jordan swell up to his mouth." That is just what men should be who put their trust in God. "Behold, if a river overflow, he trembleth not"; he says, It is all in the hand of God: the river is overflowing my meadows and carrying away my hay harvest, I do not fear or fret, it is not my harvest, it is God's. "He is confident though Jordan swell up to his mouth"; he does not begin to fear when he sees Jordan, but when Jordan doubles itself, swells, expands, rises, floods over, and comes up to his very neck, and then to his chin, and then to his very mouth, he says, I shall still be saved. Over the brimming river he breathes his assurance of triumph through the power of God. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

CHAPTER XLI.

VERS. 1-34. **Canst thou draw out Leviathan?**—*Behemoth and leviathan:*— The description of the "behemoth" in the preceding chapter and the "leviathan" here suggests a few moral reflections. I. THE PRODIGALITY OF CREATED MIGHT. With what amazing force are these creatures endowed! How huge their proportions! How exuberant their vital energy! II. THE RESTRAINING POWER OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT. What keeps those creatures in check? They are under the spell of the Almighty. To all creatures the Creator has set a boundary beyond which they cannot pass. III. THE ABSURDITY OF MAN PRIDING HIMSELF IN HIS STRENGTH. "Let not the mighty man glory in his might," &c. IV. THE PROBABILITY OF MENTAL GIANTS IN THE UNIVERSE. May there not be in the spiritual domain as great a difference in the power of its tenants as there is in the physical? V. THE DIVINE MODE OF SOLVING MAN'S MORAL DIFFICULTIES. Great were the difficulties of Job in relation to God's government. God does not reason with Job, but shows Himself to him, and this settles all dispute, and will ever do so. VI. GOD'S WORK IN NATURE SHOULD BE STUDIED, IN ORDER TO IMPRESS US WITH HIS MAJESTY. We must remember the profoundly religious and serious character of the Eastern patriarch. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 32. **He maketh a path to shine after him.**—*Phosphorescence:*—What was that illumined path? It was phosphorescence. You find it in the wake of a ship in the night, especially after rough weather. Phosphorescence is the lightning of the sea. I found a book of John Ruskin, and the first sentence my eyes fell upon was his description of phosphorescence, in which he calls it the "lightning of the sea." It is the waves of the sea diamonded; it is the inflorescence of the billows; the waves of the sea crimsoned, as was the deep after the sea-fight of Lepanto; the waves of the sea on fire. There are times when from horizon to horizon the entire ocean seems in conflagration with this strange

splendour, as it changes every moment to tamer or more dazzling colour on all sides of you. You sit looking over the taff-rail of the yacht or ocean steamer, watching and waiting to see what new thing the God of beauty will do with the Atlantic. This phosphorescence is the appearance of myriads of the animal kingdom rising, falling, flashing, living, dying. These luminous animalcules for nearly one hunderd and fifty years have been the study of naturalists and the fascination of all who have brain enough to think. Now God, who puts in His Bible nothing trivial or useless, calls the attention of Job, the greatest scientist of his day, to this phosphorescence, and as the leviathan of the deep sweeps past, points out the fact that "He maketh a path to shine after him." (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

Vers. 33, 34. Upon the earth there is not his like. — *The supremacy of leviathan* :—The lion is often spoken of as "the king of the forest," or the "king of beasts," and in a similar sense the leviathan is here spoken of as at the head of the animal creation. He is afraid of none of them; he is subdued by none of them; he is the prey of none of them. The whole argument, therefore, closes with this statement, that he is at the head of the animal creation; and it was by this magnificent description of the power of the creatures which God had made, that it was intended to impress the mind of Job with a sense of the majesty and power of the Creator. It had the effect. He was overawed with the conviction of the greatness of God, and he saw how wrong it had been for him to presume to call in question the justice, or sit in judgment on the doings of such a Being. God did not, indeed, go into an examination of the various points which had been the subject of controversy; He did not explain the nature of His moral administration so as to relieve the mind from perplexity; but He evidently meant to leave the impression that He was vast and incomprehensible in His government, infinite in power, and had a right to dispose of His creation as He pleased. No one can doubt that God could, with infinite ease, have so explained the nature of His administration as to free the mind from perplexity, and so as to have resolved the difficulties which hung over the various subjects which had come into debate between Job and his friends. Why He did not do this is nowhere stated, and can only be the subject of conjecture. It is possible, however, that the following suggestions may do something to show the reasons why this was not done. 1. We are to remember the early period of the world when these transactions occurred, and when this Book was composed. It was in the infancy of society, and when little light had gleamed on the human mind in regard to questions of morals and religion. 2. In that state of things it is not probable that either Job or his friends would have been able to comprehend the principles in accordance with which the wicked are permitted to flourish, and the righteous are so much afflicted, if they had been stated. Much higher knowledge than they then possessed about the future world was necessary to understand the subject which then agitated their minds. It could not have been done without a very decided reference to the future state, where all these inequalities are to be removed. 3. It has been the general plan of God to communicate knowledge by degrees: to impart it when men have had full demonstration of their own imbecility, and when they feel the need of Divine teaching; and to reserve the great truths of religion for an advanced period of the world. In accordance with this arrangement, God has been pleased to keep in reserve, from age to age, certain great and momentous truths, and such as were particularly adapted to throw light on the subjects of discussion between Job and his friends. They are the truths pertaining to the resurrection of the body; the retributions of the Day of Judgment; the glories of heaven and the woes of hell, where all the inequalities of the present state may receive their final and equal adjustment. These great truths were reserved for the triumph and glory of Christianity; and to have stated them in the time of Job would have been to have anticipated the most important revelations of that system. The truths of which we are now in possession would have relieved much of the anxiety then felt, and solved most of these questions; but the world was not then in the proper state for their revelation. 4. It was a very proper lesson to be taught men, to bow with submission to a sovereign God, without knowing the reason of His doings. No lesson, perhaps, could be learnt of higher value than this. To a proud, self-confident, philosophic mind, a mind prone to rely on its own resources and trust to its own deductions, it was of the highest importance to inculcate the duty

of submission to will and sovereignty. This is a lesson which we often have to learn in life, and which almost all the trying dispensations of providence are fitted to teach us. It is not because God has no reason for what He does; it is not because He intends we shall never know the reason: but it is because it is our duty to bow with submission to His will, and to acquiesce in His right to reign, even when we cannot see the reason of His doings. Could we reason it out, and then submit because we saw the reason, our submission would not be to our Maker's pleasure, but to the deductions of our own minds. Hence, all along, He so deals with man, by concealing the reason of His doings, as to bring him to submission to His authority, and to humble all human pride. To this termination all the reasonings of the Almighty in this Book are conducted; and after the exhibition of His power in the tempest, after His sublime description of His own works, after His appeal to the numerous things which are, in fact, incomprehensible to man, we feel that God is great—that it is presumptuous in man to sit in judgment on His works, and that the mind, no matter what it does, should bow before Him with profound veneration and silence. (*Albert Barnes.*)

CHAPTER XLII.

VERS. 1-10. **Then Job answered the Lord, and said.**—*Job's confession and restoration:*—I. JOB'S ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GOD'S GREATNESS. Throughout his speeches Job had frequently asserted the majesty of God. But now he has a new view of it, which turns awe into reverence and fear into adoration. II. JOB'S CONFESSION OF HIS IGNORANCE. He felt that in his past utterances he had been guilty of saying that which he understood not. It is a very common fault to be too confident, and to match our little knowledge with the wonders of the universe. "Behold, we know not anything," is man's truest wisdom. III. JOB'S HUMBLENESS BEFORE GOD. A great change had passed over his spirit. At the beginning he had sought to vindicate himself, and to charge God—with the strangeness and the mystery of His ways. Now, at the close, he repents in dust and ashes, and even abhors himself for his effrontery and impatience. IV. GOD'S CONDEMNATION OF JOB'S FRIENDS. The friends of Job had not spoken the thing that was right of God and His ways. They had ascribed a mechanical severity to His administration of human affairs. In addition to that they had shown an acrimonious spirit in their denunciation of Job. So God reproved them, and ordered that they should prepare a burnt offering of seven bullocks and seven rams to offer for their sin. V. JOB'S ABUNDANT PROSPERITY. Great and prosperous as Job had been before his afflictions, he was still greater and more prosperous afterwards. God gave him twice as much as he had before. (*S. G. Woodrow.*) *Job's confession and restoration:*—This passage sets before us the result of Jehovah's coming into communion with Job. I. THE RESULT INWARDLY. 1. Job's new knowledge. (1) He has a new knowledge of God—not new in its facts, exactly, but new in his appreciation of them. It was not so much a knowledge that God is, as that He is omnipotent, and wise in His providence. Every revelation of God to our hearts has for its contents, above the fact of God's existence, the facts of His character. God is never shown to us except with His attributes. This new knowledge came to Job because he suffered. When Job sees God, and learns of His attributes, the one attribute which he has questioned, and which he would naturally want to know about—justice—remains in the background. When God shows Himself to us we are satisfied, even though He does not show that part of Himself which we have most wanted to see. (2) A new knowledge of himself. He says frankly that he had been talking about which he was ignorant. All along Job had been discussing God with his friends upon two assumptions—that he was able to know all about Him, and that he did know all about Him. He now finds that he was mistaken in both. How difficult it is to know ourselves, even negatively. A sight of the Infinitely Holy convicts us of sin. We learn what we are by contrast with something else. 2. In connection with Job's new knowledge there came a new state of heart. (1) He was willing to have his questions unanswered. All thought of the vexing problem of suffering seems to be forgotten. Faith has silenced doubt.

We are not made to know some things. The question is, how to be satisfied while not knowing. (2) The appearance of God brought to Job the rare virtue of humility. We cannot truthfully say that heretofore Job had shown any excess of this virtue. Now he sees that the attitude of mind out of which his bold words Godward had arisen was unbecoming one who was but a creature. It is no mark of greatness to fancy oneself infallible. To acknowledge mistake is a sign of progress. (3) Job goes beyond humility to repentance. He says that dust and ashes are the best exponent of his state of mind. Repentance is open to any man who thinks. No one, not even righteous Job, needs to hunt long for reasons for repentance. II. THE RESULT OUTWARDLY OF JOB'S COMING INTO CONNECTION WITH GOD. 1. His misfortunes were reversed. We cannot infer from this that God will always literally restore earthly prosperity for those who are afflicted by its loss. What we may reasonably infer is that God controls outer things for good ends to us. We are not to infer that the Lord's hand is shortened, but He chooses His own way. 2. God transforms Job's sorrow into joy. Some time or some where He will do the same for us if we are His. It may be largely in this life, as in the case of Job. The area of vision has been enlarged by our blessed Lord, who brought life and immortality to light. 3. Job was able to be of service to his friends. Jehovah was angry against the three friends. God's coming to Job was a means of his being a blessing to others. It is so with ourselves. III. GENERAL LESSONS. 1. The conclusion of the Book of Job shows to us the mercy of God. God sometimes seems unmerciful, but it is only seeming. 2. Job's questions remain unanswered. The mystery of Providence is unsolved. 3. Yet Job was satisfied. It was better for him to have Jehovah reveal Himself and His glory to him, than to know all things he wanted to know. There is something better than knowledge, something for which knowledge would be no substitute, the peace of the soul in fellowship with God. 4. The supreme lesson of this sublime Book is that joy comes through submission to God. Happiness for the human soul is not in conquest, but in being conquered; not in exaltation, but in humiliation. (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *Job's confession and restoration*:—The primary object of the Book of Job is to prove and illustrate the glory and force of a pure, unselfish religion. Job was reconciled to his sufferings, not by argument, but by a direct revelation of the character of God. We have here what has been well called "a religious controversy issuing in utter failure." Neither party was convinced; each retained his own views. The result in this case, as in every religious controversy which has occurred since, was bitterness of spirit and alienation of heart, without adding much to the cause of truth. It was not when the friends addressed him that Job was convinced, but when Jehovah addressed him—when He brought him face to face with the wonders of creation—then the mystery of suffering was solved. The moment a man begins to have a living perception of God, when God becomes a presence and a reality to him, he begins to be sorry for his wrong-doing. Job had been peevish, complaining, and somewhat vindictive under his trials. The nearer a man approaches his perfect ideal, the more he feels his imperfections. As the moral sense of the race increases, the more heinous seem the so-called smaller sins. The term which Job uses when he says "I repent" is identical with that which is used in the New Testament to indicate the godly sorrow which is not to be repented of. It means a genuine turning away from evil. . . . Observe that the reprovers are reproved. The doctors are treated with a dose of their own medicine. Their dogma falls upon their own heads. They had been placing the justice of God above all His other attributes, and now this very justice has pronounced against them. It is very easy to fall into the error of Job's three friends, to set ourselves up as monopolists of the truth, and make people around us who do not happen to agree with us very uncomfortable. The trouble with Job's friends was, that in their zeal to vindicate their favourite doctrine they not only ignored other doctrines which were fully as important, but they violated some of the simplest principles of righteousness. How does God treat these unprofitable debaters? He rebukes their assumption by sending them to the victim of their persecution, that he may pray for them. They did as they were told. The lesson was humiliating, but it was salutary, and they showed their real goodness of heart by their prompt obedience. We must not miss noticing in the beautiful climax the double lesson which it contains. There had been wrong on both sides. Job had little occasion to boast of his victory, and the greatness of his soul appeared in the heartiness with which he accepted the Divine

decision. Here we have the only true solution of the religious controversy. Among Christians who disagree there can be no victor or vanquished. Dissensions which end in the glorification of one party and the humiliation of the other are only followed by more bitter conflicts, or are the beginning of a long estrangement. It is only when Eliphaz and Job can get down on their knees together that a real peace is established. *(C. A. Dickinson.)*

