

THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

II. PETER.

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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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INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER.

AUTHENTICITY OF THE EPISTLE.—The external evidence in favour of the First Epistle of Peter is as strong as for any other writing in the New Testament. We cannot make the same remark in reference to the Second Epistle; the testimonies in its favour among the writings of the Fathers are rare, of a comparatively late date, and indefinite. The allusions in the works of the Apostolic Fathers, Clemens Romanus and Hermas, adduced by Lardner and Kirchofer, are too vague and slight to be founded on. Justin Martyr (A.D. 150) observes: "We understand that the saying, 'The day of the Lord is as a thousand years,' belongs to this matter" (Dial. cum Tryph. 81), which is possibly a quotation from 2 Pet. iii. 8, though it may also be taken from Psalm xc. 4. The same reference is made by Irenaeus (A.D. 178, Adv. Haer., v. 23, 2). Eusebius informs us that Clemens Alexandrinus (A.D. 180) in the work called Hypotyposis, has given us abridged accounts of all the canonical Scriptures, not even omitting those that are disputed, namely, the Book of Jude and the other catholic Epistles (H. E., vi. 14); and from this it has been inferred that the Second Epistle of Peter was known to Clemens, although there is no reference to that Epistle in his extant works. There appear to be allusions to this Epistle in the writings of Hippolytus (A.D. 200). "They, abashed and constrained by the truth, have confessed their errors for a short period, but after a little time wallow again in the same mire" (2 Pet. ii. 22; Adv. Haer., 22). "You shall never have to breast the boiling flood of hell's eternal lake of fire, and the eye ever fixed in menacing glare of wicked angels chained in Tartarus as punishment of their sins" (2 Pet. ii. 4; Adv. Haer., x. 30). "For the prophets did not speak by their own power, nor did they preach what they themselves wished; but in the first place they were truly enlightened by the Word, then they were taught by visions in respect to future events, and, being thus influenced, they uttered things which God had revealed to them alone" (De Anti-christo, chap. ii.). Origen (A.D. 250), in passages found in the Latin translation of his works by Rufinus, several times expressly ascribes this Epistle to Peter. "And Peter says, Ye are made partakers of the Divine nature." "And as the Scripture says in a certain place, the dumb ass with man's voice forbids the madness of the prophet." "Peter speaks aloud through the two trumpets of the prophet" (Opp. tom., ii. pp. 200, 231, 412). These testimonies are, however, to be taken with reservation, as it is well known that Rufinus made additions to the works of Origen. Eusebius gives the following quotation from Origen: "Peter, upon whom the Church of Christ is built, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail, has left behind one Epistle undisputed, perhaps a second, but on this there is some doubt" (H. E., vi. 25); which shows that Origen was acquainted with the Second Epistle of Peter, but doubted its genuineness; nor is the Epistle quoted in any of his extant authentic works. Firmilian, Bishop of Cæsarea (A.D. 250), in his Epistle to Cyprian, writes: "Abusing also the blessed Apostles, Peter and Paul, as if they had delivered this doctrine; though they in their Epistles, have anathematised heretics, and admonished us to avoid them" (cf. Cyprian, 75). By the term Epistles Firmilian may allude to only one epistle of Peter; but what he here says can only refer to the Second Epistle, for in this Epistle alone is there any reference to heretics. The Epistle is not quoted nor referred to in the writings of Cyprian and Tertullian. Eusebius does not appear to have recognised its genuineness. He

writes: "As to the writings of Peter, one of his Epistles, called the First, is acknowledged as genuine. But that which is called the Second, we have not indeed understood to be embodied with the Sacred Books; yet as it appeared useful to many, it was studiously read with the other sacred Scriptures" (H. E., iii. 3). And in another place he classes it among the disputed writings: "Among the disputed books, although they are well known and approved by many, is reported that called the Epistle of James and Jude, also the Second Epistle of Peter and the Second and Third Epistles of John" (H. E., iii. 25). The Epistle is not found in the Muratorian canon, and is omitted in the Peshito and, most probably, in the Old Latin. After the time of Eusebius, it was received into the canon, and is attested by the succeeding Fathers. The internal evidence in favour of the Epistle is stronger than the external. It is such an Epistle as we would suppose Peter would have written. The earnestness of its tone, the repeated exhortations to holiness, the solemn warnings against apostasy, and the references to the last things, all remind us of that apostle, who knew by experience the danger of hypocrisy and the necessity of perseverance, and whose glance was always towards the future. There are also references to incidents in the life of Peter; as, for example, his presence at the Transfiguration and our Lord's notification of his martyrdom. There is also a similarity in style and sentiment to the First Epistle. In both Epistles the word *ἀναστροφή*, *conversation*, is frequently employed. The word *ἀρετή*, *virtue*, which is elsewhere restricted to man, is in both Epistles applied in an unusual manner to God; as in 1 Pet. ii. 9, "That ye should show forth the virtues of Him who hath called you"; and in 2 Pet. i. 3, according to the correct reading, "Through the knowledge of Him who has called us through His glory and virtue." The word *ἀπόθεσις*, not elsewhere used in the New Testament, is found in 2 Pet. i. 14, of the putting off the earthly tabernacle, and in 1 Pet. iii. 21, of the putting off the sins of the flesh. So the phrase "spots and blemishes" is found in both Epistles (1 Pet. i. 19; 2 Pet. ii. 13). The adjective *ἴδιος* is employed in both in the sense of the possessive pronoun. So also the sentiments in both Epistles are similar. Both dwell upon the inspiration of the prophets; both mention the Deluge and the small number who were saved; in both the eschatological element is prominent; in both there are similar references to the coming of Christ; and in both the last things are dwelt upon. It has also been observed that there are undesigned coincidences between this Epistle and the speeches of Peter as recorded in the Acts. These coincidences, however, are neither numerous nor important. In both there is reference to rioting and drunkenness in the daytime (Acts ii. 15; 2 Pet. ii. 13). In both the rare word, *εὐσέβεια* for holiness is employed (Acts iii. 12; 2 Pet. i. 7). In both the unusual word *δεσπότης*, instead of *κύριος*, is used for Lord (Acts iv. 24; 2 Peter ii. 1). In both the enemies of the faith are accused of denying Christ; in the Acts, of denying the Holy One and the Just (Acts iii. 14); and in the Epistle of denying the Lord that bought them (2 Pet. ii. 1). Another internal argument in favour of this Epistle is its marked superiority to the writings of the Apostolic Fathers. In this Epistle there is nothing at variance with the spirit or dignity of the sacred Scriptures; there is a marked inspiration and loftiness in its sentiments; an absence of everything that is frivolous or trivial. "Who," observes Dean Farrar, "will venture to assert that any Apostolic Father—that Clement of Rome, or Ignatius, or Polycarp, or Hermas, or Justin Martyr—could have written so much as twenty consecutive verses so eloquent and so powerful as those of the Second Epistle of Peter? No known member of the Church in that age could have been the writer; not even the author of the Epistle to Diognetus. Would a writer so much more powerful than any of these have remained uninfluential and unknown? Would one who could wield his pen with so inspired a power have failed to write a line in his own name, and for the immediate benefit of his own contemporaries?" In consequence chiefly of the weakness of the external evidence, no writing of the New Testament has been more disputed by theologians of all phases of opinion. Even Calvin, in a remarkable passage, expresses his doubts of its genuineness. "What Jerome writes," he observes, "influences me that some, induced by a difference in the style, did not think that Peter was the author. For though some affinity may be traced, yet I confess that there is that manifest difference which distinguishes different writers. There are also other probable conjectures by which we may conclude that it was written by another rather than by Peter. At the same time, all agree that it contains nothing unworthy of Peter, as it shows everywhere the power and dignity of the apostolic

spirit. If it be received as canonical we must allow Peter to be the author, since it has his name inscribed, and he also testifies that he lived with Christ; and it would have been a fiction unworthy of a minister of Christ to have personated another individual. I therefore conclude, if the Epistle be regarded as worthy of credit, it must have proceeded from Peter; not that he himself wrote it, but that some one of his disciples set forth in writing, by his command, those things which the necessity of the times required." Luther also appears to have doubted the authorship of Peter, and so also did Erasmus. 1. The chief internal objection brought against this Epistle is its difference in style and sentiment from the First Epistle. This was first dwelt upon by Jerome, who solved the difficulty by supposing that a different interpreter was employed in translating the Second Epistle; that whereas Mark or Silvanus was Peter's interpreter when he wrote the First Epistle, he employed another person when he wrote the Second. The chief points of dissimilarity in sentiment insisted upon are the following: "The keynote of the First Epistle is hope, whilst the keynote of the Second is knowledge. In the First Epistle, our Lord's name is used without any appellation; in the Second, the word Saviour or Lord or both are added. In the First Epistle there are frequent references to the Old Testament; in the Second these references are remarkably rare. Whilst in both Epistles the coming of Christ is alluded to, in the First it is mentioned as a *revelation* (*ἀποκάλυψις*), in the Second as a *presence* (*παρουσία*). In the First Epistle the sufferings of Christ are dwelt upon; in the Second they are not mentioned." This objection does not seem at all formidable. Whatever force is in it is counterbalanced by the points of similarity of style and sentiment which are undoubtedly to be found in both Epistles. Besides, these writings are too short to judge from them of the style of the author; more especially as Peter has no such definite and marked style as the Apostles Paul and James. Most of the linguistic peculiarities are to be found in the second chapter, which bears such a remarkable resemblance to the Epistle of Jude. And as to the difference of sentiment in the Epistles, this may in a great measure be accounted for by the different designs of the Epistles, the one being chiefly hortative and the other polemical. 2. Mayerhoff objects to the Epistle because the author shows a manifest solicitude to make himself known as Peter. He is continually bringing forward himself as if he wished to impress upon his readers that it was Peter who wrote this Epistle. Thus in the address he calls himself "Simon Peter." He reminds his readers that the Lord Jesus Christ had revealed to him that he must soon put off his earthly tabernacle. He alludes to his presence with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, when he heard the voice from the excellent glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He identifies himself with the author of the First Epistle. And he speaks of Paul as his beloved brother, thus claiming an equality with him. But this objection is as frivolous as it is weak. These references may as well be adduced as arguments in favour of the authorship of Peter, being reminiscences of what happened to him. Besides, if we attend to the context, we shall find that there are special reasons for these references, that they are natural and not designedly and artificially introduced. 3. The manner in which he mentions the Epistles of Paul is also regarded as evidence of spuriousness. Mention is made of all Paul's Epistles, as if a collection of them had already been formed; and they are put on the same footing with the other scriptures, that is the Jewish scriptures, as if they were possessed of equal authority: both of which particulars did not occur until after Peter's death. But there is no reason to suppose that the phrase "all his Epistles" denotes a collection of Paul's Epistles, but merely those which were known to the readers of Peter's Epistle; and we know that several of Paul's Epistles were written to the churches addressed by Peter. It certainly appears that Peter places Paul's Epistles in the same rank with the Jewish Scriptures; but there is nothing objectionable in this, as Paul himself makes the same assertion, and requires that his Epistles be received as a revelation from the Lord. 4. It is further objected that the expression "Holy Mount" betrays a post-apostolic age, when a degree of sacredness was imparted to the scenes of gospel history. The phrase "Holy Mount" in Peter's time could only be applied to Mount Zion. But Peter uses the epithet holy merely because such a wonderful incident as the Transfiguration occurred upon that mount: it was holy because on it the Lord displayed His glory. Nor does it appear that afterward any particular mountain was ever known by the appellation the "Holy Mount," as being the Mount of Transfiguration. 5. Another objection strongly insisted on is the use which is made in this Epistle of the Epistle of Jude. The resemblance between

these two canonical Epistles is certainly remarkable, and is too strong to be regarded as accidental. Without determining which Epistle was written first, taking the case that Jude's Epistle was the earlier, though remarkable, it does not appear to us to be opposed to Peter's authorship that he should incorporate into his Epistle what was already written by another sacred writer. We know that Paul sometimes quotes even from heathen writers. It is highly probable that Peter in his First Epistle, which is undoubtedly genuine, quotes from the Epistle of James; and Jude himself quotes from the Apocryphal book of Enoch; and therefore the use of the Epistle of Jude, though surprising, is not to be regarded as a proof of spuriousness. 6. An entirely new objection has recently been brought forward by Dr. Abbott, namely, that the author of the Second Epistle of Peter was acquainted with the writings of Josephus, and that consequently he could not be the Apostle Peter. Dr. Abbott grounds his argument chiefly on a comparison between the Epistle and two passages from the works of Josephus—the one the preface to the *Antiquities*, and the other the account of the last words of Moses—and he endeavours to prove from the similarity of words and phrases that the author of the Epistle was acquainted with these passages. Such a comparison of words and phrases as is here made, however plausible, fails to carry conviction. It is highly improbable that a Christian writer of the second century, even although he were acquainted with the writings of Josephus, should, in a short Epistle, slavishly imitate particular passages contained in them; and it is still more improbable that Josephus should take the trouble of studying a short Epistle of the Christians, in whose religion he did not believe, with a view to the composition of his history—an Epistle also which had nothing to do with the subject he had undertaken to write upon. Taking a conjunct view of the whole evidence, we admit that the external evidence is weak; there is no positive testimony in favour of the Epistle until the middle of the third century. We consider that the internal evidence is stronger, especially the undoubted similarity in style and sentiment to the First Epistle, even in the midst of differences—a similarity which cannot possibly be accounted for from a design of the author to palm off his writing as the Epistle of Peter; and the marked superiority which there is in this Epistle over the writings of the Apostolic Fathers. Nor do we think the internal objections brought against the Epistle of much weight, with the possible exception of that arising from the use made of the Epistle of Jude. On the whole, the balance of evidence is in favour of the authenticity of the Epistle. Besides, it is to be remembered that the Fathers of the fourth century, when the canon was fixed, had much more evidence than we possess; and that it was only as the result of careful examination that any writing was admitted as part of the sacred Scriptures. (*P. J. Gloag, D.D.*)

CONTENTS OF THE EPISTLE.—The Epistle is both prohibitory and hortative, and these two elements pervade it throughout; the first part is an exhortation to make progress in the Divine life; the second part is a warning against heretical teachers. The apostle, having saluted his readers, prays that grace and peace may abound to them through the knowledge of Christ. They must remember their high and holy calling: they were partakers of the Divine nature; they were delivered from the corruptions of the world. They must then make progress in the Divine life; grace must be developed within them; they must add to their faith all the other virtues of the Christian character; and thus, by the exercise of faith and holiness of life, they are to make their calling and election sure. He was now aged, and his death, revealed by his Lord, was close at hand; but he was anxious, before his decease, earnestly to exhort them to persevere in the faith; they had not followed cunningly devised fables; he himself heard Christ proclaimed by the audible voice from heaven to be the beloved Son of God, and they had the predictions of the prophets on which to rely (chap. i.). From exhortation he turns to warning. False teachers had arisen among them, who had introduced damnable heresies, denying the Lord that bought them, bringing destruction on themselves and their followers. Their destruction was certain; the examples of the fallen angels, of the world before the Flood, and of Sodom and Gomorrah, were all warnings and proofs that misery followed on the footsteps of crime. They were spots and blemishes in their feasts, a disgrace to their community, the seducers of the unstable, the servants of corruption, the heirs of wrath. If his readers suffered themselves to be seduced by them, if they were entangled in their errors and overcome, they were in a far more perilous condition than those who had never heard of Christianity, and had never been rescued from the pollutions of the world (chap. ii.). These scoffers,

who called in question the coming of the Lord, were not unforeseen : their coming had been foretold by the holy prophets and by the apostles of Christ. The advent of Christ might, according to their view, appear to be delayed ; but they must remember that time in the eyes of God was very different from time in the eyes of man : one day was with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord was not in reality slack concerning the fulfilment of the promise of His coming. They must exercise patience and persevere in a course of holy living. The day shall assuredly come when this present world and all that it contains shall be burnt up ; but new heavens and a new earth shall spring from the ashes of the old. They must prepare for this solemn day ; the delay is an evidence of God's long-suffering, as Paul had written to them. The apostle then concludes the Epistle with a brief summary of its object ; that they should avoid the errors of the wicked, and grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (*Ibid.*)

II. PETER.

CHAPTER I.

VERS. 1, 2. Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ.—*The author and his readers:*—I. **THE AUTHOR DESCRIBES HIMSELF BY**—1. His name. (1) "Simon." Commonly a happy name in the Scriptures. Not that grace is tied to names; for there was a Simon Magus, a sorcerer. Whatsoever thy name be, let thy heart be Simon's. It is said to signify hearing or obeying; so do thou confess, profess, love thy Master. (2) "Peter" was his surname, given him by Christ Himself. 2. His condition. "A servant." (1) This extols the dignity of Christ that so famous an apostle creeps to Him on the knees of lowliness. Many arrogate great dignity to themselves, because so famous men are their servants. Ahasuerus might vaunt of his viceroys; but let all sceptres be laid down at the foot of Him who is crowned with unspeakable glory for ever. (2) This is a clear demonstration of St. Peter's humility. The godly are no further ambitious than to belong to Christ. 3. His office. "An apostle." (1) He joins together service and apostleship. (a) To distinguish and exemplify his calling (Heb. v. 4). (b) To show that apostleship was a matter of service; as an honour, so a burden (Matt. ix. 38). (2) It was the custom of the apostles to magnify their office (Rom. xi. 13), to weaken the credit of false intruders (1 Cor. ix. 1). 4. His Master. "Of Jesus Christ." (1) They were apostles of Christ, for none ever called themselves apostles of God the Father, because Christ Himself only was the Father's Apostle. (2) Christ only hath authority to make apostles. He chose them to the work, who could enable them to the work. (3) They came not in their own name, but in Christ's (2 Cor. v. 20; xi. 2).

II. THE PERSONS TO WHOM THIS EPISTLE IS WRITTEN. 1. The generality of the person. "To them," all them. This is called a "general epistle"—(1) Not only because the doctrine contained in it is orthodox and catholic. (2) Nor because the use of it is general. (3) But because it was directed to all the saints and worshippers of Jesus Christ, howsoever, wheresoever dispersed, or whensoever despised. For with God is no respect of persons. 2. The qualification of this generality. "That hath faith." 3. The excellency of this qualification. "Precious faith." As Athens was called Greece of Greece, so faith may be called the grace of grace. (T. Adams.) **Them that have obtained like precious faith.**—*Apostolic faith:*—Let us first of all glance at THE FAMILY THAT IS HERE ADDRESSED. The letter is directed plainly, and to deal honestly with Scripture, and to deal honestly with souls, we must do as an honest postman would do. When he takes his budget of letters from the office, he does not take pains to tear off the envelopes and directions, and scatter them in the streets for any one to pick up. This should be the case with regard to this Epistle. It is not addressed to us individually, but it is "to them that have obtained like precious faith with us." In order to ascertain if the letter belongs to me, I must ascertain if I have like precious faith with the author. The fraternity to whom all this Epistle is addressed, they have obtained like precious faith—apostolic faith. How is this? Did they buy it? Did they earn it? Did they trace it out by dint of study? Verily not. Those who really have it, have it inspired in their souls, implanted in their experience as a living grace, by the operation of the Holy Ghost. And this leads me to observe that this precious faith obtains and maintains a holy intimacy with God in all the persons and perfections of the Trinity. There is another point I must press upon you, and that is the basing of faith upon truth, as its solid bottom. If the faith of God's elect has taken possession of your heart, I know that the testimony of Scripture with regard to all the doctrines of grace, will be received in your creed. II. **ASCERTAIN THE EVIDENCE OF OUR AFFINITY.** "Like faith in us." "Like!" How am I to know it is "like"? Now I really think it will be quite fair to ascertain what is like the apostles'; let us appeal to the apostles' preaching, and

to their practice. Now I think their preaching consisted of three things chiefly—affirming, admonishing, and advising. They were accustomed to affirm. Says the apostle—"opening and alleging that Jesus Christ must needs suffer and enter into His glory." Well, then, they went on to admonish, and they could say to the rejectors of the gospel, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish." And this led on to their advising them to continue steadfast to the truth, to flee the very appearance of evil, to gird up the loins of their minds, and so on. Moreover, I should like all such to ask the question, whether their practice is at all like the apostles'. Like precious faith will produce like precious practice. And we find the apostles active in the cause of God. So also we find that the apostles' practice was very affectionate—that they spoke in love to those who surrounded them. I want more of this affectionate deportment, as well as activity, and zeal, and vigilance in the cause of God. And then, mark, their lives were of an inspiring nature. They did not content themselves with earth—they wanted not its gaudy toys, but they waited for that crown of righteousness which was laid up for them. Well, just go on to mark that the apostles' faith was immovable and invulnerable. Now, I ask whether this faith that we profess is so much like the apostles' that it is unmovable. Can you stand a cannonading from the enemy? Can you stand a good volley of reproach and insult from the world? Just pass on to mark that this like precious faith, which thus appeals to the apostles is necessarily fixing its attention upon the name and perfect work of Christ, its object is to glorify Christ. III. THE VERY WONDERFUL APPELLATION GIVEN TO THIS FAITH. It is "like precious faith." One of the first features of its preciousness is that it takes hold of all the stores of the covenant of grace, and appropriates them as its own. But there is one point in the preciousness of faith which appears to me more precious than all the others, and that is its habitual war. "Why we thought that, being justified by faith, we have peace with God." So we have, and yet there is habitual war. There is old Satan, with his roaring like a lion, seeking whom he may devour. What is to be done with him? "Whom resist steadfast in the faith." That is war, at any rate. (J. Irons.) Like precious faith:—I. THE OBJECT OF FAITH as here defined. Revised Version reads more accurately, "faith . . . in the righteousness." Faith is trust, and the object of trust must be a person. We may say that we trust a promise, but that really means that we trust him who has made it. We may believe a creed, but for trust we must have a living Christ of whom the creed speaks. II. THE WORTH OF THIS FAITH. 1. You remember that in one verse we read about the door of faith. What is the worth of a door? It is only a hole in a wall. The value of the door is that which it admits into. So faith is precious, not because of anything in itself, but because of what it grasps, and of what it admits into your heart. Just as the hand of a dyer that has been working with crimson will be crimson; just as the hand that has been holding fragrant perfumes will be perfumed; so my faith, which is only the hand by which I lay hold upon precious things, will take the tincture and the fragrance of what it grasps. A bit of earthenware piping may be worth a few pence in intrinsic value, but if it is the means by which water is brought into a beleaguered city, which else would perish of thirst, who will estimate its worth? 2. Then again, we may consider the worth of faith as a defence. We read of the shield of faith. I do not become safe by believing myself to be so, however strong may be the imagination or the fancy. All depends upon what it is that I am relying on. Your faith is precious because it knits you to Christ's immortal stability. 3. And in like manner we may consider the worth of faith as a purifier. But how does faith purify? Is there anything in my confidence which will make me pure? No! there is no moral efficacy in the mere act of trust. All depends upon what it is that you are trusting to. You will get like what you are trusting to. The only faith that purifies is faith in Him that is pure. III. THE SUBSTANTIAL IDENTITY AND EQUAL PRECIOUSNESS OF FAITH IN ALL VARIETIES OF FORM AND DEGREE. The deepest thing in every man that has it is his faith in Jesus Christ, and likeness in that brings him near all others who have it, however unlike on the surface their characteristics may be. All manner of differences in opinion, in politics, in culture, in race which may separate men from men, are like the cracks upon the surface of a bit of rock, which are an inch deep, while the solid mass goes down a thousand feet. But I am not going to pretend that the man whose Christ did not die for him, and whose Christ gives him no righteousness in which he can stand before God, possesses "like precious faith with us." To say that he does is to worship charity at the expense of truth. The poor man's half sovereign which stands between him and want is made of the same gold as

Rothschild's millions. And so the smallest and the feeblest faith is one in character, and one in intrinsic value with the loftiest and superbest. Only as is the measure of the man's faith, so will be the measure of his possession of the precious things. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Of faith*:—I. AS TO ITS NATURE. It doth involve knowledge, knowledge of most worthy and important truths, knowledge peculiar and not otherwise attainable, knowledge in way of great evidence and assurance. 1. Truth is the natural food of our soul. What light is without, that is truth within, shining on our inward world, illustrating, quickening, and comforting, exciting all our faculties to action, and guiding them in it. Faith, therefore, as implying knowledge is valuable. 2. But it is much more so in regard to the quality of its objects, which are the most worthy that can be, and most useful for us to know, the knowledge whereof doth indeed advance our soul into a better state, doth raise us to a nearer resemblance with God. Thereby we understand the nature or the principal attributes of God. By it we are fully acquainted with the will and intentions of God, relating both to our duty and our recompense. By it we are informed concerning ourselves. It enableth us rightly to distinguish between good and bad, right and wrong. It prescribeth us an exact rule of life. It proposeth the most valid inducements to virtue. It discovereth the special aids dispensed to us for the support of our weakness against all temptations. The knowledge of these things is plainly the top of all knowledge whereof we are capable; not consisting in barren notion, not gratifying idle curiosity, not serving trivial purposes, but really bettering our souls. 3. Faith also hath this excellent advantage that it endueth us with such knowledge in a very clear and sure way, it not being grounded on any slippery deduction of reason, nor on slender conjectures of fancy, nor on musty traditions or popular rumours; but on the infallible testimony of God conveyed unto us by powerful evidence. II. IT HATH ALSO DIVERS INGREDIENTS, OR INSEPARABLE ADJUNCTS, WHICH IT DOTH IMPLY, RENDERING IT COMMENDABLE AND ACCEPTABLE TO GOD. As—1. Faith implieth a good use of reason. This is that which commendeth any virtue, that a man acting after it doth act wisely, in conformity to the frame and design of his nature. 2. Faith implieth a compliance with the providence and grace of God. 3. Faith doth imply good opinion of God and good actions toward Him. III. THUS IS FAITH PRECIOUS, CONSIDERING ITS NATURE, AND THOSE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS OR INSEPARABLE ADJUNCTS WHICH IT DOTH INCLUDE OR IMPLY. It will also appear to be so if we consider its rise and those good dispositions which concur in its production. 1. To the engendering of faith there is required a mind sober, composed, and wakeful; ready to observe what befalleth, apt to embrace what is offered, conducive to our good; a mind not so drowned in worldly care, sensual enjoyment, or impertinent sport as to neglect the concerns of our eternal state. 2. Faith doth require much diligence and industry. 3. Faith must needs proceed from sincerity and soundness of judgment. 4. To the begetting faith there must concur humility, or a readiness to entertain sober and moderate opinions of ourselves, together with suitable affections and desires. 5. To faith much fortitude, much resolution must conspire, for he that firmly persuadeth himself to be a Christian doth embark in a most difficult warfare. 6. The noble virtue of patience is likewise accessory to faith. 7. With faith also must concur the virtue of prudence in all its parts and instances; therein is exerted a sagacity, discerning things as they really are in themselves, not as they appear through the masks and disguises of fallacious semblance. 8. In fine, the embracing Christian doctrine doth suppose a mind imbued with all kinds of virtuous disposition in some good degree. IV. ITS EFFECTS are of two sorts: one springing naturally from it, the other following it in way of recompense from Divine bounty. I shall only touch the first sort, because in this its virtue is most seen, as in the other its felicity. Faith is naturally efficacious in producing many rare fruits. Even in common life faith is the compass by which men steer practice, and the mainspring of action, setting all the wheels of our activity on going; every man acteth with serious intention, and with vigour answerable to his persuasion of things, that they are worthy his pains, and attainable by his endeavours. In like manner is faith the square and the source of our spiritual activity, brooking pains and hardships. What but faith, eyeing the prize, will quicken us "to run patiently the race that is set before us"? We are told that faith doth "purify our souls and cleanse our hearts"; that is, our whole interior man, all the faculties of our soul; disposing them to an universal obedience and conformity to God's holy will; and so it is, for faith not only doth clear our understanding from its defects, but it cleanseth our will from its

vicious inclinations, it freeth our affections from disorder and distemper, in tendency toward bad objects, and in pursuit of indifferent things with immoderate violence; it purgeth our conscience or reflexive powers from anxious fear, suspicion, anguish, dejection, despair, and all such passions which corrode and fret the soul; how it effecteth this we might declare; but we cannot better set forth its efficacy than by considering the special influence it plainly hath in the production of each virtue, or on the performance of every duty. "Add to your faith virtue," saith Peter, implying the natural order of things, and that if true faith precede virtue will easily follow. In fine, it is faith alone which can plant in us that which is the root of all contentedness and all patience; a just indifference and unconcernedness about all things here; it alone can untack our minds and affections from this world, rearing our souls from earth and fixing them in heaven. (*Isaac Barrow, D.D.*)

The nature of saving faith:—In the sacred oracles five objects especially are called precious. The redemption of the soul is precious. The blood of Christ is precious. Christ is precious to His ransomed people. The promises of the gospel are great and precious. And in our text faith is called precious. That is accounted precious which is of an excellent quality, especially if it be rare. Gold is preferred to brass, moral virtue to gold; but the faith of God's elect infinitely surpasseth these, and every acquisition below the sun. And in its operations and effects it is most excellent. What tends farther to raise the value of saving faith in our esteem is—1. The manner in which we are made partakers of it, namely, by the gracious and sovereign disposal of heaven. 2. That the weakest real believers share the blessing together with the strongest apostles themselves, greatly magnifieth our idea of its worth. I. First, saving faith consists in the CREDIT THE HEART YIELDETH TO THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS, "the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness." This testimony we have delivered to us in the law and the gospel. 1. In believing the soul is persuaded of the power of Christ to save it, guilty and wretched as it is; for God hath laid help upon One that is mighty to save. 2. In saving faith the soul gives full credit to this great gospel truth, that the mercy of Christ is equal to His power to save. 3. In believing the heart fully confides in the faithfulness of Christ to perform His promise of eternal life to all those who believe on Him. 4. Take notice of the light or evidence by which true believers discern, and yield their assent to the truths of the gospel. Now this is wholly supernatural. The full credit given by the heart to the testimony of the Spirit in His Word, is peculiar to saving faith; there is therefore an essential difference between this and the assent of mere common professors. This difference chiefly consists in three things. (1) The transcendent glories of faith's object are truly discerned by the one; the other has only some dark ineffectual notices of them. The difference is as real and as great as that of seeing an object and hearing of it only. (2) The objects of faith are most agreeable to the faculties and condition of true believers. In them they perceive everything for their entertainment and profit. (3) They differ widely in the effects they have upon the minds of their respective subjects. The impressions the objects of faith make upon the mind of temporary believers, are as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away, leaving their hearts still unchanged. But sincere believers with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord.

II. Explain the nature of TRUST IN CHRIST, the second constituent of saving faith. This act of faith is called a receiving Christ, embracing Him, accepting Him, coming to Him, leaning upon Him, and resting on Him for salvation. 1. It implies a hearty approbation of the scheme of redemption in the blood of Christ, as originating from, and infinitely worthy of, the wisdom, mercy, and love of God. 2. Trust in Christ more specifically consists in the hearty acquiescence of the soul in Him for salvation. Its leading exercise is a rest in His propitiation for pardon, and then, being accepted in the Beloved for grace, for glory, and for every mercy. He is all in all to believers. (1) The gospel offers Christ fully in all His offices, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. And faith corresponding fully with the offer, accepteth Him as the only remedy for ignorance, guilt, slavery, and every misery to which sin hath subjected a fallen world. (2) The gospel offers Christ in due order—Christ Himself first, and then His gifts. It inviteth us to come to Him, and promiseth rest upon our coming. (3) The gospel offers Christ and all the blessings of His purchase freely, without money and without price; and faith disclaiming all goodness wrought in or done by the creature, as a ground of trust. Lessons: 1. What ground of lamentation is it, and how surprising that the far greatest part of those who profess the name of Christ, and the Scriptures to

be His Word, have, notwithstanding, so little of Him in their religion, and are such strangers to the doctrine of faith in His blood for salvation. 2. From what hath been said, many professors of religion might be easily convinced, did they yield to the evidence of it, that they have not the true faith of the gospel, but are still held in the chains of unbelief and condemnation! For he that believeth not is condemned already. 3. I most earnestly beseech unbelievers of every description to acknowledge your character fully and freely. Admit the conviction of your guilt and danger, fall at the feet of mercy, and beg for the life of your souls. (*R. South, D.D.*) *The value of faith*:—1. Faith, considered intellectually, is valuable. 2. The value of faith appears in its power, of realising in our minds the existence and presence of God. 3. Faith appears pre-eminently precious when we remember that by it we obtain a part in the great work of redemption which our Lord Jesus Christ has effected. 4. The preciousness of faith appears in its beneficial influence on character. 5. The value of faith is felt in the power it has to sustain and comfort the mind when no other help is available. (*The Congregational Pulpit.*) *Faith and life*:—Faith and life! these are vital points to a Christian. They possess so intimate a connection with each other that they are by no means to be severed. You shall never find true faith unattended by true godliness; on the other hand, you shall never discover a truly holy life which has not for its root a living faith upon the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Woe unto those who seek after the one without the other! I. OBSERVE WHAT HE SAYS CONCERNING THE CHARACTER AND THE ORIGIN OF FAITH, AND THEN CONCERNING THE CHARACTER AND ORIGIN OF SPIRITUAL LIFE. Let us begin where Peter begins, with the faith. You have here a description of true saving faith. 1. First, you have a description of its source. He says, "To them that have obtained like precious faith." It is not a matter which springs up by a process of education, or by the example and excellent instruction of our parents; it is a thing which has to be obtained. Now, that which is obtained by us must be given to us; and well are we taught in Scripture that "faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." 2. Peter having described the origin of this faith, proceeds to describe its object. The word "through" in our translation might, quite as correctly, have been rendered "in"—"faith in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." True faith, then, is a faith in Jesus Christ, but it is a faith in Jesus Christ as Divine. Who but a God could bear the weight of sin? Who but a God shall be the "same yesterday, to-day, and for ever"? Remark, that the apostle has put in another word beside "God," and that is, "of God and our Saviour." As if the glory of the Godhead might be too bright for us, he has attempted it by gentler words—"our Saviour." Now, to trust Jesus Christ as Divine, will save no man, unless there be added to this a resting in Him as the great propitiatory sacrifice. A Saviour is He to us when He delivers us from the curse, punishment, guilt, and power of sin. 3. Notice the word "righteousness." It is a faith in the righteousness of our God and our Saviour. I have not received Jesus Christ at all, but I am an adversary to Him, unless I have received Him as Jehovah Tsdkenu—the Lord of our righteousness. There is His perfect life; that life was a life for me; it contains all the virtues, in it there is no spot; it keeps the law of God, and makes it honourable; my faith takes that righteousness of Jesus Christ, and it is cast about me, and I am then so beautifully arrayed, that even the eye of God can see neither spot nor blemish in me. 4. Our apostle has not finished the description, without saying that it is "like precious faith." All faith is the same sort of faith. 5. He tells us too that faith is "precious"; and is it not precious? for it deals with precious things, with precious promises, with precious blood, with a precious redemption, with all the preciousness of the person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Well may that be a precious faith which supplies our greatest want, delivers us from our greatest danger, and admits us to the greatest glory. Well may that be called "precious faith," which is the symbol of our election, the evidence of our calling, the root of all our graces, the channel of communion, the weapon of prevalence, the shield of safety, the substance of hope, the evidence of eternity, the guerdon of immortality, and the passport of glory. So much, then, concerning faith. Now we shall turn to notice the life. "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God," &c. 1. Here we have, then, the fountain and source of our spiritual life. Just as faith is a boon which is to be obtained, so you will perceive that our spiritual life is a principle which is given. A thing which is given to us, too, by Divine power—"according as His Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness."