Vers. 5, 6. **I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear.**—*Job's knowledge of God:*—The text shoots a ray of light athwart the dark problem discussed in the earlier portion of this Book. How are the afflictions of a righteous man to be reconciled with moral government? How can God be just, and yet leave His righteous servants to be visited with every form of trial? The text discloses at least part of "the end of the Lord" in such mysterious procedure. No discipline can be unjust, no trials too severe, through which a soul is brought, as Job's was, to a clearer knowledge of God, which is its life. Once the end was reached, Job would have been the last man to have wished one pang of that painful experience recalled. I. A GENERAL CONTRAST BETWEEN TWO KINDS OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. We know the difference which there is in ordinary matters between a knowledge which rests on testimony and a knowledge gained by personal experience and observation. There is a contrast in vividness between the two kinds of knowledge: a battle, a thunderstorm, foreign scenery. There is a contrast also in certainty. We may distrust or question what comes to us only as report—we may reject it as unsupported by sufficient evidence; but we cannot doubt what we have seen with our own eyes. Job's knowledge of God had hitherto been the traditional knowledge common to himself and his friends. Now he knew God for himself, as if by direct personal vision. He saw. Can man, then, see God? or is Job using here merely the language of strong metaphor? Certainly in one sense God is not and cannot be seen. He is not an object of sensuous perception; we cannot see Him with the natural eye, as we see the forms and hues of objects around us. But that may be true, and yet man be able to "see God." Job had heard God speaking to him in the whirlwind, but it is not of that he is thinking here. It was the "eyes of his understanding (Gr., heart)" which had been enlightened. Whereas formerly he had heard of God by the hearing of the ear, he had now a direct spiritual intuition of His presence, of His nearness, of His majesty, of His omnipotence, of His holiness. We need not, therefore, hesitate to affirm that in man's soul there abides a power enabling him spiritually to apprehend God, and in some measure to discern His glory; a kind of Divine faculty, buried deep, it may be, in sense, filmed over by manifold impurities, and needing to be quickened and cleansed by an outward revelation, and by the inward operation of the Spirit; but still there. Happy the misfortunes which, like Job's, help to clear the spiritual vision, and enable us to see God better. II. THIS CONTRAST ONE WHICH DISCLOSES ITSELF IN A SERIES OF ASCENDING STAGES. 1. And first the text may be taken to express the contrast between the knowledge which a converted man and the knowledge which an unconverted man has of God. The one, the unconverted man, has heard of God with the hearing of the ear, as the blind man hears of the splendour of the landscape and the glory of the flowers, without being able to attach any definite ideas to what he hears; the other, the converted man, in comparison with this, has seen God with the seeing of the eye. A light has broken in on him to which the other is a stranger He cannot perhaps explain very clearly the rationale of the change—as who can? but the fact itself he knows, that whereas he was blind, now he sees. How many have heard of God with the hearing of the ear, have acquired notions about Him, have learned of Him from books, from the creed, from catechisms, in church! But how few comparatively walk with Him, and commune with Him as a living Presence! Ah! that is a never-to-be forgotten moment in a man's life when first the reality of God's presence breaks in on him like a revelation. He will not always be able to keep alive those vivid, soul-thrilling views of God which he had in the hour of his conversion; still, God can never again be the same to him as before his eyes were opened. God is a reality, not a mere name to him. The light of life has visited his soul, and its illumination never wholly deserts him. The contrast in his experience is broad and unmistakable. 2. The text expresses the contrast between the knowledge of God which a good man has in his prosperity, and the revelations which are sometimes made to him in his adversity. The former was the contrast between nature

and grace; this is the contrast between grace and higher grace. Up to this time Job seems to have been remarkably prosperous. His sky had scarcely known a cloud. But what Job knew of God in his prosperity was little compared with what he knew of God now in the day of his adversity. And is not this always the effect of sanctified affliction? All love the sunshine and the smooth way. No one prays for adversity, yet few who have come through the furnace will question its purifying power. When real affliction comes, a man can't live on hearsays and hypotheses, but is driven back on the great realities, and compelled to keep a tight hold upon them. 3. The text fitly expresses the contrast between the knowledge which Old Testament saints had of God and that which we now have in Jesus Christ. Compared with ours, theirs was but the hearing of the ear; compared with theirs, ours is the seeing of the eye. The Scripture itself strongly emphasises this contrast. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." No revelation which God ever gave of old can for a moment compare with that now vouchsafed in the person, character, and work of Christ. Job himself, were he to return to earth, would be the first to say to us, "Blessed are your eyes that ye see, and your ears that ye hear," &c. 4. Lastly, the text may be taken as expressive of the contrast between the state of grace and the state of glory, and in this view its meaning culminates. It can go no higher. "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." Earth at its best, in comparison with that, is but hearing with the ear; in heaven alone the eye seeth God. Conclusion: Every step upward in the knowledge of God will be attended by a downward step in humility and consciousness of sin (ver. 6). (*J. Orr, M.A.*) *Changed views of God*:—These words were uttered by Job at a very remarkable period of his affecting history. Up to this moment his sorrows had been unassuaged: the Almighty seemed fiercely to contend with him, and his arrows drank up his spirit. His friends also had bitterly reproached him, and he remained unvindicated from their charges; and no ray of hope had hitherto burst through the gloom that surrounded him. But the verses that follow our text point out a most favourable change in his condition. "The Lord," it is said, "turned the captivity of Job." This change in the conduct of God towards Job was preceded by a change in the mind of Job himself; the nature of which change is shown in the words of our text. Formerly he had justified himself, as we find up to the thirty-first chapter; after which he begins to condemn himself; he is humbled on account of his transgressions. "He answered the Lord," it is said in the first verse of the chapter before us, but not as he had formerly spoken, in the language either of self-applause, or of repining against the dispensations of God, for he had wisely determined to speak no longer in this manner; "Behold," said he, "I am vile; what shall I answer Thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer again; yea twice, but I will proceed no further." I. LET US INQUIRE WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND IN THE TEXT BY SEEING GOD; for Job says that he had heard of Him before by the hearing of the ear, but now his eye saw Him. He does not mean through his bodily senses; for in this manner, says our Saviour, "no man hath seen God at any time." "God is a spirit"; "the king invisible," "dwelling in the light, which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, or can see." Even when God revealed Himself to the people of Israel, "they saw no manner of similitude." It was not so much a new or miraculous knowledge of God which he had obtained, as a practical conviction and application of those truths respecting Him which he had known before, but which had not been before brought home to his heart and conscience with their due force, so as to produce the fruits of repentance, humility, and submission to the will of God. He had heard of the wisdom, the power, and the providence of the Creator; of His justice, His mercy, and the veneration due to Him. His friends, especially Eliphaz, and even Job himself, had uttered many admirable maxims on these subjects; but now his knowledge had become more than ever practical in its effects. He felt assured that God could do all things; that none could resist His will; yet that it was never too late to hope for His mercy. His knowledge was attended with such a lively faith as made it, according to the definition of the apostle, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." He had known and confessed many important doctrines and precepts of true religion at an earlier period of his history. He had acknowledged, in the first place, his infinite obligations to God, "Thou hast granted me life and favour,

and Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." He had, further, confessed his sinfulness in the sight of God; for, though he vindicated his character against the unjust suspicions of his follow-creatures, he knew that his righteousness extended not to his Creator: "If I justify myself," said he, "mine own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse." He could trust to no merit of his own: for he felt so forcibly the imperfection of his best observances in the sight of an infinitely holy God, that he says, "If I be righteous, yet will not I lift up my head"; and again, "If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt Thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." He knew that God could, and would, deliver him, and in the end make all things, and not least his severe afflictions, work together for his good. "When He hath tried me," said he, "I shall come forth like gold"; elsewhere adding, with the most exalted faith and confidence, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Yet all his former knowledge of these things, clear and accurate as it once seemed, appeared now to him but like a verbal report, compared with the vivid distinctness of his present convictions. He had heard, he now saw; he had believed, but his faith now became more than ever active and influential on his character. Before, he mourned chiefly for his afflictions; now, he mourns for his sinfulness in the sight of God: and he exhibits his penitence by the most expressive emblems; he repents "in dust and ashes." II. TO APPLY THE SUBJECT TO OUR OWN TIMES AND CIRCUMSTANCES. We also have heard of God by the hearing of the ear. We were born in a Christian country; we have, perhaps, had the benefits of early Christian education; of frequent instruction in the Word of God; of the prayers and example of religious friends: we cannot therefore be wholly ignorant of our obligations to God Yet, with all our advantages, our professed religion and knowledge of God may have been hitherto but "the hearing of the ear." It was by this faith that "Moses endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." Now, there are too many, even of those who call themselves Christians, who "live without God in the world." He is as much unseen by the eye of their mind as by their bodily senses. Far from "setting the Lord always before them," the practical language of their conduct is rather, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways." But is not this a heinous sin? Is it not also the height of folly? Will it profit us, at the Last Day, that we have heard of God by the hearing of the ear, if we have no true practical knowledge of Him, like that of Job in our text? Let us, then, "acquaint ourselves with God, and be at peace; and thereby good shall come unto us." And let us ever remember that the only medium of this peace and intercourse between God and man is Christ Jesus the Mediator. (*Ibid.*) *The knowledge of God producing repentance:*—In the warmth of the debate which took place between Job and his friends, and in the anguish of his sufferings, Job had used some impatient expressions respecting the conduct of God towards him. For these he was first reproved by Elihu, and then by God Himself, who, with unspeakable force and majesty, displays the glory of the Divine perfections. Job was deeply humbled, and acknowledges in the strongest terms his own vileness and insignificance. The impressions he now had of the majesty and glory, the wisdom and holiness, of God, were far stronger and more distinct than any he had felt before. From this passage of Scripture we learn that a clear view of the perfections of God has a powerful effect in producing repentance. But the view of the Divine perfections which has this tendency, it ought to be understood, is not a speculative knowledge of the natural attributes of the Deity, but a spiritual and affecting discovery of His moral excellencies; of the glory of His infinite purity, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. 1. It convinces us of sin, by bringing to light those evils which the deceitfulness of our own hearts is apt to hide from our view. There is a light and glory in the presence of God which exposes the works of darkness, and tends to produce a deep sense of our sinfulness. Nor is it difficult to explain how it is that a view of the Divine glory produces this effect. By applying a straight rule to a line we discover all its unevennesses. What is deformed appears more frightful when compared with what is beautiful. In the same way, a clear view of the purity of God, and of His constant presence with us, and inspection over us, tends to bring those sins to light, and to cover us with confusion on account of them, which before we contrived to justify, excuse, or conceal. This truth may be further illustrated by the different behaviour of vicious persons, when in society like

themselves, and when in that of men eminent for piety. 2. A view of the glory of God serves to point out the evil of sin, with its aggravations, and to take away all excuse from the sinner. When the law of God shows us our sins, and condemns us for them, we may be ready to complain of it as severe; but when we see that law to be but a copy of the moral perfections of God, and when we contemplate those perfections, we must be convinced that all sin must be hateful to God, and must necessarily be opposed to His nature. A view of the glory of God produces such a conviction of His rights as our Creator, and of our obligations as the creatures of His hand, as constrains us to acknowledge His justice in the punishment of sin. When we reflect on the omnipresence and omniscience of God, how great appears to be the folly of thinking to veil even our most secret sins from Him! When we reflect on His power, how does it add to the guilt and madness of presumption! This is in a more especial manner the effect of a view of the glory of God as it shines forth in Jesus Christ. The unparalleled love shown to sinners in the Gospel greatly heightens their ingratitude. It may be said in general, that it is a light sense of the evil of sin which leads men to commit it; and when they have committed it, to frame excuses for it; and also to indulge a hope that the threatenings against sin will not be executed. But a discovery of the glory of God, and particularly of His infinite holiness and justice, by showing the evil of sin in its true colours, sweeps away all such delusions. 3. A proper view of the glory of God serves further to point out the danger of sin. 4. Lastly, a view of the glory of God tends to produce repentance, because, by setting before us His infinite mercy, it encourages us to turn to Him. 1. We may learn from this subject the force of those passages of Scripture in which the knowledge of God is put for the whole of religion—"Know the Lord." "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." On the other hand, the wicked are described as those "that know not God." The truth is, God is either wholly unknown to wicked men, or greatly mistaken by them. 2. From what has been said we may also learn the great danger of a state of ignorance. If repentance take its rise from a knowledge of the perfections of God, does it not follow that those who are ignorant of Him must be in a deplorable state, strangers to the power and practice of religion, and that if they die in this state they must perish everlastingly? 3. We may learn also, from what has been said, the absolute necessity of regeneration, or an inward change of heart. It is not, as has been already observed, a speculative knowledge of the nature and perfections of God that leads to repentance, but an affecting view of His excellence and amiableness. This none can have, but those who are in some measure changed into the same image. And true Christians will see, from what has been said, how closely connected the right knowledge of God—in other words, true religion—is with humility and self-abasement. (*Christian Observer.*)