The selfsame power which is required to create a world and to sustain it is required to make a man a Christian, and unless that power be put forth the spiritual life is not in any one of us. 2. You will perceive that Peter wished to see this Divine life in a healthy and vigorous state, and therefore he prays that grace and peace may be multiplied. Divine power is the foundation of this life; grace is the food it feeds upon, and peace is the element in which it lives most healthily. 3. Observe, again, that in describing this life he speaks of it as one which was conferred upon us by our being called. He says, "We were called unto glory and virtue." I find translators differ here. Many of them think the word should be "By"—"We are called by the glory and virtue of God"—that is, there is a manifestation of all the glorious attributes of God, and of all the efficacious virtue and energy of His power in the calling of every Christian. He says there was in that calling, the Divine glory and virtue; and, doubtless, when you and I shall get to heaven, and see things as they are, we shall discover in our effectual calling of God to grace, a glory as great as in the creation of worlds, and a virtue as in the healing of the sick, when virtue went from the garments of a Saviour. II. In the fourth verse HE DEALS WITH THE PRIVILEGES OF FAITH, AND ALSO WITH THE PRIVILEGES OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE. Notice the privilege of faith first. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises." 1. Note here, then, we have received by precious faith the promise and pardon. 2. Then comes the righteousness of Christ: you are not only pardoned, that is, washed and made clean, but you are robed in garments such as no man could ever weave. The law was great—this righteousness is as great as the law. The law asked a precious revenue from man, more than humanity could pay—the righteousness of Christ has paid it all. Is it not great and precious? 3. Then next comes reconciliation. You were strangers, but you are brought nigh by the blood of Christ. Is not this great and precious? 4. Then comes your adoption. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God," &c. "And if children, then heirs," &c. Oh, how glorious is this great and precious promise of adoption! 5. Then we have the promise of Providence: "All things work together for good to them that love God," &c. 6. Then you have the promise too, that you shall never taste of death but shall only sleep in Jesus. "Write, Blessed are the dead," &c. Nor does the promise cease here—you have the promise of a resurrection. "For the trumpet shall sound," &c. Now, beloved, see how rich faith makes you!—what treasure!—what gold-mines!—what oceans of wealth!—what mountains of sparkling treasures has God conferred upon you by faith! But we must not forget the life. The text says He has given us this promise, "that"—"in order that." What then? What are all these treasures lavished for? Is the end worthy of the means? Surely God never giveth greater store than the thing which He would purchase will be worth. We may suppose, then, the end to be very great when such costly means have been given; and what is the end? Why, "that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature." We are, by grace, made like God. "God is love"; we become love—"He that loveth is born of God." God is truth; we become true, and we love that which is true, and we hate the darkness and the lie. God is good, it is His very name; He makes us good by His grace, so that we become the pure in heart who shall see God. Nay, I will say this, that we become partakers of the Divine nature in even a higher sense than this—in fact, in any sense, anything short of our being absolutely Divine. Do we not become members of the body of the Divine person of Christ? And what sort of union is this—"members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones"? Then the other result which follows from it is this, "Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Ah, beloved, it were ill that a man who is alive should dwell in corruption. "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" said the angel to Magdalene. Should the living dwell among the dead? Should Divine life be found amongst the corruptions of worldly lusts? (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Precious faith*:—Those he describeth here from their faith, which is amplified, first, from the certainty of it, they had obtained it. Secondly, from the quality and worth of it; it was of like price with the faith of the apostles, worthy of the same respect that theirs was. Thirdly, from the means whereby they did obtain it, even the righteousness of Christ, that is, His fidelity and truth in keeping His promises. True justifying faith is of great price and worth, styled here a precious faith. First, from the causes of faith. Secondly, from the effects of faith. Thirdly, from the subject of faith, or persons which have faith; those are not every one, for all men have not faith. Fourthly, from the properties or qualities of faith. It is a saving faith; it is a justifying faith; it is a sanctifying faith. It is the faith of God's

elect. It hath great boldness in it. Fifthly, from the object of faith, which is Jesus Christ; styled, therefore, the faith of Jesus Christ. Sixthly, by comparing faith with other graces, hope, love, humility, and the like, they are precious. Therefore is faith (the mother grace, the lady and mistress on whom the rest wait) of great price and worth. Seventhly, by comparing it with things external which are accounted precious, gold, silver, precious stones, and the like. For instruction, first, that faith is diligently to be inquired and searched for. Secondly, that faith is much to be respected and honoured. Thirdly, that such as have obtained faith, are possessors of a jewel of great price. (*A. Symson.*) *Like precious faith*:—Faith in all God's children is alike precious. Alike, I say, in price, in worth, in nature, in substance, in kind, though not in extent and measure. There is a weak faith and there is a strong faith, and yet both alike precious. Peter no doubt had greater faith than all or most of those had to whom he wrote, yet doth he acknowledge that they had obtained like precious faith. Some attain unto a great faith, which may be compared to a great flame, a great fountain, a strong man's holding or gripping of a thing; some again have but a weak faith, like a sparkle, like a drop of water, like a child holding of a thing; the sparkle is as truly fire as the flame is; the drop as really water as the fountain is; the child's gripping, as the strong man's. Even so faith in the least child of God, though it were but as a "grain of mustard seed," is as truly faith as the faith of the apostles, the faith of the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. So that faith is alike precious to all. (*Ibid.*) *The preciousness of faith*:—I. FAITH IS PRECIOUS IN ITS OBJECT. II. FAITH IS PRECIOUS IN ITS TESTIMONY. III. FAITH IS PRECIOUS IN ITS BENEFITS. IV. FAITH IS PRECIOUS IN ITS INFLUENCES. Faith produces—1. A living spiritual influence. 2. A comforting influence. 3. An enriching influence. 4. An establishing and conquering influence. 5. A joyous triumphing influence. 6. A meetening influence for eternal glory. (*J. Burns.*) **Grace and peace be multiplied unto you.**—*The salutation*:—I. THE MATTER. "Grace and peace." 1. We are here taught the Christian use of salutings; such godly compliments are not to be neglected. 2. We are further taught here to use good forms in saluting. "Grace and peace," gracious, not grievous; holy, not hollow; blessings, not curses. (1) "Grace." By this is generally meant the receiving of the sinner into the covenant of mercy, into God's favour by Christ. (a) Many prophets and holy men of the first times lived in grace, but not under grace. (b) Many in our times live under grace, but not in grace, hearing the gospel and receiving the grace of God in vain (2 Cor. vi. 1). (c) The unbelieving Gentiles were neither in grace nor under grace. (d) They that now believe are both under grace and in it. Under it, as released from the damning power of sin (Rom. viii. 1); in it, as delivered from the reigning power of sin. (2) "Peace." I take it specially for the tranquillity of conscience; that which follows righteousness. (3) I come from considering this sweet pair of graces asunder, to join them again together. (a) It is not enough to wish grace to the souls of our friends, but also peace; that is, health to their bodies, and other temporal blessings. (b) The apostle puts grace before peace. (c) The apostle wisheth to us the best things, grace and peace. There be two fiends that torment us—sin and a bad conscience. Now grace delivers us from sin, and peace doth quiet the conscience. II. THE MEASURE OF HIS WISH: the increase and multiplication of these blessings. For the goods of this world, the best point of arithmetic is division: it is a better thing to give than to receive, said our Lord. But for heavenly graces, the best point is multiplication. 1. There is no plenary perfection in this life, for we must still be in multiplying our graces. 2. We must seek to multiply our grace and peace. He hath nothing that thinks he hath enough. III. THE MANNER. "Through the knowledge," &c. This means not a mere knowledge, but an acknowledgment, a reflective and doubling knowledge. There is knowledge mental, sacramental, and experimental. The first is by the light of nature; the second by the power of grace; the third by the practice of life and continual proving the favour of God. 1. The means of multiplying grace and peace in our hearts is knowledge of God (John xvii. 3; Psa. ix. 10). 2. There is something in grace and knowledge still wanting, that must be multiplied and increased; for we know but in part. 3. There is no knowing of God with comfort, but through Jesus Christ (Matt. xi. 27). Without Him, he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth his own sorrow (Eccles. i. 18). (*Thos. Adams.*) *Multiplied grace desired for others*:—1. Such as have experience of the worth of grace and peace in themselves, desire also that others may be partakers of the same. 2. The preachers of God's Word ought by their labours and endeavours, by their wishes and prayers, to point out unto their people those

things for which they should especially labour and endeavour. 3. The grace and favour of God is the chiefest good thing to be sought after, to be wished and desired above all things in the world next to God's glory. 4. God doth bestow His graces upon His own children, not all at once, but by degrees as He findeth them fit and capable to receive them. This I gather from the word "multiplied." 5. Grace and peace may be obtained, continued, and increased through the knowledge of God and His Son Jesus Christ. That the main reason why so many complain of the want of peace of conscience, and of their not profiting in grace, is their not growing and increasing in saving knowledge. (*A. Symson.*) **Through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.**—*Life through the knowledge of Christ*:—The advancement in the Divine life of those in whom it is begun is the aim of this Epistle. Solemn and earnest, yet animating and assuring, are these his farewell words. It is a voice from the borders of eternity—from the threshold of glory—the voice of one who has all but reached the goal. The Christian life is life that springs up and grows through the knowledge of Christ. I. ASPECTS OF LIFE IN CHRIST. The delineation of life in Christ by the hand of the apostle here is one of marvellous richness and completeness. First your eye is directed to heavenly birth—the Divine source of the holy life which we enjoy through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. You see it coming down from God out of heaven, having the glory of God stamped on it. "His Divine power (ver. 3) has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness." If with your own hand you must tend and trim the lamp, that the flame of holiness may burn on and burn even brighter, God ministers the oil of grace wherewith it is fed. But next, if we ask, What are the essential elements and characteristic features of this life from on high? we have a clear answer. Worthy of its Divine source is its noble expression, in those Christian excellences which the apostle in the three following verses (5–7), commands us to acquire. A fair and glorious edifice this which you are called to build. Survey it well from base to cope, if you would know what it is to build yourself up on your most holy faith. In the change which every day is making on you, is there discernible any trace of the gradual advancement towards completion in your daily deeds and words of such a structure as this? II. LIFE THROUGH THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST. The dawn of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus is the dawn of spiritual life in your heart—its noon is life eternal in the heavens. That life and that light are really one. Till you know God revealing Himself in Christ, and in Christ reconciling Himself to you, you have not begun the Christian life. To know Jesus is to master the science of salvation—it is to know God. To know Jesus is to receive the life of God into our souls. To see farther into the heart of Jesus, to see in His face the ever-blessed Trinity—Father, Son, and Spirit—with whom in eternal bonds you are linked, and for whose blissful communion you are prepared—this is to make progress in the life of faith. Each new step of advance in that life is the fruit and the forerunner of new discoveries of Christ. (*W. Wilson, M.A.*) *The knowledge of God in Christ*:—The fires of the sun in the distant heavens are not more necessary to ripen the wheat or to perfect the grace of the wild-flower than are the great revelations of Christ concerning God to create and sustain the characteristic Christian virtues. The religion of Christ regulates, inspires, and sustains the morals of Christ. The morals are part of the religion. (*R. W. Dale, LL.D.*)

Vers. 3, 4. **His Divine power hath given unto us all things.**—*The Divine liberality*:—I. THE FOUNTAIN. 1. The hope of the petitioner. The experience of former mercy works a persuasion of future mercy. (1) Let us pray in confidence that God will hear us, because He hath heard us. A noble princess asked a courtier when he would leave begging; he answered, when she left giving. (2) Seeing that God gives more where He hath given much, let us be thankful; for how should God bless us with that we have not if we do not bless Him for that we have? 2. The ability of the Giver. Here is power, yea, Divine power; not only great, but good. For mercy and majesty must meet together in the donation of all things that pertain to life and godliness. The knowledge of this Divine and giving power may comfort the most dejected heart. (1) Concerning the salvation of others and ourselves; how desperate soever we judge their estates, by reason of their continual habit of sinning, yet this Divine power is able to convert them. (2) This comforts us in the midst of all afflictions. We are weak in ourselves, unable to stand under the lightest cross; but there is a Divine power that strengthens us. Though it doth not nullify our sorrows, yet it doth fortify our patience (Col. i. 11). (3) This

comforts us in prayer. (4) This comforts us against all opposition, even those principalities that wrestle against us (1 John iv. 4; Rev. xii. 11). (5) Let this hearten us to cheerful liberality; because, whatever we lack or lose, there is a Divine power able to requite it (2 Cor. ix. 8). 3. The liberty of the action. God does not set, nor let, nor sell, nor lend, but give. (1) How to judge of all we have; as the Lord's gifts, not our own merits (1 Cor. iv. 7, xv. 10). (2) Follow God's example, in being evermore giving good things. 4. The necessity of the receivers. (1) We had nothing; miserable beggars. (2) We deserved nothing. 5. The universality of the gift. "All things that pertain"—(1) To life. (a) Natural. He put a soul to our flesh, gave birth to the child, nourishment after birth; bread when we were hungry, drink when we were thirsty, &c. To the wise man his wisdom, to the strong his might, to the wealthy his riches, &c. (b) Spiritual; whereby we live to Him, and in Him, and whereby He lives in us. (2) To godliness. By His grace we come to godliness, and by godliness to life. II. THE CISTERN. The ever-flowing and over-flowing conduit is Christ, in whom dwells all fulness (Col. i. 19). The more capacious a vessel of faith we bring, the greater measure of faith we shall receive. 1. The water of life, which is an effectual calling to glory and virtue. (1) Who hath called us. Christ alone can call home sinners. (2) The action. There was a time when Christ came personally to call. He went out from His majesty that is invisible, to His mercy that is manifested in His works. Now He calleth at divers times, in divers places, and after divers manners. (a) In all ages of the world, and of men's lives. (b) Some from their ships, others from their shops, &c. (c) After divers manners. First, by the preaching of the Word; and herein He useth two bells to ring us to church, the treble of mercy and the tenor of judgment. Next, in His sacraments. (3) Whom hath He called? "Us"—miserable sinners, that were deaf and could not hear Him, lame and could not meet Him, blind and could not see Him, dead and could not answer Him. (4) To what? "To glory and virtue." (a) In present being. We must understand by "glory" the honour of being Christians; by "virtue" the good life that becometh Christians. (b) Hereafter we shall come to a perfect and plenary possession. The virtue there is a pure white garment without spot, and the glory a golden crown of eternity. 2. The pipe and bucket to draw and derive all to us. "Through the knowledge," &c. One was of opinion that a philosopher excels an ordinary man as much as an ordinary man excels a beast; but every true Christian excels a philosopher as much as a philosopher does a dunce. They scarce knew God in His creatures; we know God in His Christ. There is no pleasure so sweet as knowledge, no knowledge so sweet as that of religion, no knowledge of religion so sweet as that of Christ; for this is eternal life, &c. (John xvii. 3). Let us therefore use the means to get knowledge. (1) Read the Scripture; that is God's will, there is knowledge (John v. 39). (2) Frequent the temple; that is God's house, there is knowledge (Psa. lxxiii. 16, 17). (3) Resort to the Communion; that is God's maundy, there is knowledge (1 Cor. xi. 26). (4) Consult His ministers, for the priest's lips preserve knowledge. (*Thos. Adams.*) *The wonders of Divine grace*:—I. THE GREATNESS OF DIVINE GRACE. "His Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." The reference here is to our Saviour Jesus Christ. 1. Grace comes by Divine power. It is no angelic effort or human invention. Its wisdom is Divine omniscience. Its power is Divine omnipotence. Its activity is Divine omnipresence. Its resources infinite. Its love the eternal love of God. 2. It supplies every real need. Life is the state and godliness the activity. In the gift of the Holy Spirit every possible want of the soul is met. II. THE METHOD OF DIVINE GRACE. It comes through the knowledge of Him that calleth us by His own glory and virtue. In knowledge is the spring of life. Our actions are governed by our volitions, our volitions by our emotions, our emotions by our knowledge or belief. Thoughts of Christ's love set our hearts all aglow with love to Him, and that love becomes the spring of a new and holy life. III. THE CONSOLATION OF DIVINE GRACE. "Exceeding great and precious promises." IV. THE GLORY OF DIVINE GRACE. That through these ye may become partakers of the Divine nature. V. THE FOE OF DIVINE GRACE. The corruption that is in the world by lust. There are two great spiritual cities: in the one there is corruption by lust, in the other life by godliness. The Divine new life is in peril in the poisoned air, that life which to the believer is infinitely more precious than all besides. (*The Freeman.*) **All things that pertain unto life and godliness.**—*All things pertaining to life and godliness given unto the saints*:—I. THAT THE PEOPLE OF GOD ARE TO LIVE GODLY LIVES. II. THAT FOR THIS LIFE AND GODLINESS, DIVINE POWER BESTOWS EVERYTHING NECESSARY. 1. It is

necessary that He should give us all things, for we have nothing in ourselves. 2. It is very gracious of Him to give all things. We were told that during the first winter campaign in the Crimea, our armies were subject to many sufferings and privations on account of inadequate provisions. This might have been so; it often has been so in times of war, and no human power can prevent it. But it can never be so with the armies of the Cross. Divine power is our guarantee. III. THE TEXT TEACHES US THAT ALL THINGS ARE IN CHRIST, AND OBTAINED THROUGH THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM. IV. THAT AMONG THE "ALL THINGS" WE HAVE IN CHRIST THE PROMISES ARE ESPECIALLY TO BE PRIZED. V. THAT THE POSSESSION OF THESE HEAVENLY GIFTS MAKES US PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE. (*H. Quick.*) *Christ the complement of our life*:—In the sunshine there is a colour for every plant that seeks its own hue out of sunshine, and in Jesus Christ there is every possible hue which the heart could want. All things that pertain to godliness are in Christ—in other words, Christ is the complement of our nature. When I use that word complement—a mathematical term—I infer that just as a segment of a circle may be a very small thing, and may need the rest of the circumference to be its complement, so, whatever be the segment of your life, Jesus Christ is the complement of all the rest. He just fills out your deficiency and makes you a complete thing. It is no use a man saying he was born deficient in patience, because there is all the patience of Jesus to complete his impatience; no use for a man to complain of weakness or cowardice, when any kind of want comes, which has been permitted to come into his life that he might learn to appropriate the fulness of Christ. So the apostle gloried in his infirmity, because he said—the smaller the segment is the more of a complement I get, and a man may even be proud in a sense of the natural deficiencies of his nature, because he is thrown back upon Jesus Christ, in whom everything is stored to make him a saint. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) **Called us to glory and virtue.**—*A glimpse of glory*:—I. THAT WHEREBY A CHRISTIAN MAY HAVE TITLE, INTEREST, AND COMFORT, IN LIFE AND GLORY. It is not a knowledge of calling in general, but of that particular calling of ourselves to glory and virtue. This doth interest us in the promises of God (Acts ii. 39). No calling, no promise. Nay, further, without this there is no encouragement to holiness (1 Tim. vi. 12). By our calling, which is by an eternal purpose and grace of God in time, changing and renewing us unto holiness of life, we come to know the eternal decree of God, which otherwise were presumption to look unto. For, as a prince's secret mind is made known by edicts and proclamations, which before we durst not search into, neither could know, so when God's secret counsel to execution is manifested, by changing our hearts, by calling us from the world to an holy calling, in a sanctified life: this, then, is no presumption, but duty in us, by our calling, to judge of our election, and so of our calling to glory and virtue. If you look for an example of this, see that of St. Paul (Gal. ii. 20). II. THAT THIS KNOWLEDGE OF OUR PARTICULAR CALLING IS ONE OF THE STRONGEST MOTIVES UNTO ALL GOODNESS. So we see the apostles in their opinions still urge holiness and sanctification from this ground of the assurance of calling and election (Gal. v. 13; Eph. iv. 2; Col. iii. 12). He that hath no assurance of this calling can have little comfort in performing of holy duties. A fearful, doubting soul lives in much vexation. Use 1: The first is against all such as oppose this doctrine, chiefly the Papists, who are for that, that a man should not inquire after the assurance of his salvation. Use 2: The second is, that every man then must try his title, what calling he hath. Use 3: The third is for instruction. If this be so, let not then any man dare to confound the external calling of men with the internal calling of God. Further, how precious this calling should be unto us, we may see (Luke x. 20). Here is only cause of true joy. By this then be sure to take thy warrant of rejoicing, fetch it out of this calling, that God hath called thee to glory and virtue, which is the next thing to consider of; our calling to glory and virtue; I mean a consideration of these things whereunto we are called, glory and virtue. 1. Glory. Glory is the end of all. The glory of God is the furthest reach and end of all things, and virtue is the way leading unto glory. This glory then we speak of is the reward of goodness, and is ever attended with virtue. For as shame and sin still go together, so do glory and virtue, even by the testimony of the consciences of all good and ill men. The glory then we speak of is an eternal glory. It is not meant, when he says "called to glory," that a Christian is only called unto that, and unto nothing else by the way, but by the way he is called unto virtue, and by occasion unto afflictions. But God's end of calling us is unto glory; as 1 Thess. ii. 12. This glory is only of His mercy, from whence glory floweth unto us; mercy is the ground thereof. What shall I say of

glory (Rev. xix. 9)? Here shall be glory, and surpassing glory, as it is written (1 Cor. i. 9), then to be "called unto fellowship with Christ"; yet more, as Rom. viii. 17, to be heirs; nay, yet a step more, to be co-heirs with Him together in glory. And, finally, what use the faithful make of this glory against all the crosses, afflictions, and tempests of this life, the apostle sheweth (2 Cor. iv. 17). What can be said more? If yet you desire to hear more of glory, consider—1. First, for the place. It is heaven, the proper seat and mansion of all glory, where Christ is. So Christ speaketh in the prayer of His (John xvii. 24). So also 1 Thess. iv. 17. 2. The second thing is the company, with whom. No unclean thing shall enter therein (Rev. xxi. 27). 3. Thirdly, the title, what. Not of creatures, or of servants, not so only, but of sons and heirs, and co-heirs with Christ. This, one would think, were sufficient; and yet the Scripture gives us others to the like effect, as that we shall be kings and priests unto God. But as those spies who went to view the land of Canaan, by some of the grapes and fruits which they brought did judge of the fertility of the land, so, I say, if by the Word of God those first-fruits of the Spirit, the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, those beginnings of grace, the divers working and operation of the same Spirit, those feelings and joys of the faithful raised thereby, peace of conscience, and all that which shines in the glory of the gospel, we may think of the same. 4. Now we want but the time, how long. What can be said of eternity? Think that we can, this is ever beyond the reach of all our thoughts, only I may say thereof as it is (Psa. lxxxiv. 10). The uses. 1. If this, then, as is proved, be the only calling that we are called unto, unto glory and virtue, let us labour to acknowledge the excellency of the calling of God, and set a due price upon the same. 2. The next is, to value the children of God highly for the graces of God in them, so judging of them. 3. The last is for consolation, a man that hath this calling unto glory. Oh, how marvellously may such an one be joyful in all tribulations, sorrows and crosses! (R. Sibbes, D.D.)

Spiritual life : its origin and true development :—I. GOD CALLS US; that is the origin of all spiritual life. It is His good pleasure to bless and to save. In the exercise of this sovereignty God calls all men not to judgment and sorrow, but to glory and virtue. II. HAVING GLANCED AT THE ORIGIN OF ALL SPIRITUAL LIFE, NOW LOOK AT ITS DEVELOPMENT: God calls us to glory and to virtue. 1. God calls us to glory. The most obvious meaning of this word is honour, dignity, or illustrious rank; such is the idea of this word in chap. ii. of this Epistle, and ver. 10, where it is rendered "dignities." The idea of Peter in saying that God has called us to glory appears to be that the spiritual life to which God calls us is one of renown and dignity. God calls us not to dishonour, mortification, and degradation. Religion is the elevation of the whole nature of man. 2. God has called us to virtue. In this word virtue there is great meaning. The old Roman empire, based on power, knew no virtue but valour. *Vir* was the Latin for man, and *virtus* was that which a man was expected to put forth in opposition to effeminacy and weakness. The Roman had no idea of virtue in one sense of the word as signifying morality. His idea of virtue was one, and no more: a brave man was a virtuous man. God calls us all to fortitude. (W. G. Barrett.)

Virtue and religion enforced :—Sir Walter Scott left a solemn and weighty legacy to others than his son. On his death-bed "his eye was clear and calm," we are told; "every trace of the wild fire of delirium extinguished. 'I have not a moment to speak,' he said; 'be virtuous—be religious. Be a good man. Nothing else will give you any comfort when you come to die.'" **Exceeding great and precious promises.**—*The Christian's privileges* :—I. A CONVEYANCE. 1. The instrument. This "whereby" stands like a Janus, looking both to the matter past and to come. The matter past was the knowledge of Christ. Let us use all the means to get knowledge; yet, after all this, glory not in thy knowledge. Knowledge without truth is like Uriah's letters that contained his own death. To know good, and do ill, makes a man's own mittimus to hell. 2. The materials. The law gave menaces, the gospel gives "promises," and brings mercy to our houses and our hearts. 3. The latitudes of these promises. (1) "Great." They promise a thing no less than greatness itself: the love of God, an immense kingdom, the world invisible. (2) "Precious" (Psa. lv. 22; Matt. xi. 28; Rom. viii. 28). (a) If God so promise, let us trust Him (Heb. x. 23). (b) Seeing these promises are so precious, store thy heart with them; that which way soever the blow comes it may assault thee without fear, not without foresight. 4. The form of the conveyance—a deed of gift. All worldly things are but lent; only spiritual graces are given. The Lord's bounty requires of us some duty. (1) Call upon the Giver, as the beggar frequents the gates of bounty, and that in faith (James i. 6).

(2) Be thankful to the Giver, not only for spiritual, but even for temporal things. It is not enough to take the whole loaves, but let us even gather up the fragments. And if God gives all to us, let us give something to Him. Not only my goods, but myself. (3) Be not proud, arrogate not that to thyself which is God's gift. 5. These promises are signed, sealed, delivered, and bound with an oath. (1) God hath put His hand to them in the gospel. (2) The two sacraments are the seals. (3) They are delivered to us (Rom. viii. 15). Use: From the stability of God's promises to us let us learn to be constant in the performance of our promise, both to God and to man. II. AN INHERITANCE. God's nature may be participated two ways, of quality and of equality. 1. For equality: this is only proper to the three Persons of the Trinity. 2. Our participation must be only qualitative: by nature we understand not substance, but quality, by grace in this world and by glory in the world to come. This communication of the Divine nature to us is by reparation of the Divine image in us (Heb. xii. 10; Eph. iv. 24; Rom. viii. 29). (1) As servants of a Master; not merely as creatures; so all men partake (Acts xvii. 28). (2) As subjects of a Prince; and thus we partake with the King of heaven in many benefits. (3) As sons of a Father: thus we partake many things of the Divine nature. (4) As members of a Head (1 Cor. xii. 27). (5) As branches of a Vine (John xv.). III. A DELIVERANCE. 1. The discovery of great danger. (1) The infection, corruption of lust. It gets into the thoughts, senses, tongue, hands, &c. (2) The dispersion through the world. Consider the villainy, misery, inconstancy, insufficiency of it. 2. The recovery. We have escaped, not by our power, but by His grace that hath delivered us (Psa. cxxiv. 7). There is a fourfold manner of freeing captives. (1) By manumission (John viii. 36). (2) By commutation. Christ was killed; we escaped. (3) By ransom (1 Tim. ii. 6; 1 Pet. i. 19). (4) By violence (2 Tim. iv. 17). God did all this for us, and shall we do nothing for Him, for ourselves? (*Thos. Adams.*) *The promises of God*:—I. THE EXCELLENCY OF THE DIVINE PROMISES. The promises of Scripture are generally declarations which God has made of His intention to bestow blessings upon His faithful people. Under the Old Testament dispensation the promises mainly related to the future advent of the Messiah. The Christian covenant is, in fact, one comprehensive promise (Jer. xxxi. 33, 34; xxxii. 40; Heb. viii. 6-12). So that illumination, pardon, holiness, and union with God—that is, all imaginable mercies—are included in this one rich and overflowing promise. II. THE DESIGN FOR WHICH THESE PROMISES ARE GIVEN—"that by these you might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." The two designs of the promises, then, are a deliverance from the corruptions of the world and a participation of the purity of God. What this corruption is need scarcely be described. Men by their concupiscence and ungoverned passions corrupt each other. The Divine nature stands opposed to all this corruption. We are to be holy as God is holy. 1. That this is the direct tendency of the Divine promises may appear, first, from the consideration that it is in the view of His love and grace as displayed in the gospel of His Son, which God is pleased chiefly to employ to win the heart to His service. 2. The assurances of assistance offered to us in the promises tend also directly to promote holiness. The promise of forgiveness excites us to forsake sin; the promise of inward grace to mortify it. 3. Again, the condition annexed to the promises make them the powerful means of producing in us conformity to the Divine nature. These are frequently expressed. To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God. The meek will He guide in judgment. 4. But I ask once more, What is the matter of God's promises—what are the blessings themselves which they hold out to us? Do they not all either imply holy obedience or directly include it? Repentance, faith, love, joy, hope, peace, strength, communion with God, are subjects of the promises; and what are these but parts of sanctification? 5. I ask, again, what are the direct and necessary effects of such promises, when they are received? They are the nutriment of faith which worketh by love. They inspire hope which purifies the heart even as God is pure. They work therefore not as an opiate to stupefy, but as a medicine to restore. And all this they do, not by a mere natural process, but by the gracious appointment of God. III. THE TEST WHICH IT FURNISHES OF OUR STATE BEFORE GOD. If men will put a general notion of God's mercy in the place of His promises; if they will substitute a form of godliness for a Divine nature, and a mere decency and good order before others, for an "escape from the corruption which is in the world through lust," they must perish. (*D. Wilson, M.A.*) *Great and precious promises*:—Did you ever hear the story how, once upon a time, a dove moaned and mourned to her fellow-birds of the tyranny

of the hawk—the dove's great foe? One advised her to keep below; but the hawk can stoop for his prey. Another said, Soar aloft; but the hawk could soar as high as she could. Another said, Fly to the woods; but the woods are the very palace and court of the cruel hawk; safety could not be found there. And another said, Fly to the towns; but there she was in danger of being caught by man, who might even make her a sport for the hawk. At last one said, Fly to the holes of the rocks. Violence cannot surprise the dove there. Thus it is with the soul of man—distressed and fearful. Come to me, says Riches, and I will shelter you. No, Wealth is only the devil's lure, and, by and by, his rein and his spur. Come to me, says Pleasure; but she is the very Delilah of the soul, to betray you to the Philistines. Honour says, Come to me; but there is no assurance in any of these. No. Oh, ye that dwell in cities and repose in wealth or pleasure or honour, there is safety in Jesus or nowhere. "Leave the cities and dwell in the rock—in the Rock of Ages—fly to the promises, and be like the dove that maketh her nest by the side of the hole's mouth." I. CONSIDER THE PROMISES. Ah, if we practically realised the might, the majesty, and the meaning of God's promises, how happy they would often make us! The astronomer, when he knows that the hour of the planet draws nigh, prepares his glasses and climbs his highest towers, and through its bright far-seeing eyes he watches and he waits till he beholds it come labouring along its infinite way. And when it has shone through the darkness its hour or its season, then it fades down again into the darkness till another season shall come, and, perhaps, another astronomer hails its beams. So the promises of God are made to conditions, and they shine like constellations. Oh, sweet garden of the promises! But are they not rather like trees—exceeding great and precious promises? It seems to me, when I study the life of the promises, I come as into a vast and stately forest, planted by the glorious men of God in old time by His will and word; and they are, "the fir tree, the pine, and the box together." There are the cedars of Lebanon, which He hath planted; and, like all trees, they are fit for meditation and fruit and use. How cool it is to walk amongst the promises! They are quiet places, and sacred and secret ways, where God, in an especial manner, meets with man's soul. When the glorious sun strikes down, how the promises stretch out their cool arms; and when storms are in the heavens they cannot strike through these boughs. And so every promise conceals or reveals some biography—some way of God in a human soul. Poor Bilney, that noble martyr, lost all comfort after he had recanted till he found the words, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Beza found the life of his hope in words which I can never forget: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I will give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." Some of the fathers divided the promises into *Pabulum fidei*, and *Anima fidei*—"Food of faith," and the "Soul of faith." "Oh, thou of little faith," see yonder is the state; but do you not see the sunshine falling over it?—those arrowy flakes of gold, they are the promises—the exceeding great and precious promises: when you come to that darkness, fear not, but you shall inherit that light.

II. EXCEEDING GREAT AND PRECIOUS. Do but think how wonderful it is that God should make Himself known by man. And all God's works are promises. They are tokens of holiness, and wisdom, and faithfulness. Why do you plant an acorn? Does it not contain a promise? Infinite value is placed here. And methinks if we did but read the works and ways of God in nature aright we should see everywhere the promise of our future. Oh, when I can stand on the great mountain chains of the Bible, what a view I have! And do not promises strengthen? Our whole life is maintained by promise. Without promise we should sink into the deepest places of despair. We need spiritual tonics. We need them to destroy our unhealthily consciousness, which is only another name for weakness. And how glorious that, by these promises, we are able to look beyond the tomb; yes, by them we escape the corruption that is in the world through lust and see our fair inheritance there. But remember one great condition by which you know your relation to the promise—"escaping the corruption that is in the world through lust." Here, you see, is the great condition. Have you escaped the corruption? Till you breathe in purer air you cannot expect to breathe the sweetness of this promise. Obedience first, then recompense. (E. P. Hood.) *The promises of God* :—I. Their greatness will appear if we consider THEIR AUTHORITY. They derive importance and value from the holiness of God in all its glory, from His justice in all its inflexibility. Finally, they must derive importance from His infinite benevolence and mercy in which they

originated, of which they are the magnificent expression and all the resources of which they open. Is there not an important sense, then, in which these promises are as precious, as great as God is glorious? Those, therefore, who neglect them despise Jehovah Himself when making the most interesting appeals to their hearts, and involve themselves in guilt and wickedness proportionable to the glories of the Divine character. II. The greatness and value of the promises will appear if we consider them in their OWN NATURE AND PROPERTIES, or, if we attend to THEIR INTRINSIC WORTH. In estimating the value of promises, this is the chief consideration. No matter what may be the rank or character of the promiser, or what the relation in which he stands to us. The promise cannot be denominated great and precious if it relates to an insignificant object or to one that does not meet our exigencies. The great consideration here is: suppose the promises to be accomplished, and all the good that is contained in them enjoyed, will all our capacities be filled? Shall we be completely delivered from all dangers and enemies? Shall we be raised to the perfection of our nature? If so, but not otherwise, the promises, the value of which we are endeavouring to estimate, are exceeding great and precious. Now, tried by this criterion, the promises to which the apostle refers will appear to be fully entitled to the epithets under consideration. For when they are all accomplished in heaven, what want will remain unsupplied? what capacity unfilled, even to overflowing? what danger or enemy will threaten, what desirable good will not be possessed? What will then be wanting to complete the dignity and happiness of human nature? III. Consider THE MEDIUM through which these promises have been made, or the way in which these blessings are secured and conferred, and they, too, will show that they are indeed exceeding great and precious. "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself," and, therefore, making all the promises through Him. "All the promises of God are in Him yea, and in Him Amen." They are all made and confirmed in Him. In Him who, though He was the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His Person, the Lord, the Creator of angels, and the object of their worship, became the Babe of Bethlehem, the sufferer on the Cross. In Him who, by the exercise of every grace of which innocent human nature is capable, and the performance of every duty in their very perfection, and that in the most difficult circumstances, met all the demands of an absolutely perfect law. In Him, who, by making His life, His blood, His soul an offering for sin by drinking, to the very dregs, the bitter cup of Divine wrath, secured all the blessings contained in the promises. IV. Consider THE NUMBER AND VARIETY of the promises. We have given to us not an exceeding great and precious promise merely, but exceeding great and precious promises relating to all the endless variety of the believer's wants and circumstances and dangers and duties: to prosperity and to adversity, to the body and to the soul, to time and to eternity, to earth and to heaven. V. Consider next THE SUITABLENESS of these promises, and this, too, will prove that they are exceeding great and precious. A promise may be valuable in itself, and as it regards the blessing which it exhibits; and yet it may be to the individuals to whom it is made of no importance because it is not suitable to their circumstances. How valuable to some would be the promise of a large sum of money, of a rich and extensive estate, of a crown! What are they to the man who is the victim of a mortal disease, who has only a few moments longer to live? "Behold, he is at the point to die," and what are riches and crowns to him? How valuable is a promise of pardon to a convicted and condemned malefactor! But what is it to the man who glories in his innocence and virtue and claims the protection of the law, and the blessings of life as his right? But the promises of the gospel are as suitable to our circumstances as they are great and wonderful in themselves. They secure light to those who are in darkness, and rich supplies to those who are perishing of hunger, and pardon to those who are guilty and condemned. VI. Consider THE IMMUTABILITY of these promises, and this will show that they are exceeding great and precious. How inexcusable, then, is unbelief! VII. On account of THEIR INFLUENCE the promises may well be denominated exceeding great and precious. The promises of men often exert an injurious influence on those to whom they are made. They dazzle the eyes of the mind, enkindle a flame of unhallowed feelings, lead astray from the path of duty, and thus prove the most dangerous temptations to sin. How many have been led by them to act a foolish, a base, a disgraceful part! By seeking the honour that comes from men they have lost all the honour that comes from God. But the influence of the promises of the gospel is always beneficial. They ever enlighten and sanctify and stimulate to act a wise and noble part. This must be the case, for they make those who embrace

them partakers of the Divine nature and keep from the corruption that is in the world through lust. Now we may infer from what has been advanced—1. That the Bible is an exceedingly great and precious book, for it contains all these promises. 2. We may learn whether or not we are personally, actually interested in these promises. 3. How great the folly and guilt, how wretched the state of those who despise all these promises and reject all these blessings! 4. Remember that the Bible contains not only exceeding great and precious promises, but exceedingly great and terrible threatenings, and the latter are as dreadful as the former are glorious. (IV. Scott.) *Divine promises* :—I. THE MEANS whereby God conveys His grace to us, viz., the promises of the gospel. 1. Their excellency is set forth by two adjuncts. They are “exceeding great and precious.” The one noteth their intrinsic worth and value; they are “exceeding great.” The other, our esteem of them; they deserve to be “precious” to us. 2. Their freeness: “given,” made freely, made good freely. II. THE END and use of them: that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature; that is, the communicable excellence of God. 1. Because these are communicated to us by God; they are created in us by His Divine power. We have them by virtue of our communion with Him. They flow from God, as the light doth from the sun. 2. Because by these perfections we somewhat resemble God. Therefore it is said (1 Pet. ii. 9), “We show forth His praises,” His virtues or Divine attributes, His “wisdom, goodness, bounty, holiness”; for in these we most resemble Him. III. THE WAY, METHOD, AND ORDER how we receive this benefit of the Divine nature. “Having first escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” As we die to sin, the Divine nature increaseth in us. There is a putting off before there can be a putting on (Eph. iv. 22–24). 1. What is to be avoided: “The corruption that is in the world through lust.” Observe, sin is called “corruption” as often in Scripture, because it is a blasting of our primitive excellency and purity (Gen. vi. 12; Psa. xiv. 1). Observe, the seat of this corruption is said to be in the world, where lust and all uncleanness reigneth, therefore called “the pollutions of the world” (chap. ii. 20). The generality of men are defiled with them, corrupted in their faith, worship, and manners; therefore conversion is called for under these terms (Acts ii. 40). Lastly, observe that this corruption is said to reign in the world “through lust.” Besides the bait there is the appetite; it is our naughty affections that make our abode in the world dangerous. 2. The manner of shunning, in the word escaping. There is a flying away required, and that quickly, as in the plague, or from a fire which hath almost burned us, or a flood that breaketh in upon us. We cannot soon enough escape from sin (Matt. iii. 7; Heb. vi. 18). No motion but flight becomes us in this case. Doctrine: That the great end and effect of the promises of the gospel is to make us partakers of the Divine nature. I. Let us consider the effect or end. 1. That it is a natural, not a transient effect. There may be such a sense of the goodness, wisdom, and power of God as may produce a sudden passion; as suppose of fear or love. It may only affect us for the present, but inferreth no change of heart and life. But the promises of the gospel are to breed in us such a temper of heart as may be a second nature to us, a habit or constitution of soul that may incline us to live to God. A habit serveth for this use, that a man may act easily, pleasantly, and constantly. (1) To act easily. There is an inclination and propensity to holiness. (2) To act pleasantly. They have not only a new bias and tendency, but it is a delight to do what is holy (Psa. xl. 8), as being in their element when they are thus employed. (3) It is a constant principle of holy operations, so that a man doth not only obey God easily, but evenly, and without such frequent interruptions of the holy life. 2. It is a Divine nature; that is, not only such as floweth from God, but may carry some resemblance with Him or to Him. It floweth from God, for we are “partakers”; it is but a ray from His excellency, and it carrieth a likeness to Him, or cometh nearer to the nature of God Himself than anything that a man is capable of. Now this is said for two reasons—(1) To show the dignity of it. Nothing known to man is so like God as a sanctified soul. The saints have their Maker’s express image; therefore if God be excellent and holy, they are so. The image and picture of God and Christ is in them, not made by a painter or carver, but by the Holy Ghost (2 Cor. iii. 18). (2) To show the quality and condition of it. You must have a new nature, and such a nature as may be a Divine nature. If you have nothing above natural men or corrupt nature, you are strangers to the promises of the gospel. 3. This Divine nature may be considered three ways. Either—(1) As begun; when we are first “renewed in the spirit of our minds,” and regenerated “according to the image of

God" (Eph. iv. 23, 24). (2) As increased; when more like God in a conspicuous degree. (3) As it is perfected in heaven; for there we have the nearest communion with God, and so the highest conformity to Him that we are capable of (1 John iii. 2).

II. Let us now see the means by which God doth accomplish this effect: "To us are given great and precious promises." 1. It is an instance of God's love, that He will deal with us in the way of promises. (1) A promise is more than a purpose; for the purpose and intention of a man is secret and hidden in his own bosom, but a promise is open and manifest. Thereby we get the knowledge of the good intended to us. (2) It is more than a doctrinal declaration. It is one thing to reveal a doctrine, another to promise a benefit; that maketh a thing known, this maketh a thing sure, and upon certain terms; that gives us notice, but this gives us interest. (3) It is more than a prophecy or simple prediction. Scripture prophecies will be fulfilled because of God's veracity; but Scripture promises will be fulfilled, not only because of God's veracity, but also His fidelity and justice; for by God's promise man cometh to have a right to the thing promised. 2. The promises of the new covenant are of a most glorious and valuable nature. They are not about small things, or things of little moment, but about worthy and dear-bought blessings. 3. They are precious promises, worthy of our esteem; for they are not about things that we have nothing to do with, but such wherein we are deeply and intimately concerned. In God's promises there is due provision made for the desires, necessities, and wants of mankind. 4. All this is given to us wretched men without any desert of ours; nay, we had deserved the contrary.

III. The influence of the one upon the other; or, how do these promises promote the Divine nature? 1. From their drift, which is, to draw us from the creature to God, and the world to heaven; to mortify the esteem of the false happiness which corrupteth our natures; and to raise us to those noble objects and ends which dignify and adorn the soul, and make it in a sort Divine. It breedeth an excellent spirit in us, which is carried above the world, and the hopes and fears of it (1 Cor. ii. 12). 2. The matter of the promises. Many of which concern the change of our hearts, the cleansing or healing of our natures (Heb. viii. 10; Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26; Jer. xxxiii. 8). 3. The conditions or terms on which our right is suspended. Not pardon without repentance (Acts iii. 19). Not heaven or eternal life without holiness (Heb. xii. 14). 4. The power with which the promises are accompanied (chap. i. 3). The Divine nature is communicated to us by virtue of the promises; for the Spirit is our sanctifier, and He works by congruous means. Use 1. Believe the promises, for they are most sure and certain. God's testimony of the good things He will bestow upon us cannot deceive us, or beget a vain and uncertain hope. Use 2. Esteem them (Heb. xi. 13). Use 3. Labour to improve the belief of every promise for the increase of holiness, that we may be like God, pure and holy as He is (2 Cor. vii. 1). (T. Manton, D.D.)

"Exceeding great and precious promises" :—I. First, THE SOURCE of all the promises is shown by this same apostle to be "the abundant mercy of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. i. 3-5). By whatever name called, in whatever dispensation or method made known, the "abundant mercy" of the ever-blessed God has been the great original, only source of promise to man. II. THEIR CHARACTER. They are "exceeding great," or, as the Rhemish version literally translates it, "most great." As the announcements of Divine mercy concerning the provisions of redemption for man, we may expect the promises to be so great as to meet all the wants and woes of our fallen nature. 1. One wide, deep, and long-felt want of our spiritual nature is—"light." The most enlightened Pagans but guessed at immortality, and felt after the true God among a rabble of false ones. Need I point out to you how Jesus Christ is thus "the Desire of all nations"? "To Him," as the true Light, "gave all the prophets witness." Pleasant to the eyes, cheering to the heart, indispensable to labour, assuring to the traveller, longed for by the watchman, an indispensable condition of all healthy growth, and therefore of life, light is in every language the symbol of truth; and as Jesus Christ is "the brightness of the Father's glory," so His gospel is "the light of lights" in all these respects to believing souls. 2. Another deep-felt want of the human soul is the craving for "peace with God." Wherever the religious instincts have been awakened, their most poignant consciousness has been that of guilt, a dread of the Invisible, and "a fearful looking for of judgment." Hence all the self-torments of superstition, and the altars and offerings of Paganism, past and present. And of all the promises of God, none are more "exceeding great and precious" than those which invite, intreat, "beseech men to be reconciled unto God," on the ground of the great propitiation of Jesus Christ for

sin. They are more precious than the royal warrant that releases the death-doomed culprit; they are our passport and safe-conduct into present safety and eternal life. 3. Thus we might proceed in regard to every want of the human spirit. Does the quickened soul pant for self-harmony and purity, crying, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me"? Then one of a thousand promises uttered from the heart of God replies, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you; a new heart will I give unto you, and a new spirit will I put within you." 4. Does the heart, pre-designed for Divine love and fellowship, feel restless for its adapted element—a good which it knows not, and without which it must inly burn and pine for ever? To all this multitude of weary, feverish souls there comes from the Father of spirits such exceeding great and precious promises as these: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters: and he that hath no money, come." 5. Again, does the universal soul of man believe in and anticipate immortal life? Does the savage from his instincts, and the sage from his reasonings, expect to live for ever? Does even the bad man inly shudder at the prospect of annihilation, and the good man long for immortality? Then the certainty, the nature, and the path of endless life are the subject-matter of transcendently "great and precious promises." 6. Finally, as to the wants of the soul and their Divinely promised supply. The life and immortality—rather incorruptibility—brought to light by the promises of the gospel meet another demand of our nature—"the resurrection from the dead." And are they not "precious"—"precious" as the free pledges of sovereign, paternal, everlasting grace?—"precious" as the fruits of Jesus' death-enduring love?—"precious" as the subject of the Comforter's ministry to the heart, and the medium of His sanctifying energy therein? They are precious for their past beneficent history in healing wounded spirits and raising fainting hearts. Their greatness and preciousness have been in part realised by the first advent of Christ and this present "dispensation of the Spirit." This, however, is but the introduction to the vast volume of "good things yet to come." The sons of God are now adopted, but not manifested. III. This is rendered still more evident by THE DESIGN of the promises: "That we might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 1. This declaration inevitably implies that man has lost that participation in the Divine nature which is called "the image of God," and which consisted in "spiritual knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness." 2. It also implies that there is in man's nature, however fallen, a constitutional capacity (though we know, alas! a deep disinclination) to receive back and reflect the moral character of God. 3. It suggests that all the needful influences are given by the God of the promises, and lie within our reach for the recovery of the Divine nature; and that God holds us responsible for the earnest, prayerful use of those gracious means whereby we may grow into His likeness, and ascend to fellowship with Himself. 4. And this involves most inspiring views of what redeemed humanity may attain even on earth, much more in heaven. 5. This fellowship with God is the only means of escaping the infectious pollutions of moral evil that abound in the world on every side, and that spring from the desires of the heart turned from God to impure and forbidden objects. 6. The promises, then, are indispensable to the attainment of this end. They reveal the "Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness," and assure the gift of the Holy Spirit to renew and inhabit the soul. (*John Graham.*) The efficacy of the promises:—What is the "whereby" with which the passage commences? designating, as it appears to do, some channel of communication. There are here several antecedents to which the "whereby" may be grammatically referred; but, without examining a variety of critical opinions, it appears to me the most obvious course to take the concluding words, "glory and virtue," as the antecedent which we are in search of; "the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue; whereby"—that is, through which glory and virtue—"are given to us exceeding great and precious promises." We are called to glory and to virtue—to a warfare that is full of honour, but at the same time full of difficulty, requiring much wisdom and vigour in the combatant. If we obey this calling, and throw ourselves into the conflict, then the struggle in which we are engaged will be the best witness that we are the elect of the Most High. Having this witness, we possess an assurance that the promises of the Bible are spoken specially to ourselves. Now, having thus cleared up the connection between the text and the context, it still remains that I vindicate the description that is here made of the promises given in the Bible. Yet, can this be necessary? If there be a spiritual solicitude for which the Bible

contains not a word in season; if there be a doubt which is left without a message to disperse it; if there be an anxiety which is passed by without a whisper to soothe it; and if there be a tear which it dries not; then I will give up the description, and pronounce it overdrawn. But in nothing has God so manifested His wisdom as in the precision with which His Word meets the wants of His people. It were idle to attempt to descend into particulars. Exceedingly great are the promises of the Bible; great in their sweep, for they leave no circumstance unattended to; great in their power, for they bring all the magnificence of eternity to bear on the solitudes of time. And precious are the promises, as well as great. He who can appropriate them has blessings which no arithmetic can reckon, a security which no contingency can shake, and a help which never can be without use. But there is no need that I insist further on the character that the text gives of the promises. Those who have proved them acknowledge them to be "exceeding great and precious"; they who have proved them not, want, alas! the spiritual ardour by which their character is to be discerned, and are therefore not to be convinced by the most elaborate description. We all profess to believe that once on the earth the spectacle was exhibited of the human nature adopted into union with the Divine. There was the perfect instance of one of our race being made partaker of the Divine nature: I need scarcely add that the instance will stand for ever by itself; and that the sense in which we alone can share in the nature of God differs from that in which Christ Jesus had share. He had it in essence—we in conformity; He by being God—we only by being renewed after the image of God. The Greek might more strictly be rendered "*partakers of a Divine nature*," and not of *the* Divine nature. Now, the point which yet remains to be investigated, is the agency of the promises in effecting such a change; for, you will observe, that whilst partaking of the Divine nature is the result, the promises are the means through which it is brought about. "Exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature." The machinery exhibited in the Bible when a spiritual transformation is in question, is the influence of the Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the blessed Trinity. We may be assured, therefore, that when any other machinery is brought on the stage, we are to understand that it is effectual, not through its inherent energies, but only through its being actuated by that Agent. The promises in themselves have no power to animate; but if I believe in the promise, then the promise becomes a quickening thing; and that which as spoken was merely sound that melted into air, is now a radiant star which rules me and guides me by the brilliancy of its light. We shall take for granted, in all we say of the power of the promises, that the power is derived from faith, and faith from the Holy Ghost; and we go on to show in the first place the power which promises wield over men in ordinary things, and in the second place, the influence which they exert over Christians in particular. If you took a rapid survey of the various classes and occupations of men, you would find that almost every one is submitting himself to the power of promise. If you enter the crowded marts of commerce, or pass through the courtly circles of ambition, or sit with the student in his secluded chamber, or accompany the dissolute into the haunts of pleasure, the same pursuit is in each case carried on; they are all hunting after some fancied good, which, though it may cheat them at last, engages them at present. Some busy spirit has been whispering into the ear of every man whom you meet, that if he will but follow this course, or that course, he shall attain the object of his desire. And the greatest marvel is, that although the experience of successive ages has shown there is a lie in each of these promises, they nevertheless attain the same credit as ever. If it could, however, come suddenly to pass that an arrest was put on this circulation of promise, there would be an instant standstill in the busy scenes of human occupation. And I need hardly point out how amplified would be the power of promise if there were anything like an assurance of fulfilment. If men can do such things on chance, what will they do on certainty? Now I turn from this rapid survey of the power which promise wields over men in general; and I ask you whether, if you turn the uncertainty of promise into certainty, you may not expect to find the power a thousand times greater which is wielded over Christians in particular? The defects in promise are here done away with; the result which is desired not only may take place, but shall take place. And if a promise, which is both indefinite in its terms and insecure in its pledges, be the efficient thing we have already described, who shall marvel that where the terms are the noblest, and the pledges are the strongest, it shall lead those who believe to work out their salvation with the fear and trembling of men who know

themselves to have eternity at stake? I will seek, however, to dissect this point a little more nicely; for it is both of interest and importance. Escaping the pollution that is in the world, we account to be the same thing as being made partakers of the Divine nature. It is by escaping pollution, by withdrawing from the trammels and habits of sinfulness, that this partnership in the celestial character is procured; and if we can show that it is by the promises that pollution is escaped, it will follow that it is through the promises that conformity to the Divine nature is attained. But whether it be by promises or by threatenings that the work is commenced, assuredly it is by promise that the work is carried on. Is the believer disheartened when he considers the might of his spiritual enemies? the promise is kindly whispered, "God shall bruise Satan under thy feet shortly." He takes courage, and wrestles with the enemy. Is he confounded at the view of indwelling corruption? "God will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able to bear." Are kinsmen and friends alienated from him on account of his profession of godliness? What sustains him but this?—"When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." Does prayer seem unanswered? "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart." Do sorrows seem multiplied? "All things work together for good to them that love God." Is his progress in the life of faith scarcely perceptible? Where God hath begun a good work, He will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. You see, then, that promises are mighty engines in the hands of God's Spirit. It is by these souls are animated to prayer; it is by these they are prepared for warfare; it is by these they are warmed in love; it is by these they are cheered on in their way after holiness. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Precious promises*:—What makes a promise precious? 1. The thing promised must be valuable. 2. He who promises must be truthful. 3. He who promises must be able to perform. (*W. Lawson, D.D.*) *The Divinely assimilating force of Divine promises*:—Christianity is a system of promises. Even its doctrines and precepts may be regarded as promises. These promises are "exceedingly great" in their nature, variety, and influences; they are exceedingly "precious" too;—precious essentially and relatively in themselves and in their bearings on man. I. THESE PROMISES TEND TO ASSIMILATE US TO GOD BY GIVING US AN ATTRACTIVE VIEW OF HIS CHARACTER. Two thoughts will illustrate this point:—1. Man's moral character is formed on the principle of imitation. There are two wrong developments of this instinct. (1) When it is directed to the natural peculiarities of others. (2) When directed to the moral faults of others. 2. Man's imitation is ever directed to that which seems to him beautiful. He will not copy that which appears to him unamiable, unlovely, repulsive. If the Infinite appear to us supremely lovely, He will by the laws of our imitative nature mould us into His own image. Now His promises give us this attractive view of Him. A sincere promise reveals the author's disposition. If the promise is trifling where there are large resources, it indicates a niggardly soul, and the reverse. A sincere promise reveals the author's resources. If great things are promised, the possession of great things are implied. According to these criteria, what infinite kindness and inexhaustible resources do the promises of God reveal! II. THESE PROMISES TEND TO ASSIMILATE US TO HIM BY BRINGING US INTO PERSONAL CONTACT WITH HIS CHARACTER. We must be with a being to become like him. Fellowship is absolutely indispensable. There is on the one hand a giving, and on the other a perpetual receiving. Thus the two are brought together. Both minds meet, as it were, in the promise. III. THESE PROMISES TEND TO ASSIMILATE US TO HIM BY GIVING US A LIVING INTEREST IN HIS CHARACTER. (*Homilist.*) *The design of the promises of God*:—I. IN THE DIVINE NATURE ARE ATTRIBUTES PROPERLY INCOMMUNICABLE; SUCH AS CANNOT, IN THE NATURE OF THINGS, BE IMPARTED; SUCH AS CANNOT BE EVEN IMITATED BY CREATURES. It is peculiar to Him to exist in and from Himself; while a creature is a dependent being, and ever must remain so. It is peculiar to Him to be from everlasting to everlasting. It is peculiar to Him to have supreme dominion. Absolute perfection, that which is liable to no injury, admits of no diminution, is capable of no advancement, is peculiar to Him. Finite cannot equal infinite. It is, then, in moral attributes that we are to look for this participation of the Divine nature; in those which, indeed, constitute the very glory of that nature; the others being adorable as they are exercised and employed by a perfect wisdom, rectitude, and love. But let it be here observed that the promise is not that we shall be raised into something like God; some mere imitation of what is morally perfect in Him. We are to be partakers of the Divine nature. There is to be a communication on the part of God, and a reception on our own, of those

principles on which all that is pure and holy in God may be said to depend; a communication continued to us, on which the growth and permanency of those principles rest. The moral nature of God, thus to be participated by believers, may be summed up in the three terms. 1. Knowledge. The power of knowing is the property of spiritual beings. It is not merely to perceive in the low degree which belongs to irrational animals, but to apprehend, to remember, to compare, to infer, and from particular to bring out general truths, which are to be laid up in the mind for meditation or action. This knowledge is the knowledge of things as good or evil, as right or wrong, as tending or not tending to our own happiness, and that of the whole creation. Infinitely perfect is this knowledge in God. And by the indwelling of His teaching Spirit, opening these truths to our mind, and rendering us discerning to apply them, He makes us partake, in our degree, of His own knowledge, His infallible judgment of things. Then it is that we walk in the light. We find a sure way for our feet, and so are enabled to escape the snares of death.

2. Holiness. This is essential to God. It is that principle in Him, whatever it may be, which has led Him to prescribe justice, mercy, and truth, and to prohibit their contraries under penalties so severe; that principle, which is more than a mere approval of the things which He enjoins; which makes Him love righteousness. The holiness of a creature as to actions is, conformity to the will of God, which is the visible declaration of His holy nature. That conformity implies justice, a rendering to all their due; a large duty, referring not only to man, but likewise to God, to whom are to be given the honour and worship He requires from us: perfect truth and sincerity in everything, so that all outward acts shall concur with the heart, and the heart with them; and the strict regulation of every temper and appetite, so that they may be kept within the bounds prescribed, beyond which they become impurity and sin. But there must be principle from which all this must flow, or it is only external and imitative; and that principle is found only in the new man, that which comes from this participation of the Divine nature.

3. But the Divine nature is love. Who can doubt this when he sees the happiness of the creatures so manifestly the end of their creation? when we can trace all misery to another source? when we see the mercies He mixes with His judgments, always bringing some good out of evil? when He spared not His own Son, but gave Him freely for us all? II. We observe, THAT THE VALUE OF THE PROMISES OF THE GOSPEL IS SPECIALLY DISPLAYED BY THEIR CONNECTION WITH THIS END. "There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature." To raise men to this state is matter of promise, and therefore of grace. We might have been left to the sin and degradation we had sought. And the promises thus given to us, all of them suppose the covenant of grace. And when we consider their great design to make us partakers of the Divine nature, how clearly and brightly does it display their value! They appear to us of unspeakable value; "exceeding great and precious." 1. They are so in respect of the honour which this great attainment puts on man. 2. Consider this value in respect to interest. What is the real interest of man but the attainment of the favour and image of God? 3. Consider this value in respect of peace. There can be no peace to the wicked. Every evil brings its own punishment with it in the disquietude which it occasions. 4. Consider this value in respect of usefulness. Knowledge is a powerful instrument of God when prompted by benevolence and sustained by consistency of character. And where there is this participation of the Divine nature, there we find all these elements of usefulness, knowledge, holiness, and love. 5. And lastly, consider this value in reference to hope. (*R. Watson.*)