God known in various manners:—These are the words of one of the most virtuous of our race. This is the language of one who added to moral virtues the noblest beneficence; and who added to a charity almost unbounded a piety the most sincere and consistent. Exalted as were his attainments in the school of religion, he had much more yet to learn. There appears through the whole of his conversations with his friends the indications of a mind claiming too unqualified a freedom from guilt, and yielding to a spirit of impatience. The Lord appears, and answers Job out of the whirlwind. He makes such a glorious display of His greatness and majesty; of the multitude and stupendous character of His works, interspersed with notices of the littleness and short-sightedness of man, that Job seems now to know more than he had ever known before. Evidently, then, there are various manners in which God may be known; various degrees in the clearness, the certainty, and the satisfaction of knowing Him. Discoveries of God produce effects upon the mind proportionably to their nature. The men who have a speculative knowledge of God, which is defective and false. They speak of the heavenly Father; the claims of the Ruler they overlook. They dwell on the mercies of the God of grace; they pass by the awfulness of the avenger of sin. Such persons may glow with enthusiasm as they contemplate the vast or the beautiful; but all this may be without any beneficial influence on the soul. 2. The speculative knowledge of God that is true. This is the true knowledge of God, which comes to the intellect, and there it is arrested,—which stands in idea and sentiment. Everything is acknowledged. The Divine perfections are not separated and sacrificed. The theological system is correct. Religion has been learned as a science, but with no better a moral and spiritual

influence. These men have not seen God; they never had those views of God that are peculiar to a regenerate and purified heart. The report has reached the understanding, but has never been echoed through the soul. Bare knowledge does but "puff up." 3. A knowledge of God which is spiritual and true, but an incipient acquaintance with God. This is a higher description of knowledge, yet is it only a beginning. Such a knowledge is as decided in its effects as it is Divine in its nature. But in its first degrees, although it brings salvation into the soul, this knowledge of God is but as the distant, though well-established report of what is true. We come now to the consideration of an advanced stage in the spiritual knowledge of God; that which constitutes its ripeness in the present world. Such a maturity in grace is not to be attributed to more abundant instruction, or to any new method of instruction. It was a purifying of his heart by the influences of the Holy Spirit. The perfection of the knowledge of God must not be hoped for in the present world. Examine, then, into the nature of that knowledge of God which you possess. (*T. Kennion, M.A.*) *Knowing by the ear and the eye*:—What is suggested through the ear does, of necessity, affect the heart more languidly than what is presented to the faithful eye. What was the change in Job's impression of his own moral character and condition produced by his being placed in the immediate presence of the Almighty, and how the alteration in his circumstances was fitted to produce the alteration in his feelings. Job had conducted his part of the controversy in a spirit which prompted him to palliate and diminish the sins which he confessed, to exalt and magnify the virtues which he claimed. It carried him so far as once and again to implore, to demand, of the Sovereign Judge that He would vouchsafe to him the opportunity of arguing the whole cause before Him. The Almighty had granted his request. Jehovah's own voice came forth upon the patriarch's ear, challenging, indeed, and reproving the proud presumption with which a mortal man had ventured to dispute, as it were, on terms of equality with Him of whose infinite grandeur and absolute perfection all this wondrous universe is one vast type. But what a change has been effected on the spirit and demeanour of that presumptuous challenger of the Almighty, by the simple fact of the Almighty presenting Himself to abide the challenge, the answer, the appeal. There is no more palliation of his own sins,—no more boasting of his own excellencies. What was there in the uttered perceptions of Jehovah now enjoyed by Job to produce and to account for the altered emotions with which he now contemplated himself? He was placed in personal contact with the Father-spirit of the universe, and the effect was to impart a sudden accession of force and vividness to all those impressions of the holiness of God which, while God Himself was absent, had been comparatively faint and languid and ineffective. The impression of adoring reverence and awe which the contemplation of Jehovah's wondrous works in the kingdoms of nature and providence is fitted to produce mingles well and naturally with that of lowly self-abhorrence of which the comparison of His moral character with ours is the parent and the source. And the physical greatness of the Deity affords to the overwhelmed and prostrate soul a ready and a most impressive standard by which to estimate His moral excellence. 1. How strong a resemblance there is between the estimate which Job formed of his own character before the vision and the voice of God had met him, and that which the multitude of men are wont to entertain and to express regarding themselves. 2. All that I implore of you, in prospect of that solemn entrance which awaits us all into the sphere of Jehovah's more peculiar residence, and on the consciousness of a more present Deity, is to judge from the recorded example of Job what will be the effect on all your conceptions of Jehovah's awful holiness, and of your own contrasted sinfulness. (*J. B. Patterson, M.A.*) *The hearing of God by the hearing of the ear*:—Who amongst us has not heard of God thus? No doubt, Job had been religiously brought up. The great truths of religion had been impressed upon his mind. He displayed an almost more than human measure of patience and resignation. Though he had heard by the hearing of the ear, at an advanced period of life he declared that his eye had, for the first time, seen God. Then, he embraced in his mind's eye, one vast and comprehensive view of the majesty, of the glory, of the goodness, of the purity of Jehovah. He gazed upon Him, as it were, in the length and the breadth of His infinite perfection. It is not enough to have the means and opportunities of grace afforded to us, or even to make use of them. Not a few of us fall short of one thing, a full, and comprehensive, and Christian view of the nature and

attributes of God. We do not conceive rightly of His power, His wisdom, His goodness, His holiness, His love. The first thing Job did, as soon as his eye had seen God, was to abhor himself. He had hitherto looked upon himself with complacency and satisfaction. He betook himself immediately to repentance; a humble, abasing, sincere, heartfelt sorrow for sin. That godly sorrow which worketh reformation. Happy are those among us, whose abhorrence of their own selves, and earnest repentance of their sins, attest that their eyes have been permitted to see the Almighty in all His goodness and His glory. (*Edward Girdlestone, M.A.*) *On being brought to see God*:—Job, though the most patient of men, had been betrayed, under the pressure of his severe sufferings, into some unreasonable and rebellious murmurs. He had acknowledged the providence and the power of God, but not with a full submission of heart. On the occasion now before us, he is brought to a juster sense of his own unworthiness, and the omnipotence and omniscience of Jehovah. His meaning in what he says may be this: that he had before obtained some knowledge of God from various opportunities afforded him; from education, from instruction, from his own researches, and the conference of his friends; but a scene, which he had lately witnessed, had made such discoveries to him of the Divine glory, and had so deeply affected his heart, that all he ever felt or knew before was nothing as compared with his present perception and knowledge. This fuller knowledge had produced, as it is always calculated to do, the fruit of humility in the heart. As a humble penitent, he desired to lie low in self-condemnation, and in the frame of his spirit before God, casting himself wholly on His mercy, and submitting unreservedly to His will. . . . Far indeed should we be from supposing that religion consists in feelings and experiences; a more false and delusive standard than this cannot be proposed to mankind; the true faith and the true principle must always be measured by the fruit. Yet still there may have been a fair appearance of fruit without the full establishment of the principle; there may have been a considerable and hopeful profession without a vital communion with God in the Gospel. Though our guilt is washed away by the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit, yet this does not prevent the necessity of our afterwards feeling a deep and distressful sense of sin, as often as it is committed, together with the dreadfulness of its consequence; we still need the profoundest humiliation at the foot of the throne of mercy, a thorough abasement of soul, in the presence of a just and holy God. Not only must there be a habit of sincere repentance on all occasions of actual transgression, but a positive abhorrence of all evil, in thought, and word, and deed, must be rooted in the heart; accompanied, as it surely will be, with a constant unfailing love of our God and Redeemer, such as will incline our hearts to keep His law in all its holiness and integrity. Wherever this change has taken place, this enlightenment been vouchsafed, this true view of the Gospel been formed, this life of God in the soul established, there will have been a result and experience similar to the case of the patriarch of old. "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." I perceive the wretchedness of my condition by nature; and though my profession was fair, and my conduct not immoral, my heart was not spiritual, my affections not purified, my will not brought into a self-denying and total subjection to the Divine law. This conviction and confession would doubtless lead to a deep repentance "in dust and ashes." Leave two questions with you. 1. Are there any here who have never needed such an alteration in their views, and principles, and conduct? Let them pour out their hearts in grateful thanksgiving for this singular benefit and mercy. 2. The other questions relate to those who are conscious that there was a period at which their hearts were not right with God. Have they now turned to God in sincerity and truth? Do they now see God in the fulness of His grace and power and blessing? To find ourselves lodged in the ark of His salvation is a consolation for all ills, a constraining motive to all duty, the sweetest food for the immortal soul, and a "joy unspeakable and full of glory." (*J. Slade, M.A.*) *Hearsay and conviction*:—This is the moral of the whole story. Job had maintained his innocence all along. He had indignantly protested against the supposition that his calamities were the direct result of his evil life. And he was regarded with the Divine approval. But Job's words at the last indicate that, after all, he had not been altogether right, and the arguments of his friends had not been altogether wrong. What produced this great change? It was that he no longer measured himself by human standards, that he no longer compared himself with other men, but with the perfect holiness of the law of God. "Now mine eye seeth Thee." How

had this great sight been granted him? It was by bringing before him the blindness and ignorance of man, and the marvels of the universe, and the majesty of Him by whom the universe was governed. What did he know of that power, that government which he had been impugning? Job was summoned to consider the mysteries which lay round about him, the events and things in which he had been accustomed to think there was any mystery at all. He saw around him so much that he could not understand; he saw around him powers with which he could not contend; what must be the power which embraced and controlled them all? How foolish, how presumptuous, to make of his own weak sight, of his own insignificant case, the measure of the mighty whole! There was order, though he might not see it; there was law, though he might not understand it. This conclusion was come to simply because he saw more clearly what had always been visible. The volume of nature outspread before him revealed to him, wherever he turned, the infinite wisdom, and power, and righteousness. It was God whose presence and whose working he discerned in everything—nowhere could he look but God was visible. In seeing God he saw himself. When he looked from himself to God, when he saw the eternal holiness and purity, the new sight awoke within him a knowledge of himself which all his self-inspection had been unable to produce. The greatest earthly wisdom became as foolishness, the greatest earthly virtue became as vileness by the contrast. There are many who can bear witness to a change like that which took place in Job having taken place in themselves. They have passed from a belief which is the result of hearsay to a faith which is the result of personal conviction; and this experience in some form is needful for us every one. The modes in which it may be attained are very various, but no one can be right till that vision has been granted to him, till the God of whom he has been taught becomes a reality, is seen and known by the eye of faith. There comes a crisis, a distinct period, in the lives of some, when God speaks to them out of the whirlwind, out of the storm of affliction which has broken over them, out of the storm of agitation by which their spirits are convulsed. It is the vision of Divine love and power and forgiveness which strikes our "doubting dumb," which alone affords relief to the spirit longing to believe that all is well, that human hopes and aspirations are not a mockery and an illusion. But it is a vision which each must see for himself. One cannot communicate to another what he has seen. We must not rest content until spiritual things become realities. (*F. M'Adam Muir.*) *The second-hand and the primary knowledge of God:*—I. HERE IS IMPLIED A SECOND-HAND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. 1. This second-hand knowledge is very common. 2. It is spiritually worthless. There is no moral value in it. Its influence on the soul is that of the lunar ray, cold and dead, rather than that of the solar beam, warm and life-giving. II. HERE IS IMPLIED A PRIMARY KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. "Now mine eye seeth Thee." The Great One came within Job's horizon. 1. This primary knowledge silenced all controversy. Job, under the influence of a second-hand knowledge, had argued long and earnestly; but as soon as he is brought face to face with his Maker, he felt Him as the greatest fact in his consciousness, and all controversy was hushed. Experimental knowledge of God disdains polemics. It is second-hand knowledge that breeds controversies. 2. This primary knowledge subdued all pride. Hast thou this primary knowledge? Is God Himself thy teacher, or art thou living on second-hand information? (*Homilist.*) *Tradition and experience:*—The theme of this book is the old, yet ever new problem which meets each thoughtful man, the problem of this strange chequered life of ours, and of God's relation to it. I. THE REAL ROOT OF JOB'S PERPLEXITIES. They sprung from the traditional but inadequate conception of God's moral government accepted in his day. The Book represents a transition period in Jewish religious thought, and one of much interest and importance. Men's minds were passing from an older and simpler faith to the fuller recognition of the facts of the Divine government. The old creed was this—the outward lot is an index to the inward character. This is true in its essence, but rudimentary in its form. But, according to the ways of human nature, the form became stereotyped, as though the letter rather than the spirit of the law were the abiding and essential element. Presently the question arose, How is this creed to be reconciled with facts? What about the prosperity of the wicked? What as to the sore troubles and afflictions of the righteous? Men of honest purpose could not shut their eyes to the seeming contradiction. Must they then yield up their trust in Jehovah as the supreme and righteous Ruler?