That by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature.—*Partakers of the Divine nature*:—The keynote of the passage is the word "Divine," which occupies so conspicuous a place at the commencement and the close. To the momentous questions, What is the source and what the nature of true religion? the sum briefly is—It is a Divine life. Its source is traced to the Divine power of the Mediator, and on its features are stamped the impress of the Divine image. 1. Life and godliness is a comprehensive and practical description of true religion. Life alone, in Scripture, often describes the state of grace, and sums up all the blessings of salvation (1 John v. 12; Acts v. 20). Godliness, also, by itself, often denotes the whole of religion—the whole life of faith (1 Tim. iii. 16; iv. 7). Employed together they modify each other's meaning, and give completeness to the delineation of the Christian life. Life points out its inward source in the heart, godliness its outward manifestations in conduct and character. Be it ours to seek this life. Filled with it, it will show itself in the blossoms and fruits of godliness. And, let

us not forget, that if there is no godliness of conduct or character, we want the only sure evidence that life from on high has descended into our souls. 2. Have I escaped from the corruption that is in the world? Worldly life apart from God, and opposed to God, is moral and spiritual death; in its most refined as well as in its grosser forms, in its intellectual as well as in its sensual enjoyments, it has the taint of corruption. Its maxims and morality are unsound. The tie that binds us to the world and its corruption is the corruption of our own hearts. That removed, the magnetic attraction of evil is broken. The world and the renewed nature have no affinity, but repel each other. Like the occupant of the diving-bell, breathing air which is replenished and purified by constant supplies from above, and which, by its elastic force, keeps out the water which presses on every side; so the Christian, breathing the vital air of a heaven-derived life, moves unharmed in the midst of the world's corruption; surrounding him on every side, it cannot overwhelm. 3. Partakers of the Divine nature! At that momentous change, variously spoken of as a resurrection from the dead, as a new creation, as regeneration, there is communicated to the soul a Divine principle of life which, through grace, gradually transforms the whole man. Nothing less will do as a commencing point for the Christian life as a foundation on which to build a new and Godlike character. By God's overruling providence and restraining grace and favourable circumstances the worst outbreaks of sin are often prevented, as by the physician's skill the maladies of an unsound constitution may be mitigated. But only by a renewal of the soul, by the communication of the life of God, can we obtain true spiritual health and vigour. Christ then becomes our life. We are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and thus are made partakers of the Divine nature in the only sense possible for creatures. But the fellowship of the renewed soul with God is also embraced in that participation of the Divine nature of which the apostle speaks. Converse with God is the highest bliss of which we are capable. The life that has descended from God into our hearts rises up to Him again in desire and love, and the new nature in us subsists by communion with the source whence it is derived. (*W. Wilson, M.A.*) *The promises designed to make men holy*:—I. THE SCRIPTURES OFTEN DECLARE THIS TO BE A PRINCIPAL DESIGN OF THE DIVINE PROMISES. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Whatever is necessary to encourage, to cheer, to strengthen, to prompt in the course of holy obedience, is derived by constant appeals and illustrations from the promises of God. II. WE ARGUE THE SAME THING FROM THE CHARACTER OF MAN AS A MORAL BEING, AND THE PURPOSE OF GOD TOWARD HIM. The great purpose of God toward man is to perfect his moral character through moral influence. But where is this influence furnished? in what are these motives presented, if not in the blessings promised as the reward of obedience? If God by these promises intended merely to comfort His people by quieting their fears and awakening their hopes, why are not His promises absolute and unconditional securities? III. FROM THE DIRECT PRACTICAL TENDENCY OF THE PROMISES OF GOD. There is no higher evidence of the design to be answered by the appointments of God than the true tendency of such appointments. 1. Such is the tendency of the Divine promises, as they remove every obstacle to personal holiness. To rouse man to holy activity the promise of God is indispensable. You may show him an opening hell, but without a promise revealing a pardoning God and opening heaven he will never stir. With such promises all the hopelessness and despair of escaping the curse is taken away by the assurance of favour and reward to obedience. Without the promises there would remain also another obstacle of paralysing influence—the impracticability of obedience without the grace of God. But with the promise of a faithful God sounding in his ears, "My grace is sufficient for thee," how will he rise, as it were, in the consciousness of that strength, which shall be perfected in his weakness, and enter the career of obedience with the inspiration of hope! 2. This tendency is apparent in the nature of the blessings promised. Whether we look at the general or specific nature of the Divine promises we see that they cannot become effectual as motives without producing holiness. What are the promises of God? Pence of conscience is promised. But who can think of escaping the reproaches of this inward monitor except by the practice of holiness? Is justification unto life promised? But who can be influenced by this blessing as a motive, and still wish to incur the guilt and the condemnation of sin? Is heaven promised? but what is there in heaven but an influence of transformation into the likeness of the God who reigns there? 3. The same tendency is apparent in the

circumstances or mode of the Divine promises. Such is the manner of God's promises as to secure to the utmost their full energy on the soul. While the holiness of man is their ultimate end, there is no sensibility or interest of man to which they do not appeal, and aim to render subservient to that end. They create no interference, but insure a perfect coincidence between man's temporal and eternal well-being. 4. The same tendency is apparent from the number and magnitude of the blessings promised. Remarks: 1. We see the error of those who aim to derive comfort only from the Divine promises. To say nothing of the prostration of the Divine law thus involved, the notion is a direct perversion of the very promises of God, which are pleaded as its warrant. Where is the promise of life except to patient continuance in well-doing? Others there are who make the application of the promises to depend on the belief of their own personal interest in them, as if to believe one's self to be interested in the promises of God really made us so. This perversion is equally gross. The promises of God given to promote holiness, and made to nothing but holiness, do these secure an interest in their blessings to him who has no holiness? There is yet another error nearly allied to these, and still more common. There are those who, though they deny not that the only warrant for the hopes of the gospel is obedience to the gospel, yet seem practically to disregard the conviction. Their concern is to discover the evidence of an interest in the promises, rather than to create that evidence, by increasing their holiness. 2. How great are the obligations of the people of God to holy obedience! (*N. W. Taylor, D.D.*) *The influence of the promises of the gospel:*—Not that we can partake of the essence and nature of God, as some have blasphemously affirmed. For this would be for men to become gods, and to be advanced to the state and perfection of the Deity. I. BY WAY OF INTERNAL EFFICACY AND ASSISTANCE. And this influence the promise of God's Holy Spirit, and of His gracious help, hath upon the minds of men, inclining them to that which is good, and enabling them to do it. For the Holy Spirit is promised to us, in consideration and commiseration of that impotency which we have contracted. II. BY WAY OF MOTIVE AND ARGUMENT, to encourage us to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God." For—1. A full pardon and indemnity for what is past is a mighty encouragement for us to return to our duty, and a forcible argument to keep us to it for the future. 2. The promise of God's grace and Holy Spirit is likewise a very powerful encouragement to holiness, encouraging us hereto by this consideration, that we have so unerring a guide to counsel and direct us, so powerful an assistant to "strengthen us with all might in the inner man." 3. The promise of eternal life and happiness, if duly considered, hath a mighty force in it, to take us off from the love and practice of sin, and to encourage our obedience and patient continuance in well-doing. All that now remains is to make some useful reflections upon what hath been discoursed upon these two heads. 1. If we expect the benefits of these exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel, we must be careful to perform the conditions which are indispensably required on our parts. 2. From hence we learn that if the promises of the gospel have not this effect upon us, to make us partakers of a Divine nature, it is our own fault, and because we are wanting to ourselves. 3. If the promises of the Christian religion are apt in their own nature to work this great effect upon us, to make us like to God, to make us good, and just, and merciful, how doth this upbraid the degenerate state of the Christian world at this day, which does so abound in all kind of wickedness and impiety; so that we may cry out, upon reading the gospel: "Either this is not the gospel which we read and the Christian religion which we profess, or we are no Christians." (*Abp. Tillotson.*) *Partakers of the Divine nature:*—"Partakers of the Divine nature," which is to say, taking part in the Divine nature. Not simply like God, but in a way shareholders in Him; something, possibly, as the waves of the sea are partakers in the sea, something, it may be, as the leaves of a tree share in the life of the tree. We are not afraid of widening out the area of our humanity along the line of its upward frontier. Man differs in one very peculiar regard from the brute; not only in moving in a higher range of life and experience, but in not being tethered to any fixed condition. The brute is a brute, and always a brute. Improve your dog, and he will still be brutal; debase your dog, and he will still be brutal, and evince no symptoms of dropping to a lower grade of being. Once a dog, always a dog! On the contrary, there is a just sense in which you can say of humanity, that it is not so much a condition as it is a position of poise between two alternative conditions. It is like standing at the halfway point on the Gemmi Pass in Switzerland. You

look down to the profound depths beneath you, or you turn and look up to the superb heights above you, but you are not going to stop there, nor to live there. It is not a place to remain, but a place from which to look off. You are either on your way down the pass to Leuker-Bad, or you are on your way up the pass to the Wild-strübel; it is merely a position of poise between two alternative destinations. Ye are partakers of the Divine nature. Our thought now is particularly up the pass, not down. There is more danger in a theology that differences man from God than in one which assimilates man to God. There is, as a rule, more quickening stimulus in the prospect of victory than there is in the danger of defeat. Few men ever become great through fear of remaining small. There is more incentive in trying to get to the top of the class than in trying to keep away from the bottom of it. If God can humanise the Divine to the point of its becoming man, as in the instance of Jesus, what is to hinder Him, in the exercise of the same omnipotence, from deifying man to the point of his becoming Divine? It is no farther from the bottom of the mountain to the top than it is from the top to the bottom. Now that, as we read the gospel, is exactly what the blessed Spirit is trying to do with us. God became like us that we might become like God. He is seeking to lead us back over the same road that He came down. "Partakers of the Divine nature." "Now are we the sons of God." It is all in that word "sons." There is community through identity. You cannot get sonship in any other way. A loyal son is governed by his father; but it is the best element of that loyalty, not that the son does what the father bids him do, or makes him do, but that the son has his father's spirit so reproduced in himself, and so become a part of himself and he so a partaker in his father's nature, that his one act is at the same instant both his act and his father's act. And when we pray that God will control us by His Spirit, we certainly hardly expect that He is going to put His personality behind us, so as to push us onward; or put His personality in front of us, so as to hold us backward. We would rather mean, would we not, that as children of His, we are bound in the bundle of one life with Him, moving therefore at the impulse of energies that are ours without their ceasing to be His—somewhat, perhaps, as each separate storm-wave rolls in the expression of its own might, which is at the same time a part of the might of the sea; somewhat, perhaps, as each separate leaf or branch grows green in the expression of its own life, which is at the same time a part of the life of the vine. I in you, you in me. Frontier lines gone. One in each other. A single bundle of life, human or Divine, either or both; a shareholder in God; up the Gemmi Pass toward the indistinguishable summit. (*C. H. Parkhurst, D.D.*) *Partakers of the Divine nature*:—I. Look, first, at this LOFTY PURPOSE which is here presented as being the very aim and end of God's gift in the gospel. The human nature and the Divine are both kindred and contrary. There are no gods of the heathen so far away from their worshippers, and there are none so near them, as our God. The arched heaven, though high, is not inaccessible in its cloudless beauty, but it touches earth all round the horizon; and man is made in the image of God. True, that Divine nature of which the ideal man is the possessor has faded away from humanity. But still the human is kindred with the Divine. The tiniest spark of flame is of the same nature as those leaping, hydrogen spears of illuminated gas that spring hundreds of thousands of miles high in a second or two in the great central sun. But that kindred, belonging to every soul of man, abject as well as loftiest, is not the "partaking" of which my text speaks, though it is the basis and possibility of it; for my text speaks of men as "becoming partakers." What, then, is it? No mere absorption, as extravagant mystics have dreamed, into that Divine nature, as a drop goes back into the ocean and is lost. There will always be "I" and "thou," or else there were no blessedness, nor worship, nor joy. We must so partake of the Divine nature as that the bounds between the bestowing God and the partaking man shall never be broken down. But that being presupposed, union as close as possible is the great hope that all Christian men and women ought consciously to cherish. Only mark, the beginning of the whole is the communication of a Divine life which is manifested mainly in what we call moral likeness. Partakers we shall be in the measure in which by our faith we have drawn from Him the pure and the hearty love of whatsoever things are fair and noble; the measure in which we love righteousness and hate iniquity. And then, remember also that this lofty purpose which is here set forth is a purpose growingly realised in man. The apostle puts great stress upon that. He is not talking about a being, but about a "becoming." That is to say, God must ever be passing, moment by moment, into our hearts if there is to be anything

godly there. Cut off the sunbeam from the sun and it dies, and the house is dark; cut off the life from the root and it withers, and the creature shrivels. The Christian man lives only by continual derivation of life from God; and for ever and ever the secret of his being and of his blessedness is not that he has become a possessor, but that he has become a partaker, of the Divine nature. By daily increase we shall be made capable of daily increase. II. Look, next, at THE COSTLY AND SUFFICIENT MEANS EMPLOYED FOR THE REALISATION OF THIS GREAT PURPOSE. "Promises" here must necessarily, I think, be employed in the sense of fulfilment of the promises. And so we might think of all the great and wondrous words which God has spoken in the past, promises of deliverance, of forgiveness, and the like; but I believe that by these "exceeding great and precious promises" is meant the unspeakable gift of God's own Son, and the gift therein and thereafter of God's life-giving Spirit. For is not this the meaning of the central fact of Christianity, the incarnation—that the Divine becomes partaker of the human in order that the human may partake of the Divine? Contrariety vanishes; the difference between the creature and the Creator disappears. III. Let me say, lastly, that this great text adds a HUMAN ACCOMPANIMENT OF THAT DIVINE GIFT, "Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Corruption is initial destruction, though of course other forms of life may come from it; destruction is complete corruption. The word means both. A man either escapes from lust and evil, or he is destroyed by it. And the root of this rotting fungus "is in lust," which word, of course, is used in a much wider meaning than the fleshly sense in which we employ it in modern times. It means "desire" of all sorts. The root of the world's corruption is my own and my brothers' unbridled and godless desires. So there are two states—a life plunged in putridity, or a heart touched with the Divine nature. Which is it to be? It cannot be both. A man that has got the life of God, in however feeble measure, in him, will flee away from this corruption like Lot out of Sodom. And how will he flee out of it? By subduing his own desires; not by changing position, not by shirking duty, not by withdrawing himself into unwholesome isolation from men and men's ways. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) **HAVING ESCAPED THE CORRUPTION THAT IS IN THE WORLD THROUGH LUST.—Depravity:—I. THE SOURCE OF A TREMENDOUS EVIL.** Lust—of flesh, eye, and pride of life. II. THE NATURE OF THIS EVIL. 1. Corruption of the physical nature—health damaged, disease engendered. 2. Corruption of the intellect—judgment biased, mental powers enfeebled. 3. Corruption of the moral nature—heart polluted. 4. Corruption of the life—the corruption of the intellect and heart having its full development. III. THE ESCAPE FROM THE EVIL. 1. From its tyrannical power and authority. 2. From its baneful effects, both in time and eternity. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 5-7. Giving all diligence.—Christian diligence:—It is not fit that heaven should take all the pains to bring earth to it; earth must do somewhat to bring itself to heaven. God's bountifulness is beyond our thankfulness; yet thankfulness is not enough; there is matter of labour in it. If the lord of a manor have given thee a tree, thou wilt be at the charges to cut it down and carry it home. He who takes first in thy conversion hath in wisdom made thee a second. Thou seest God's bounty; now look to thine own duty. I. DILIGENCE. Here, first, for the quality. There is no matter wherein we hope for God in the event, accomplished without diligence in the act. He that expects a royalty in heaven must admit a service on earth. The good man is weary of doing nothing, for nothing is so laborious as idleness. Satan's employment is prevented when he finds thee well employed before he comes. It is observable that albeit the Romans were so idle as to make idleness a god, yet they allowed not that idle idol a temple within the city, but without the walls. There are four marks and helps of diligence: 1. Vigilance. A serious project, which we can hardly drive to our desired issue, takes sleep from our eyes. 2. Carefulness (*Eccles. v. 1*). 3. Love. This diligence must fetch the life from affection, and be moved with the love of virtue. 4. Study (*2 Tim. ii. 15*). II. GIVE DILIGENCE. Not a pragmatism in others' affairs; but rectify thy diligence, confining it principally to thyself. Dress thine own garden, lest it be overrun with weeds. III. ALL DILIGENCE. Here is the quantity—"all." 1. The working up of salvation is no easy labour; thereto is requirable all diligence. Such a diligence respects so great an object, and such an object requires so great a diligence. Refuse no labour for such a reward. The best things are the hardest come by (*Matt. xi. 12*). Spare no invention of wit, no intention of will, no contention of strength about it. Will we adventure our estates, our lives, to find out new lands

where may be gold, and spend no diligence for that where we are sure there is gold, and such as cannot perish? 2. God requires "the whole duty of man" (Eccles. xii. 13); that is God's due. What, nothing left for this world? Yes, moderate providence; the saving of souls hinders not provision for bodies, but furthers and blesses it (Matt. vi. 33). Follow thou Christ; the rest shall follow thee. IV. *BESIDE THIS . . . ADD.* Thus much for the addition: now to the addition, wherein we find a concession, an accession that He requires—"add." You have done something, yet there is a "besides." I yield a beginning, I ask a proceeding (Heb. vi. 1). God's arithmetic principally consists in addition. To give every man his own is but equity; but the addition of charity makes blessed. And as addition teaches us to add grace to grace, so there is a multiplication required to increase the effects of those graces in a multiplicity of good works. Knowledge not improved will be impaired. If there be no usury, we shall lose the principal. As in generation, so in regeneration, we must be growing up to a full stature in Christ (Eph. iv. 13). As a traveller passes from town to town till he come to his inn, so the Christian from virtue to virtue till he come to heaven. (*Thos. Adams.*) *The power of diligence*:—I. Now as to THE HOMELY VIRTUE ITSELF, "giving all diligence." We all know what "diligence" means, but it is worth while to point out that the original meaning of the word is not so much diligence as haste. It is employed, for instance, to describe the eager swiftness with which the Virgin went to Elizabeth after the angel's salutation and annunciation. It is the word employed to describe the murderous hurry with which Herodias came rushing in to the king to demand John the Baptist's head. It is the word with which the apostle, left solitary in his prison, besought his sole trusty companion Timothy to "make haste so as to come to him before winter." Thus, the first notion in the word is haste, which crowds every moment with continuous effort, and lets no hindrances entangle the feet of the runner. When haste degenerates into hurry, and becomes agitation, it is weakness, not strength; it turns out superficial work, which has usually to be pulled to pieces and done over again, and it is sure to be followed by reaction of languid idleness. But the less we hurry the more should we hasten in running the race set before us. But, with this caution against spurious haste, we cannot too seriously lay to heart the solemn motives to wise and well-directed haste. The moments granted to any of us are too few and precious to be let slip unused. The field to be cultivated is too wide and the possible harvest for the toiler too abundant, and the certain crop of weeds in the sluggard's garden too poisonous, to allow dawdling to be considered a venial fault. Little progress will be made if we do not work as feeling that "the night is far spent, the day is at hand." The first element, then, in Christian diligence is economy of time as of most precious treasure, and the avoidance, as of a pestilence, of all procrastination. "Now is the accepted time." "Wherefore, giving all haste, add to your faith." Another of the phases of the virtue, which Peter here regards as sovereign, is represented in our translation of the word by "earnestness," which is the parent of diligence. Earnestness is the sentiment, of which diligence is the expression. So the word is frequently translated. Hence we gather that no Christian growth is possible unless a man gives his mind to it. Dawdlers will do nothing. There must be fervour if there is to be growth. The engine that is giving off its steam in white puffs is not working at its full power. When we are most intent we are most silent. Earnestness is dumb, and therefore it is terrible. Again we come to the more familiar translation of the word as in the text. "Diligence" is the panacea for all diseases of the Christian life. It is the homely virtue that leads to all success. If you want to be a strong Christian—that is to say, a happy man—you must bend your back to the work and "give all diligence." Nobody goes to heaven in his sleep. No man becomes a vigorous Christian by any other course than "giving all diligence." It is a homely virtue, but if in its homeliness we practised it, this church and our own souls would wear a different face from what it and they do to-day. II. Note THE WIDE FIELD OF ACTION FOR THIS HOMELY GRACE. First, note that in our text, "giving all diligence, add to your faith." That is to say, unless you work with haste, with earnestness, and therefore with much putting forth of strength, your faith will not evolve the graces of character which is in it to bring forth. He has just been saying that God has "given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, and exceeding great and precious promises." The Divine gift, then, is everything that will help a man to live a high and godly life. And, says Peter, on this very account, because you have all these requisites for such a life already given you, see that you "bring besides into" the heap of gifts, as it

were, that which you and only you can bring, namely, "all diligence." The phrase implies that diligence is our contribution. "Diligence" makes faith fruitful. Diligence makes God's gifts ours. Then, again, the apostle gives an even more remarkable view of the possible field for this all-powerful diligence when he bids his readers exercise it in order to "make their calling and election sure." If we desire that upon our Christian lives there shall shine the perpetual sunshine of an unclouded confidence that we have the love and the favour of God, and that for us there is no condemnation, but only "acceptance in the beloved," the short road to it is the well-known and trite path of toil in the Christian life. Still further, one of the other writers of the New Testament gives us another field in which this virtue may expatiate, when the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews exhorts to diligence, in order to attain "the full assurance of hope." The last of the fields in which this virtue finds exercise is expressed by our letter, when Peter says, "seeing that we look for such things, let us be diligent, that we may be found of Him in peace without spot, and blameless." If we are to be "found in peace," we must be "found spotless," and if we are to be "found spotless" we must be "diligent." What a beautiful ideal of Christian life results from putting together all these items! A fruitful faith, a sure calling, a cloudless hope, a peaceful welcome, at last! (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Diligence:—1. That it is not enough to flee and abstain from our fleshly lusts, and so perform the duty of mortification, unless also we add unto the same, faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, and the like Christian graces. 2. That naturally we are sluggish, slothful, and dull in the performance of holy duties, and therefore have need to be often roused up, admonished, and warned to perform our duty with all diligence. 3. That we cannot attain unto any of the graces of God's Spirit without diligence, painful labour, and travail. 4. That the gifts and graces of God's Spirit are worth the pains taking, worthy I say, both in regard of their nature and in regard of the recompense which we receive by them. 5. That neither the unlawful pleasures of this world are to be sought at all with any diligence, or the lawful pleasures and profits thereof with all diligence. 6. That this diligence which is required must be total, both inward and outward—outward in every member of the body, inward in every faculty of the soul. To the first I answer, that God doth require this great diligence in the apprehension and application of His benefits. 1. Because of the worth and excellency of His benefits. 2. Because of their inefficacy unto us if not apprehended and applied by us. 3. Because of the great profit which we shall reap thereby, being by us rightly apprehended and with all diligence applied. 4. Because of the great diligence which Satan and his adherents, the world and the flesh, do use to deprive us of the same. 5. Because the work is great, we unwieldy, our time both short and uncertain, yea, and not being diligently apprehended as they are diligently offered, they are not afterward so easily attained. (*A. Symson.*)

Christian diligence:—I. THE GRACES WHICH WE ARE HERE EXHORTED TO CULTIVATE. II. THE CONSIDERATIONS BY WHICH THESE EXHORTATIONS ARE ENFORCED. By cultivating these various graces we shall show—1. That our piety is not merely speculative and nominal. 2. They will contribute materially to our spiritual illumination. 3. A consciousness of our personal acceptance. 4. Perseverance in the face of temptations and difficulties. 5. A joyful and triumphant death. (*Expository Outlines.*)

A downright Christian:—It was the saying of a shrewd thinker: "If it is worth while being a Christian at all, it is better to be a downright Christian." *Activity necessary to piety*:—To purity activity seems essential. Fill your room with the purest air, and shut it up for one month, and when you open it the air is foul. Its stagnation has made it impure. The same is true of water; no matter how pure it may be, let it become stagnant, and it grows fetid and deleterious. The spiritual world presents an analogy. Idleness is the stagnation of the mind, and, like that of the air and water, it breeds impurity. (*Christian Armour.*) *Connection with preceding verses*:—"As He hath given us ALL things needful for life and godliness (so), do you give ALL diligence," &c. The oil and flame are given wholly by God's grace, and "taken" by believers; their part is to trim their lamps. (*A. R. Fausset, M.A.*)

Practice necessary to perfection:—A neighbour near my study persists in practising upon the flute. He bores my ears as with an auger, and renders it almost an impossibility to think. Up and down his scale he runs remorselessly, until even the calamity of temporary deafness would almost be welcome to me. Yet he teaches me that I must practise if I would be perfect; must exercise myself unto godliness if I would be skilful; must, in fact, make myself familiar with the Word of God, with holy living, and saintly dying. Such practice, moreover, will be as charming as my neighbour's flute is intolerable. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Exercise develops*

strength:—As in the body so is it in the soul, exercise develops strength. The Laplanders and the Patagonians are in climates almost equally cold. The Laplanders are a small race, the Patagonians a large one. What makes the difference? The Laplanders, supported by their reindeer, spend most of their time in indolence; the Patagonians are an active race, and spend much of their time in fishing and hunting. Hence the stunted development of the one, and the large dimensions of the other. It is thus grace expands by the activity of love. (C. Graham.) **Add.**—*Religion a principle of growth*:—Our age is writing "progress" on its banners. It bids us to forget the things that are behind, as incomplete and unsatisfactory, and to press toward those which are yet before us. We believe that the gospel, and it alone, adequately meets this deeply-seated craving of our times. Religion is a principle of perpetual progress. Setting before us, as the great end of our existence, and as the only perfect model of moral excellence, the Infinite Jehovah, it requires, and it also ministers an ever-growing conformity to Him. "Grow in grace," is the apostle's injunction to all recipients of that grace. It is the secret and rule of personal reform, constantly advancing, and of social amelioration, enfranchisement and elevation. 1. The Church needs in this age to be kept in mind of the great truth, that there remains yet much land to be possessed. 2. And if, from the peculiar state and needs of the churches, we turn to review the present aspect of the world, we seem to discover similar reasons why the churches should not, now at least, overlook the fact that the gospel is, to its obedient disciples, a principle of continuous advancement, a law of expansion and moral elevation. The world, falsely or with justice, is shouting its own progress, and promising in the advancement of the masses, the moral development of the individual. It is an age of rapid discovery in the physical sciences. The laws and uses of matter receive profound investigation, and each day are practically applied with some new success. Yet physical science can certainly neither create nor replace moral truth. The crucible of the chemist cannot disintegrate the human soul, or evaporate the moral law. But besides these advances in physical science, our age is one of wondrous political revolutions. It is again, even in lands and governments where political revolution is not needed or is not desired, an age of social reform. 3. And now, having seen how in the aspects, both secular and ecclesiastical, of our age, Christians were especially summoned to evolve what of progression there was in their own faith, let us see how in the inspired presentations of that faith, the fullest provision is made for man's moral growth. Were there no other precept: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," would be sufficient to show how a limitless expansion of our intellectual and moral stature was set before us in the gospel. To man, the heir of immortality, it prescribes the law and warrants the hope of an immortal progression. There are stages in Christian attainment; and one but prepares for another, and, without all, the Christian cannot be fully useful or perfectly blessed. 4. From the word "add," a heedless reader might infer that all the graces thus clustered were independent each of the other, and might be selected or omitted as each disciple saw fit; and that a man might at least be safe in having but the first, though in his negligence lacking all the rest. But such is not the apostle's meaning. The believer is called upon to furnish not a single and isolated grace, but to supply "adding" one to another, the whole consenting train, and harmonious interwoven troop, the complete sisterly choir of Christian graces. He is to look upon the one in this cluster of Christian excellences as fragmentary and untuned without the others. The one grace is the supplement and complement indispensable to the symmetry and melody of all its sister graces. Now in this choir or train Faith is the elder born, and upon it all these other graces depend. It alone justifies, but as the old theologians were fond of saying, not being alone. It comes singly to the task of man's justification, but in the heart and life of the justified man it does not come as a solitary, building there its lonely hermitage. (W. R. Williams.) *Christian growth*:—The word which has been translated "add" is a very pictorial term, and refers to a choir of well-trained musicians. The musical illustration of Christian growth is a very profound and far-reaching one. Keats says that "heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter," implying that there is a music which appeals to the soul finer than anything that can be expressed by human voice or musical instrument. Beethoven was deaf, heard no outward sounds, but the soul of music was in him, and therefore with the deeper inner ear he heard continuously the Divine music to which all things are attuned. Music is the great principle of order. It enters into the essence of all things. The music of the spheres is not a mere poetic, but a

scientific phrase. Everything speaks to the ear of the thoughtful of the wonderful rhythm of the universe. What nature does unconsciously and will-lessly, we are to do consciously and willingly. We are to keep step and time to the music of the universe—and to add to our faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity—and thus practically make the statutes of the Lord our song in the house of our pilgrimage. There are two ways in which we may add to our faith all the graces which the apostle enumerates. We may add them as a builder adds stone to stone in his wall; or we may add them as a plant adds cell to cell in its structure. Whether, therefore, we take our illustration from architecture or from plant life, the essential point, as implied by the significance of the word “add” in the original, is that growth should be harmonious. Architecture is said to be “frozen music.” This is true of the commonest wayside wall. What is it that makes the sight of a well-built wall so pleasing to the eye? What is it that makes building a wall such an interesting employment that children take instinctively to it? Is it not the love of symmetry—the delight in shaping large and small, rough and smooth, pieces of stone, adapting them one to the other, and placing them in such a way that together they make a symmetrical structure? And if we see this curious harmony in the humblest rustic building, how grandly does it come out in the magnificent Gothic cathedral, where every part blends faultlessly and carries out the design of the architect; and clustered pillar, and aerial arch, and groined roof soar up in matchless symmetry, and the soul is held spellbound by the poetry which speaks through the entire structure! There is a remarkable peculiarity in the text in the original which must be specially pointed out. The preposition which we have translated “to” should be rendered “in,” and so rendered, we are significantly taught, that Christian growth is not by mechanical addition, but by vital increase. We are to add not “to” our faith, but “in” our faith, virtue, and “in” our virtue, knowledge, and so on. The first thing that we are commanded by the apostle to “add” to our faith is virtue, meaning by this term vigour, manliness. Our faith is to be itself a source of power to us. We are to be strong in faith. It is to be to us the power of God unto salvation, enabling us to overcome the temptations and evils of the world, and to rise above all the infirmities of our own nature. Our faith should be manifested as it was in olden times by a victorious strength which is able to overcome the world, which fears the Lord and knows no other fear. To this strength or manliness we are further commanded to “add” knowledge. In our manliness we are to seek after knowledge. The quality of courage is to be shown by the fearlessness of our researches into all the works and ways of God. We are not to be deterred by any dread of consequences from investigating and finding out the whole truth. The wisdom from above includes not only the knowledge that we are pardoned sinners, but also all that can furnish the understanding and fill the soul with food for its high capacities and boundless appetites. With wonderful sagacity the apostle commands us to add to our knowledge temperance; for there is a tendency in knowledge to puff us up and fill our hearts with pride. Temperance gives us just estimates of ourselves and of the world. It gives us the true knowledge of all things. It enables us to use our knowledge aright, to convert thought into action, and vision into life. We are to know ourselves and our relations to God’s Word in order to regulate our life accordingly. To this self-government we must add patience. As the plant slowly ripens its fruit, so we are to ripen our Christian character by patient waiting and patient enduring. It is a quiet virtue this patience, and is apt to be overlooked and underestimated. But in reality it is one of the most precious of the Christian graces. The noisy virtues—the ostentatious graces have their day; patience has eternity. And while it is the most precious, it is also the most difficult. It is far easier to work than to wait; to be active than to be wisely passive. But it is when we are still that we know God; when we wait upon God that we renew our strength. Patience places the soul in the condition in which it is most susceptible to the quickening influences of heaven, and most ready to take advantage of new opportunities. But to this patience must be united godliness. Godliness is God-likeness, having the same mind in us that was in Christ Jesus, viewing everything from the Divine point, and living in our inner life as fully in the light of His presence as we live in our outer life in the light of the sun. And exercising ourselves unto this godliness, our patience will have a Divine quality of strength, endurance, beauty imparted to it such as no mere natural patience possesses. We wrong God when we are unkind, ungenerous, and uncourteous to each other. But brotherly kindness is apt to be restricted towards friends only—towards those who belong to the same place or the same church, or who are Christians. It must,

therefore, be conjoined to charity. In our brotherly kindness we are to exercise a large-hearted charity. Such, then, are the graces which we are enjoined by the apostle to add to each other, to develop from each other, not as separate fruits dispersed widely over the branches of a tree, but as the berries of a cluster of grapes growing on the same stem, mutually connected and mutually dependent. This is the ideal of a perfect Christian character. It must have these parts; it must be characterised by these qualities. These are the fruits of the Spirit. These are the products of genuine faith. They are not like the links of an iron chain, manufactured separately, and mechanically added to each other; but they are like the living cells of a growing plant, in which one cell gives birth to another, and communicates its own qualities to it. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*) *An apostle's method of silencing objectors*:—"Add to your faith virtue." "You have faith." This is assumed, you perceive. "Now," says the apostle, "let your faith be associated with virtue." The word is used in only three passages in the New Testament. It is a word derived from the name of the Greek god of war, and hence would give some countenance to those who would simply make it to mean fortitude, or courage. Others take it in another sense, by associating it with rectitude of conduct—everything that is "lovely and of good report," in conduct. For my part, I do not see how we can do without either meaning. The apostle speaks, in one of his passages, of our being "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, to show forth the virtues of Him who hath called us": that is, "to show forth the praises"; so to exhibit God in connection with our faith in His Son, that men may praise Him, seeing how His name and His law are magnified in the work of redeeming love. In another passage, in the Philippians, the Apostle Paul uses, in a more general sense, the same word: "If there be any virtue"—if there be anything at all commendable. Now, I think, we must look at the word as having both these senses. "See," the apostle says, "that your profession of faith is in connection with such conduct that the name of God may be magnified in you and by you." But, then, why should we exclude the idea of courage? Right conduct in the midst of evil men; consistency of conduct in the midst of a world lying in the wicked one; forgetting all distinctions of time, or country, or circumstances, to take God's mercy, and apply it to our own souls; to accept Christ as God's well-beloved Son; to look right into the grave, and think of the judgment-seat will require fortitude; and take the word, in whatever sense you please, fortitude and courage and rectitude of conduct must, says the apostle, be associated with your profession of faith in Christ Jesus. But then the apostle says we are to associate also "knowledge"; that is, he enjoins upon us to be intelligent professors of faith in Christ Jesus. God puts none of our faculties under ban; God does not ask any man whom He has endowed with faculties, by which He may be glorified by His creature, to keep them in abeyance, to leave them uncultivated. We are to have the soul filled with wisdom from above, and to seek all kinds of wisdom, that we may consecrate them to the service of God. And mark how necessary it is for the believer in Christ Jesus ever to be growing in intelligence. New errors creep into the Church; new forms of error are presented to the believer. He is not to be satisfied with the instruction which God blessed to the bringing him into living relationship with Christ Jesus. We ought, as a matter of conscience, and as a matter of duty, to seek to increase our intelligence, that we may be ready always to give an answer to every man, and a reason of a hope that is in us. And then the apostle enjoins "temperance" upon us. The simple meaning of the idea is self-government, or self-restraint, rather. This was one of the virtues which the Grecian philosophers laid great stress upon, in this general sense, not simply in eating and drinking, but in everything that referred to the passions of men. As the apostle says, "Be angry, and sin not." If there is just cause of anger, we are to be moderate in our anger. And the Apostle Paul speaks of persons who are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God"; that is, they are not temperate in their pleasures. There is nothing contradictory between this temperance and earnestness. Now, a man may be earnest without intelligence; he may be zealously affected even in a bad cause; but temperance—prudence, that is, moderation in our views, and in the mode of carrying out our views—may be found in connection with great earnestness. But, then, to "temperance" we are to add "patience." Even when you regulate yourselves most, and have your spirits under the directing influences of the Spirit of God, you cannot possibly live and act for Christ without finding some difficulties. "But," says the apostle, "just quietly endure all things; just patiently persevere in all that concerns your Christian course." "And, then," says the apostle, "associate also with these things godliness." The word means certain acts of worship pre-

sented to God; but it means more than this, it means a reverential spirit, by which our acts of worship are regulated. Is it not remarkable how much our religious worship is dependent upon certain influences, certain associations, certain circumstances? You perceive a man who has associated early in life with persons who frequent the house of God, and he contracts a kind of habit, and it is a long while before he can shake off this habit. Now, just change a man's position in society; see what the increase of this world's goods will do for a man; you see him slackening his attendance at the house of God, and leaving certain acts of worship that he once regularly engaged in. I have seen men who rigidly observed certain outward acts of worship when they were at home. I have seen them give the lamentable proof that it was all a matter of external influence. And therefore the apostle says, "Associate with everything that is right, everything that is virtuous in conduct, godliness": that is, a devout and a reverential spirit, manifested in connection with your devotedness to Christ and Him crucified. But the apostle says, "Not simply towards God, but towards your fellow-men." Christ Himself enjoined upon His disciples love towards each other, by which they should manifest that they loved Him. (*J. Sherlock.*) *Additions to faith:*—I. THE ADDITIONS WHICH YOU ARE TO MAKE TO YOUR FAITH. The apostle does not exhort Christians to seek after faith. This he supposes them to possess already. You say you have faith—but faith without works is dead, being alone. Faith resembles a foundation, of high importance in case of a building, but useless if no superstructure be reared. It is only a beginning, which is nothing without progress. What are clear notions unless they influence; or proper motives unless they impel? Moses had faith, and he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. 1. The first addition which he requires of you as believers is virtue—courage. This principle in the whole of your Christian course will be found indispensably necessary. You live in a world unfriendly to religion. It will be found no easy thing to deny yourselves and take up your cross, to pluck out a right eye. Some of these difficulties, indeed, might be avoided if you were only to be religious and not to appear so. If we trace things to their origin we shall find a thousand evils springing, not from ignorance but cowardice. Pilate condemned a Saviour of whose innocency he was conscious because of the Jews. Many of the Pharisees "believed on Him, but feared to confess Him lest they should be put out of the synagogue." The disciples were afraid and forsook Him. 2. A second addition is knowledge. And this very properly follows the former. It teaches us that courage is a force which wisdom is to employ; courage may urge us to undertake the war, but judgment is to manage it. And hence it will be easy to determine the nature of this qualification. It is practical knowledge; it is what we commonly mean by prudence, which is knowledge applied to action. It is what Paul recommends when he says, "Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. Walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. Walk in wisdom towards them that are without, redeeming the time." This kind of knowledge results principally from experience and observation; and he is blameable indeed who does not grow wiser as he grows older, and who does not make every day a correction of the former. Our own history affords us some of the best materials to improve and embellish our character. We should derive strength from our weaknesses, and firmness from our falls. But, alas! what numbers are there upon whom the continuance of life and all means of improvement seem to be thrown away. They have eyes, but they see not; ears have they, but they hear not. Whereas "the wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way." "The prudent man looketh well to his going." He draws down his knowledge from speculation, and uses it in common life. He judges of the value of his notions by their utility. He studies his character and condition. He examines his dangers, his talents, his opportunities. 3. You are to avoid intemperance. There is a sense in which this word may be applied to the mind as well as the body. 4. You are to add to your temperance patience. There is an obvious and striking relation between these. The one requires us to bear, the other to forbear. The one regards the good things, the other the evil things of the world. By temperance we are preserved under the smiles of prosperity, and by patience we encounter the frowns of adversity. 5. Godliness is indispensable. Courage and prudence, temperance and patience, would be no Christian qualities, if in the exercise of them we were not influenced by suitable regards to God. Without this reference our religion is nothing more than morality. 6. We are to add to godliness brotherly kindness. 7. To brotherly kindness, charity. II. INQUIRE HOW THIS IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED. The apostle tells us. It is by giving

all diligence. 1. These things deserve your diligence. It is pitiable to see men employing their zeal and consuming their strength upon trifles. But this cannot be said of spiritual blessings and graces. These are in the sight of God of great price. They are necessary to man. They purify his passions, and tranquillise his conscience. They enrich, they dignify him, they are his perfection. They make him happy. 2. Diligence will infallibly secure these things. 3. There is no attaining these things without diligence. Diligence is indispensable. (1) Indispensable if we appeal to analogy. You must labour even for "the meat that perisheth." (2) Indispensable if we appeal to the character of a Christian. He is a merchant, a scholar, a husbandman, a traveller, a soldier—the anxiety of the merchant, the application of the scholar, the hardy toil of the husbandman, the wearying progress of the traveller, the painful exercise of the soldier, are images which ill accord with indolence and ease. (3) Indispensable if we appeal to the promises of the gospel. These all require it, encourage it, produce it. (*W. Jay.*)

The Christian chorus:—The word translated "add" takes us back to an old Grecian custom; it means to be a chorus-leader, to furnish a chorus at one's own expense. The Greeks worshipped their gods through a hired chorus. When a poet had completed his work, he called upon the archon (or city mayor) to grant a chorus. He in turn appealed to a wealthy citizen called a choragus, who collected a chorus, hired a trainer, and in time rendered the poet's composition to the delight of the citizens and the glory of the gods. As a reward he received a tripod, which he consecrated, and in some cases placed on a monument. The Athenian street lined with these memorials was called "the avenue of tripods." Into this custom as a mould Peter pours the truth of God's gift and man's duty. Vers. 2-4 set forth God's gift to man, the composition of Jehovah, the sacred score, the expression of His life and love. Grace and peace are allotted to us; they are not obtained by effort, but are gifts of God. All that pertains to life and godliness comes through precious promises. He who takes the promises of faith takes the life of God into his soul. Here stands the poet with his finished work, pleading for a chance to help the people and honour the gods. He has put himself into the composition, it is as yet only a promise of harmony; the chorus is organised, trained, the people gather, the soul of the composer finds expression, the people are inspired to nobler lives, the gods are glorified. Until the archon accepts the poet's promise, and the chorus renders it, the poet is dumb. God has given Himself in great and precious promises, completed His work, and now calls upon men to accept and fill the universe with Divine harmony. Vers. 5-7 give us man's duty growing out of God's gift. His work is the inspiration to, not the substitute for our work. God operates, man must co-operate. The air is free, therefore breathe it; the earth is rich, therefore till it; the seed is vital, sow it; the sea is wide, launch out upon it. Opportunity means duty; gifts bring obligations. Peter is writing to Christians—to "them that have obtained like precious faith." Faith is a present possession, something assumed, to which other things are to be added. Yet faith is but one grace, one instrument in chorus; without it the others are useless; with it alone you can never render God's composition. A solo is not a chorus. Beethoven and Wagner cannot be rendered by one instrument; much less can God be set forth by one virtue. "Add to your faith virtue." Not virtue in the narrow sense of moral excellence, but of the energy which Christians are to exhibit, as God exerts His energy upon them. Faith in "the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" must be an energetic faith. The verb of life is passive toward God, but active toward men. The poet threw himself into his composition; the chorus was simply to take in what he gave, and pour it out upon others. God has put Himself into this gift of His; receiving it we are to yield our powers to it, and let His energy control us. A lazy Christian is a contradiction in terms. "And to energy knowledge"—intelligence, understanding, spiritual discernment. This looks two ways: understanding of truth, and discernment of what is right and wrong in life. As the years go by we should know more and more of God's will as made known in His Word. Astronomy is ever finding new stars. Christians should find new depths, new heights, and new breadths in God's Word as the years go by. "And to knowledge temperance"—self-control, the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions. Keep the beast beneath the saddle. Eyegate and eargate must be guarded lest the enemy capture man's soul, and the door of speech be kept; for "If any man offend not in word," &c. "And to self-control patience"—the characteristic of a man who is unswayed from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials

and sufferings. Not only endurance of the inevitable, but the heroic, brave patience, with which a Christian not only bears but contends. Faith, energy, self-control count for little unless you endure; there are many Galatian Christians, who run well for a time; but the crowns are given to men who complete the race. Quick response on the part of the soil is no guarantee of a harvest; depth is as needful as willingness. "And to patience godliness"—reverence, respect, piety toward God; the confession of human dependence upon God manifested in conduct and conversation. Having faith, energy, self-control, and patience, there is danger lest we lose the fine sense of reverence; danger that we become irreverent. At the beginning of the Christian life there is an awful sense of God; in too many cases this wears off, we become familiar with and degrade holy things and places, forget to bow in prayer, to close the eyes in worship. "And to godliness brotherly kindness"—love of the brethren. Nearness to Christ as the head means nearness to one another as members in particular; the muscles that bind the members to the head bind them to one another; the nerves that give the head control of the members are nerves of mutual joy and suffering. Godliness cannot be solitary and selfish, but must be social and unselfish; he who loves God must love his brother also. "And to brotherly kindness charity"—love, the broad affection which should characterise Christians, the love of men as men, "God is love." The object of God's love is the world; likeness to God means love to all mankind. Paul calls it the bond of perfectness, the sash which binds all other graces into place, the girdle over all; here it is the last instrument; without it you cannot render God's composition to the world. The first is faith in God, the last is love to man, for faith in God begets His likeness in us. Yonder is God, the great composer, bidding us render His composition. What powers He must see in us; what confidence in our powers He must have; what a calling is ours! When St. Cecilia played the angels responded; well may they respond when human powers are counted worthy to render God's opera. Oh, men and women, rise to the dignity of your powers and possibilities! God waits for expression, angels wait to hear God expressed. There are eight instruments called for, the octave, the perfection of harmony; though the chorus be what no man can number, yet at the heart of it is the octave, and God calls on each man to use the powers in himself; each man has the octave in himself, and is called upon to chorus his powers, to train his gifts. Then we have (ver. 8) the consequences of faithful service. Grace and peace are multiplied through knowledge, and knowledge comes through faithful use of these powers. The musician who gives himself to the works of the master gains knowledge of the score, and is transformed into a sort of human photograph, possessed by and giving out the genius of the composer. So the Christian who tries to render God's composition comes into a fuller knowledge of it, sympathy with it; God's thoughts become his thoughts, and God's ways his ways; he no longer lives, but Christ lives in him. The composition controls the performer. On the other hand, "He that lacketh these things is blind," &c. The word "blind" here carries with it a curious figure, "darkened by smoke." Smoke-blinded, squinting his eyes up, forgetting the door of entrance and exit, bewildered, he gropes about searching in vain for the way out of sin. Refusing to give himself to God's gift, to cultivate the Christian graces, his horizon narrows, his life shrinks; what he has mastered sinks from him: forgiveness forgotten, sin returns, and he is lost. Hear God's call to constant practice, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." God's work is done, Christ has offered the finished opera; in grace as in nature the end of His work is the beginning of your work; where the composer stops the performer begins, and at this point the composer becomes dependent upon the performer. Enter diligently upon your part of the task; "by patient continuance in well-doing" thou shalt reach the final reward. And that is "an entrance shall be ministered unto you," &c. "Ministered" is the passive of the same verb that is translated "add" in ver. 5. As the city honoured the man who assumed the burden of the chorus, giving him a public triumph, rearing for him a tripod on the broad avenue, so God shall minister to those who chorus His works of grace a mighty triumph in the kingdom of His Son. (O. P. Gifford.) *Apostolic Christianity*:—Men are very fond of looking at the Divine government from that side where it can be the least seen, and where they are most subject to the errors of their own fluctuating imaginations, and to the obscurities of philosophy, falsely so called. It is far better, wherever we can, to look at the great truths of the Divine moral government, at the mystery of God's dealing with men in this world, from the human side. And this is what is done in this passage. It is, in brief, the

inspired disclosure of the purposes of God in respect to men. What it is that the grace of God is attempting to do with those who are called in the Lord Jesus Christ, is set forth. We are called of God. In our version it is "to glory and virtue," but in the original it is "by glory and virtue," as if the call was not by the nature of man, but by the nature of God. By His own being, by the glorious and virtuous power of His own Spirit, He calls us up out of our lower life—out of that nature of ours which is physical. The apostle goes on to say, "On account of this, giving all diligence." You are called. The call is one which is to be answered. There is to be working together of the inspiration of the Divine Spirit and human endeavour, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you." "On account of this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue." What is faith? Supersensuousness. Well, what is supersensuousness? It is all that truth which exists beyond the discernment of the senses. Now the apostle says, "Add to that faith virtue." "Add to this vision-seeing tendency of yours, which may etherialise itself and go off in a cloudy dream—add to this the practice of a wise and righteous kind. Add to your faith virtue, in the old Roman sense—true manhood." By the way, I have jumped a thought. It does not say "add to" in the original; it says, "Provide," or "develop in." It is as if he had had in his mind the thought of a plant. "Add to your faith, or in your faith, virtue; in other words, develop out of your faith virtue—that is, practical godliness; and in your virtue or from out of your virtue, develop knowledge." By this is not meant, evidently, that knowledge which we gather by our senses—scientific knowledge, ideas, facts; but a higher knowledge—that subtle intuition of truth which men have who live high and noble lives. That which is meant by temperance is self-government. And in temperance, or from it, develop patience—endurance—the spirit of bold, quiet waiting. "And to patience, godliness." That is, let your patience be not stoical. Let it not be stubborn, sulky. Let it be the waiting and endurance of a man who believes that God reigns, and that all the affairs of the universe are in His hands, and shall work toward good. "And to godliness, brotherly kindness." That is, let there be in your godliness a warm sympathy and affection, not only for yourself, but for your family, for all your near neighbours, for all your neighbours that are more remote, for all your townspeople, for all the world. "And to brotherly kindness, charity." Local affection and universal affection—add these. Here, then, is the apostle's conception of a Christian man's character, development, and destiny; and I remark—I. This ideal destiny of man is one that shall lead him into the likeness, into the sympathy, and into the participation of the Divine nature. The reason why we know so little of the Divine nature is, that we have so little in ourselves that interprets it to us. I have groped to see if there are not at least some traces along the line of this march, and I think I see some. I observe, for instance, in the progress of the lower animal in man up toward the higher, that when it reaches the human race, the difference between undeveloped men and men who are developed, is the power to discern the invisible. That is, men whose forces are muscular are inferior to men whose forces are mental. And when the apostle says that we are to be partakers of the Divine nature, I say that the declaration is in harmony with everything that I see going on in human nature. We rise away from the animal toward the spiritual. We advance from lower manhood to higher manhood. The line is from the flesh toward the spirit. Therefore, it might naturally be expected that Christian character would consummate itself in the development of the Divine nature. That is the highest form of spiritual existence, and when the apostle says this is so, I am prepared to receive it, and to rejoice over it. II. No man was ever converted to Christianity at one flash. No man ever built a house at a single blow, except in a summer dream. The conversion by which the Spirit of God starts a man, just starts him—that is all. It turns him away from the wrong direction. It turns him toward the right model. It gives his heart an inspiration for things higher, and then says to him, "Work out your salvation." A man who has a musical ear goes into a workshop and sees lying there large quantities of material of various kinds—iron, and steel, and copper, and brass—and he says, "Let me make these available." And he takes the various kinds of metal, and puts them into a furnace and melts them, and pours the liquid which they form into a mould; and when it is cool and brought out it is a bell. Such is the result of the combination of all these incoherent substances. And when it is struck it is musical. And he says, "I have hit it! It is perfect!" But it is a monotone; and after some thought he says, "No, I have not reached perfection yet. There is more material here. What if I should make another bell?" So he goes to work and makes a

second bell. And then he makes a third; and then a fourth. And some musician says, "Hang them up in yonder tower," and they are lifted up into the tower; and, swinging there, they ring out through the air glorious chants which call men to God's house. God has lifted up the spire or tower of the human soul, and has set in it some thirty bells; and they are all to be brought into accord. There are two or three that strike bass notes musically; but it is our business to bring harmony into the whole mighty collection of musical instruments that are swinging in the belfry of man's soul. No man is perfect until all his faculties are brought into harmonious play. God never put a faculty into a man which was not necessary; and if we are to be perfect, every one of our faculties must be developed and used. As God looks upon men, they are not perfect until they are built up into the lines and lineaments of the Lord Jesus Christ, and have partaken in part of the Divine nature. Then they are sons of God; and to be a son of God is something transcendently glorious. III. The glorious ideal of Christianity, compared with all the current ideas, stands up in bright and rebuking contrast. How many are calling men to church-membership! How many are calling men to morality! How many men are called to philosophy! How many men are called to philanthropy! But such is not the call of God. God calls men to be partakers of the Divine nature. And the providence of Divine grace is working on that pattern incessantly. What the gardener means, and what Nature means, are very different things. What the grape-vine means is to drive out its branches, rank and strong, far and wide. What the gardener means is grapes; and therefore he cuts back the vine on every side. "Let me grow," says the vine. "Bear," says the vintner. "Give me more room for my leaves," says the vine. "Then give me more grapes for my wine," says the gardener. Men in this world are seeking to develop forces that shall be for their pleasure. God is meeting those who are His own with blows at every step, and beating them back. He is tempering this man's zeal by various shames. He is subjecting another man to such tests as shall compel him to come to endurance. In various ways God's providence is meddling with us. We are all praying that God's will may be done; but we do not like the answer to our prayer when it comes. The soul is a temple, and God is silently building it by night and by day. Precious thoughts are building it. Disinterested love is building it. Joy in the Holy Ghost is building it. All-penetrating faith is building it. Gentleness, and meekness, and sweet solicitude, and sympathy are building it. All virtue and all goodness are workmen upon that invisible temple which every man is. "Ye are the temple of God." The foundations are laid, the lines are drawn, and silently, night and day, the walls are carried up, tier after tier being laid; and when the temple is built it shall seem as if it were composed of precious stones—of beryl, and amethyst, and topaz, and diamond—so that at last when it is completed, and there comes the shout of "Grace, grace, unto it," it shall be a temple built in darkness to reveal light; built in sorrow to produce a joy which shall never die. IV. If these views are generally correct, we may see in them the correction of many of the popular sayings and tendencies of the day. I am met at every step by those who say, "I ought to conform to the laws of my being." Which way is the eagle's nature, where he lies in his nest, or where he is, in the might of his power, poised under the sun, on a summer day? Is a man's nature that which he is born to, or that which he comes to by unfolding? Is a man's nature that which is furthest from, or nearest to, that which God meant should be the final estate to which he is to come? A man's real nature lies far beyond his present sphere. Nature in a man is not what he came from, but what he is going to. I am not, therefore, to take my models and patterns from behind; but this one thing I am to do—I am to forget the things which are behind, and to look on beyond, and to take my conceptions of true manhood and noble nature from the ideals which I form of God—and they are interpreted in my experience by God's Spirit. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Combination of Christian graces*:—You would think that flower-garden very defective which grew only one kind of flower, however beautiful that one may appear. It is the large variety of flowers that gives interest and pleasure in a garden. Thus, if you see a Christian with only one predominant grace, whatever it may be and however fine, he is lacking. It is the variety of graces, and their combination in the one life of experience and practice, that give charm and glory to Christian character, as it is the combination of colours that makes the light of the day. (*Jas. Hamilton, D.D.*) *An incongruous addition*:—As it is always incongruous to see a mighty foundation with a trivial superstructure, a block of granite the basis, and a mud wall the building, a foundation of jasper, and the remaining corners all brick; so where there really is precious faith to begin

with, you grieve that there should not be added courage, knowledge, temperance; but wood, hay, stubble, trivial tastes, narrow notions, sectarian prejudices, a sour or censorious spirit, and manifold infirmities of the flesh and spirit. (*Ibid.*)

Faith.—*Faith the root of Christian life*:—When the Vatican issued the celebrated Bull Unigenitus, the occasion of so many scandals, and of such protracted controversy, and in which it condemned, as abounding with most portentous errors, the excellent commentary upon the New Testament of the pious Father Quesnel, it selected as one of those errors, a remark of the good Jansenist upon the chapter before us, that “Faith is the first of graces, and the source of every other.” And yet what else than this very sentiment does the language of the apostle here suggest? Faith is put by him first in order; and is it not so put by Peter’s Lord? (John iii. 36.)

I. FAITH, IN ITS WIDEST SENSE, IS TRUST OR BELIEF; confidence in the word, character, or work of another. Though requisite in religion, it is as much requisite elsewhere. Human society in its whole framework is so held together; and the kindreds and amusements and business of the world are presenting to the most earthly-minded, continual images and intimations of that faith which, when demanded of him by the Church and by the Word of God, he may sometimes affect to regard as strange and unexampled. The generous confidence of soldiers in a tried and heroic leader; the implicit confidence of his correspondents in a merchant of known means, and of proved integrity; the trust of the voyager in the intelligence and vigilance of the navigator; the unshaken assurance of a friend in the worth and affection of one whom he has long known and intimately loved—these are all but examples, in daily recurrence, of the use and the need, of the sweetness and of the power, of a reasonable faith and a well-placed trust. The faith of the gospel is something more than these, only as being trust in God. It is trust as to matters of higher concernment, and upon better warrant, and in a greater and better Being. It is a reliance on His true testimony. It is not irrational, for it has overwhelming evidence. Instead of its being, as the bigots of scepticism (for infidelity has its blind and bitter bigotry) represent it, a bandage for the eyes, and a manacle for the free hand, faith is really, to the eyes of the soul, a telescope bringing near the far glories of heaven: “the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for.” And it is, to the hand, a clue leading our steps out of the mazy dungeon of sin, and through the labyrinth of earth. It is a magnet pointing the voyager to his desired haven; the charter, to the criminal, of an undeserved and full pardon. And as this faith is trust in the truth of the ever-truthful God, it is highest wisdom, as it is reliance on the Omnipresent, the Almighty, and the everlasting Jehovah, it is the surest, the only safety.

II. And should it be asked, WHY HAS IT THIS PRIORITY IN THE CHRISTIAN SYSTEM, we answer, it may well occupy this place of precedency in the scheme of man’s salvation, for various reasons. 1. Man’s history required it. Unbelief, the opposite of faith, had the primary place in man’s fall and perdition. 2. It occupies the first place, again, from the nature, respectively, of God and man. He, as the Infinite and Omniscient, knows much which man, as the finite being of limited faculties and existence, can know only through His Divine testimony. 3. Again, God’s unutterable tenderness and goodness have assigned to faith this post of pre-cedency. The babe, yet but a prattler, may have full trust in the parent who cherishes it. Before it can reason, or even speak, it may believe in its father and mother. 4. And man’s besetting sin—the pride which, after all the deep descent of the Fall, clings so persistently to him, however degraded, made it fitting, that the mode of his acceptance before God should be one that allowed no occasion for boasting.

III. BUT WILL NOT A SCHEME OF SALVATION, THUS FREE AND INDISCRIMINATE, BREAK DOWN ALL VIRTUE, AND “THE DIGNITY OF HUMAN NATURE,” and abolish law, and holiness, and truth? So, in all ages, objectors have argued. But the providence of God, and the history of the churches, have sufficiently answered these cavillings. The faith that justifies is implanted by a transforming Spirit, and reconciles to a holy and sin-hating Father, and unites to a Redeemer detesting and destroying iniquity. Whilst faith then accepts pardon as God’s free gift, it accepts as the inseparable concomitants of that pardon, penitence for sin, gratitude to the Giver, ingenuous love, adoption into the household of God, and assimilation to the Elder Brother—the Head of that household.

IV. FROM THE NECESSITY OF ITS NATURE THE IMPLANTED FAITH BECOMES A ROOT OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH, AND A PRINCIPLE OF PRACTICAL DEVELOPMENT. In its earlier stages faith is generally but feeble. That it should remain so, is not the will of Him who implants and who sustains it. 1. From the nature of faith, and of the human mind itself, faith, where well placed, on a trustworthy object, must grow and strengthen by exercise and continual repeti-

tion. 2. The growth set before our faith appears, again, from the character and structure of Scripture, the volume on whose testimonies faith fastens, and in whose rich pastures she must ever feed. God might have made it a book to be exhausted at one reading; or a record of the past, unavailing to the men of the present; or a mysterious outline of the future, of little clearness or usefulness till the times of its fulfilment had come. Instead of this, it is a book of all times, full of the ancient past, and the busy present, and the dread or gorgeous future. It has the simplest teachings interwoven inextricably with its most fathomless mysteries. Now, when faith is presented with such a manual, not to be mastered in weeks or years, but still evolving new lights to the latest studies of the longest lifetime, does not the structure of the book proclaim the intent of God, that faith should not sit down content with present attainments, and its as yet immature strength? 3. And so, too, the character of God Himself proclaims the same great law of the constant growth of faith. "Acquaint thyself with Him and be at peace," is the demand of reason, no less than Scripture. Man has capacities and aspirations that the earthly, the perishable, the finite, and the sinful can never satisfy. 4. The office and character of the Holy Ghost, the Author of faith, point to the same results. The Saviour Himself described the influence of this Spirit's indwelling "as a well of water" in the disciple "springing up into everlasting life." (*W. R. Williams.*) *Faith*:—I.

ITS NECESSITY. 1. Our apostle, to build the house of Christianity, lays this as the foundation. Philosophy lays her ground in reason, divinity in faith; the first voice of a Christian is, "I believe." 2. The necessity of faith appears—(1) In respect of God (Heb. xi. 6; Rom. x. 14; Matt. viii. 13). (2) In respect of the devil (1 Pet. v. 9). He is too strong for thee if thou meetest him with thy virtue, or with thy good works; for he will object sins enough to outweigh them. Solon cannot meet him with his justice, nor Solomon with his wisdom; every poor sinner can overcome him with his faith (Eph. vi. 16). (3) In respect of thyself. (a) Thou art ignorant. There is no understanding of God but by faith. (b) Thou art originally corrupt, naturally hateful to God; nothing canst thou do to please Him, till thyself be first made acceptable to Him. The doer is not acceptable for the deed, but the deed for the doer. Hadst thou all the succeeding graces, and not this foundation of faith, whereby thy person is made accepted in the Beloved, when thou art judged, thou couldst not be saved. II. ITS SINGULARITY. Not faiths, but faith (Eph. iv. 5). There is but one faith in the church, as but one church in the faith; one faith in nature, not one in number. Every man hath his own faith, yet all have but one faith. III. ITS PROPRIETY. 1. "Your faith," because you have a right and interest to this faith. Divers gifts are appropriated to divers men; but faith is general to all the elect. 2. "Your faith," because every one must have a proper and peculiar use of faith. Thou canst not see Christ with another's eyes, nor walk to heaven on another's feet. IV. ITS SOCRACY. "To your faith"; "to" implies some accession. Faith is a great queen; it is base to let her go without a court and a train. (*Thos. Adams.*)

Virtue.—*Faith and virtue*:—Isaac Taylor has told us we may find an illustration of this apostolic injunction by taking a view at large of church history. If we do so we shall "discern beneath the scientific phraseology of the passage, a condensed but comprehensive caution against each of those prominent corruptions that have developed themselves in the course of eighteen centuries. They are readily enumerated, and may be put somehow in this fashion." 1. Pusillanimous or inert faith. 2. The licentious abuse of the gospel. 3. A fanatical or haughty subjugation of animal desires. 4. Anchoretic pietism. 5. Sectarian or factious sociality. Thus our apostolic canon is seen to hold up as in a mirror the history of the degenerate Christianity of all ages." Now let us think of faith and manly energy combined. It would be better to inquire at this point, what is the New Testament conception of "virtue"? We have to thank the gospel of Christ for the force of the meaning which we at present attach to the word. You are familiar with the history and some of the literature of the great heathen nations—the Greeks and the Romans. You know what "virtue" meant with them. Patriotism, first and chiefly; willingness to endure all, to give up all for the safety or benefit of their country; fearlessness of danger; implacability of hatred of the enemy; scorn of physical suffering; insensibility to the common sympathies of men; the cultivation of a brave war-spirit; this was courage, manliness, "virtue," in those days. We have, as I said, to thank the gospel that the meaning of the word has changed, that we understand true manliness to consist in the full and free development of all that is good in human nature; the cultivation of some of those tenderer emotions which were so haughtily scorned; the recognition of the fact that, in quiet, unanswering

submission, there may be majesty of soul as true or truer than is evident in the man who does battle with fortune and writhes under her hand; that love, mercy, forgiveness of injury, are not tokens of an effeminate heart, but of manliness; that a man is most victorious when he conquers himself, and most free when he yields ready, grateful obedience to the will of God. The manliest man must be the Christian; and what strikes us chiefly in thinking of the great names of pagan history, men of the type of Aristides, of Pericles, of Socrates, of Decius, of Brutus, is that it was the inspiration of this truth that they lacked for their perfection. This manly energy, then, is to be cultivated, conjoined, mixed up with that faith in the promises of God which is the only true basis upon which spiritual character can be built. Now, such a command would not have been given if the apostle had not foreseen that the tendency of human nature would be to divorce these two things, as either incompatible with each other, or, at all events, as not necessarily connected. Some of you have not lived beyond the remembrance of your first Christian experience. What effect was produced upon you by the vivid consciousness that you stood cleared from sin in the presence of a merciful Father; that eternal life was yours, that all the promises of the rich heavenly inheritance were yours? Was not the effect that your inclination was just to sit still, and ponder thankfully the marvellous grace of God, in revealing such blessing, in assuring to you such a glorious future? Such a desire for quiet contemplative enjoyment of this new experience filled you, that you regarded with distaste anything which threatened to break in upon it. Now you see the wisdom of it all. Now you see the necessity of the apparent harshness of some of that life. As some one has said of the early Christians, "they were daily brought upon a path of danger which made them such men of action, of promptitude, and of courage, as they were men of meditation; while, more than any others, they lived in correspondence with things 'unseen and eternal,' more than any others also they wrestled with things earthly, being embarrassed amid common cares, exhausted by hunger, thirst, and toil, distracted by fears, and often actually engaged in encountering the anguish of cruel deaths. Thus they were compelled, by the very position they occupied, to 'mingle with their faith, virtue.'" Such has been, in varying fashion, the course of God's providence with all of us. Our nature is such that the active and the passive emotions must both have play, or the man is not proportionate in his development—the man is not manly. It is no small evidence of the Divinity of Christianity that such a precept as this is found as part of its ordinance, showing that the religion is adapted for the man by a wisdom above his own. Faith cannot thrive without some expression in action. Faith without activity ends in superstition. Now, just glance at the other side of the truth. There must be this Christian manliness evident and active, but it must have faith as its basis, as its very life. While language helps thought, language without thought would be nothing. Activity without faith leads to infidelity, utter and complete atheism. (*D. J. Hamer.*) *Virtue*.—I. Consider, first, WHAT THIS VIRTUE IS. No better suggestion has been made than that which takes it as meaning a certain manly energy, vigour, and firmness of disposition, which is the first outcome of Christian faith, and may well be the first aim of Christian effort. Now that strength of nature, firm tenacity of character, will at bottom be neither more nor less than a good strong will; for a man's strength is the strength of his will. And that being understood, what are the shapes in which this manly energy will manifest itself? There should flow from faith a tenacious vigour which masters circumstances and does not let them work with us as they please. True, the ship can only be carried by the wind and the currents, but, equally true, if there be a good strong hand on the tiller, and the canvas be wisely set, she can sail almost in the wind's eye. Circumstances do make us, but it depends on us what they make us. Though they supply the force, the guidance lies in the hand that holds the reins and pulls the bit. The strength of the Christian man will manifest itself in ruling outward things, and making them subservient, whether they be sorrowful or joyful, to the highest end of all, even his larger possession of a fuller Divine nature. And, in like manner, the "virtue" of my text will manifest itself in the rigid subjugation, by the energy of a strong will, of all my own inclinations, desires, tastes, passions, and the like; which all seek to assert themselves, and which the more mightily and ungoverned they work, the weaker a man is. In like manner, this manly energy, which all Christians are bade in the very first place to cultivate, will teach us independence of other people. Learn not to live upon their smiles, dare to be voices and not echoes, and to take your commandments, not from the habits of your class or of your calling, but from the lips which alone have power to command, and whose approval is praise indeed.

Let me remind you that the gentle Christ is the pattern of this manly force as of everything else. All that the world adores as power looks weak, hysterical, strained by the side of the calm gentleness of that life which bears no trace of effort, and yet is mightier than all besides. He is Power, because He is Love. II. And now observe THE ROOT OF THIS VIRTUE, OR ENERGY, IN FAITH. A faith which does not grow into virtue and knowledge, and all the other links in this chain is, if not dead, at least ready to perish if it has not vitality enough to fruit. And then need I say that the exercise of confidence in God, as revealed to us in Jesus Christ, has a direct tendency to produce this strong form of character of which my text speaks? Faith as the realisation of the Unseen will bring strength. III. And now a word as to THE CULTURE OF THIS "VIRTUE" BY OUR OWN EFFORT. The original word is very graphic and picturesque. It means, "Bringing in by the side of," when fully and clumsily and yet accurately translated. "Bringing in your diligence by the side of"—what? By the side of that, "partakers of the Divine nature." God's gift does not make my effort unnecessary, but rather demands it as its completion and consequence. The best way by which we can give diligence to make ourselves strong, is by nurturing the faith which strengthens. Get into the habit of thinking about Jesus Christ all through your days, get into the habit of bringing mind and heart and will under the dominion of the principles of the gospel, and you will find the strength flowing into you and you will be mighty by Him. And we can get this strength in larger measure, too, by the simple process of habitually acting as if we possessed it. That is to say, you may cultivate the habit of suppressing yourselves, of stopping your ears to men's voices, of mastering and coercing circumstances. The Will gets dominion by asserting its dominion. There are no better ways of evolving this strenuous vigour from faith than these two—First, live near the source of it—"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." And then, exercise the little that you have got, and it will grow by exercise. (A. Maclaren, D.D.)

Virtue:—I. THE MEANING OF THE WORD. II. THE DESCRIPTION OF THIS CHARACTERISTIC AS BELONGING TO A CHRISTIAN. 1. What a Christian ought to be. Not feeble, vacillating, pusillanimous; but brave, strong, trustworthy. 2. How a Christian ought to endure. 3. How a Christian ought to resist. III. THE NEED FOR THIS CHARACTERISTIC. There is no high goodness without strength. IV. THE WAY TO THE ATTAINMENT OF VIRTUE. 1. A deep conviction of its necessity. 2. Fellowship with heroes who have embodied it. 3. Communion with its great source. 4. Exercise of as much of it as we possess. (U. R. Thomas.)

Virtue:—In common speech every moral excellence is called a virtue. We also give the name "virtue" to that outward conformity to the law of God which constitutes a good moral character. Thus honesty is a virtue; veracity is a virtue; chastity is a virtue, &c. It is evident, however, that the text does not use the word in either of these significations. It cannot intend by virtue moral excellence in general, since it goes on to enumerate several particular moral excellences, such as temperance, patience, godliness, and charity, which must be added to virtue in order to complete the Christian character. It cannot intend any one in particular of those moral traits which we sometimes call virtues, since in addition to virtue it specifies most of these by name. For the meaning of the apostle we must go back to the primary idea of virtue—which is, manhood, manly vigour, a courageous tone of mind. The old martial Romans, from whom our word virtue is directly inherited, used this term to denote primarily the sum of all corporeal or mental excellences in their ideal of a man. The use of virtue in the sense of power or energy is common in old English; and there are some traces of this elsewhere in our version of the Scriptures, which help to determine the meaning of virtue in the text. The Greek word here translated virtue occurs but four times in the New Testament. As used by Paul in Phil. iv. 8, it has the sense of moral excellence. But as used by Peter with respect both to God and to man, the word clearly denotes force, energy, power. There is another word (*δύναμις*) whose primary meaning is power, which our translators, following Wiclif, sometimes render by virtue, thus showing that they attached to virtue the old Latin sense of energy or force (Luke viii. 46; vi. 19). Here virtue denotes not moral goodness, but miraculous healing power. Wiclif uses virtues as the equivalent of miracles. Where our version speaks of the "mighty works" done in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, Wiclif styles these "virtues." Again, "He could there do no mighty work"; Wiclif reads, "He must not do there any *virtue*" (Mark vi. 5). Milton applies the phrase "celestial virtues" to the fallen "powers and dominions" of heaven, rising

"More glorious and more dread than from no fall."