It was the emerging out of comparative childhood, an advance to a theology at once more spiritual, more true to the facts of life, and charged, moreover, with new sympathies for human sorrow and need; an advance, indeed, of no insignificant character towards that highest point of prophetic thought—the conception of the ideal servant of Jehovah, as "marred in His visage more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men." In this poem we have the lasting record of this immense transition—this passing of the old faith into the new. As to the three friends and their characteristic talk, at every period of advance in men's conceptions of Divine truth these same good men have reappeared—with the same appeal to traditional beliefs, the same confidence that their hoary formulæ express the whole of truth, the same inability to conceive it possible that they may be mistaken, the same dark suspicion of those who question their conclusions, and the same disposition to wax bitter, and to use hard words against the apostles of advance. On the other side we have Job. He had accepted the traditional view, but he sees plainly that in his case the belief does not square with the facts. And he is too honest and too fearless to shut his eyes to the contradiction. He will neither be untrue to his own consciousness of integrity, nor yet will he "speak unrighteously for God." Like many a man after him, Job found himself adrift on the surging waves of doubt. He asks, Can it be that the God I have trusted is simply force, resistless force, indifferent to moral distinctions? Or can it be that He has pleasure in the misery of His creatures? Or can it be that He sees as man sees, is capable of mistake, of confounding innocence with guilt? II. HOW WAS THE DELIVERANCE OBTAINED? "Now mine eye seeth Thee." He clings to God even when most keenly sensible that His ways were harsh and repelling. He is resolved to hold on to God. From the traditional conception he presses upward to the thought that, somehow and somewhere, the righteous God will ultimately vindicate and honour righteousness. The answers of God did not deal directly with his problem, but they gave him such a vision of the glory of God, that his whole being was stilled into reverent trust. "Now mine eye seeth Thee";—there is faith's foundation. (*Walter Ross Taylor.*) *Clear views of God correct errors:*—Job's afflictions were charged to secret sins; he defended his innocence with great power; but not till God answered him from the whirlwind, did he know either himself or God's dealings. Seeing God, he abhorred himself. 1. Clear views of God correct errors touching His character. Caught in some speculation, we are whirled about as in an eddy, till, in bewilderment, we may deny that there is a God, or deny some attribute—His justice or His grace, His goodness or His power. But let a man's eyes be opened by the Holy Spirit so that he shall see God, as did Job, Moses, Paul, and error vanishes. 2. Clear views of God correct errors touching God's providence. Here all men are staggered at times, their steps well-nigh slip; the wicked prosper, the righteous suffer. The wise man dies even as the fool. Does it not seem wrong that our lot is cast, and our wishes not regarded? Our purposes are baffled, our plans miscarry, our way is hedged, till hope lies crushed. Does ever an accident distinguish between the innocent and the guilty? Does not a mistake kill as quickly as an intent? Does death spare the child or the mother? We cannot escape these agonising questions; can we find relief in them? With all the light shining from another world on the dark spots of this, tormenting doubts will not be allayed until we come into a clearer view of God. Let the Spirit reveal God, and doubts dissolve in the fulness of the light. 3. Clear views of God correct errors touching our moral condition. They convict of sin. Even the most godly then abhor themselves. The elder Edwards wrote, "I had a view that for me was extraordinary, of the glory of the Son of God." "My wickedness, as I am in myself, . . . looks like an abyss infinitely deeper than hell." 4. Clear views of God correct errors touching Jesus and His salvation. Shall men never have done with the question, What think ye of Christ? Yes, men are slowly exalting Him to the throne of His glory. Have we had these clearer rays of God? We may see Jesus, and yet nail Him to the Cross. Men seeing God in the face of Christ may turn their backs on Him. But when Christ is accepted, forgiveness, peace, life eternal are sure. (*A. Hastings Ross, D.D.*) *Self-renunciation:*—We need not all be as Job in the depths of affliction and self-renunciation. There was an intensity about his case which was peculiar to it. But in our measure, and according to our position as members of the body of Christ, we should be able to sympathise with Job. I. JOB'S EARLIER AND SUPERFICIAL EX-

PERUSUM. "I have heard of Thee with the hearing of the ear." I have heard of Him as the God of creation, the God of providence, the God of Israel, the God of the universe, the God who, in Christ, was incarnate for my salvation. But not what we hear is the thing, but what we read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest. II. JOB'S PRESENT VIVID REALISATION. "Now mine eye seeth Thee." Note the emphasis of this short phrase; what awe, what closeness, what personality, what a majestic presence they imply. There is no escape, no evasion, not an attempt at it. He stands or lies before God, "naked and open." III. THE GRACIOUS CONSEQUENCES. "I abhor myself, and repent." Those are gracious consequences. The unconverted may shrink from them, but the people of God covet them. Job had been entertaining a vast amount of self-complacency, which generated pride and a refined idolatry. He had been petulant, impatient, imperious. This is what he alludes to when he says, "I abhor myself." Now I perceive myself to be loathsome, corrupt, brutish, guilty, miserable. Was not that a gracious consequence of his vivid realisation of God? Then he adds, "I repent." He repented of his self-sufficiency, of his charging God foolishly, of his irritation under His rebukes, of his exalting himself above his fellows, of his hastiness in speech with them, &c. The regenerate amongst you will not limit your repentance to your grievous offences, you will mourn over what defiles the white linen within, our sinful aims, motives, desires, our opposition to God, reproaches of God, murmurings against God. (*J. Bolton, B.A.*) **Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.**—*A view of the glory of God humbling to the soul:*—Though Job had supported the truth on the subject of Divine providence, yet in the heat of the debate and the anguish of his own sufferings he had let fall some expressions, not only of impatience, but of disrespect to the conduct of the Lord his Maker. For these he was first reproved by Elihu, and then by God Himself, who asserts the dignity of His power and the righteousness of His providence. Perhaps God gave Job some visible representation of His glory and omnipotence. I. THE EFFECT OF A DISCOVERY OF THE GLORY OF GOD. Attend to the following preliminary remarks. 1. This truth (that a view of the glory humbles the soul) will hold equally certain in whatever way the discovery is made. God manifests Himself to His people in very different ways. In miraculous ways; by affecting dispensations of providence; by His ordinances, or instituted worship, accompanied with the operation of His Spirit; and sometimes by this last alone, without the help or accession of any outward mean. 2. We may add the manifestations given us in the Gospel of the Divine glory. 3. When I speak of the influence of a discovery of the glory of God, I mean an internal and spiritual discovery, and not such a knowledge as is merely speculative, and rests in the understanding without descending into the heart. A barren speculative knowledge of God is that which fixes chiefly on His natural perfections. The true knowledge of God is an inward and spiritual discovery of the amiableness and excellence of His moral perfections. What influence has such a discovery of the glory of God in producing a repentance, and increasing humility? 1. It tends to convince us of sin, and particularly to bring to light those innumerable evils which a deceitful heart often hides from our view. There is a light and glory in the presence of God which discovers and exposes the works of darkness. Nothing makes any quality appear so sensibly as a comparison with its opposite. 2. It serves to point out the evil of sin, the aggravations of particular sins, and to take away the excuses of the sinner. 3. It serves to point out the dangers of sin. It is the hope of immunity that emboldens the sinner to transgress, and to persist in his transgressions. But a discovery of the Divine glory at once destroys the foundation of this stupid security and impious presumption. "All things are naked before Him," so that there is no hope of lying concealed. God in Scripture reveals the glory of His own nature as the effectual means of restraining us in the commission of sin, or turning us from it; plainly supposes that nothing but ignorance of Him can encourage sinners in their rebellion. 4. It tends to lead us to repentance, as it sets forth His infinite mercy, and affords encouragement to, as well as points out the profit of repentance. Just and proper conceptions of God cannot be given us without including His great mercy. It is in the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ that we have the brightest and clearest display of Divine mercy. II. PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT. 1. Learn the force and meaning of those passages of Scripture, in which the whole of religion is expressed by the knowledge of God. 2. The great danger of a state of ignorance,

3. The necessity of regeneration, or an inward change of heart, in order to real religion. Finally, address those who are strangers to true religion. See also the reason why every truly good man, the more he groweth in religion, the more he groweth in humility. (*J. Witherspoon, D.D.*) *Knowledge of God and self simultaneous*:—Other knowledge discovers other things, but not a man's self; like a dark lantern, which shows us other persons and things, but obscures ourselves from the sight of ourselves; but the knowledge of God is such a light whereby a man beholds himself as well as the way wherein he should walk. (*S. Charnock.*) *Humility and self-abhorrence*:—The moral of this book is, that man must be abased, and God alone exalted. Humility and self-abhorrence form so essential a part of the Christian temper, that no person can be a real Christian who is destitute of them. Job was on the side of truth so far as related to his own sincerity and the dispensations of providence. But his importunate wishes after death, his confident appeals to God for the perfect innocence of his heart and ways, his peevish exclamations in the heat of the debate, and his rash arraignment of the Divine justice in afflicting him so severely, are quite unjustifiable, and plainly prove that he was unacquainted with the evil of his own heart, and had too good an opinion of his own righteousness. On the discovery of the Divine glory and perfections, the sufferer is deeply humbled. He no longer stands upon his vindication with God, but his pleas are silenced, and he is abased in the dust with a sense of his guilt and unworthiness. This is a truth which we are all unwilling to learn. It is with the utmost difficulty we are brought to see and confess that we are such sinners as the Word of God declares us to be. Salvation by Christ was contrived on purpose, that no flesh should glory in themselves, but in the Lord. The reason why so many have slight views of the evil of sin, and continue in the practice of it, without any apprehension of danger, is, because they are ignorant of God. (*W. Richardson.*) *Self-abasement for sin*:—No one can be perfect who commits sin at all, and "all have sinned," so we must include Job among the number. He was sincere, but when he was brought into more close communion with God, he saw his own vileness in a degree in which he had never perceived it before. Similar has been the happy experience of many of God's children in every age. The more we are humbled under a sense of our own sinfulness, the more we shall see the need of the perfect and completed work of Christ. Let us examine ourselves, and see what we can say to our own consciences and to God, as to the state of our souls before Him. Have we grown in grace? Has improvement kept pace with knowledge? Have you been content with the mere acknowledgment of yourself as a sinner? Or is the remembrance of your sins grievous to you, and the burden of them intolerable? Let me exhort you to "think on these things, and to consider your latter end." (*F. Orpen Morris, B.A.*) *Job's repentance*:—The intervention of the Deity in the magnificent last act of the drama is an intervention rather of majesty than of explanation. In the revelation of God in any one of His attributes, in the manifestations of the fountain of being in any form of reality, lies the germ at least of all satisfaction and of all comfort. . . . The point and moral of the book does not lie in the sinfulness of the chief actor. All else is subordinated to this main point, the beautiful and glorious steadfastness of the godly man under temptation. If this is so, how shall we read, and how interpret the words of the text itself? It might be thought that the thing which God accepted in Job was this self-abasement and self-abhorrence before the manifested glory. The text carries us from the godly or Godward sorrow which worketh repentance, to that repentance itself, which is unto salvation. 1. The very narrow and limited view commonly taken of repentance. As though repentance were either a regretful and sorrowful backward looking upon some particular sin or sins; or, at best, an altered mind towards that particular kind and shape of sinning. But repentance is not the necessity of some; it is the necessity of all. Repentance is not an act, but a state; not a feeling, but a disposition; not a thought, but a mind. Repentance is too real a grace to live in the ideal. Of course, if there are sins in sight, past or present, repentance begins with these. It is of the nature of repentance to be quick-sighted, and quick-souled, and quick-conscienced; she cannot dwell complacently with evil, be it but in memory. But she goes far, far deeper than any particular exhibition or ebullition of evil. Repentance is the consciousness, not of sins, but of sin—the consciousness of sinfulness as the root and ground of all sinning. The new mind, the "after-mind," according to the Greek word for repentance, is the mind which eschews the fallen state, the taint and bias

of evil, which is what we mean, or ought to mean, by original sin. Thus a deep, pervading humility, a lowly self-estimate, what our Lord speaks of as "poverty of spirit," takes a possession not to be disturbed of the very thought and soul of the man. This is one part of the grace. 2. The connection of repentance with what is here called the sight of God. This is contrasted with another thing which is called the hearing of God by the hearing of the ear. We are not to dream of any literal sight. It is a figurative contrast between hearing of and seeing. The former is a hearer hearing; the latter is a direct communication, like that face to face vision, which has nothing between the person seeing and the person looked upon. The experience spoken of is always the turning-point between the two kinds of repentance. We have all heard of God by the hearing of the ear. The Godward sorrow, before it reaches repentance, has had another experience. It has seen God; it has realised the Invisible. The Godward sorrow will grow with each access to the God who breathes it, and repentance itself will be seen as the gift of gifts, foretaste of heaven below, and atmosphere of heaven above. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Experiences of the inner life*:—Human sin is the prime fact with which the Gospel deals, and to which all its provisions of grace are adapted. Whatever estimate we form of it must, therefore, necessarily extend throughout the whole of our religion, both doctrinal and practical. Enlarge your estimate of sin, or depreciate it, and you either raise or lower in the same degree your estimate of the Gospel, alike as regards the work of atonement accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ in His life and death, and as regards the work of conversion and sanctification by the Holy Spirit of God. The general estimate of human sin falls much below the positive language of the Church. The objection to the Church doctrine of sin appears to be threefold. The doctrine of the utter corruption of human nature offends self-respect, and is thought not only to lower, but even to degrade the man, of whose faith it forms a part. Extending this feeling of the individual to mankind at large, it is supposed to affront the conscious dignity of human nature and the nobility of the soul of man. And further extending the thought from ourselves to the scheme of God's saving love towards us, it is thought to deprive the Gospel of its genial beauty, and to make it harsh, distasteful, and unloving. The estimate of sin implied in these difficulties is a profound mistake. A true doctrine of sin elevates the man, not degrades him; the sense of sin is a sign of strength and knowledge, not of weakness and ignorance, exalting human nature, and making it greater, alike in the memories of the past, the magnificent hopes of the future, and the condition of the present. It gives loveliness and glory to the whole Gospel scheme, and invests it with a captivating power over the human heart otherwise unknown. I. LOOK AT THE SENSE OF SIN IN THE INDIVIDUAL. Place in as sharp a contrast as our personal experience may enable us to do, the two states of the man, converted and unconverted. What is the difference that has been made between them? The man has lost nothing except his pride. He has not deteriorated one whit since the change. He has gained a new ideal, a higher conception of moral goodness, a loftier standard by which to measure himself. A man grows into his aims, and rises or sinks with them. The man satisfied with his own work can never be great. It is the same with the conscience that it is with the intellect. The same laws pervade all our nature. The man who has acquired a sense of sin has simply grown. How has this conception been gained? The text gives the answer. The soul of Job was filled with deepest humiliation. Now there had flashed upon his soul an actual vision of God. The words "now mine eye seeth Thee" express inward sight, not outward. It is remarkable that Job saw God mainly in His immensity and sovereignty, for to these, rather than His moral attributes, the words of God refer. In that sight Job saw the infinite distance between God and himself. II. WHEN WE LOOK TO THE AGGREGATE OF MANKIND THE SENSE OF SIN SUGGESTS THE GRANDEUR OF HUMAN NATURE. The human nature is a fallen thing, sadly different to what it was when it came first from the Creator's hand, the finite reflection of His own infinite perfections. If human nature be not fallen, then all its sins and sorrows are an essential part of itself, and never can be otherwise. The man was made thus. What hope can there ever be of change? III. THE DOCTRINE OF SIN GIVES SUCH A HEIGHT AND DEPTHS OF GLORY TO THE GOSPEL AS IT CAN POSSESS IN NO OTHER WAY. From this alone we understand the occasion of the Gospel, and see the necessity for it. The greatness and value of a remedy can only be commensurate with the evil that it cures. I do not say that sin is a good or

noble thing. The sense of sin is a prelude to the song of triumph. (*E. Garbett, M.A.*) *Humiliation and exaltation* :—Something more was needed to be wrought in Job's heart. A great work had been wrought there, when he was brought to exclaim, "Behold, I am vile." But still he must descend a step lower. The valley of humiliation is very deep, and the sufferer must go down to its very lowest point. This Job did when he spoke the words of the text. But how do these words show more humiliation than the preceding ones, "Behold, I am vile"? It is a question which may well be asked. Something was still wanting in him. And as the last confession was the end of his trial, we may still further conclude that what was wanting before was then attained. It must strike us that the last is in every respect a more full expression—a manifest expansion of the former. In that Job acknowledged his exceeding sinfulness, and was silent before God. But in this he confesses what he had overlooked before, the power and omniscience of God, and he enters into a more detailed acknowledgment of his sins. Look a little, first, into the progress of Job's inner life. His former knowledge he compares to the hearing of the ear, his latter experience to the sight of the eye. Job does not mean to express that, before this affliction, he was entirely destitute of all saving knowledge of God. The words, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear," taken by themselves, and without reference to Job's history, might mean this. His words must be understood in a comparative, not in an absolute sense. Job means to describe his progress in the knowledge of God, and this he does by comparing it to the two senses of hearing and sight. And this comparison is very instructive; for the ear, as compared with the eye, is a very imperfect medium of knowledge. Do you see, then, the difference between the two degrees of knowledge? In the first there may be tolerably clear apprehensions of God, accompanied by some fear and love. The characteristic of the second is that God's presence impresses the heart. It is the precious knowledge of God in Christ which those have who walk by living faith—who enjoy constant communion with God, who live on Jesus. Some there are who, through grace, walk in this blessed vision of God; God is near them, and they realise His nearness. To see God, remember that you must behold Him in Christ Jesus. But the increase of light, in Job's case, was followed by a depth of humiliation. Job was a believer, and therefore a penitent man long before this. It was a repentance for sins committed after he knew God—for sins of self-righteousness, of impatience, of murmuring. It is not enough to repent once only, when we are first brought to God. We need constant repentance. (*George Wagner.*) *Man's worse self* :—After all, were the charges brought by the three friends against the patriarch just? Was he in the end proved to be the transgressor and the self-deceiver which they had affirmed from the beginning he was? If not, what means this confession, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes," extorted from him at this late hour? "I abhor myself, and repent," sounds very differently from his former asseverations. How are we to explain the incongruity? This confession, in the text, is unquestionable evidence that in no respect was Job hypocritical. Considering what had come to pass, the abhorrence of himself which he now expressed was a stronger testimony that there was no unrighteousness in him than all his previous self-justification. Had there been a doubt of his integrity before, there could have been none now. But was it the same person who said, "I abhor myself and repent," and was he in the same state when he said it, as when he said, "My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go"? Yea, the very same. The very opposition of the language, coupled with the variation of the accessories, demonstrates the identity of the speaker. What had happened? God appeared, "walking upon the wings of the wind," had confronted the patriarch, and pleaded His cause; hence, the subdued and self-despising tone of his reply; and hence, neither by his Divine Justifier, nor his human accusers, could anything be added to it, nor anything be taken from it. It was the free confession of a perfect man, humble and abasing as it was. How is the apparent discrepancy to be explained? In the presence of God man is very differently affected by the sight of himself than when in the presence of his fellows. The difference of self-estimate here is the difference between man in man's sight and in God's, and this alone. In the presence of his fellows man doth not clearly see himself, any more than he seeth them clearly. We know neither the worst about the bad in this world, neither the best about the good. Overhanging the world is a moral haze. If it hinder us from the perception of some excellence, it also prevents our seeing much depravity. When a man "cometh to God," or rather God come to him, the

man "cometh to the light." When a man seeth himself in the blaze of that "Sun of Righteousness," compared with whose brightness the sun in the material heavens is as a dark ball, he is at once made conscious of a number of flaws and failings, faults and fallacies in the moral constitution, of which he may have had no previous knowledge; and which, had not He who is the source of light and love darted His heavenly beams into the secret corners of "the chambers of his imagery" within, he might have remained ignorant for ever. Man is a two-sided being. In his moral aspects he is by turns a dwarf and a giant. He possesses a better self and a worse. He hath a sincere and an evil double. No man ever had his good self built up within him, who was not constantly upon his guard against his bad self. What then is the difference between man and man? It is that one man is duly mindful of the phenomenon, and another is not. It behoves us then to determine which side of our nature we will take: and having taken it, to beseech of God that we may never desert it, or go over to the other. According to the side we habitually take, we are what we are; and such do we appear to the world, and the world to us. On the sunny side of the road all things look sunny; on the opposite all things look shaded. He who acts from the worst side is against God; and he who is against God is against himself; as he who is not on God's side is no longer on his own. (*Alfred Bowen Evans.*) *The sinner's mourning habit:*—The Lord hath many messengers by whom He solicits man. But none despatcheth His business surer or sooner than affliction. If that fail of bringing a man home, nothing can do it. Job was not ignorant of God before, when he sat in the sunshine of peace. But he says that, in his prosperity, he had only heard of God; now, in his trial, he had seen Him. When we hear a man described, our imagination conceives an idea or form of him but darkly; if we see him, and intentively look upon him, there is an impression of him in our minds. Such a more full and perfect apprehension of God did calamity work in this holy man. Here is a Jacob's ladder, but of four rounds. Divinity is the highest. "I have seen Thee; therefore." Mortality is the lowest. "Dust and ashes." Between these sit two others, "shame," and "sorrow"; no man can abhor himself without shame, nor repent without sorrow. "Wherefore." This refers to the motive that humbled him; and that appears by the context to be a double meditation—one of God's majesty, another of His mercy. Put both these together, and here is matter of humiliation. "Even to dust and ashes." Humility is not only a virtue itself, but a vessel to contain other virtues. The children of grace have learned to think well of other people, and to abhor themselves. He that repents truly, abhors himself. "I repent." Repentance hath much acquaintance in the world, and few friends; it is better known than practised, and yet not more known than trusted. It is every man's medicine, a universal antidote. Repentance is the fair gift of God. There is no other fortification against the judgments of God but repentance. "In dust and ashes." An adorned body is not a vehicle for a humbled soul. Repentance gives a farewell not only to wonted delights, but even to natural refreshings. In both dust and ashes we have a lesson of our mortality. I call you not to cast dust on your heads, or to sit in ashes, but to that sorrow and compunction of soul whereof the other was but an external symbol. Let us rend our hearts, and not our garments. (*T. Adams.*) *Job among the ashes:*—In the confession that now lies before us, Job acknowledges God's boundless power. He sees his own folly. Notwithstanding, the man of God proceeds to draw near unto the Lord, before whom he bows himself. Foolish as he confesses himself, he does not therefore fly from the supreme wisdom. I. WE HAVE SOMETIMES VERY VIVID IMPRESSIONS OF GOD. Job had long before heard of God, and that is a great matter. If you have heard God in the secret of your soul, you are a spiritual man; for only a spirit can hear the Spirit of God. Now Job has a more vivid apprehension of Him. Notice that in order to this close vision of God affliction had overtaken him. In prosperity God is heard; in adversity God is seen, and that is a greater blessing. Possibly helpful also to this seeing God, was Job's desertion by his friends. Still, before Job could see the Lord, there was a special manifestation on God's part to him. God must really come and in a gracious way make a display of Himself to His servants, or else they will not see Him. Your afflictions will not of themselves reveal God to you. If the Lord does not Himself unveil His face, your sorrow may even blind and harden you, and make you rebellious. II. WHEN WE HAVE THESE VIVID APPREHENSIONS OF GOD, WE HAVE LOWLIER VIEWS OF OURSELVES. Why

are the wicked so proud? Because they forget God. 1. God Himself is the measure of rectitude, and hence, when we come to think of God, we soon discover our own shortcomings and transgressions. Too often we compare ourselves among ourselves, and are not wise. If thou wouldest be right, thou must measure thyself with the holiness of God. When I think of this, self-righteousness seems to me to be a wretched insanity. If you would know what God is, He sets Himself before us in the person of His own dear Son. In every respect in which we fall short of the perfect character of Jesus, in that respect we sin. 2. God Himself is the object of every transgression, and this sets sin in a terrible light. See then the impertinence of sin. How dare we transgress against God! The fact that sin is levelled at God makes us bow in lowliness. When God is seen with admiration, then of necessity we are filled with self-loathing. Do you know what self-loathing means? III. SUCH A SIGHT FILLS THE HEART WITH TRUE REPENTANCE. What did Job repent of? 1. Of that tremendous curse which he had pronounced upon the day of his birth. 2. Of his desire to die. 3. Of all his complaints against God. 4. Of his despair. 5. Of his rash challenges of God. According to our text, repentance puts man into the lowest place. All real repentance is joined with holy sorrow and self-loathing. But repentance has comfort in it. The door of repentance opens into the halls of joy. Job's repentance in dust and ashes was the sign of his deliverance. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 7–9. **My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends.**—*Job's friends condemned, and he acquitted:*—These words suggest the following reflections. I. GOD IS AN AUDITOR TO ALL THE DISCUSSIONS OF MANKIND. If men realised this, all frivolous, vain, ill-natured, deceitful, profane, irreverent, and untruthful speech will be hushed. II. THE PROFESSED ADVOCATES OF RELIGION MAY COMMIT SIN IN THEIR ADVOCACY. These three men were engaged in an endeavour to vindicate the ways of God. They considered Job a great heretic; and they took on themselves to stand up for God and truth. Notwithstanding this, they had not spoken of Him the thing that was right. There are professed advocates of religion who speak not "the thing that is right" concerning God. III. A PRACTICAL CONFESSION OF SIN IS THE DUTY OF ALL SINNERS. "Take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering," &c. IV. INTERCESSION OF ONE MAN FOR ANOTHER IS A DIVINE LAW. "Go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept." 1. Intercessory prayer is an instinct of the soul. Nothing is more natural than to cry to heaven on behalf of those in whom we feel a vital interest. 2. Intercessory prayer is a blessing to the soul. V. THE LIFE OF A GOOD MAN IS A BLESSING TO A COMMUNITY. "My servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept; lest I deal with you after your folly." For Job's sake these men were forgiven and blessed. God educates, saves, and ennobles man by man. (*Homilist.*) **As My servant Job hath.**—*My servant Job:*—Look at Job in his misery. Now comes the problem. Why this sudden, this awful change? Morally, spiritually, religiously, this man is just what he was before. The friends vainly tried to account for it on the score of his own ill-doings and moral defects. Job victoriously repels all their charges and insinuations. Elihu tries to meet the case by arguing that "God is greater than man." How can the finite have the infinite made simple? You cannot pour the ocean into a pond. Though we cannot understand His matters, yet He has revealed enough of Himself and His doings, and more than enough, to show us that trust in His providence, loyalty to His rule, and hope in His Word is gloriously certain to result in our safety and security, our sustentation and deliverance, our ultimate prosperity and peace. "My servant Job." God calls him by that name in the days of his wealth and prosperity. Riches and grace can go together. God calls him by the same name before ever the days of testing, trial, and calamity came upon him. The expression is used by the Almighty at the end of the book as well as at the beginning, and what was Job's condition then? Just before this was said, Job had uttered hard things of his God,—of His government, of His dealings with himself. Even when God came to speak to him he was sullen under a sense of wrong. And yet, in spite of all his faults, infirmities, and sins, the Lord lays His hand lovingly on his bended head, and fondly owns him, in the presence of his three friends, as "My servant Job." (*J. Jackson Wray.*) *In the wrong:*—It is not the first time in the history of the world that the majority of religious professors have

been wrong. The solitary thinker, the philosopher, the heretic, the forlorn monk, the rejected of his day, has been sometimes, even in spite of many errors, in the right. That little group in that unknown land of Uz, who tried to silence the one among them who was in his wild cries and low wails the herald and the apostle of a truth that was one day to be embodied in the symbol of Christ's religion—they warn us against thinking that truth is always to be found on the side of numbers, that the God of truth marches always with the largest battalions. How startling to those who heard them, how instructive to us who read them, are the words which we shall find when next we meet, "Ye who have been so earnest, so rigid in justifying My ways, and asserting My righteousness; ye have not spoken the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath." (*Dean Bradley.*)