Here the word "virtues" conveys no idea of moral excellences, but is the equivalent of potentates. It is obvious, then, that in old English and in the first English version of the Bible the word virtue had its primitive Latin sense of manliness, a vigorous or energetic spirit, and that it sometimes retains this meaning in our version and also in good poetry. This is the meaning which most fitly renders the original term in the text. It is almost impossible to express this idea of virtue by any one English synonym. Isaac Taylor paraphrases it as "manly energy, or the constancy and courage of manly vigour." The one word which comes nearest to it, while it has the abundant sanction of good English writers, is hardly domesticated in the pulpit; yet both the word and the thing were strikingly expressed by an honoured foreign missionary, when urging upon the American Board the immediate and thorough occupation of Turkey, with men and means for the service of Christ. Said Dr. Schauffler, "After all the discouragements and disasters of the Crimean campaign, official mismanagement, army jealousies, camp sickness, and the discomforts of winter, the soldiers held on and took Sevastopol, not by science but by pluck"—and what we need is Christian pluck to take possession of Turkey in the name of Christ. This is the virtue which all Christians are expected at all times to cultivate. "Giving all diligence, add to your faith *virtue*." The apostle speaks to those whom he fully recognises as one with himself in Christ. The faith that bringeth salvation is already theirs. But they are not to rest in that faith as the whole of the Christian character and life. Add to your faith, virtue; as followers of Christ cultivate a true Christian manhood. I. IN WHAT THIS MANHOOD CONSISTS. II. ITS PLACE IN A COMPLETE CHARACTER. III. HOW IT MAY BE ATTAINED AND CULTIVATED. 1. The virtue of which the apostle speaks—boldness, vigour, courage, manhood—is not to be confounded with rashness. In his earlier experience as a disciple, Peter was sadly deficient in the very virtue which he here recommends, though he was by no means wanting in a rough physical vigour, and the courage which that inspires. 2. This manly virtue should not be confounded with wilfulness. Stubbornness of will is not strength of character. It is doggedness or mulishness, not manliness. If wilfulness were a virtue, then Pharaoh was the most virtuous of men. A resolute, unflinching purpose to do right, a will to honour God and to stand by truth and duty, a will which cannot be broken upon the wheel, nor relaxed by the fires of martyrdom, but like steel grows more firm and inflexible under pressure and heat—such a will is, indeed, a manly virtue. But "will-worship," the magnifying of self-will, adherence to a position or course, not because it is known and felt to be right, but because it has been taken, and pride forbids to change—this wilfulness is as far from Christian manliness as a spoiled child is from an angel. 3. But the virtue of which we speak, while it is neither rash nor wilful, is always bold, firm, and determined in maintaining truth and performing duty: it is a manly and energetic tone of mind. (1) An obvious constituent of this state of mind is an intelligent conviction of truth and duty. "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." Steadfastness in purpose is impossible where the mind is doubtful as to the object in view. A purpose springing from mere feeling is apt to prove unstable, since feeling is a variable quantity. Manly resolve rests upon intelligent conviction. Strength of conviction gives courage to resolution. (2) But in order to this manly virtue, the principle of obedience to God must be established in the soul as final, above all personal interests, above all earthly goods, above all merely human custom or law, above whatever would obtrude itself between the personal soul and a personal God, its Creator, Ruler, and Judge. You cannot cower down a soul that rests implicitly on God. When Luther stood before that court of the German empire which held his life in its hands, it is said that he was the only person in the assembly who was perfectly undisturbed. Luther was ready to die for the doctrine of justification by faith, since he himself had added to faith—virtue, a manly courage, a holy energy of soul—proceeding from an intelligent and principled obedience to God. (3) One other constituent enters into this manly virtue—that is, frankness or sincerity in avowing one's convictions of truth and duty. He who would be manly must be open. Frankness is not forwardness; it does not require that one should be always thinking aloud; neither is it bluntness; but it does forbid one from a selfish motive, to conceal his convictions when truth and duty are in question. When the Jewish Sanhedrin threatened Peter and John, and forbade them to speak or teach in the name of Jesus, the apostles fell back upon conscience and

the law of Christian obedience, and said, "Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken to you more than to God, judge ye; for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." That was Christian manliness. Peter had now learned to add to his faith, virtue. I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS VIRTUE TO COMPLETENESS OF CHARACTER IS EVIDENT WITHOUT ARGUMENT. There can be no sterling character without this. The annals of Christian martyrdom often exhibit this manly virtue grafted upon child-like faith. II. HOW SHALL THIS VIRTUE BE ATTAINED? 1. Study the examples of those who have manifested virtue. Look at Noah, standing up against the cavils of an apostate world to do the command of God—a preacher of righteousness. Look at Abraham, with firm tread walking trackless wastes to unknown lands, his courage rooted in faith. Look at Moses confronting the stubborn will of Pharaoh. Look at Paul, ready to face a Jewish mob, or the prejudiced Sanhedrin, or pagan governors and Roman captains, or the wild beasts at Ephesus, or the dungeon at Rome, and to stand in Cæsar's palace as a witness for Christ. 2. To attain the full vigour of Christian manliness, you must exercise this virtue whenever you have opportunity. Virtues will not come to serve us upon great occasions unless they are trained and developed day by day. The young Christian should begin early to cultivate this holy courage—learn to say "no" to every solicitation of evil; learn to say "yes" to every call of duty. 3. Since virtue rests upon faith, you can strengthen and develop it by increasing faith as a living power in the soul. Much as we may discipline ourselves to virtue, our strength must lie not in ourselves and our purposes, but in God our Saviour. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." A living faith secures a manly piety. (Joseph P. Thompson.) *Virtue*:—The term *ἀρετή*, translated virtue in the text, denotes strictly manhood, prowess, manly qualities. Stephanus defines it by "*virtus, sed proprie virtus bellica*"; martial courage or valour. He cites a gloss on Thucydides i. 33; where "*arete*" is expressed by *industria, navities, virtus, fortitudo*; activity, zeal, manliness, fortitude. Suidas denotes "*arete*" to be "*Constantia et animi vigor*"; firmness and strength of mind. Homer applies it to his heroes to denote valour in battle, and other manly qualities. The Mycenaean Periphetes is said to have been "superior in all kinds of virtues (*ἀρετὰς*), whether in the race or in the combat" (Il. xv. 642). Here virtue denotes physical qualities, such as speed, strength, prowess. So the "god-like Polydorus" in the agility and valour which he displayed in fight, is said to have exhibited "virtue of feet" or limbs (*ποδῶν ἀρετήν*. Il. xx. 411). The same term is applied to the "valour" of Meriones (Il. xiii. 277), and to the "bodily vigour" of Menelaus (Il. xxiii. 578). This primary sense of *ἀρετή* is strictly expressed by the Latin *virtus*, from which virtue is derived. This, in its literal sense, is manhood, valour; and is applied to physical courage and to energy of character—vigour of mind in dangers and labours. Cicero speaks of something akin to virtue in animals, as in lions, dogs, and horses; but insists "that virtue of the mind" (*animi virtus*), being the offspring of reason, is to be preferred to "physical virtue" (*corporis virtuti* anteponatur. De Finibus v. 13, 38). He also speaks of "the Divine force and virtue of the orator." Here *virtus* is a pleonasm, reiterating the idea of *vis*. (Ibid.) *Virtue*:—I. WHAT IS VIRTUE? II. AS EARLY AS THE DAYS OF APOSTLES THERE WERE IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH THOSE WHO WOULD MAKE FAITH SUFFICE WITHOUT VIRTUE. Some really loving and practising piety, have yet, in their crude theories, discredited morality and virtue, for the purpose of extolling, as they supposed, religion. III. BUT THERE IS ANOTHER CLASS WHO PROCLAIM THE SUPERIORITY OF VIRTUE TO FAITH, and the sufficiency before God and man, for this life and the next, of virtue without faith. But if virtue be but the small portion of man's duties that he owes in this life to his fellow-mortals, and man be formed for another life as well as this, and have a God as well as human society to regard and propitiate, it seems impossible on any rational principle to establish it that the discharge of this small portion of his obligations shall be accepted in full for his neglect of yet higher duties to a yet higher Being. And if, in matters of human courtesy and friendship even, you are wont to look at the motive as determining the worth or worthlessness of the service rendered, does it not seem necessary even to the claim of true virtue for these social and human duties, that the man discharging them do it from right motives, from the true love of man and the paramount love and fear of Almighty God? From mere vain craving after honour and praise, men may discharge the duties. But are such duties, so prompted by lower motives, genuine virtue? Again, take a few of the more eminent of those whose virtues are thus held up as surpassing

the fruits of Christian faith. Take Hobbes, the philosophical oracle of the court of the last Stuarts. Take Hume, whom his friend, Adam Smith, pronounced among the most faultless of human characters; or in later times Bentham. And after a close analysis of the lives and influence of these men, do you not find the inquiry of the apostle remaining still in full force, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ?" Was the morality of any of these men superior to the average morality of their times? Did virtue do in them what faith achieves in the Christian—overcome the world? Again, did it tend to improve that world, recovering its degraded, and uplifting its oppressed classes? Go out as missionaries of the new lights of philosophy without Christianity; and who of you would hope to see the new creed, like the faith of the New Testament, teaching the barbarian, taming the cannibal, making freedom possible, and law and duty sovereign over the nations? IV. BUT TURN TO DWELL RATHER UPON THE UNION THAT SCRIPTURE MAKES BETWEEN THE TWO PRINCIPLES, which we have seen isolated and divorced, requiring as those Scriptures do, the man of faith to become the pattern of virtue, abounding in every good word and work. The problem is not to guide the sinless, but to recover the sinful. How can you efface the brand of sin on their souls? Morality has not the atoning calvary. It cannot call down on its pentecostal aspirations the rushing fires of the Holy Ghost. The virtue that would be thus recuperative on the masses must be preceded by a faith, with which shall go the regenerating power of God, and for which shall have been first provided the great remedial and reconciliatory process of the redemption. Let the Pharisee or the Sadducee go with another doctrine than that of faith to Zaccheus, would they have won his fourfold restitution of aught wrongly gained? The God that shall answer by fire, He is God. Faith can produce virtue. Look again at the way in which she instructs virtue. Read the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, or take the same apostle's discourse of charity and its fruits, in the thirteenth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthian Church. Saw you ever such full, and brilliant, and unmatched portraiture of virtue as this? But beside these preceptive instructions, remember that all the doctrines and mysteries that faith receives have their practical lessons. The fall, and original sin, how they teach humility and dependence on God—the first lessons of moral progress. The incarnation and redemption—is that a mere logomachy? On the contrary, see in it a great scheme for the subdual of sin, and the implantation of hope, and love, and gratitude. But must faith produce always virtue? It must, or it is not genuine. The inseparable accompaniment of true faith in Scripture is repentance; and what is repentance but the practical and the outward and inward renunciation of sin? (*W. R. Williams.*) *Of Christian fortitude:—*

I. First, let us consider THAT WHICH MUST ACCOMPANY OUR WHOLE DUTY, THE MANNER OF PERFORMING IT, OR APPLYING OURSELVES TO IT, "GIVING ALL DILIGENCE." It is not to be confined to one point, but runs through the whole detail of the Christian graces which is here given. We should summon all the powers of our souls continually to attend this very thing, and watch every occasion of doing and of receiving good. The necessity of this will appear if we reflect on the constitution of human nature, and the Divine wisdom and condescension in accommodating to it the way of conferring the greatest blessings upon us. The blessed Author of our beings has a regard to their frame while He carries on His merciful designs towards us. He does not deal by us as unintelligent machines, but rational creatures. He does not make us happy without our own knowledge, choice and concurrence. I will add but one observation more on this subject, that religious industry will produce constancy, as its natural effect. Whatever obligations we are under to diligence in our duty at any time do equally bind us at every time; and there can be no sure evidence of our sincerity without a persevering steadfastness in the work of the Lord. II. I now come to THE FIRST PARTICULAR WHICH THE APOSTLE EXHORTS US TO ADD TO OUR FAITH, AND IT IS VIRTUE. This virtue carries in it the idea of hazards and difficulties, and the excellence of it consists in a magnanimous superiority to all dangers and all opposition. As it is peculiar to a probationary state, or a state of discipline, like ours, it is that without which there can be no real goodness, at least no steadfastness in such a state. The "flesh lusteth against the spirit"; our senses and inferior appetites always minister the occasion of evil. Now, these must be resisted by a Christian. Here, then, is another occasion for the exercise of Christian fortitude, which may in some cases require all our strength. How difficult must it be to stand unmoved against a train of sufferings in our outward estate, And how much invisible wicked agents may contribute to the

difficulties and trials of the Christian life, who can certainly say? Having thus shown you the proper object of Christian fortitude, or the occasion of its exercise, I will next consider the exercises and dispositions of mind which are necessary to it, or do concur in it. And let us, first of all, observe that it is very different from a blind passion. Nothing is more necessary in the whole of our religion than that we be sedate and deliberate; and particularly that our zealous resolutions for God be formed upon a just and solid ground of calm and mature consideration. Secondly, having proceeded so far, the next thing necessary is steadfast resolution. It is of consequence to us that we hold on in a religious way, that we endure to the end. Then certainly we should fortify our minds against temptation by firm purposes; we shall find the firmest we can enter into weak enough. Thirdly, the virtue which the apostle here exhorts us to add to our faith imports bearing trials, uneasiness and fatigues with equanimity. A Christian has the same sense of pleasure, profit, and honour with other men: and yet he bravely denies them. He has the same feeling of pain, and yet is not moved by it to forsake his duty; and herein he acts reasonably, for the tendency of such disagreeable sensations is overruled by superior motives; he sees such an excellence in religion, finds such an inward peace and comfort in his integrity, has such a solid joy in the prospect of a future glorious reward, as is sufficient to bear him up under all his present uneasiness. Here, then, is the exercise of religious fortitude. (*J. Abernethy, M.A.*)

Christian fortitude.—I. I am to explain the nature of this grace of Christian courage or fortitude. Courage, in general, is a temper which disposes a man to do brave and commendable actions, without being daunted at the appearance of dangers and difficulties in the way. 1. For what it is to be exercised. It is courage in Christ's cause; that is, in maintaining the profession of the Christian faith, and adhering to the practice of our duty. 2. Against what Christian courage is to be exercised. It supposes oppositions, trials and dangers in our way, else there would be no occasion for it. It is a temper for which there will be no room in heaven. (1) The power, the subtilty, and activity of the powers of darkness call for courage in a Christian. (2) The oppositions from within ourselves require courage. (3) The several discouragements or dangers we may meet with from other men, in the way of our duty, and even for our duty, make courage necessary. 3. Wherein or in what acts and instances it should express itself. (1) In deliberate and vigorous resolutions for God and our duty, upon counting the cost. (2) In the suppression of distracting fear of evils at a distance. (3) In a vigorous application to our Christian work, notwithstanding the stated and constant difficulties and oppositions attending it. (4) In a readiness to undertake hard and difficult services when God calls to them. (5) In a uniform steadiness of conduct under all the trials we actually meet with. II. WHAT MAY BE INTENDED IN THE EXHORTATION TO ADD VIRTUE, OR COURAGE, TO OUR FAITH. When we are called to make this addition we are only required to build the most proper and natural structure upon our most holy faith. The fortitude required by the gospel is distinguished from all other fortitude, not only as it is upon account of the truths and duties of Christianity, but as it is founded upon Christian principles. Christian faith is most fit to inspire with Christian fortitude. 1. Faith discovers Divine providence as engaged for us and with us in all our difficulties. 2. Faith proposes the Divine Spirit as directly provided to help our infirmities. Particularly for this very purpose, to inspire us with needful courage. 3. Faith represents our main enemies as already vanquished, and as having their chief power broken. 4. Faith gives us particular assurance that our trials shall not exceed our strength; either the strength we have, or that which shall be imparted (1 Cor. x. 13). 5. Faith sets in view greater evils to be feared from our cowardice than can be feared from our adherence to God. 6. Faith assures us of the certain and glorious success of our courage. That our endeavours against our powerful enemies shall issue in a full conquest (Rom. xvi. 20.) 7. Faith represents to us the noblest examples of such holy fortitude upon the same principle. Lessons: 1. Consider this grace of fortitude as a matter of the utmost importance in the Christian life. The variety of oppositions and difficulties in our way make it necessary. 2. Cultivate therefore your faith, in order to the forming of your minds to holy fortitude. 3. Use all farther additional means to fortify your minds. Be prepared for the worst, by counting frequently the cost. Make clear the goodness of your cause, for which you may be called to exert your courage. Carefully exercise a good conscience: without this the best cause in profession will be very faintly maintained in an evil day. (*J. Evans.*)

Courage.—Whatever the Christian was in the early days, he could not well be a coward. He could not live in any fear as

to what people would say about him: there was no doubt about that. And he could not live with a miserable counting of the loss or gain that religion should bring him. He knew full well that it would mean abuse, loss, danger, perhaps death. So in the old time Christianity first demanded faith that took hold of the promises—and then demanded courage that held on to them at any risk though earth and hell raged furiously. To-day religion is not so much a battlefield as it is a hospital for sick and disabled folks; it is very often only a round of poultices and plasters and nourishing diet, where the talk is of troubles and trials and what we have to go through. Look at the company in which this valour is found. "Add to your faith valour." St. Peter is writing to those who have obtained like precious faith in the Saviour. But it is not good for Faith to be alone; to live in luxurious ease; hers is a high and sacred calling. So is it that at her right hand must stand the tall and stalwart captain of her guard, Courage, my Lord Courage, strong in action, resolute in danger, fearless always. And at her left is her Prime Minister, and councillor, old Knowledge, with lofty brow, and ready understanding of the times and its requirements, and skilful in devices for meeting them. Then comes the Comptroller of the Household, a goodly gentlemen of clear eye and of fair complexion, my Lord Temperance. Then cometh the Lady-in-Waiting, Patience, fair Patience, whose cheery song keepeth the palace bright in troublous times. "Bear bravely," Patience sings, "it is all well that cometh down from Him; and it is ever well for them that journey up to Him." Then cometh the Queen's chaplain, Godliness, who moveth amidst the rest having a deep and holy sense of God's claim, a steadfast eye to His commandments, a lofty sense of His greatness, and a glad obedience to His will. Then come the two almoners who dispense the Queen's bounty—Brotherly Kindness and Charity. Thus only is Faith secure, and thus only can she rightly discharge all her duties and claim all her honours, when she is attended by each of these.

I. THAT CHRIST'S RELIGION ASKS FOR COURAGE SHOULD GIVE IT A STRONGER CLAIM UPON US. I ask you to-day to come and pledge yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, because it does need courage.

II. WITH MANY IS IT NOT JUST THIS ONE THING—THE LACK OF COURAGE—WHICH IS THE UNDOING OF THE LIFE? Some want courage to decide for Christ.

III. IN THESE BUSY TIMES MANY A MAN WANTS COURAGE TO DEAL WITH CIRCUMSTANCES THAT HINDER HIM. "Well," says somebody, indignantly, "must I sacrifice my business?" Yes; or anything else, if you can dare to call it a sacrifice, seeing what infinite gain is at stake.

IV. OTHERS NEED COURAGE TO DEAL WITH DAMAGING INFLUENCES ABOUT THEM. There is some companion, or some pursuit, or some pleasure that takes away all the heart and appetite for the service of the Lord Jesus. It leaves you like a garden in winter—nipped, withered, dead, without bud or bloom or beauty. There are things that make prayer such hard work that it seems impossible, and the Bible is a weariness, and the service of God is a dreary restraint. Resolve by God's help to have done with them bravely for the sake of the King, and for the sake of your own true life.

V. THERE ARE OTHERS STILL WHO NEED COURAGE TO DEAL RESOLUTELY WITH DESETTING SINS. Your only hope is to add to your faith courage—to have no terms with the enemy. You must perish or your foe; the two cannot live together. (*M. G. Pearse.*)

Christian courage:—It is not physical courage, the courage of the brute, the courage of the man without nerves; it is the courage of the man who has moral sense developed and spiritual ideas strong. I suppose you have heard the story of the Duke of Wellington, who, seeing in the thin red line which shines in Britain's glorious story a man trembling in battle but who would not retreat, said: "There is a brave man; he knows his danger, and he faces it." Another story is that two men were once standing together in battle, one strong with accumulated flesh and blood, phlegmatic, not knowing what fear was, and the other thin and pale and nervous; and as he trembled so much that his spirited horse trembled also, his phlegmatic companion turned to him and said: "Humph! afraid, are you?" "Yes," said he, "if you were as much afraid as I am you would run." And so sometimes in the Christian life apparently the weakest one is called to bear the heaviest strokes of Providence. He staggers under his affliction even as Jesus, pale and weak and trembling, staggered beneath the Cross. So we are not called to physical courage—that is good enough in its way—but to moral courage. (*W. E. Griffis, D.D.*)

Goodness is true manliness:—There is nothing really brave, really manly, really womanly, on earth, unless it is also good. To be good and to do good—that alone is manly. There are two Latin words for man. The one—*homo*—means merely a man as an animal distinguished from a dog or a horse. But the other word—*vir*—means a man in the best and truest sense; and that gives us our word "virtue." Never forget, virtue

and manliness are one. (*Canon Teignmouth Shore.*) **Knowledge.**—*Knowledge* :—

I. WHAT EXACTLY IS MEANT BY THIS SECOND LINK OF OUR CHAIN. What is meant here is a practical insight into what Christian people ought to do, not only in general, but at each moment in accordance with the circumstances and demands of the instant. The more we can rule our lives by the intelligent application of principles, and not by mere use and wont, instinct, imitation, mechanism, necessity, the more we shall be the men and women that God meant us to be. But Peter does not stop with such a mere toothless generality as that; for everything depends on what the law is which we apply to conduct. So this knowledge is not only of what it is right and wise to do at the moment; but it is knowledge of what it is right and wise, on Christian ground, to do at the moment and in the circumstances. Let the perception of duty be a perception illuminated and determined by the principles of the gospel, and bring that law to bear upon all life. Such a continual reference of daily exigencies and circumstances to the great principles that lie in Christ and His revelation will take the place of that selfish and secular tact and instinct which the world prizes so highly. It will give delicacy to roughness, sympathy to the hard, tact to the clumsy, and will bring a simplicity of motive and a suppression of self which are the best possible precautions for seeing clearly what the will of the Lord is. "Supply in your strength knowledge." **II. THE CONNECTION OF THIS LINK IN THE CHAIN WITH THOSE THAT GO BEFORE.** The believing man is the truly sagacious man. The real prudence is got in communion with Jesus Christ. The eye that looks at the sun is blinded, but the eye that looks constantly at God sees all things as they are, and is delivered from the illusions which deceive the rest of mankind. To see all in God and God in all, that is the way to understand the depths of things, and to know what, at each moment, they call upon us to do. What we want to know is not only what circumstances and self-advantage require, but what Christ requires, and that we shall learn when we keep near to Him in faith. In like manner the strength, of which my text has been speaking, naturally produces—when it gets fair play, and when men give themselves honestly to work out all that is in it—it naturally produces this happy certitude and illumination upon the path by which we should walk. **III. THE PRACTICAL DUTIES WHICH COME OUT OF THIS EXHORTATION.** 1. First, study, and keep very near the pattern of Jesus Christ. There is nothing more wonderful in that wonderful life than the unconscious facility and certainty with which He did the very act, and said the very word that the moment required. 2. Then, again, I would say try and get a more firm and intelligent grip of the principles of the New Testament as a whole. I believe there is the weakness of much of our modern popular Christianity. You do not read your Bibles half enough. 3. Let me say again what is only a deduction from what I have already said—regard all Christian truth as being meant to influence conduct. We write up in churches the Creed on the one side, and the Ten Commandments on the other. Christ is creed and Christ is commandment. 4. Again, let us see to it conversely, that we bring all the actions of our lives under the grip of our Christian principle. The lawyers say, "*De minimis non curat lex.*" "The law does not take care of the very small things." Perhaps it does not; Christ's law does. It stretches out its hand over all life, and the smallest duties are its special sphere. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) "*To virtue knowledge*" :—Virtue without knowledge were like a beautiful damsel blind, or a fair house that hath not a window in it. Virtue is like a pearl in the shell; there must be knowledge to break the shell, or we cannot come at the pearl. Ignorance is dangerous. Thus the devil carries many to hell, as falconers carry their hooded hawks, without baiting. There is no wretchedness so pitiable as that which is not known to the sufferer. If men will not know God, God will not know them. The work of regeneration begins at illumination. The first thing that sunk in our first parents was knowledge: now where the wound began, there must begin the medicine. Knowledge is the light of virtue. 1. By knowledge is here meant an insight into heavenly things. 2. This earnest exhortation to knowledge intimates that naturally we want it. The first way to knowledge is to know our own ignorance. 3. Knowledge is not the cause of sin, but ignorance; for virtue is begotten and nourished by knowledge. 4. Seeing we must join with our faith knowledge, it is manifest that an ignorant faith is no faith. 5. This knowledge must be added to virtue also. (*Thos. Adams.*) *Knowledge* :—I. There is in the Church of God, as well as in society generally, a disposition to exalt practice at the expense of theory; and yet all practice is but the embodiment of some theory. There is in some minds a disposition to mock at all science and all patient thought as being but idle and

unprofitable speculation. Common sense is lauded at the expense of study and research. The labourer is exalted above the thinker, and the man of experimental activity is pronounced the truly useful, whilst the studious and reflecting is denounced as a thriftless and unprofitable cumberer of the earth. But society and the Christian Church need the thinker as much as they require the labourer. Every seaman is not expected to construct his own nautical tables, or every miner to build his own steam-engine that may uplift the ore or drain off the superfluous waters. Yet without the aid of the astronomer and the machinist, of what avail would be the practical energy of the hardy mariner, or the begrimed miner toiling in his ever dark and narrow gallery? So, in religion, a just, religious practice must grow out of just, religious principles. And although a simple and childlike faith may readily grasp the great outlines of these principles, it requires that faith should be patient and studious, in order that these principles may be fully understood and justly stated, may be seen in their due position, and may be held in their just proportion, and in their mutual dependence and symmetry. II. Now our text and, in full harmony with it, the entire body of the Divine Scripture, require THAT THE CHRISTIAN PROFIT IN HIS RELIGIOUS COURSE, BY GOING ON FROM FAITH TO VIRTUE, AND FROM VIRTUE TO KNOWLEDGE. The first great necessity of our nature is that we know ourselves, that we learn from the book of God our origin, destiny, and redemption. But to have a just and safe knowledge of ourselves it is needful that we know our God. Framed by Him and for Him we cannot ascertain the moral bearings or calculate, so to speak, the latitude and longitude of our own drifting course over the ocean of life; but, as we refer to Him whose will is the meridian line by which we estimate the position of all beings, and whose favour is the Light and central Sun of our moral life. And knowing ourselves, and knowing our God in Scripture, we are called upon to know this world, that portion of it called Nature which we can reach and survey; and that march of the Divine purposes in the government of the race which we call history; and to know life, or those arts, and occupations, and relations, and human laws, and local customs that are to affect us in the discharge of our duties to our fellows. We are required to know man, not only as he should be, and as in his original innocence he was, but man as he is, in his selfishness, craftiness, and wretchedness, and yet, withal, in the long and tangled train of all his susceptibilities, and his capabilities, and his hopes and his fears, his grovelling desires and his soaring aspirations. III. THE ORDER OF CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE AS FOLLOWING AND TENDING TO GUARD AND CROWN FAITH AND VIRTUE. Why should it be set here, and not at an earlier place, in the rank of Christian excellences? 1. We suppose the reason to have been this: it was to remind us of a great truth, that practical obedience or virtue is necessary if we would gain any great advancement in Christian knowledge. Not only is such obedience an evidence of a sound understanding, but it is also a safeguard for it. No man can keep a healthy and sound intellect who is perpetually sporting with known error, and wallowing in known iniquity. The very conscience may become defiled, and the eyes of the soul contract blindness, by disuse and misuse. 2. Virtue was again made to precede knowledge, in order to protect against a great error that began to be promulgated ere the first apostles had quitted the arena of the Church militant for the thrones of the Church triumphant. Gnosticism, or the system of knowledge, claimed in the early Christian Church the highest prerogatives. It sought to plant knowledge, or the teaching of its own wild and foul philosophy, as the very basis of faith. Much of the Rationalism and Pantheism of our own times proceeds on the same most false and most fatal principle. Instead of going out of ourselves to find, by faith in God's testimonies, what He is and what we ourselves are, and to obtain the recuperative grace that sanctifies the heart and so enlightens the intellect, this system drags the God and the oracle and the revelation into man's self, makes its own purblind reason, and its own hasty and crude utterances, in the natural state of alienation from God and moral blindness, the law of judgment, to God and to His teachings. 3. The gospel does not proscribe knowledge: it requires it. It makes knowledge possible to the savage by awakening aspirations where before were only appetites; and by letting out on every side the horizon of his cribbed and narrow intellect, into the wide eternity and the high infinity around and above him. It not only patronises and diffuses knowledge; it classifies it as humanity unaided cannot do it. See in modern missions the usefulness and glory of consecrated learning in a William Carey and a Henry Martyn, a Morrison and a Judson; and is it not evident that, whatever else the gospel be, it is not the patron or the parasite of ignorance? 4. Physical science in our day has made rapid progress. Religion

frowns not on it. But far as physical science claims to be paramount and sufficient and exclusive, it has usurped honours that are not its due. It would, in so doing, treat man as a being of mere bodily organs, without conscience, without a God, and without an eternity; and in so regarding our race it robs and degrades us. Religious knowledge comes in to prevent the degradation and to denounce the usurpation. Religious knowledge comes in to remedy the deficiency, and to right the wrong. Political enfranchisement, or the recovery of the rights of the masses, is another most popular subject of thought and debate. But when was humanity so elevated as when the Creator assumed its likeness in Bethlehem? How is fraternity to be expounded and established, but by bringing men to look on themselves, as being in common amenable to the Last Judgment, and as being also in common interested in the great propitiation? The gospel it is, then, that gives the best knowledge; ascertains the relative rank and worth of all knowledge; popularises, diffuses, and defends it; and above all gives to man, the sufferer, the knowledge of the Consoler; and to man, the sinner, the revelation of the atonement; and to the groping captive of sin and heir of the pit, announces liberty and holiness, citizenship in heaven and sonship with God. (*W. R. Williams.*)

Of knowledge:—I. WHAT KIND OF KNOWLEDGE IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS EXHORTATION? Knowledge is an attainment very suitable to a reasonable nature, and is the glory of man because it is the improvement of that faculty which is one of his distinguishing privileges. But there is a great diversity in the kinds of knowledge, which chiefly depends on the quality of the object and the importance of the ends it serves. That knowledge which the text recommends is, according to this rule, the most valuable (Prov. ix. 10.) If we observe the connection of the apostle's discourse, that he has placed knowledge in the middle of the Christian virtues, it will appear plainly enough that he means a right understanding of them, such a knowledge as is necessary to our practising them. We should constantly study to be more and more acquainted with the Christian virtues, to understand the mind and will of God, and be making daily proficiency in the exact knowledge of our duty. We should use our own active endeavours that we may grow in knowledge, for the purposes of usefulness and goodness. Secondly, another thing intended in this exhortation is a disposition to improve knowledge to the proper practical ends of it. II. THE REASONABLENESS OF OUR ENDEAVOURING TO ATTAIN KNOWLEDGE, AND MAKE DAILY PROGRESS IN IT. If knowledge be absolutely necessary to our doing our duty acceptably, then all the arguments which press us to the one do also oblige us to the other. First, this is the way to be preserved from snares, of which we are always in danger through temptation and the deceitfulness of sin. Secondly, in proportion to the measure of our knowledge, so is our steadfastness; if it is of a rational kind. Thirdly, this unsteadiness, together with weakness of understanding, which is one cause of it, renders men in a great measure unprofitable to the world and to the Church. There is not anything a Christian should have more at heart than to promote the common edification of the body of Christ. And that this may be effected, adding knowledge to our faith and virtue is the best expedient. III. SOME DIRECTIONS FOR ATTAINING USEFUL AND SALUTARY KNOWLEDGE. 1. The first is a high esteem of it. If it be pleasant to our souls, if we have a just sense of its excellency, and thus our affections are captivated to it; it is the best preparation of mind we can have for this most important acquisition. 2. Let us use the means of attaining knowledge with great diligence and care. There is no other way to prove our sincerity and our love of wisdom. 3. But it is above all things necessary that we use the means of knowledge, and particularly that we search the Holy Scriptures without prejudice and prepossession. 4. The best means of attaining to religious knowledge, is doing what we know to be the will of God. (*J. Abernethy, M.A.*)

Knowledge:—The meaning of the term "knowledge" must be ascertained by a comparison of the text with other passages in which this word occurs. It is of course knowledge with respect to spiritual things and religious duties of which the apostle here speaks. This word is used in the New Testament some thirty times, and with various shades of signification. Sometimes it denotes a supernatural gift, knowledge by immediate inspiration. Perhaps it is in this sense that the "word of knowledge" is classed with the gifts of healing and of tongues, and with other miraculous powers. But since all Christians are exhorted to add knowledge to their faith, the apostle cannot intend a miraculous gift which God only could bestow. And for the same reason he cannot here intend the power or faculty of knowing in which sense the word is used when it is said that "the love of Christ passeth knowledge," i.e., is beyond the natural comprehension of men. We cannot add a new

sense or faculty to our natural endowments. Again, the word "knowledge" is used for the object of knowledge, and especially the system of truth made known in the gospel. But this must be known, in a measure, before we can have faith; and the knowledge spoken of in the text comes after faith. Knowledge is used also to denote a general apprehension of religious truth; but, as this is essential to the act of faith in Christ, it could hardly be referred to as a something to be added to faith. Isaac Taylor says this knowledge is "neither human erudition nor general intelligence, but that specific knowledge of which the gospel is the subject." There is another use of the word which applies it to the deep, clear, and cordial perception of truth, followed by the discriminating adaptation of truth to practical ends. Thus the apostle Paul speaks of the Christians at Rome as "full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able to admonish one another" (Rom. xv. 14); *i.e.*, they possessed that discriminating insight into truth which would shed light upon questions of practical duty. Knowledge is a spiritual apprehension of Divine things, forming and controlling the practical judgment. A soul informed by such knowledge discerns the way of truth and duty. This knowledge is not the mere perception of the truths of the gospel in their objective form, but an apprehension of gospel truths in their inward spiritual relations. I. WHAT THIS KNOWLEDGE IS. II. HOW IT MAY BE CULTIVATED. III. THE EXCELLENCE OF THIS KNOWLEDGE IN ITS EFFECTS. 1. This inward experimental knowledge of Christ and His truth differs from the intellectual perception of truth, just as the feeling that we know the mind and heart of another differs from the knowledge of his person which we gain through the eye; it is the difference between heart knowledge and knowledge merely by perception or intellection. Now we may know Christ, and yet may not know Him; may know Him as to His person revealed as Divine; we may know Him as to His character recorded in the four Gospels; we may know Him as to His doctrine and His work; and still we may come far short of really knowing Christ. Such knowledge is objective; *i.e.*, it exists in our thought as an object, and does not bring us into personal sympathy with Christ as our Saviour and Friend. It is in the brain but not in the heart. 2. And here, again, this knowledge differs from faith. Faith is that belief in Christ upon the evidence of the Gospels which leads the soul to rely upon Him as its Saviour, and to commit itself to His service. This faith rests upon a degree of knowledge as its warrant. But having gained this faith, and rested ourselves in it, we are exhorted to add to it knowledge; not the mere knowledge of the doctrine of Christ as a Saviour—for that we have already—but knowledge of Christ Himself, which comes through the heart, proving His doctrine, His promises, His love, in its own blessed experience. 3. But this inward knowledge of Christ has its outward expression in a judgment wisely exercised upon truth and duty. We need to cultivate the judgment as well as to fortify the spirit, to attain to a sound discernment of duty as well as to firmness in duty. It is a proverb that discretion is the better part of valour; a critical judgment as to the time and manner of acting is important to the success of the boldest and bravest action. In his description of the good man the Psalmist happily combines a sound judgment with boldness and firmness as essential qualities of his character. "He will guide his affairs with discretion; surely he shall not be moved for ever. His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid." Such knowledge is not what men of the world call prudence, which is exercised more in the cautious avoidance of evil to one's self than in devising and executing that which is good. There are two or three words which somewhat approach to this meaning—discernment, discretion, and discrimination; these all in their radical idea mean "to separate," "to distinguish," to "make a difference," especially between the true and the false, the right and the wrong, in theory and in practice. This discrimination as to truths and motives duly exercised by the mind itself, and faithfully applied to our outward conduct, constitutes knowledge as a practical thing. IV. HOW SHALL THIS KNOWLEDGE BE ATTAINED? 1. By the prayerful study of Christ as He is set before us in the gospel. The mere tourist sauntering through a gallery of art recognises in one painting a work superior to the rest; but the artist lingers before that picture and scans its every point till, without the help of catalogue or cicerone, he discovers it to be a Titian, a Tintoretto, a Murillo, and feasts his soul upon those diviner touches that reveal the master's hand. You must not look only, or read by catalogue or note-book, but must study. Prayer is the life element of such a study. 2. We gain this knowledge by a diligent and teachable seeking after the will of Christ. The spirit of obedience helps to the knowledge of duty. This determination to do the will of Christ is like a signal rocket piercing the gloom of night from

a ship on an unknown shore. 3. We gain this knowledge by studying questions of right and duty in the closet. The place for calm, mature judgment is the place of secret prayer. 4. We may gain this knowledge by being willing to learn, and to correct mistakes. The key of knowledge is humility. 5. We may cultivate this knowledge by often testing ourselves by our principles. If we were careful to keep a daily balance-sheet of our actions and principles, we should be more quick to detect errors of judgment, and to increase our stock of practical wisdom. True principle is a fixed quantity. It rests upon the eternal base of truth and justice, and is firm as the pillars of heaven. As the old Egyptians took their astronomical bearings from the sun-line upon the pyramid, so should we take our moral bearings by the light of Christ's teaching and life, giving the meridian line of principle and duty.