Ver. 10. **And the Lord turned the captivity of Job.** — *The turning of Job's captivity* :—Since God is immutable He acts always upon the same principles, and hence His course of action in the olden times to a man of a certain sort will be a guide as to what others may expect who are of like character. God does not act by caprice, nor by fits and starts. We are not all like Job, but we all have Job's God. Though we have neither risen to Job's wealth, nor will, probably, ever sink to Job's poverty, yet there is the same God above us if we be high, and the same God with His everlasting arms beneath us if we be brought low; and what the Lord did for Job He will do for us, not precisely in the same form, but in the same spirit, and with like design. If, therefore, we are brought low to-night, let us be encouraged with the thought that God will turn again our captivity; and let us entertain the hope that after the time of trial shall be over we shall be richer, especially in spiritual things, than ever we were before. I. First, then, THE LORD CAN SOON TURN HIS PEOPLE'S CAPTIVITY. That is a very remarkable expression—"captivity." It does not say, "God turned his poverty," though Job was reduced to the extremity of penury. We do not read that the Lord turned his sickness, though he was covered with sore boils. A man may be very poor, and yet not in captivity, his soul may ing among the angels when his body is on a dunghill, and dogs are licking his sores. A man may be very sick, and yet not be in captivity; he may be roaming the broad fields of covenant mercy, though he cannot rise from his bed. Captivity is bondage of mind, the iron entering into the soul. I suspect that Job, under the severe mental trial which attended his bodily pains, was, as to his spirit, like a man bound hand and foot and fettered. I mean that, together with the trouble and trial to which he was subjected, he had lost somewhat the presence of God; much of his joy and comfort had departed; the peace of his mind had gone. He could only follow the occupation of a captive, that is, to be oppressed, to weep, to claim compassion, and to pour out a dolorous complaint. Poor Job! He is less to be pitied for his bereavements, poverty, and sickness, than for his loss of that candle of the Lord which once shone about his head. Touch a man in his bone, and in his flesh, and yet he may exult; but touch him in his mind—let the finger of God be laid upon his spirit—and then, indeed, he is in captivity. The Lord can deliver us out of spiritual captivity, and that very speedily. Some feel everything except what they want to feel. They enjoy no sweetness in the means of grace, and yet for all the world they would not give them up. They used at one time to rejoice in the Lord; but now they cannot see His face, and the utmost they can say is, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" Therefore, mark well this cheering truth—God can turn your captivity, and turn it at once. Some of God's children seem to think that to recover their former joy must occupy a long period of time. It is true, that if you had to work your passage back to where you came from it would be a weary voyage. He will vouchsafe to you the conscious enjoyment of His presence on the same terms as at first, that is, on terms of free and sovereign grace. Did you not at that time admit the Saviour to your soul because you could not do without Him? Is it not a good reason for receiving Him again? Was there anything in you when you received Him which could commend you to Him? Say, were you not all over defilement, and full of sin and misery? And yet you opened the door, and said, "My Lord, come in, in Thy free grace: come in, for I must have Thee, or I perish." Having begun to live by grace, wouldst thou go on to live by works? Well do I know what it is to feel this wondrous power of God to turn our captivity. The Lord does not take days, months, weeks, or even hours to do His work of revival in our souls. He made the world in six days, but He

lit it up in an instant with one single word. He can do the same as to our temporal captivity. Now, it may be I address some friend who has been a great sufferer through pecuniary losses. The Lord can turn your captivity. When Job had lost everything, God readily gave him all back. "Yes," say you, "but that was a very remarkable case." I grant you that, but then we have to do with a remarkable God, who works wonders still. If you consider the matter you will see that it was quite as remarkable a thing that Job should lose all his property as it was that he should get it back again. If you had walked over Job's farm at first, and seen the camels and the cattle, if you had gone into his house and seen the furniture and the grandeur of his state, and if you had gone to his children's house, and seen the comfort in which they lived, you would have said, "Why, this is one of the best-established men in all the land of Uz. I have heard of great fortunes collapsing, but then they were built on speculations. They were only paper riches, made up of bills and the like; but in the case of this man there are oxen, sheep, camels, and land, and these cannot melt into thin air. Job has a good substantial estate, I cannot believe that ever he will come to poverty." Surely if God could scatter such an estate as that He could, with equal ease, bring it back again. But this is what we do not always see. We see the destructive power of God, but we are not very clear about the up-building power of God. Yet surely it is more consonant with the nature of God that He should give than take, and more like Him that He should caress than chastise. Does He not always say that judgment is His strange work? When the Lord went about to enrich His servant Job again, He went about that work, as we say, *con amore*—With heart and soul. He was doing then what He delights to do, for God's happiness is never more clearly seen than when He is distributing the largesses of His love. Why can you not look at your own circumstances in the same light? The Lord can turn the captivity of His people. You may apply the truth to a thousand different things. You Sunday-school teachers, if you have had a captivity in your class, and no good has been done, God can change that. You ministers, if for a long time you have ploughed and sowed in vain, the Lord can turn your captivity there. You wives who have been praying for your husbands, you fathers who have been pleading for your children, and have seen no blessing yet, the Lord can turn your captivity in those respects.

II. THERE IS GENERALLY SOME POINT AT WHICH THE LORD INTERPOSES TO TURN THE CAPTIVITY OF HIS PEOPLE. In Job's case, I have no doubt, the Lord turned his captivity, as far as the Lord was concerned, because the grand experiment which had been tried on Job was now over. The suggestion of Satan was that Job was selfish in his piety—that he found honesty to be the best policy, and therefore he was honest—that godliness was gain, and therefore he was godly. The devil generally does one of two things. Sometimes he tells the righteous that there is no reward for their holiness, and then they say, "Surely, I have cleansed my heart in vain and washed my hands in innocency"; or else he tells them that they only obey the Lord because they have a selfish eye to the reward. God puts His servants sometimes into these experiments that He may test them, that Satan himself may know how true-hearted God's grace has made them, and that the world may see how they can play the man. Good engineers, if they build a bridge, are glad to have a train of enormous weight go over it. I am sure that if any of you had invented some implement requiring strength you would be glad to have it tested, and the account of the successful trial published abroad. "Do your worst or do your best, it is a good instrument; do what you like with it"; so the maker of a genuine article is accustomed to speak; and the Lord seems to say the same concerning His people. "My work of grace in them is mighty and thorough. Test it, Satan; test it, world; test it by bereavements, losses, and reproaches: it will endure every ordeal." And when it is tested, and bears it all, then the Lord turns the captivity of His people, for the experiment is complete. Most probably there was, in Job's character, some fault from which his trial was meant to purge him. If he erred at all, probably it was in having a somewhat elevated idea of himself and a stern manner towards others. A little of the elder-brother spirit may, perhaps, have entered into him. When, through the light of trial, and the yet greater light of God's glorious presence, Job saw himself unveiled, he abhorred himself in dust and ashes. You see, the trial had reached its point. It had evidently been blessed to Job, and it had proved Satan to be a liar, and so now the fire of the trial goes out, and like precious metal the patriarch comes forth from the furnace brighter than ever.

I will try and indicate, briefly, when I think God may turn your trial. 1. Sometimes He does so when that trial has discovered to you your especial sin. 2. Perhaps, too, your turning-point will be when your spirit is broken. We are by nature a good deal like horses that want breaking in, or, to use a scriptural simile, we are as "bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke." Well, the horse has to go through certain processes in the *menage* until at last it is declared to be "thoroughly broken in," and we need similar training. You and I are not yet quite broken in, I am afraid. 3. Sometimes, again, trial may cease when you have learned the lesson which it was intended to teach you, as to some point of Gospel truth. "It is enough; I have taught my child the lesson, and I will let him go." 4. I think, too, it may be with some of us that God gives us trouble until we obtain a sympathetic spirit. How can a man sympathise with trouble that he never knew? How can he be tender in heart if he has never been touched with infirmity himself? If one is to be a comforter to others, he must know the sorrows and the sicknesses of others in his measure. 5. In Job's case the Lord turned his captivity when he prayed for his friends. Prayer for ourselves is blessed work, but for the child of God it is a higher exercise to become an intercessor, and to pray for others. Prayer for ourselves, good as it is, has just a touch of selfishness about it; prayer for others is delivered from that ingredient. III. That BELIEVERS SHALL NOT BE LOSERS FOR THEIR GOD. God, in the experiment, took from Job all that he had, but at the end He gave him back twice as much as he had. If a man should take away my silver and give me twice the weight in gold in return, should I not be thankful? And so, if the Lord takes away temporals and gives us spirituals, He thus gives us a hundred times more than He takes away. You shall never lose anything by what you suffer for God. If, for Christ's sake you are persecuted, you shall receive in this life your reward; but if not, rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in heaven. You shall not lose anything by God's afflicting you. You shall, for a time, be an apparent loser; but a real loser in the end you shall never be. We serve a good Master, and if He chooses to try us for a little we will bear our trial cheerfully, for God will turn our captivity ere long. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Prosperity restored:*— The Book of Job resembles a drama. An English biblical scholar calls it "the Prometheus or the Faust of the most complete age of Jewish civilisation." What, as illustrated in the story of Job, is the ripe result of affliction? 1. A true knowledge of God (ver. 2). He had assumed that he, a finite man, could understand the mystery of God's providence. He had held a theory of religion which made prosperity the reward of goodness, and suffering the effect and evidence of sin, and which denied that the latter could ever befall the godly. By the calamities which overtook him, while conscious of his integrity, this theory had been violently shaken. It seemed to him that the Almighty had set him up as a mark for His arrows, without any cause. In the stupor of his distress and amazement he had sat down in the ashes in silent misery and brooded like one in a trance over the perplexing mystery. His heart ran over in the fulness of its sorrow, and he uttered a cry of regret that he had ever been born. It seemed to him that God had utterly forgotten and cast off His child. No other composition so describes the wrestlings of a distressed human spirit with the mystery of sorrow, none breathes out such longings for death as a refuge and escape from trouble. In his conception God was a being of arbitrary purposes and action, who governed the world in veiled obscurity, remote, inaccessible to tender appeal, regardless of man's weal or woe. Out of the darkness we hear him call to the incomprehensible and invisible One. Who has not this feeling of uncertainty and remoteness toward God when in great trouble the soul gropes in the darkness for Him? Job reckoned not that man is incapable of judging the meaning of God's dark providences; that within the range of God's view there might be broad zones of light, though to his narrow vision all was dark; and that within the resources of God's omnipotent power there might be found stores of relief and goodness that should give a way of escape from his trouble far better than that offered by the grave. To this larger and truer view, however, he was brought at last. As we read the book from the beginning to the end, we can perceive the change of view gradually going on. In the struggle of his mind with the mystery of his sorrow, another conception of God is seen slowly shaping itself in his thoughts. God is not indifferent to our sorrows, neither does He recklessly inflict on us pain. 2. A second fruit of his affliction was a feeling of humility and penitence for his sin (vers. 3-6). All his upbraidings of God had been like the complaint of a foolish child. His proper

place was only that of an humble inquirer. God alone was able to answer the problems that environed his existence. He was humbled to the dust before the new view of God which dawned upon him. Spiritual conceit vanishes at the sight of the Holy One. The night of sorrow produces more than the day of prosperity. 3. The sufferer's manifest acceptance with God (vers. 7–10). Job was approved of God, while his three friends, who had seemed to be the special champions of God's truth, are condemned. The temper of the friends had grown more harsh, and their conduct more and more reprehensible. They sin against charity and truth. A lesson underlies the restoration. Job's earthly possessions may, without his being aware of it, have had too large a place in his heart. Now Job was able to use the world as not abusing it. One thought in conclusion. It is that when trouble comes and lies heavy on us, the thing to be done is not to long for death, or to accuse God of cruelty and injustice, but to be patient and wait for deliverance. (*Sermons by Monday Club.*) **When he prayed for his friends.**—*Intercessory prayer* :—"The Lord turned the captivity of Job." So, then, our longest sorrows have a close, and there is a bottom to the profoundest depths of our misery. Our winters shall not frown for ever; summer shall soon smile. The tide shall not eternally ebb out; the floods retrace their march. The night shall not hang its darkness for ever over our souls; the sun shall yet arise with healing beneath his wings—"The Lord turned again the captivity of Job." Our sorrows shall have an end when God has gotten His end in them. When Satan is defeated, then shall the battle cease. The Lord aimed also at the trial of Job's faith. Many weights were hung upon this palm-tree, but it still grew uprightly. Another purpose the Lord had was His own glory. And God was glorified abundantly. Job had glorified God on his dunghill; now let him magnify his Lord again upon his royal seat in the gate. God had another end, and that also was served. Job had been sanctified by his afflictions. His spirit had been mellowed. Thou hast had a long captivity in affliction. He shall make again thy vineyard to blossom, and thy field to yield her fruit. "The Lord turned again the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends." Intercessory prayer was the omen of his returning greatness. It was the bow in the cloud, the dove bearing the olive branch, the voice of the turtle announcing the coming summer. When his soul began to expand itself in holy and loving prayer for his erring brethren, then the heart of God showed itself to him by returning to him his prosperity without, and cheering his soul within. I. First, then, BY WAY OF COMMENDING THE EXERCISE, let me remind you that intercessory prayer has been practised by all the best of God's saints. Take Abraham, the father of the faithful. How earnestly did he plead for his son Ishmael! "O that Ishmael might live before Thee!" With what importunity did he approach the Lord on the plains of Mamre, when he wrestled with Him again and again for Sodom. Remember Moses, the most royal of men, whether crowned or uncrowned; how often did he intercede! But further, while we might commend this duty by quoting innumerable examples from the lives of eminent saints, it is enough for the disciple of Christ if we say that Christ in His Holy Gospel has made it your duty and your privilege to intercede for others. When He taught us to pray, he said, "Our Father," and the expressions which follow are not in the singular, but in the plural—"Give us this day our daily bread." If in the Bible there were no example of intercessory supplication, if Christ had not left it upon record that it was His will that we should pray for others, and even if we did not know that it was Christ's practice to intercede, yet the very spirit of our holy religion would constrain us to plead for others. Dost thou go up into thy closet, and in the face and presence of God think of none but thyself? Surely the love of Christ cannot be in thee, for the spirit of Christ is not selfish. No man liveth unto himself when once he has the love of Christ in him. I commend intercessory prayer, because it opens man's soul, gives a healthy play to his sympathies, constrains him to feel that he is not everybody, and that this wide world and this great universe were not, after all, made that he might be its petty lord, that everything might bend to his will, and all creatures crouch at his feet. It does him good, I say, to make him know that the cross was not uplifted alone for him, for its far-reaching arms were meant to drop with benedictions upon millions of the human race. I do not know anything which, through the grace of God, may be a better means of uniting us the one to the other than constant prayer for each other. Shall I need to say more in commendation of intercessory prayer except it be this, that it seems to me that when God gives

any man much grace, it must be with the design that he may use it for the rest of the family. I would compare you who have near communion with God to courtiers in the king's palace. What do courtiers do? Do they not avail themselves of their influence at court to take the petitions of their friends, and present them where they can be heard? This is what we call patronage—a thing with which many find fault when it is used for political ends, but there is a kind of heavenly patronage which you ought to use right diligently. II. We turn to our second point, and endeavour to say something BY WAY OF ENCOURAGEMENT, that you may cheerfully offer intercessory supplications. First, remember that intercessory prayer is the sweetest prayer God ever hears. Do not question it, for the prayer of Christ is of this character. In all the incense which now our Great High Priest puts into the censer, there is not a single grain that is for Himself. His work is done; His reward obtained. Now, you do not doubt but that Christ's prayer is the most acceptable of all supplications. Remember, again, that intercessory prayer is exceedingly prevalent. What wonders it has wrought! III. A SUGGESTION AS TO THE PERSONS FOR WHOM WE SHOULD MORE PARTICULARLY PRAY. It shall be but a suggestion, and I will then turn to my last point. 1. In the case of Job, he prayed for his offending friends. They had spoken exceedingly harshly of him. They had misconstrued all his previous life, and though there had never been a part of his character which deserved censure—for the Lord witnessed concerning him, that he was a perfect and an upright man—yet they accused him of hypocrisy, and supposed that all he did was for the sake of gain. Now, perhaps, there is no greater offence which can be given to an upright and a holy man, than to his face to suspect his motives and to accuse him of self-seeking. Carry your offending ones to the throne of God, it shall be a blessed method of proving the trueness of your forgiveness. 2. Again, be sure you take there your controverting friends. These brethren had been arguing with Job, and the controversy dragged its weary length along. It is better to pray than it is to controvert. You say, "Let two good men, on different sides, meet and fight the matter out." I say, "No! let the two good men meet and pray the matter out." He that will not submit his doctrine to the test of the mercy-seat, I should suspect is wrong. 3. This is the thing we ought also to do with our haughty friends. Eliphaz and Bildad were very high and haughty—Oh! how they looked down upon poor Job! They thought he was a very great sinner, a very desperate hypocrite; they stayed with him, but doubtless they thought it very great condescension. Why be angry with your brother because of his being proud? It is a disease, a very bad disease, that scarlet fever of pride; go and pray the Lord to cure him; your anger will not do it; it may puff him up, and make him worse than ever he was before, but it will not set him right. But particularly let me ask you to pray most for those who are disabled from praying for themselves. Job's three friends could not pray for themselves, because the Lord said He would not accept them if they did. He said He was angry with them, but as for Job, said He, "Him will I accept." Do not let me shock your feelings when I say there are some, even of God's people, who are not able to pray acceptably at certain seasons. IV. I have to EXHORT YOU TO PRAY FOR OTHERS. Do you always pray for others? Do you think you have taken the case of your children, your church, your neighbourhood, and the ungodly world before God as you ought to have done? I begin thus, by saying, how can you and I repay the debt we owe to the Church unless we pray for others? How was it that you were converted? It was because somebody else prayed for you. Now, if by others' prayers you and I were brought to Christ, how can we repay this Christian kindness, but by pleading for others? He who has not a man to pray for him may write himself down a hopeless character. Then, again, permit me to say, how are you to prove your love to Christ or to His Church if you refuse to pray for men? "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Christians are priests, but how priests if they offer no sacrifice? Christians are lights, but how lights unless they shine for others? Christians are sent into the world, even as Christ was sent into the world, but how sent unless they are sent to pray? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Intercession*:—God made an act of piety on the part of Job the condition of his restoration to his lost possessions and dignities. I. THE AGREEMENT OF THIS FACT WITH THE TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE. Honour is always put on intercession. It may be said that we see not how the blessing of one can be effected by the fervency or carelessness of another. But this reasoning would

put an end to all prayer and effort. For who can explain how our requests can affect the Divine will, or change the course of events? II. THE ENCOURAGEMENT HERE HELD FORTH TO US. Clear is the duty of intercession. Great is the honour, that we who are unworthy to pray for ourselves should be admitted as petitioners for others. Yet all will feel the need of encouragement in this duty. Sometimes by reason of sin and temptation the Christian cannot come to God in prayer. The best thing to do at such times is, pray for his friends. Thus his heart will be insensibly enlarged, and his spirit drawn heavenward. Whatever raises us out of our miserable slavery to ourselves augments devotional feeling. Some feel themselves desolate in the world, as if none knew their sorrows, or cared for their souls. But if they were frequent in intercession, the comfortable truth would come home to them, that all the children of God are, in private and public worship, really praying for them. Others sigh for a wider field of activity; but if they would give themselves to prayer for other workers, they would understand that they bear no mean or needless office in Christ's Church. In mutual and common prayer we shall find deliverance from the jealousies, suspicions, enmities and divisions which cramp and mar the spiritual life of the Church and her members. (*M. Biggs, M.A.*) *Preparation for success*:—A man of God is not prepared to enjoy success till he has tasted defeat. Many an heir of heaven will never be fit for heaven till first of all he has been brought near to the gates of hell. A traveller said to me, speaking of the heat, how different it is from cold; for the more you suffer heat, the less you can endure it; but the more you are tried with cold, the more you can bear it, for it hardens you. I am sure it is so as to the influences of prosperity and adversity. Prosperity softens and renders us unfit for more of itself; but adversity braces the soul, and hardens it to patience. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Self-triumph through self-forgetfulness*:—The climax in Job's life was the hour when, in his terrible desolation and sorrow, he ceased to think of himself, and began to pray for his friends. Even his oxen and asses came back to him, when, unmindful of his own poverty, he was busy seeking spiritual riches for others. Self-forgetfulness in work for others turns away many degrading captivities. 1. It saves us from the tyranny of an overweening self-conceit. Self-conceit blinds its victims. It blocks the doorway to true knowledge. It robs us of sympathy. Work for others rescues us from that dangerous tyrant, "Myself." 2. It rescues us from the slavish monotony and narrowness of a selfish life. We are told of a little street waif who was once taken to the house of a wealthy English lady. Looking about on the unaccustomed splendour, the child asked, "Can you get everything you want?" The mistress of the mansion replied, "Yes, I think so." "Can you buy anything you would like to have?" "Yes." The keen little eyes looked at her pityingly as she said, "Don't you find it dull?" Many a man and many a woman, given up to a life of simply looking after self, have found it intolerably dull, and have yawned themselves out of life from pure monotony. 3. It frees us from captivity to covetousness. Some men are human sponges that absorb all the good things of life they touch, but never give up anything unless they are squeezed so tight that they can't help doing it. God saves us frequently from this meanest of tyrants, by setting us to work to distribute what He has given us, for the benefit of others. Self-forgetfulness in work for others does also some positive things for us. It beautifies the character. (*L. A. Banks.*) *Job's prayer for his friends a moral victory*:—Notice that this flagellation by the three friends was premeditated. They did not merely happen in, and come suddenly upon trouble for which they could not offer a compound. The Bible says, "They had made an appointment together." The interview was prearranged. The meanness of the attack of these religious critics was augmented by the fact that they had the sufferer in their power. When we are well, and we do not like what one is saying, we can get up and go away. But Job was too ill to get up and go away. First he endured the seven days and seven nights of silence, and then he endured their arraignment of his motives and character, and after their cruel campaign was ended, by a sublime effort of soul, which I this day uphold for imitation, he triumphed in prayer for his tantalisers. In all history there is nothing equal to it, except the memorable imploration by Christ for His enemies. No wonder that after that prayer of Job was once uttered, a thrill of recovery shot through every nerve and vein of his tortured body, and every passion of his great soul; and God answered it by adding nearly a century and a half to his lifetime, and whitened the hills with flocks of sheep, and filled the air with the lowing of cattle, and wakened

the silent nursery of his home with the swift feet and the laughing voices of childhood—seven sons and three daughters celebrated for their beauty, the daughters to refine the sons, the sons to defend the daughters. There is nothing that pays so well as prayer, and the more difficult the prayer to make, the greater the reward for making it. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Prayer for others salutary* :—Now, will you please explain to me how Job's prayer for his friends halted his catastrophes. Give me some good reason why Job on his knees in behalf of the welfare of others arrested the long procession of calamities. Mind you, it was not prayer for himself, for then the cessation of his troubles would have been only another instance of prayer answered, but the portfolio of his disaster was rolled up while he supplicated God in behalf of Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. I must confess to you that I had to read the text over and over again before I got its full meaning. "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends." Well, if you will not explain it to me, I will explain it to you. The healthiest, the most recuperative thing on earth to do is to stop thinking so much about ourselves and go to thinking about the welfare of others. Job had been studying his misfortunes, but the more he thought about his bankruptcy, the poorer he seemed; the more he thought of his carbuncles, the worse they hurt; the more he thought of his unfortunate marriage, the more intolerable became the conjugal relation; the more he thought of his house blown down. the more terrific seemed the cyclone. His misfortunes grew blacker and blacker. But there was to come a reversal of these sad conditions. One day he said to himself, "I have been dwelling too much on my bodily ailments, and my wife's temper, and my bereavements. It is time I began to think about others and do something for others, and I will start now by praying for my three friends." Then Job dropped upon his knees, and as he did so, the last shackle of his captivity of trouble snapped and fell off. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 12–17. **So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job.**—*The limitation of Job's blessings to this life* :—Is there not something incongruous in the large award of temporal good, and even something unnecessary in the renewed honour among men? To us it seems that a good man will be satisfied with the favour and fellowship of a loving God. Yet, assuming that the conclusion is a part of the history on which the poem was founded, we can justify the blaze of splendour that bursts on Job after sorrow, instruction, and reconciliation. Life only can reward life. That great principle was rudely shadowed forth in the old belief that God protects His servants even to a green old age. Job had lived strongly, alike in mundane and moral region. How is he to find continued life? The author's power could not pass the limits of the natural to promise a reward. Not yet was it possible, even for a great thinker, to affirm that continued fellowship with Eloah, that continued intellectual and spiritual energy that we call eternal life. A vision of it had come to him; he had seen the day of the Lord afar off, but dimly, by moments. To carry a life into it was beyond his power. Sheol made nothing perfect; and beyond Sheol no prophet eye had ever travelled. There was nothing for it then, but to use the history as it stood, adding symbolic touches, and show the restored life in development on earth, more powerful than ever, more esteemed, more richly endowed for good action. Priestly office and power are given to Job. Wider opportunities for service, more cordial esteem and affection, the highest office that man can bear, these are the reward of Job. And with the terms of the symbolism we shall not quarrel who have heard the Lord say, "Well done, thou good servant; because thou wast found faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities." (*R. A. Watson.*) *Light at eventide* :—Have not some of us had experience in the glorious Alps, when, on nearly reaching the top, we have been surrounded by clouds, mist filled the air, the tempest hurtled around us; and we sat down utterly disappointed in our hope of a glorious view, and ready to wail with despair at a lost day, a lost prospect, a lost joy? But by and by a strong wind swept the heavens and revealed the beauty of the skies! There stood the white throne of the Monta Rosa. and yonder the magnificent Matterhorn, and as the evening sun bathed it in rosy glory we have stood lost in admiration. "At evening time it was light." Have not you and I had experiences in the past like that? Ah! we have, and realised the blessed hope. We cannot give up in despair, even in times of trial. Many are the experiences of this kind in the history of God's people. Look at poor old Jacob, bewailing the fate of his dead: "All these things are against me; I will