V. THE EXCELLENCY OF THIS KNOWLEDGE IN ITS EFFECTS. 1. This knowledge, combined with firmness in faith, gives beauty and dignity to character. We have seen that virtue gives energy, strength, resolve; but a character in which force and earnestness predominate is one-sided; may easily run into extremes. 2. This knowledge gives us power over ourselves. Man was created a power, and not a thing. In proportion as the soul gains a true spiritual power over its inferior desires does it become a power over the world. 3. This knowledge gives us power for good and even great achievements. It is no modern discovery that "knowledge is power." 4. This knowledge of Christ gives us power over evil and over death. It is half the battle to know the enemy, his ground, his resources, and his tactics. Classical usage helps us little as to the meaning of *γνῶσις* (gnosis) in the New Testament. Plato uses it commonly of "understanding," though sometimes of a deeper philosophical insight. But with the Neo-Platonists, gnosis came to be almost a technical term for higher insight, deeper wisdom, a certain mysterious knowledge reserved to the initiated. In this sense of deep spiritual insight, but without the associations of mysticism or mystery, the word gnosis is often used in the New Testament. It is a term peculiarly liable to abuse by enthusiastic minds, and before the close of the apostolic age there began to appear a sect of Gnostics, who claimed to have "an extraordinary insight into Divine things beyond the system of faith, which the people commonly received on authority." This insight they professed to have gained through certain secret traditions handed down from Christ, the higher light. Their gnosis corresponded to the esoteric doctrines of the old Greek philosophers, mysteries to be communicated only to the initiated. The Epistles of John seemed to have been aimed in part at this Gnostic tendency. The true Christian knowledge is as far as possible both from the obscurity of mysticism and from the pretensions of clairvoyance. The gnosis of the New Testament is the privilege of all Christians alike. (*Joseph P. Thompson.*)

Temperance.—*Temperance* :—I. TEMPERANCE IS THE CURB, bringing into subjection all those passions of human nature that tend to voluptuousness, just as patience and meekness check and keep under the fiercer passions or those tending to violence. Christian temperance sets itself in opposition to the drunkard's bowl, and the glutton's banquet, and the revels of the profligate, and the anxious longings of the covetous, and against the immoderate desire of what is not ours, as well as against the undue and immoderate abuse of what is ours. It includes, thus considered, sobriety, and chastity, and moderation—all the varieties of a wise self-discipline, imposed on man's fierce quest of pleasure. II. LET YOUR KNOWLEDGE, then, said the apostle to the readers of his Epistle, DEFEND ITSELF BY THE COMPANIONSHIP OF TEMPERANCE. Why, it may be asked, should this be selected, and not any other of those clustering graces which go to attest the energy and fruitfulness of the Divine Spirit in the work of his moral renovation? Let it be remembered, then, that in the sin of our first parents, the knowledge which they sought, beyond God and His instructions, was knowledge which brought with it a sin against the holy temperance that had before been the law of Paradise, and the defence of primeval innocence. Was it not then fitting that the victim of the Fall should be perpetually reminded of his need to be on his guard evermore against that dominion of the bodily senses into which the Fall betrayed us? In Satan's school knowledge brought forth intemperance; but it must not be so in Christ's school. Is it not, again, a fact, sustained by the history of the Christian Churches, that even when men enjoy this gospel their knowledge, both in things secular and spiritual, is but too often perverted into a license for casting off the self-control and the serene moderation of Christian principle? Is not a palmy civilisation often found shading a feverish and lawless sensuality? Was it not thus that Solomon—after his wide research, that wrote of plants from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall, and in consequence of his growing acquaint-

ance and his large converse with heathen society—became in his old age a doting conformist to the lewd idolatry of Ashtaroth? III. To glance at the BEARING OF THIS CHRISTIAN GRACE ON THE TEMPERANCE REFORMATION OF OUR TIMES. But we suppose that the best friends of temperance will yet find that, to give it permanence, it needs the broader basis and the deeper root of a religious movement; and that there, as in so many other earthly reforms, the controlling motives—the effectual lever, must rest on some stronger and firmer basis than earthly considerations. Drunkenness is enough to damn a man; but the mere absence of drunkenness is by no means enough to save him. IV. THE CLAIMS OF THIS CHRISTIAN GRACE, TAKEN IN THE WIDE AND COMPREHENSIVE SENSE WHICH SCRIPTURE ATTACHES TO IT, UPON THE DISCIPLES OF OUR TIMES. 1. It is necessary to true piety. The knowledge and love of God cannot lodge in a heart crowded and dragged downward by debasing and sinful pleasure. If men are Christ's, they are crucified with Him to the flesh and the world. 2. It is necessary to Christian usefulness. The man who would be really and truly useful must have an unselfish sympathy. Now, of this the lovers of pleasure are notoriously destitute. Few things more rapidly bring a seared callousness over the heart than the habitual pursuit of gross and selfish pleasure. 3. It is necessary to national well-being and prosperity. (*W. R. Williams.*) *Of temperance:—*I. THE VIRTUE ITSELF, AND WHEREIN IT CONSISTS, WILL BE EASILY UNDERSTOOD BY ANY ONE WHO ATTENDS TO THE PRESENT CONSTITUTION OF HUMAN NATURE, and what our experience will obviously suggest to us. The Author of our being has implanted in us passions which excite us to such action as is useful for our safety; and herein His wisdom and goodness appears, making provision for the continuance, the comfort, and all the purposes of our existence in this world. But, as the highest ends of our being are not confined to the present state, the same wise Creator has endued us with nobler powers and affections, by which we are determined to the pursuit of more excellent objects, wherein our true perfection and happiness consists; it is plain these inferior appetites were ordained to be in subjection to reason, and to be gratified within such limits as to be consistent with superior enjoyments, and with the proper exertion of superior powers. To consider this subject a little more particularly—1. In the first place, it is plain that sobriety or temperance does not require the rooting out or an obstinate refusal to satisfy or comply with the original appetites of nature. 2. But, on the other hand, temperance requires such a regulation and restraint of our desires towards sensible objects, or the pleasure of the external senses, that they shall not possess that room in our esteem which is due to things of vastly greater excellence and value. Temperance not only forbids all excesses, but requires such an habitual moderation that the freedom of the mind may be preserved, its powers in a constant readiness for better exercises, and that it may have a taste for intellectual and moral pleasures. The natural effect of a customary indulgence to carnal desires is a confirmed habit which increases the desire so as it prevails against better inclinations; and then experience shows the truth of what the apostle teaches, “that fleshly lusts war against the soul”; they tend to enervate its powers, impair its liberty, and bring it into bondage. 3. I observe that sobriety, like all other virtues, is seated in the mind. The appetites take their rise from the body, but the regulating them belongs to the higher faculties of the soul. It is in the superiority of the soul in its freedom, and in the dominion of reason and conscience over the lower desires and passions that the virtue chiefly consists. II. TO PROPOSE SOME MOTIVES TO SOBRIETY OR TEMPERANCE. This particular virtue of temperance stands upon the same foot with the rest, and is, like them, recommended by its own native beauty and intrinsic worth, which at first strikes any mind which attends to it. It is impossible for any one, upon a deliberate comparison, not to acknowledge in his heart that the sober man is more excellent than his neighbour who is intemperate; that it is a more lovely character and more worthy of the human nature to have the rule over one's own spirit. Besides, intemperance naturally tends to make life not only mean and contemptible, but miserable. But I intended principally to insist on these considerations which are contained in the gospel. It deserves the serious attention of Christians that the blessed Author of our religion Himself, and His apostles after Him, very earnestly inculcate this virtue. Let it never enter into our thoughts that great professions of respect or pretended faith will please Jesus Christ if we continue in carnal impurity and live after the flesh. But there are two arguments which you will find often urged in the new Testament: one is taken from the circumstances of our present state compared with the future. The second is, that temperance is an excellent preservative from snares and temptations. (*J.*

Abnethy, M.A.) Self-government:—One of the old Italian masters has left us his conception of temperance on the walls of a little chapel, where he has painted a heroic female figure with a bridle upon her lips, and her right hand binding the hilt of a sheathed sword to its scabbard. And that conveys in symbol and emblem an idea of a self-command that restrains the utterance of emotion and sheathes the sword of passion. I. THIS SELF-COMMAND IS A UNIVERSALLY ADMITTED NECESSITY. A man has only to look at himself to see that he is so made as that bits of him are meant to be governed, and bits of him are meant to govern; that there are some parts of his nature which are intended to be kept down under hatches, and some that are meant to be on the quarter-deck, with the helm in their hands. We have only to look, for instance, at the way in which the necessities and the appetites which belong to our bodily organisation work, to see that they were never meant to have the mastery, or to be left to operate as they please. A man is hungry, thirsty, feels the sting of some perfectly innocent, legitimate, fleshly need, and that appetite is as blind as a bat to all other considerations except its own gratification. No matter what lies between it and its object, its tendency towards the object is the same. And is a man to let such a mere unintelligent and almost involuntary impulse drive him? And it is just as true, too, about other bits of our nature, for instance—emotions and passions. Anger is a very good thing; God puts it in us. It is meant to be exercised. Yes! But it is meant to be governed. And so joy, mirth, fear, and all the rest of them; all these are inseparable from the perfecting of a man's nature. But their unbridled working is the ruin of a man. And then excellences want to be controlled, in order that they may not run to faults. Some edible plants, if they once run to seed, are ruined for food; so a man's good qualities need to be kept under, in order that they may not become exaggerated into weaknesses. And a man's bad qualities, natural weaknesses and defects of character, which are too deeply engrained in him ever to be got rid of—these want control in order that they may be turned into excellences, as it is quite possible for them to be. What did God put a will into you for, but that you might be able to say not "I like"; or "I was tempted, and I could not help it"; but that you might, before each action, be able to say "I will"; and that passions, and the stings of lust and sense, of appetite and flesh, and emotions and affections, and vagrant fancies and wandering thoughts, and virtues that were running to seed, and weaknesses that might be cultivated into strength, might all know the master touch of a governing will, and might obey as becomes them? And what did God give you a conscience for, but that the will, which commands all the rest, might take its orders from it? II. THIS ABSOLUTE NECESSITY IS A PROVED IMPOSSIBILITY. From the beginning moral teachers of all sorts have been saying to men, "Rule yourselves"; and from the beginning the attempt made to govern myself by my unaided self is doomed to failure. Not absolute failure, thank God! I would not be understood as if I were denying that, to a large extent, every man and woman has this power of self-government. But I do want you to consider that the worth of self-control depends, to a large extent, on the motive from which it is practised; and that, unfortunately, for twenty men that will exercise it for the sake of temporal purposes and immediate advantage, there is one who will exercise it for the sake of higher motives. A great deal of the moral reformation and restraint which the best of men, who are not Christians, put in practice upon themselves, is exactly like taking a child with scarlet fever and putting it into a cold bath. You drive in the eruption, and that is about as much as you do, except that you make the disease worse, because you have driven it in. But, beyond that, when once a man's passions, or affections, or desires, or any other part of him, have got the bit between their teeth, and have cast off control, it is impossible to bring them again into obedience. When the very instrument by which we are to coerce the worst part of our nature is itself tainted, what, in the name of common sense, is to be done then? When you send out the military to suppress the mob, and the military, bayonets and all, go over to the mob, there is nothing left for the sovereign but to abdicate. As somebody has said about such a matter, it is a bad job when the extinguisher catches fire. And that is exactly the condition which men stand in who are seeking to exercise a thorough-going self-restraint, when the self which should govern is itself tainted and evil, the will bribed and enslaved, the conscience sophisticated and darkened. What is the use of saying to such a man, "Govern thyself"? III. HERE WE HAVE A CHRISTIAN CERTAINTY, IF WE CHOOSE TO MAKE IT SO. Let these three things, faith, strength, insight, work upon you, and they will make the impossible possible. That is to say, if you want to govern yourselves begin with faith. We rule ourselves when we let Jesus Christ rule us. The

Christian man, thinking of his conflict, and knowing that with his ten thousand it is hard for him to meet the twenty thousand who are arrayed against him, invokes, as some petty chief of a weak tribe might, the aid of the great emperor whose dominions are at hand, and when he stretches his protecting power over the little territory there is liberty and there is victory for the trembling prince. So hand over the authority and the sovereignty of thy soul to Jesus Christ, and He will give thee the strength to govern thyself. And, in like manner, we have here implied another prescription, "Add to thy strength, temperance." If I am in Christ it is not a question of one bit of my nature against the other, but it is a question of the higher nature, which is His, flowing into mine, and so enabling me, the true me, which is Christ in me, to keep down the animal and the evil that attaches to me. And, in like manner, there is the third condition of self-command here; that knowledge of which the preceding clause speaks, which is mainly a clear insight into Christian duty. If we have once clear in sight the dictates of an enlightened conscience, felt to be Christ's will, then it will not be so hard to put the screw on all that rebels against Him, and to stimulate (for that is a part of self-command) the lagging and slothful graces of our hearts. So it comes to this, the necessity, which is an impossibility for everybody else, is a possibility for the weakest among us, if we let Christ rule in our hearts. Put the reins into Christ's hands, and He will make you kings over yourselves, and priests unto Him. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Temperance:—The grace of temperance may be here diversely understood. I. FOR SUCH A DISCRETION AS MAY SEASON ALL THESE GRACES; so taken it is the salt of every virtue. Devotion without discretion is like a hasty servant that runs away without his errand. Profession of faith without temperance is turned into hypocrisy or preposterous zeal; virtue without it is folly. Patience without discretion wrongs a good cause. Godliness without temperance is devotion out of its wits. Brotherly kindness without temperance is brotherly dotage. Charity without temperance is prodigality; it gives with an open hand and shut eye. II. FOR SUCH A DISCRETION AS MAY MODERATE KNOWLEDGE, and qualify that heat to which it is addicted (1 Cor. viii. 1). Temperance is not so much a virtue itself as a marshal or moderator of virtues. It is not enough to do a good work unless the due place, fit manner, and convenient time be observed. III. FOR SUCH A MODERATION OF THE MIND WHEREBY WE SO DEMEAN OURSELVES AS NEITHER TO SURFEIT ON FULNESS, NOR TO DESPAIR ON WANT. IV. FOR A MODERATE USE OF OUTWARD THINGS. There is intemperance—1. In lust; so it is called incontinence. This may be avoided—(1) By subduing the body to the soul (1 Cor. ix. 27). (2) By debarring the flesh all lust-provoking meats and drinks. High diet is adultery's nurse. (3) By avoiding temptations (1 Cor. vi. 18). (4) By meditating on the punishment. What men think most pleasing is most plaguing; to have their lusts granted (Psa. lxxxi. 12). 2. In apparel. Christ says the body is more worth than raiment; but some strive to make their raiment more worth than their bodies; like birds of paradise, their feathers are better than their carcasses. 3. In meats. (1) For the manner; this is merely circumstantial, and may thus be expressed: too soon, too late, too daintily, too fast, too much, is gluttony. (2) For the measure: it is an insatiate desire of delicacies (Luke xii. 19; Phil. iii. 19). As too much rain drowns the fields which moderate showers would make fruitful; so this plethora of diet, instead of conserving nature, confounds it. (3) For the matter: it is great feasting. (4) The effects are manifold and manifest. (a) Grossness. (b) Macilency of grace. (c) Consumption of estate. (d) Sickness of body. (e) Rotteness and death. The finest food shall make no better dust. (i) Abstinence is man's rising, as intemperance was his fall. (ii) It is God's blessing that makes fat, and not meat. 4. In drinks. (1) It makes room for the devil. (2) It overturns the estate. (3) It poisons the tongue. (4) It intoxicates all reason. (5) It enervates the strength. (6) It is the bond to incontinence. (7) It is an incendiary to quarrels and homicides. (8) It is a woe to itself (Prov. xxiii. 29). Learn how to avoid it—(a) Because we are men. While the wine is in thy hand, thou art a man; when it is in thy head, thou art become a beast. (b) Because we are citizens, and therefore should lead civil lives; drunkenness is an uncivil exorbitance. (c) Because we are Christians (1 Tim. vi. 11; Titus ii. 11, 12; Luke xxi. 34). (*Thomas Adams.*)

Temperance:—This is the third figure in that sum in compound addition the footing up of which makes the complete Christian character. Our modern use of this word temperance restricts it mainly to abstinence from strong drink. Abstinence alone does not fully express the idea, since this presents rather its negative side. The word means

strictly "ruling with a strong hand," having the mastery; and when applied to a person, the temperate man is he who governs himself firmly, who has the mastery especially over the passions and appetites of his lower nature. I. WHAT THIS SELF-CONTROL INVOLVES OR IMPLIES. *Ἐγκράτεια* is used by Plato and Aristotle to express self-discipline, self-mastery. Xenophon uses it to express the government of all the passions and appetites; such a mastery of the natural desires for food, drink, and sensual gratification, and such a power to endure cold, heat, fatigue, and want of sleep, as become a good general in time of war. (Mem. 1. 2, 1; 1. 5, 1; 2. 1, 1.) So Paul used the word when addressing Felix, who lived in open adultery with Drusilla, and who indulged every selfish and sensual passion; he reasoned of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment," till the wretch trembled. The Latin *temperantia*, from which our word temperance is derived, has the same meaning; moderation, regulation, government, self-restraint. And it is applied not only to sensual appetites, but to the government of the tongue, the eyes, the temper; to the restraint of the emotions of grief under calamity or of exultation in victory. Cicero defines *temperantia* to be that which teaches us to follow reason, both in what we seek and in what we avoid; a firm and judicious control of reason over impulse and desire (De Finibus 1, 14, and 2, 19).

II. BY WHAT MEANS IT MAY BE ATTAINED. 1. This Christian temperance or self-control implies and demands the absolute subjection of all evil appetites, passions, and desires. Those grosser social vices with which the pagan society of the old world was thoroughly infected, and which the old pagan religion encouraged—vices which destroyed home, corrupted literature, debased art, and defiled the altars of the gods—were so little thought of as evils, were so fully sanctioned by custom, were so gilded over by the example of public men, the toleration of law, and the flattering arts of genius, were so protected by the priests, who made them a means of revenue, that it was an easy thing for a Christian at Corinth, at Ephesus, at Antioch, or any like luxurious capital, to slide into sins the bare suggestion of which we should resent with abhorrence. Anger, in the common use of the word, is an evil passion. A passionate man cannot exercise self-control. Some ancient philosophers used the word temperance as the specific opposite of irritability. Self-indulgence in appetite, whether under the form of drunkenness or of gluttony, is a sin. It is a sin against the body, whose beautiful mechanism we strain and impair by any excess. It is an offence against the mind, whose faculties we clog and stupefy by excess. It is a sin against God, the gifts of whose bounty are perverted. Covetousness is specified again and again in the Word of God as one of the worst forms of carnal passion; and the subjection of this is indispensable to self-government. The greed of gain must be subdued, or it will choke the life of godliness in the soul. The Christian must learn to moderate his views and desires of worldly possessions. The tendency to a self-satisfied and even luxurious enjoyment of the world is, perhaps, the strongest antagonist in our times to a simple scriptural piety. Sensual appetite, pleasure-seeking for its own sake, and frivolity in the methods of enjoyment, a vain love of pomp and show—these proceed from a propensity which cannot be reconciled with the love of God. 2. Besides this absolute subjection of all evil passions and propensities, the law of temperance requires that those natural desires which are in themselves innocent and lawful, should, both as to the manner and the measure of their indulgence, be regulated by a regard for the highest good of the soul. Appetites and tastes we have which were never designed to be our tempters and tormentors—making the body a mere battlefield of the soul—but were meant to minister to a pure and healthy enjoyment. But the peculiarity of these native appetites and tastes in man is that they do not, like the instincts of animals, regulate themselves, but require the mild restraint of reason. That is a nice point—a hair-line—where desire instead of ministering to rational enjoyment, oversteps the bounds of reason, and becomes an ungovernable passion. Keep well within that line. 3. It has been assumed in this discussion that since all sin concentrates in a selfish will, this of course must be subdued in order to a sound and perfect self-control. But I wish to insist upon the idea that selfishness is not merely to be restrained, held in check by compromises, but to be conquered, if ever the soul would gain the mastery of itself for God. Our love of God, to be complete, must be unconditional. The existence of a calculating, selfish spirit is incompatible with the very idea of love. III. HOW SHALL IT BE ATTAINED? 1. Not by mere force of will, determining to override, and if possible to annihilate the sensibilities and propensities of our nature, whether for good or evil. The cold impassiveness of marble is not self-control, nor can the Christian perfect his moral nature by cutting

away all natural emotions and sympathies. One may conquer many an appetite and passion by mere force of will, and in so doing may strengthen the will itself in resistance to God, and may stiffen that will with the pride of self-righteousness. 2. Neither is self-control to be attained by the arbitrary mortification of the body, by means of denials and penances. Christianity was not made for the desert and the convent, but for the living and hostile world; and we are not to become saints by secluding ourselves from the outer world, but are to be saints in it by the power of a new life. 3. But in order to gain self-control we must study ourselves, especially as to our weak points of character, and aim to conquer specific modes or habits of evil to which we are prone. 4. Again, the power of self-control will be strengthened if we cherish habitually the sense of God's presence and of His watchful eye. And not only the thought of God as ever nigh to us, but the presence of God by His spirit within us must be cherished if we would govern ourselves by His law. The apostle enumerates temperance, self-government among the fruits of the Spirit. And now, in conclusion, let me urge you to give all diligence to add this grace to your character; to perfect yourself in the government of your own heart. (1) I urge you to this diligence by the greatness of the object to be obtained. Consider what it is to gain the mastery over a single passion. Think of the poets, the statesmen, the warriors who have sunk under the inebriating cup and have left a dishonoured name. (2) I exhort you to be diligent in this self-conquest because it is made practicable by timely diligence. Passions indulged have a rapid and fearful growth. (3) I exhort you to this self-control for your own peace of mind. (4) Your duty to Christ and your professed hope in Him require that you shall govern yourself in His spirit. "He died for all, that they should not henceforth live to themselves, but to Him who died for them and rose again." (*Joseph P. Thompson.*) *Self-mastery*:—I. The NATURE of self-mastery. II. The DIFFICULTIES of self-mastery. 1. Hereditary. 2. Surrounding. 3. Inherent. III. The ADVANTAGES of self-mastery. The evils from which it saves—physical, social, spiritual. IV. The MEANS of self-mastery. 1. Fellowship with other self-conquerors. 2. Communion with Jesus Christ. 3. Help from heaven. 4. Earnest, brave endeavours. (*U. R. Thomas.*) *Temperance*:—Temperance, self-mastery, the power of self-restraint, is a necessary part of Christian life, natural to it, indispensable to its perfection. Let me illustrate what I mean. You have a servant: he comes to you unacquainted with the perfect working of your system of business, strange to you, strange to the service he has to render; you do not take him into your full confidence at first; you give him such detailed directions that he cannot well make a mistake. By and by you give him your confidence, you throw him upon his honour; he knows as well as if you were always telling him what you want him to do. If there comes to pass a transaction different from what he has been engaged in, he knows your principles so well that he can complete it without referring to you at all. Detailed instruction is no longer necessary. It strikes you, too, very forcibly sometimes, does it not, that the higher position which the servant now occupies may be much more abused than the lower—the more mechanical office? He is freer in one sense from control, and, if he be a good man, the very fact that you put him on his honour in your service makes him doubly dutiful. But you know that confidence may be abused, and the fuller the trust, the greater the possibility of abuse. You know that freedom—leaving a man to act for himself, with nothing but well-instilled principles to guide him—means possibility of delinquency as well as possibility of uprightness. You say, in a word, that the man has knowledge; and that knowledge will be a dangerous thing for him and for you unless it be conjoined with self-mastery, self-restraint. You say, in other words, that in this high, confidential, honourable position in which the servant stands, to be faithful and perfect in his service he must "add to his knowledge, temperance." You have raised your servant from being little better than a machine, and you have made a man of him; the risk increases with the dignity. Intemperance is of two kinds—asceticism and licentiousness; temperance is the mean between the two. If a man is of such a nature that he cannot use his freedom without abusing it, if he must go to one extreme or the other, it is better that he should be an ascetic than a theological libertine, just as it is better for a man who must be either an entire abstainer or a drunkard, that he should be the former. Both extremes are equally intemperate; but, of course, while there is not much more than self-denial in the one, there is sin in the other. (*D. J. Hamer.*) *Self-control*:—A river is usually an unmixing blessing to a country. It fertilises adjacent lands. It presents a matchless highway for commerce. But there are exceptions to the rule. One of the

largest rivers in the world is known by the name of "China's sorrow." The banks through which the Yellow River flows for nearly a thousand miles of its course are so low and so friable that, with the first flash of the spring floods, away they sink, and thousands of square miles of country are laid under water. It is not hemmed in by granite or limestone gorges like its great and incomparably useful neighbour the Yang Tsze. Its torrents are unrestrained. Within historical times it has shifted its course altogether, and discharges itself into the sea some hundreds of miles away from the old mouth. Although a river of first-class dimensions, counted by the volume of water it discharges, for nearly a thousand miles of its course it is scarcely navigable. It is a colossal power for good wasted through the lack of strong, binding power in its banks. And there are not a few people who are like this capricious river in the career they follow. We might, perhaps, describe them as the "Church's sorrow." There is uncommon virtue or potency in their characters, and they are not altogether wanting in knowledge. But through the lack of this temperance or "self-restraint" they break out at given periods like "China's sorrow," and make schism and faction in the Church, and fritter away their own capacity for usefulness, and possibly in the end shift their course into altogether unexpected channels. (*T. G. Selby.*)

Patience.—*Patience*:—I. THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE IN REFERENCE TO ALL THAT IS UNWELCOME AND SORROWFUL. "In your self-control supply patience." Is there one of us who is not aware of some crook in the lot? Well, then, this is true wisdom, quietly take it and let it work as it is meant to work. It is Christian patience that is here enjoined, not the mere stoical, submitting to the inevitable; not the mere pride of not showing my feeling; not the mere foolish attempt to argue myself into insensibility. This Christian patience has for its very first element the recognition of the bitterness of the cup that He gives us to drink. The second element in Christian patience is quietly bearing, with submitted and acquiescent will, the pain or sorrow that comes upon us. Now, remember where, in our series of Christian graces, this wise endurance of the inevitable and God-sent suffering comes. It comes after self-command. That teaches us that it will take a great effort of self-control to keep the quivering limb quite still, if undrugged by any false anæsthetic, under the gleaming knife. But we can do it. And remember, too, that this injunction of Christian patience comes in a series which is all dependent on faith. Patience is possible when beneath all the sorrows, be they great or small, we recognise God's will. And in another way faith ministers patience by teaching us to understand and recognise the meaning of sorrows.

II. THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TOWARDS ALL DIFFICULTY, THE ARMOUR FOR THEM THAT STRUGGLE. What we have to deal with here is Christian perseverance. And about that I have only two things to say. First, how impossible it is to get any wholesome, vigorous Christian life without it; and in the second, how faith likewise ministers to all persistent effort and energy. As to the first, no course of life which has in view a far off end, towards which all its efforts are to be directed, but runs the risk of wearying ere the end is attained. The quiet persistence with which the leaf "grows green and broad, and takes no care"; the quiet persistence, with which from tiny knob, hard and green, the grape advances to blushing purple, and juicy sun-warmed mellowness, is the type of the fashion in which alone the harsh crudities of nature can be turned into the sweetness of grace. "Add to your faith persistence." And be thankful to remember that our gospel alone gives men motives and power thus to persevere to the end.

III. THE ATTITUDE OF THE CHRISTIAN SOUL TOWARDS LONG-DEFERRED GOOD. There is an element of hope in the New Testament conception of patience. In fact, in some passages the word seems almost to be a synonym for hope, and we read in other places of the patience of hope. This view of the "patience of hope" suggests to us a thought or two. The weakness and the misery of all earthly anticipation is that it is full of tumult and agitation. Hope is not calm, but the very opposite. As usually entertained it leads to impatience and not to patience. And the reason why hope is impatient is because we foolishly set our hopes on things that are too near us, and on things that are uncertain. The man that is only going a railway journey of an hour's duration will be more tired at the end of the first half-hour than a man who is going a journey of a day's duration will be at the end of the first half of the day. If we were only wise enough to fling our hopes far enough forward, and to set them upon that future upon which they may fasten, which is as certain as the past, there would be no need and no possibility of the agitations that perturb all earthly anticipations. And you can get the patience that endures and persists where you get everything else—from Him who is its example as well as its giver.

(A. Maclaren, D.D.) *Patience*:—Patience is, in the estimation of some, a mere drudge among the virtues. In Scripture she is a queen, magnanimous and dignified. How it is and why it is that the disciples of temperance or self-restraint are immediately commended to the cultivation of a gentle and forbearing spirit, will, as we think, appear if we but advert to the petulance which all rigorous and abstinent self-control is apt to foster. Thus, during the great fast of the Mohammedans, the Ramadan, observed by severe abstinence from food through all the hours of daylight, travellers have noted the querulous spirit that seems for the time to reign through a Turkish city. A recent British missionary speaks of the devotees of Hindooism, whose austerities are most rigid, and who proclaim superiority to all passion, as being notorious for “a general irritability.” The ascetic, of all times and of all forms of faith, has been subject, and not without some plausibility, to the imputation of sourness.