go down into the grave unto my son mourning." Wait a minute! The caravan is coming! Glorious news! His sons returning, bringing full sacks of corn to Jacob and his family. At evening time to the old man it is light—it is light! (*T. L. Cuyler, D.D.*) "*All's well that ends well*":—The Book of Job is sometimes called a "key to the Bible." Certain it is that it explains one of the deep moral problems that has vexed mankind, as well as it did the patriarch and his friends. 1. Job discerns the nature of afflictions, and repents of his sin and folly. 2. His character is vindicated before his friends. 3. His former dignity and honour are restored. 4. His former prosperity is doubled. (1) It is generally believed that he lived, after these afflictions, twice his former age. (2) His property was doubled. (3) His offspring became as numerous as before. We have here an indication of immortality. His former children were not lost, though dead. He was doubly enriched; for he had not now as many on earth as in heaven. Reflections—1. All earthly troubles must, sooner or later, have an end, even as cycles of time. 2. The success of a life is to be judged from its ending—*e.g.*, Solon and Crœsus. 3. The afflictions of the righteous are not penal, but corrective and sanctifying. 4. If this year ends well morally for us each—no matter how it may be otherwise—we should be devoutly thankful, and press onward till we reach that final ending which shall sum up a whole lifetime. (*Lewis O. Thompson.*)

Ver. 15. **Were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job.**—*Job's daughters*:—It is a long lane that has no turning. Job's captivity was turned at last. It is a true saying that godliness is profitable for the life that now is. Job's family was again built up. He had buried all his children, but God had repaired the breach. I. THESE DAUGHTERS OF JOB WERE REMARKABLE FOR THEIR BEAUTY. Whether beauty is a good gift or not depends upon the use made of it. Beauty is a Divine talent, and may be gloriously used for God. The secret of beauty is the shining through of a consecrated spirit. II. THEY WERE REMARKABLE FOR THEIR CHARACTER. This appears in their several names. 1. Jemima, or "Light of the morning." Let it stand for the influence of young womanhood at home. No one can estimate the influence of a gentle sister among a group of boisterous lads. 2. Kezia, or Cassia, "Breath of the garden." Let her stand for the influence of young womanhood in social life. 3. Keren-happuch, or "All plenteousness." Let her stand for the influence of young womanhood in the Church of God. III. THESE DAUGHTERS WERE REMARKABLE FOR THEIR INHERITANCE. "Their father gave them an inheritance among their brethren." This was a rare thing in those days. This inheritance means, to begin with, life at the Cross. All sons and daughters are equal here. What else? The joy of service. What else? Participation in the heavenly glory. (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*)

Ver. 17. **So Job died, being old and full of days.**—*Fulness of days*:—"Full of days." This form of speech, though not in common use amongst ourselves, is sufficiently familiar from our acquaintance with the language of Scripture (Gen. xxv. 8, xxxv. 29; 1 Chron. xxiii. 1, xxix. 28). The propriety of this expression will not be questioned by those who have had even a moderate experience of human life—who are drawing near themselves to the term of their mortal existence; or who have seen their neighbours, each in his turn, relaxing his hold of life, worn out in mind and body, and at last "gathered to his people, being old and full of days." The expression implies—1. A natural limit to our mortal life. A man may be said to die "full of days" when he has attained or passed the average duration of human life. It is only courtiers and flatterers who would dare to tell any man that they wish him to "live for ever." 2. The failure of our natural powers, both of body and mind. Man is "fearfully and wonderfully made." All the parts of his constitution are accurately adjusted to each other, and to the work which they have to perform. The frame is constructed to last a certain time, and no longer. The wonder is, not that our natural powers and appetites should fail us at the last, but that they should serve us so long and so well as they do. Especially considering that we have not always used them well; sometimes imprudently, sometimes viciously, we have taxed them beyond their strength and worn out a machine which, if fairly used, would have performed twice the work that we have got out of it. But, whether well or ill used, it comes to the same thing in the end. Even while he lives, "man dieth and wasteth away." Every year that passes over the head of the old man, takes something

from his remaining strength. His friends perceive it, if he does not himself He stoops more than he did. He cannot walk as he used. His hearing or his eyesight is affected. The mind also partakes of the decay of the body. The memory drops her treasures. The judgment is dethroned from its seat. "Last scene of all . . . is second childishness and mere oblivion." Our aged friend is seen no more abroad. Even at home his infirmities continue to increase. At last he takes to his bed. There let us leave him; leave him in the hands of his Maker, and of that human love "strong as death," which will never quit his pillow so long as one office of affection remains unperformed. 3. Enough of anything is always better than too much. Fulness implies satiety. When a man has passed through all the stages of human life; has attained, in succession, the various objects and prizes which, at different periods in their course, men propose to themselves; has tasted of every kind of gratification which came in his way; has performed all the duties which belonged to his station and condition; has had his full share of the troubles and disappointments of life; has lived out his appointed time upon earth, and "accomplished, as an hireling, his day"; is it not a natural feeling which prompts him to say, "I would not live alway; let me alone, for my days are vanity"? Perhaps there is something yet unattained; some object for which he would wish to be spared a little longer. But when that is happily accomplished, what more has he to live for? But when we see aged persons planning fresh schemes, and proposing to themselves new objects, to the very verge of life as keen in the pursuit of wealth, pleasure, or honour, as if they were just beginning to live, or as if they were to live always—more like hungry guests sitting down to table, than full ones rising up from it—is there not something unnatural and almost shocking in such a perversion of feeling? Will such persons ever be "full of days"? ever have played out their part? ever retire with dignity from that post of life which they are no longer able with dignity to tread? 4. We Christians will never consent to call any man "full of days" merely because he has attained to a good old age, or because he is worn out in body and mind, or even because he has had enough of life and desires no more of it. We ask, not only whether he is willing, but whether he is prepared to die? Is his soul "full of days"—weary of her protracted sojourn in this land in which she is a stranger, and longing to enter upon a new, separate, and eternal state of being? We shall better be able to answer this question if we consider what constitutes preparation for death, in the Christian view of it. In this view, then, a man may be said to be "full of days"—(1) When he has finished the work which God has given him to do. Has he been diligent in the business of his station, whatever that station may have been? Has he "provided for his own," for all who are in any way connected with him or dependent on him? Has he discharged all his social and relative duties? Has he "served his generation according to the will of God"? Has he made the most of those abilities and opportunities which he has enjoyed for doing good, for promoting the happiness or alleviating the misery of his fellow-creatures? Has he endeavoured, both by his influence and example, to discountenance wickedness and vice, and to advance the cause of true religion and virtue in the world? And, lastly, does he take no merit, and claim no reward for his best services? not expecting to be thanked because he has done a few of the things that were commanded him; but even though he should have done all, ever ready to confess, "I am an unprofitable servant; I have done that which was my duty to do"? (2) But preparation for death, in the Christian view of it, implies also a certain disposition of the soul in relation to God. Though we know little of the state of the soul after death, both reason and Scripture inform us that it enters into a nearer and closer connection with the Almighty than it was capable of while yet in the body. This is variously expressed by its "returning to God who gave it," "appearing before" God, "meeting" or "seeing" God. And we have an instinctive feeling, that whenever our souls shall depart from the body, they will, in some inconceivable manner, be brought into an immediate communication with the Author of their being, the God of the spirits of all flesh. For this event we ought to be training and fashioning our inner man from the beginning of our days to the end of them. And every man is "full of days" and prepared to die exactly in proportion to the progress he has made in this spiritual work, to the degree in which his soul is alive to and in communion with his God. This inward religion or life in the soul is, in fact, the great business of our lives. All the ordinances of religion, and all the exercises of devotion, have this end in view—

to make the soul more and more independent of the body with which it is associated and the world in which it is placed, so that finally it may be able to exist in a state of separation from both. Who, then, can look upon a hoary head and a bent body without asking, What is the state of the soul which is enclosed in that venerable frame? Is that also chilled with age? Does that look downwards to the earth, and move slowly and feebly towards God? The body, we see, has done its work; has the inner man been equally active and diligent in those labours which are proper to it? Is this "old man, and full of days," also full of faith, full of prayer, overflowing with those holy affections and heavenward aspirations which are the fruits of faith and prayer? Has he lived all his life and all his days near to God, and has he regarded every event in his life and every addition to his days as a call to live still nearer, a warning voice saying to him, "Draw nigh to Me, and I will draw nigh to you"? And in the contemplation of that event, which cannot be far off, when his body "shall return to the earth as it was, and his spirit shall return unto God who gave it," is he able to say, "I have set God always before me; for He is on my right hand"? &c. (3) There is one other qualification, without which let no Christian be called "full of days," or "prepared to meet his God." Does our aged friend, "being justified by faith," enjoy "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"? The saddest sight of all is the unconverted old man, the Christian in name, but in everything that belongs to Christian faith and Christian hope, incurable, ignorant, or irremediably reprobate. There can be no more momentous inquiry respecting the condition of any aged person than this—Has he made his peace with God? Does he believe in Him whom He hath sent? This is "fulness of days" in the highest and Christian sense of the words. This is not a mere weariness of life, a distaste for those duties which we can no longer perform, and those pleasures which we can no longer enjoy; but a deliberate conviction, shared alike by our reason and our feelings, that we are going to a better place—to a place where we shall be far happier than we now are, or have ever been; to a place where, in the presence and at the right hand of God, we shall find fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore. (*Frederick Field, LL.D.*) *Job's history reviewed*:—Note the following facts—1. The unconquerable force of an unselfish religion. Job loved the right for its own sake. His religion was not a means to an end; but the end itself, the centre of his affections, and the spring of his activities. A sublimer force is not found in the creation of God than the force of genuine religion. 2. The comparative worthlessness of theological controversy. This lengthened and often excited talk led to no satisfactory solution of the difficulties connected with the Divine procedure. Neither party was convinced of its mistakes. 3. The absurdity of boasting of the march of intellect. In mental and moral culture, what are we superior to the men who figure on the pages of this wonderful book? 4. The impropriety of deeming all outside the Gospel as morally worthless and lost. Conventional Christianity and missionary theology do this. They depict all the teeming millions of heathendom as without virtue, doomed to irremediable ruin. But here we find men who had no written revelation, no Gospel, not only theologically and ethically enlightened, but highly moral and profoundly religious. 5. The egregious folly of estimating man's moral character by his external circumstances. This is what the friends of Job did, and this is what men have been prone to do in every age. 6. To attempt to comfort the afflicted by discussion is to the last degree unwise. 7. A man may have many imperfections of character, and yet be good in the sight of God. Job was not a "perfect" man, but a genuinely good man. Men are to be judged, not by their imperfections, but by their "fruits." 8. With the fact that a righteous life will ultimately be victorious. Job's was a righteous life. And God blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning. (*Homilist.*) *Life of Job*:—This history gives us much information with respect to Divine providence; warns us against uncharitably censuring our brethren, or judging of their piety by outward circumstances; presents the strongest consolations to the afflicted, the tempted, and the oppressed; and teaches us the benefit and duty of relying upon God, even in the most disastrous circumstances. Job's piety was manifested in all his conduct. He did not forget the wants of the poor, and the woes of the destitute. Instead of indulging bitter and malignant passions, truth and justice ever directed him, and the fear of God Most High restrained him from all profane wishes against others. His whole conduct was a living comment on that solemn direction given many centuries after by the apostle Paul to Timothy, "Charge them that are rich in this world," &c. Satan

accusing Job of serving God only through mercenary principles, and from a desire of promoting his own interests, the Lord permits this evil spirit to deprive him of all his possessions, that his sincerity might thereby be tested. It is in trials and spiritual contests that the reality and degree of the Christian soldier's graces are manifested. Satan was defeated, for "in all this did not Job sin with his lips." Surrounded by calamities, yet displaying the power of Divine grace, the firmness of religious principle! (*H. Kollock, D.D.*)

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