I. WHAT CHRISTIAN PATIENCE IS NOT. 1. The patience of the disciple of Jesus is not stoical apathy, nor acquired or affected obduracy to all physical suffering. 2. Nor, much less, is Christian patience a meek indifference to all error and wickedness in the world around us. The standard of Christian piety adopted by some, which is all softness and repose, would have no room for men like the lion-hearted Knox who did, under God, so thorough and good a work before a licentious court, and a frowning nobility, and a raging priesthood, for the Scottish nation. Patience shines forth in such a spirit at such a time triumphant. It is the patience that dares brave all anger, and loss, and suffering; but that dares not sacrifice truth or duty, or make the fear of God to bend to the fear of man.

II. WHAT THEN IS CHRISTIAN PATIENCE? We understand by it “a calm endurance of evil for God’s sake.” Now, evil is both physical and moral. Physical evil includes pain, want, disease, and death; moral, errors, sorrows of soul, and wickedness in all its varying shades, and in all its hideous shapes. Taken in this largest sense, patience includes the grace of meekness, from which, however, in other portions of Scripture, it is distinguished. Meekness is the quiet endurance of wrong from man, and patience is the endurance of woe appointed of God. But in our text we suppose the word patience to include both meekness and patience strictly so called. It is the quiet endurance of evil for God’s sake. That it is endured, implies that the evil is not self-invented and self-inflicted. If the physical evil be the effect of our own utter neglect, the passive endurance of it is not sufficient to make the sufferer a patient Christian in the truest sense of those terms. Against moral evil it must bear patiently its bold protest; but the want of immediate effect to that protest, and the presence of that evil in the world, and its temporary triumph, must not shake the Christian’s patient reliance on the wisdom and justice of the Divine Providence. For Christian patience is essentially hopeful. It must quietly wait for the salvation of God. So is it also in the New Testament represented as bound up with Christian diligence or industry. The Bible tells us of “patient continuance in well-doing,” and sends the pleader of the promises and the keeper of God’s precepts to learn of the husbandman, who, having sown the seed, must have long patience for the harvest. We have seen its needfulness to fill out Christian temperance.

III. Let us observe, now, ITS RELATIONS TO OTHER GRACES OF THE RELIGIOUS CHARACTER. 1. Ours is a day of religious effort for reform at home and evangelisation abroad. Look at the need of patience to preserve the spirit of the labourers in working order, and to render their endeavours successful. Mackintosh praises Wilberforce as being a model reformer, because of his immovable sweetness, as well as his inflexible persistency. But many good men assay, without this patient sweetness, to reform others by the virtual tyranny of harsh and unreasoning criminations. They resort to moral coercion where they should use moral suasion. 2. Again, as a preservative of faith and knowledge and godliness, patience is indispensable. It was said by the illustrious philosopher Newton, that if he had accomplished anything in science, it had been “by dint of patient thought.” The believer in Scripture who would feed, from its full pages, his faith and knowledge and piety into richer development and greater vigour, must be patient in searching, patient in pondering and comparing, and patient in praying over those sacred lines. 3. Again, virtue and godliness and charity, all practical Christian excellences, need patience for their development. “Confidence,” said a British statesman, “is a plant of slow growth.” True, consistent piety is also such, and needs long and meek study of God’s providence and Word to refine and perfect it. Carey said, modestly, in his old age, when his grammars and versions of Holy Scripture were almost a library in themselves, “I can do one thing—I can plod.” Men, families, nations, have pined and dwindled because they could not plod. In

the soul's struggle heavenward we do well to recollect that he "who endureth to the end" shall be saved, and that by faith and patience we inherit the promises. IV. LET US NOW CONSIDER THE MOTIVES THAT SHOULD PERSUADE US TO BE PATIENT AS CHRISTIANS. For as patience includes meekness under wrongs of our fellow-men, we must forgive or we may not hope ourselves before God to be forgiven. As patience includes submission to the Divine appointments, let us remark that our trials are lessened by serene meekness and resignation. God lightens and removes them more early, and they do not so deeply wound and empoison the soul. We are to remember, too, the necessity of this grace to success and influence with our fellow-men. It is the patient perseverance in well-doing that builds up consistency, and influence, and weight of character. We are, again, all to remember our own unworthiness before God, and our liability to pay ten thousand talents, ere, in our fretfulness, we chide man harshly, or murmur bitterly against our God and His providence. Nor is it unfitting that we remember how much of mercy and kindness there is in God's allotments. V. WE SEE WHY PATIENCE IS TO BE DESIRED, BUT HOW IS IT TO BE ATTAINED? 1. By the study of Scripture. We see there glorious examples and inspiring promises, and the most solemn warnings, and the most apposite models and precepts. 2. Let us pray. Does the spirit in us lust to envy? And would envy swell into wrath, or blasphemy, or murder? The apostle's reply is, "He," our God, "giveth more grace." And He gives it in answer to prayer. The apostles when bidden by their Lord often to forgive the offending and injurious, prayed, "Lord, increase our faith." Repeat the petition. For its teacher yet lives to be its answerer. 3. Above all, be in communion, much and habitually, with Christ. (*W. R. Williams.*) *Patience*.—Now let us look at this matter fairly. Jesus Christ does not want to put us, as His disciples, in an artificial world. He has thought for us in the future and also in the present. He takes up the conditions of our life here, He takes up all the powers of our nature; and the truth which He reveals so asserts itself that when fully grasped and acted out the powers of our nature are most fully ordered and developed, the conditions of our life are most perfectly met. We are placed in certain circumstances, and Christ knows them. Christ would so teach us, so mould our nature, that we fulfil all the conditions of our earthly course in such a way as to be best prepared for entering on the fuller realities of the heavenly and eternal life. Patience, then, power of endurance, power of perseverance, is a necessary part of Christian character. Take one or two simple reminders and this will appear clearly enough. Men are in a condition of suffering in this world. Account for it as you may, expound the purpose of it as you may, the fact remains. Somehow or other we seem to be always playing at cross-purposes with ourselves. Who ever formed a plan and found no hindrance to the carrying of it out? And is it not in these smaller matters that our chief causes of discomfort lie? The big, thick clouds that altogether shut out the light from a man's life only gather once or twice perchance in his history. Yet all men have to suffer, and to suffer severely, from minor trials every day; and to meet these some firm, abiding principle regulating the life is needed. Does it not also suggest itself to you that the position in which Christianity puts a man in relation to God, to himself, even, to things present and things future, is such as to require that he, at all events, of all men should be possessed of this grace of "patience," this energy of quiet perseverance. If it be a necessity in every-day life apart from Christianity, it is all the more a necessity to the Christian. He sees things to which other men are blind; he has burdens laid upon him which other men know nothing of; and he of all men must be specially strengthened to endure. A man takes a piece of rough iron and fines and hardens it into steel. It is sterner and stronger than it was in some respects, but is more susceptible in others. It will glitter with brilliant polish, but a breath can dim and tarnish it. The finely tempered sword must be kept ensheathed, or it will lose its lustre. So Christianity takes a man in his rough, natural state and refines his nature. He is stronger and yet more susceptible than he was before. It comes, then, to this alternative: he must be moved from the risk of danger, taken, in a word, out of the world, or he must have a new power of endurance given to him which will enable him to resist contaminating influence. A gardener takes a flower root; what it has of beauty is wild and fitful, it has many rough defects. He cultures it, and by care and scientific appliance he makes the same life bring forth more beautiful blossoms. But the plant has a fragile beauty; it cannot now weather the storm, it must be guarded against the nipping frost and the rude wind. So Christianity takes a man and puts such grace into his heart

that his life bears flowers and fruit "unto holiness"; but he cannot bear unconsciously what he could before. It comes, then, to this alternative: that he must be removed from contact with the storms of this world's experience, or else he must have what the gardener cannot give his cherished plant, special and increased power to withstand and to patiently endure. So you see this grace of which Peter speaks, and which at first sight seems rather incongruous with the rest, is really a necessary and inherent part of the Divine life in man. Christianity would deal cruelly and fatally with us if "patience" were not inalienably connected with the life which it cherishes. But there are other points in which such necessity as I have asserted is clearly seen besides that arising from the keener susceptibility of the Christian. We set out with a high ideal. Our whole nature thrills with the new life that has begun to stir within us. The sense of deliverance is precious. We feel that new motives, new aims, new desires have come to us. Sin and misery have fled away; hope and joy and peace will fill our heart. Such happy life is to be for our constant enjoyment. Are these not the thoughts which fill the soul when it first passes from death unto life? Has such experience, then, been an unchanging one with you? Have you never been thrust back from what you thought a sure and safe position of advance? Sin does not lose its hold upon us all at once. We are weak, and only by patient perseverance can we be made strong. We are subject to temptation, and only by patient watching can we hope to escape. We are ignorant, and only by patient learning can we attain unto knowledge. A war is carried on within us in which the good principles do not come scatheless from the conflict. These rebuffs and disappointments and failures are sure to meet us. Our Master had to contend with evil, and led the way by His example of faith and patience to the inheritance of the promises: so must we persevere and endure unto the end. (*D. J. Hamer.*) *Patience*:—

I. THE ELEMENTS OF A TRUE CHRISTIAN PATIENCE. The literal meaning of *ὑπομονή* is "remaining behind," or "remaining in the house"; i.e., abiding—*das zurückbleiben, zuhausebleiben* (Passow). Hence constancy, stability, steadiness. "Our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding" (1 Chron. xxix. 15). The Septuagint here uses *ὑπομονή* to denote stability, the opposite of that which is transitory and fleeting. In the text De Wette renders *ὑπομονή* by *Standhaftigkeit, steadfastness*. It is something more than submissiveness, by which Isaac Taylor defines it. *Patentia* denotes the quality of bearing or enduring. Cicero applies it to the endurance of hunger and cold. In analysing patience into its elements we must view it both upon the negative and the positive side. 1. Patience does not imply a want of sensibility to suffering, sorrow, or wrong. A North American Indian would think it unmanly or cowardly to betray a consciousness of pain, to utter a cry or shed a tear for any physical suffering. We may not seek for patience in an insensibility to suffering, whether natural or forced, nor in a sullen disregard of personal consequences in carrying out some proposed end or meeting an imagined fate. 2. And here we may note more particularly that patience does not argue indifference to the issue of the trials or labours which are upon us. The mind will forecast its own future, will have hopes, will have fears, will have a choice as to events affecting its own happiness; no logic or philosophy or schooling can destroy these essential qualities of the human soul; take away these, and man ceases to be a man. He who professes not to be troubled about events because he does not care what happens is not an example of the patient man. The true patient man does care what happens. The care-nothing spirit is not true Christian patience. 3. Neither is a do-nothing spirit to be identified with patience. There are times when patience counsels to inaction, when "the strength of Israel is to sit still." But this patience of waiting is not the inaction of sluggishness nor of despondency. It is a watchful inaction, like that of men sleeping upon their arms, with their camp-fires always lighted and the sentinels at their posts. The shipwrecked mariner in an open boat without oar or sail has nothing to do but wait for the appearance of relief. But if he has a compass and a paddle and knows himself to be within a hundred miles of land, then patience will be shown not in idle waiting or in praying for some chance relief, but in working on without murmuring and without despair, though the hand is weary and the head is faint, and neither sun nor star appears over the waste of waters. Viewed, then, positively patience requires—1. The consciousness of a right intent. This removes from within all disturbing causes which might irritate and unsettle the mind, and enables us to commit our way to the Lord in confidence. We shall grow patient under trials in proportion as we grow unselfish. And so too

of labours; if we enter upon these with a pure intent, if we rise above all selfish feeling to the grandeur of working for mankind and for God, then shall we hold on by the attraction of the work itself, never ruffled by opposition nor disheartened by difficulty. Hence the exercise of a true Christian patience demands a conscience void of offence towards man and God. 2. The exercise of Christian patience demands implicit confidence in God and in our cause as approved by Him. Patience and faith go hand in hand. The main element in patience is Christian submission to the will of God. This rests upon confidence as its basis—confidence in the wisdom, the power, and the love of God. 3. Patience must have in it the element of hope. Patience is incompatible with despair. Patience under trial expects God's appearing. Patience in labour awaits God's help. The virtue of patience, by reason of its quiet and retracy, commands but little notice and admiration from men. Men do not lay the stress of greatness upon the passive virtues. II. THE PLACE AND VALUE OF PATIENCE IN THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. 1. This virtue of patience we need in all our labours for the cause of Christ and the good of men. In working against evil we are prone either to irritation or to despondency. Our weak natures are annoyed by the opposition we encounter in a good cause. 2. We need this patience under the afflictions and wrongs which we personally suffer—afflictions at the hand of God, persecution, calumny, wrong from our fellow-men. How sweet is patience under the hand of God! It is like sunlight and flowers in the chamber of sickness. But it is easier to bear great and prolonged afflictions which come directly and visibly from the hand of God than the petty vexations and wrongs which arise from untoward circumstances and evil men. Great occasions rally great principles and brace the mind to a lofty bearing, a bearing that is even above itself. But trials that make no occasion at all leave it to show the goodness and beauty it has in its own disposition. 3. We need patience with respect to the fulfilling of God's plans of mercy for the world. God's promises are like century plants. They grow silently, almost imperceptibly, through wind and storm, by day and night, and year by year. (*Joseph P. Thompson.*) **GODLINESS.—Godliness:**—At first sight it appears strange to find "godliness" ranked among the special virtues of the Christian character, whereas it is a very much more general expression than any of these specific excellences which precede it in this list. Nor is it less singular to find it inserted in the midst of a catalogue of Christian graces, whereas we should rather expect it to stand as the all-inclusive foundation of them all. What do we mean by godliness? The fundamental idea is reverence toward God. That reverence expresses itself both inwardly and outwardly—inwardly by habitual communion with Him in spirit; outwardly by habitual service of Him in act. The word covers substantially the same ground as the Old Testament expression, "the fear of the Lord." If, then, we take that for the meaning of the word, the singularity of its insertion in this catalogue may be found to be the means of teaching important truths. I. The first lesson that I would gather is as to THE ROOT OF REAL RELIGION. We must never forget, in considering this series of Christian virtues, that faith is regarded as the foundation of them all. It is the raw material, so to speak, out of which all these other graces and excellences are made. And this is especially the case with regard to the sense of reverence to God manifesting itself in habitual communion with Him and habitual service of Him which is meant by this word godliness. Some of us say that we believe in Jesus Christ and are living by faith. Does your faith lead you to this continual godliness? Are you brought by it into continual communion with Jesus Christ, and, through Him, with God? Do you constantly refer all your actions to Him? II. We have here the other lesson that REAL RELIGION IS A THING TO BE CULTIVATED BY THE STRENUOUS EXERCISE OF CHRISTIAN GRACES. No man becomes "godly" by mere desiring. The bridge between faith and godliness is made of manly strength, discrimination and discernment of duty, rigid self-control, patient perseverance. If you have these things your faith will effloresce into godliness; if you have not, it will not. You will want all these virtues and graces which precede godliness in my text. You will want manly strength—for a hundred reasons, because of the condition of things round about you, which is always full of temptations to draw you away, because of your own proclivities to evil. And you will want manly strength, because you can get no hold of an unseen God except by a definite effort of thought, which will require resolute will. Further, for godliness, we need to cultivate the habit of discrimination between good and evil, right and wrong, because the world is full of illusions, and we are very blind. And we need to cultivate the habit of self-control and rigid repression of passions, and

lusts, and desires, and tastes, and inclinations before His calm and sovereign will, because the world is full of fire and our hearts and natures are tinder. And we need to cultivate the habit of patience in all its three senses of endurance in sorrow, of persistence in service, and of hope of the future, because the more a man cultivates that habit, the larger will be his stock of proofs of the loving-kindness and goodness of his God, and the easier and more blessed it will be for him to live in continual communion with Him. Exercise thyself into godliness, and do not fancy that the Christian life comes as a matter of course on the back of some one initial act of a long-forgotten faith in Jesus Christ. III. Then another lesson to be gathered from this catalogue of graces is that TRUE RELIGION IS THE BEST PRESERVATIVE AND STRENGTHENER OF ALL THESE PRECEDING EXCELLENCES. Do not spend your time upon merely trying to cultivate special graces of the Christian character, however needful they may be for you, and however beautiful they may be in themselves. Seek to have that which sanctifies and strengthens them all. Faith is the foundation, godliness the apex and crown. IV. And the last thought is that THIS TRUE RELIGION OR GODLINESS UNITES IN ONE HARMONIOUS WHOLE THE MOST DISSIMILAR EXCELLENCES OF CHARACTER. Notice that in this series all the excellences which precede my text are of the sterner, the more severe, and self-regarding kind, and that those which follow it are of the gentler sort and refer to others. If I might so say, it is as in some Alpine range, where the side that faces the north presents rugged cliffs and sparse vegetation, and close-knit strength to breast the tempest and to live amidst the snows, whilst the southern side has gentler slopes and a more fertile soil, a richer vegetation, and a sunnier sky. And in like manner the difficult problem of how far I am to carry my own cultivation of Christian excellence apart from regard to others, and how far I am to let my obligations to help and succour others overcome the necessity for individual cultivation of Christian character, is best solved as Peter solves it here. Put godliness in the middle, let that be the centre, and from it will flow on the one side all needful self-discipline and tutoring, and on the other all wise and Christlike regard to the needs and sorrows of the men around us. (*A. MacLaren, D.D.*) *Godliness*:—A religious man is he who practically makes his accountability to God the law of his life, who is bound to God with the sense of personal obligation for all that he receives, in all that he does. What, then, is that godliness which is capable of being nurtured as an addition to saving faith in Christ and to the several virtues before enumerated? Some understand the term in the old English sense of god-like-ness, a moral resemblance to God. But this does not express the objective sense conveyed in the original word. Godward-ness, if we might make such a term, would be nearer this than God-like-ness, a state of mind which is toward God as the sole object of its adoration and religious reverence, the central, supreme object of its trust and love, the final source of moral obligation and authority. One may have a certain faith in Christ who is yet wanting in a just and commanding reverence toward God. A mind that believes in Christ as historically revealed in the New Testament, accepts Him as a Divine Teacher, and even regards His death as in some way connected with the redemption of mankind, but which does not recognise a necessity for that death as an atonement between human guilt and Divine justice, is wanting in that godliness of which the apostle speaks. It has not attained to that reverence for God in the holiness of His Being and the purity of His law which makes the atonement at once a moral necessity for the soul itself and a legal necessity for the Divine government. A mind that looks to Christ as the author of a universal and indiscriminate salvation for the race, and admits no distinction in the results of probation between those who accept and those who reject the terms of that salvation, is surely wanting in this godliness. A just reverence for God as lawgiver and judge is wanting. I. THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF GODLINESS. 1. That it is most inward in its seat and power. The Apostle Paul has in view this internal spiritual quality of true godliness when, writing to Timothy, he says, "Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." Here godliness is distinguished from righteousness. Righteousness, as it stands in this catalogue of Christian qualities, denotes rectitude of action; godliness points to the inward spring of that action, and the ground of its righteousness, in a just sentiment of veneration toward God. True godliness has the soul for its seat and God for its object. "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." 2. This sentiment is equally compounded of love and fear. That veneration or reverence toward God which is true piety is grounded in a love of His holiness. There is a veneration whose chief element is awe; a reverence for dignity, station, greatness, power, which is

cold and formal and distant. Such is the veneration which barbarian tribes manifest for the mysterious powers of Nature. But the veneration of the Christian mind for God is not a dim awe of invisible power, a dread of that Almighty force which heaped up the mountains, but is a reverence for that which is greater than physical force, however sublime and terrible, even the greatness of a good and just and holy character. The poet Shelley disowned a personal God; yet what one has aptly styled "the atheistic hunger of his soul" caused him to fill the universe with invisible powers to which he paid that credulous homage which atheism always pays to mystery. But with this love and adoration of the character of God should mingle always a salutary awe of His majesty. "By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil." II. WHAT ARE THE MODES OF ITS EXPRESSION? 1. We should cherish this reverence for the being of God when we approach Him in prayer. Abraham and Moses, and Samuel and David, with all their importunity in supplication, were filled with reverence and godly fear when they drew nigh to God in prayer. 2. We should cherish reverence for the name of God. 3. True godliness implies a reverence for the law of God as the supreme and final rule of moral action. "Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee." 4. We should cherish also a profound reverence for the will of God as manifested in His providence. "I opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it." The godly mind rises above all secondary causes in nature and all intermediate human agencies to perceive and acknowledge the hand of God in its afflictions. III. GUARD AGAINST ITS COUNTERFEITS. 1. We are cautioned not to confound gain with godliness. The Apostle Paul warns Timothy against "men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness." At first view this seems a strange and almost incredible form of heresy. But call to mind the fact that under the Old Testament dispensation temporal prosperity was promised to godly living, and you will readily see how the idea might arise, as it did, that outward prosperity was always a mark of inward piety. This substitution of gain for godliness is one of the most subtle and depraving devices of the enemy of souls. It is making a calf of gold under the very brow of Sinai, and setting aside the Holy One of Israel for an image of Mammon. 2. The other error is thus characterised by Paul. He speaks of men who are "lovers of their own selves; lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God," who yet have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof. Manifest are the forms under which such godliness appears. There is a poetic form of godliness, a sentiment which takes the air of reverence and breathes the name of the Divinity when singing of the grander forms of nature. The old Greek and Latin poetry peopled the invisible with gods, whose presence and agency it represented in all the mysteries of nature and in all leading events of human experience. The machinery of Homer's great epic lies within the supernatural; the gods played their part in every Greek tragedy. Indeed, we know the religion of Greece and Rome mainly through their literature. But while true godliness is true veneration for God, not all veneration is godliness. It may lead the soul to God, or it may not lie deeper than the sentiment and the imaginative. There is an artistic or æsthetic form of godliness. The Greek mind, which under the fairest clime and the most liberal government was stimulated to the highest culture in taste and art, expressed its devotion through artistic forms, especially in sculpture. But taste and art, however subsidiary to the expression of devotion, can never be of the essence of godliness. There is a dogmatic form of godliness, a creed-worship, a veneration for dogmas and authorities in religion. Wherever the creed is put before the life as evidence of piety, the profession of the lips before the confession of the heart, there the form of godliness is substituted for its power. There is a mechanical work-form of godliness. This puts all the religious energy of the soul into such outward visible acts as seem to be deeds of piety, but which may be only deeds of self-righteousness. The methodical and laborious Southey was once describing to a friend his minute allotment of time for his diversified labours in reading and writing—such an hour being given to French, the next to Spanish, the next to a Review, the next to classics, the next to history, &c. "But pray, Mr. Southey," interrupted the friend, "at what time do you think?" Might it not be asked of some who abound in the drill-work of religion, "At what time do you pray?" IV. THE MOTIVES FOR CULTIVATING A TRUE GODLINESS. 1. That God is as He is. Could we but form a conception of God as revealed in the Scriptures, surely we must bow reverently and walk softly before Him. 2. The blessedness of godliness both here and in the hereafter. 3. The fact that we shall soon meet God face to face. (*Joseph P. Thompson.*) *Godliness*:—The term εὐσέβεια,

here translated godliness, is used in the New Testament to denote that reverence toward God which is a spontaneous feeling of the heart in view of His character (see in Robinson). Cornelius was "a devout man (*εὐσεβής*), and feared God." The prevailing use of *εὐσεβεία* by classic writers gives to it this same objective sense. Plato, Thucydides, Desmosthenes, use it to express veneration toward the Deity (*πρὸς Θεοῦς*). See in Stephanus, Suidas, and Passow ed. Rost and Palm. In the "Definitions" sometimes ascribed to Plato, *εὐσεβεία* is defined to be *δικαιοσύνη πρὸς Θεοῦς*, that which is just, fitting, meet, as toward the gods. The Stoics defined it to be *ἐμὴν ἑαυτὸν θεοῦ θρασύτητα*—the appreciative or becoming service of the gods. Stephanus defines it by *religiositas*, thus expressing the same idea of reverence toward God. De Wette, in his note upon 2 Peter i. 6, says "Ehrfurcht und Liebe gegen Gott"—veneration and love toward God. This use of the word precludes the idea of God-like-ness, and favours the less euphonious, but more expressive term, God-ward-ness. It denotes also something deeper than a formal outward reverence for the demands of God, and refers directly to the reverence of the soul toward God. (*Ibid.*)

Of godliness:—I. WHEREIN GODLINESS CONSISTS. It takes in all those dispositions of mind with the proper expressions of them which are due to the high perfections of the Deity, and which result from the relations we bear to Him. As He is eternal, independent, infinitely excellent, powerful, wise, holy, and good, the light of nature itself teaches us to glorify Him by our praises, to esteem, love, and fear Him, and to obey His will in all things as far as it is known to us. As He is the almighty Creator of all things visible and invisible, the preserver and governor of the world, from hence arises the obligation to gratitude, confidence in His mercy, submission and resignation to His providence. The inward affections which naturally arise comprehended in godliness are, first, fear, a reverence for His majesty, a serious affecting sense of all His glorious attributes, not a confounding terror and amazement. Secondly, the fear of God, as the Scripture explains it, which is an essential part of godliness, and of the respect He claims from us, doth not exclude love. His goodness naturally excites love. Gratitude is a kind of love which naturally arises in the mind to any being who discovers kind intentions towards us. The exercise of love and respect seems especially to consist in an entire acquiescence in the order He has appointed, with confidence in His wisdom and goodness and submission to His will. When I speak of resignation to God, I do not only mean that we should be satisfied with the occurrences of life, but that we should approve and actively obey His precepts, submitting to His moral as well as providential government. This doctrine has been always taught in the true Church, and care taken to prevent men's falling into that fatal error of placing the all of religion in acts of devotion, while they neglected that much more substantial proof of respect to the Deity, the imitating of His righteousness and mercy. Yet the external acts of adoration and homage to the Deity are not to be left undone, and the performing of them according to His institution is a part of godliness. Not that there is any value in the outward performance, as separated from the affection, but supposing first the sincerity of good principles and dispositions in the soul, they ought to be exerted in external acts of worship for two reasons. First, because that has a tendency to increase them. The body and the mind in our present constitution have a mutual influence on each other. Secondly, another reason for outward acts of adoration and homage to God is that thereby we may glorify Him. II. THE REASONABLENESS AND NECESSITY OF ADDING GODLINESS TO ALL OTHER VIRTUES. First, if we consider godliness in itself abstractedly, it will appear to be a very eminent and important branch of our duty. Not only is it so represented in the Holy Scriptures, but if we attend to the reason and nature of the thing, we must be convinced that, as God is the most excellent of all beings with whom we have to do as our ruler and constant benefactor and our judge, our first respects are due to Him. It is the distinguishing privilege of mankind to be capable of religion. Secondly, it ought therefore to be added to all other virtues, because it is the chief support and security of them, and where it prevails has a great influence on men to practise them. The efficacy of godliness, strictly so called, to the production of all other virtues appears from the nature of it already explained, for it imports a disposition to obey all God's commandments and to do everything which He approves. (*J. Abernethy, M.A.*) *Godliness*:—It was a beautiful saying of one of the old Fathers when, addressing himself to God, he exclaims, "Thou hast formed man, Thy creature, for Thee, and he cannot be at rest until he have come again unto Thee." I. WHAT IS THE GODLINESS HERE COM-MENDED? Looking to the sense of the term here employed in the Greek original,

it is piety or the fear of God—that veneration of the Most High which leads to homage and obedience. Godliness has its three sides. It is communion with God, for the society of our Maker is enjoyed in true worship of Him. It is intellectual and spiritual assimilation to Him, in the cordial admission and love of His truth; and practical assimilation to Him, in the endeavour to reflect on the world the lustre of His graces and some broken, distant beams, at least, of His moral excellences. To make this possible—to raise the fallen and rebuild the down-trodden and polluted shrine—God Himself has come amongst us. II. THERE ARE FOUL SEMBLANCES OF GODLINESS, mere idols, that delude many. Let us keep ourselves from them. 1. It is a mistake to suppose that mere veneration for some higher existence, however imaginary and false our views of this existence—that such vague veneration is godliness; that God hears alike with delight those who call Him Jehovah and receive the Bible and those who call Him Juggernaut and who swear by the Hindoo Shaster. In this vague and unscriptural sense of the term the atheistic poet, Shelley, and the pantheistic philosopher, Spinoza, have been called men of piety, because of a spirit of tenderness and awe that was attributed to them. But atheism—the ungrateful and irrational dethronement and denial of any God—is that to be by any apothecary's art of liberalism made to coalesce with the love and worship of the true God, as forming the same incense of accepted adoration? As to pantheism, it is opposed to piety or true godliness radically and throughout. True godliness begins in humility and penitence, and is sustained by prayer and adoration. But pantheism begins in pride. 2. It is a mistake, again, to look, as some seem now disposed to do, upon the austerities and ceremonies of the Church of Rome, as the fairest exhibition of godliness. III. IN WHAT MODE, THEN, MAY WE SAFELY AND SUCCESSFULLY ATTAIN THE GODLINESS WHICH THE APOSTLE HERE ENJOINS? Far, then, as it is a life, God must give it. Far as it is a truth, He in His Scriptures and by the Spirit of His Son must teach it; and far as it is a communion, it must be sought in the one way, Christ. Daily and earnest and effectual supplication is necessary. This must, again, seek God's teachings in the study of His revealed truth. Here He has manifested Himself, His purposes, and character; and this, His book, He delights to honour and to transcribe afresh into the experience and hearts of His devout people. IV. EVERY INDUCEMENT OF INTEREST AND DUTY, OF HONOUR AND SAFETY, OF BENEVOLENCE TO MAN AND PIETY TOWARDS GOD, REQUIRES EACH OF US TO BECOME THE FRIEND AND CHILD AND FOLLOWER OF THE LIVING GOD. 1. Remember that it is the highest style of human nature. The scholar, the sage, the discoverer, and the hero, what are they, before God, to the saint? 2. Holiness is, again, the master-key of the universe. Born to die, you are fated to travel hence. But whither? Become God's charge and child. Be a renewed man by God's grace, and you are gifted, virtually, with the freedom of the universe. 3. Remember, again, that it is the one thing needful. Send bread to the famishing, give sympathy to the oppressed, give healing remedies to those who are sick and ready to die, give education to the ignorant. But before the school, or political emancipation, or health, or even bread, the tribes of Adam need true godliness. 4. The last consideration is that as godliness is the bond and crown of all the virtues, so it is, on the other hand, the one sufficient remedy for the subjugation and removal of all the vices. (*W. R. Williams.*) *Godliness*:—Let us trace the wisdom and necessity of the exhortation, and the wisdom and necessity of that which is thus commanded. It was a wise suggestion to men of every age that they should possess and develop this habit of pious reverence. It gives us the hint that the contrary was likely to be the tendency. It is no easy thing, under all circumstances, to look calmly and trustfully up to the throne of the living God, and cheerfully commit all our life to His fashioning and to His keeping: it is no easy thing at all times to trace the gentleness of His grace in the ways of providence. We see the necessity of the exhortation, then, because this reverence of heart in all purity and faith is hard of accomplishment. Our lot seems to be cast in what, generally speaking, may be called a thinking and reading age. Men are learning to observe, and to glory in observing. There is God's great universe, spreading about us on all sides, and He who created it, and created us, knew that as men learned to read, they would aspire to acquaintance with the truths which unfold themselves to careful observation. The only thing I have to say about it is, that it makes a life of reverence, of piety, of "godliness," harder to us than it was to men who lived in the time nearer to human intellectual infancy. By the discovery of what are called natural laws, and the secondary

causes of the effects we see around us, do we not apparently lengthen the distance between ourselves and God? To the savage, the thunder is the voice of the Great Spirit, the lightning is the flash of His angry eye. He stands face to face with his deity in these things. To the Israelite, God, Jehovah worked directly in sending the plagues upon the obstinate king and his people, who would not let them go; in bringing streams of water from the rock, in sending manna for their food, in overthrowing their enemies, in establishing their greatness. They did not see, or care to see, the second causes, the long chain, it may be, of means by which these effects were accomplished. They seemed to stand ever in the immediate presence of their God. Is it not true that the advancement of science and acquaintance with natural laws has removed you to a lengthened distance from Him, who works through all things by the word of His power; and that, as there is a wider interval for you to overpass, it is harder for you, than it was, say for Abraham, or Noah, to live a life of reverence and the fear of God? Thus much concerning the necessity for the exhortation. One word on the necessity of that which is thus commanded. Because the thing is harder there is the more credit in its accomplishment. If the man has a larger interval over which to look, the stronger must be his sight, if he is able to see clearly through all the intermediate second causes, the great first Mover in all things, working out His purpose. The more thickly the "clouds and darkness" roll around God, the truer man does he assert himself, who is able to trace His loving intention through the mystery. If we are ever to come to the full stature of manliness in Christ, we must possess in active exercise this disposition of "godliness." (*D. J. Hamer.*)

Of the practice of godliness:—1. The amiableness of a truly pious temper, and the importance of it in religion. 2. It will have a most happy influence to make us holy and righteous in our whole conversation in the world. 3. It will tend exceedingly to our own interest and happiness. The exercise of it will afford us the most sincere and high pleasure and satisfaction.

I. THE PROPER METHODS OF RAISING AND CULTIVATING A TEMPER OF RATIONAL PIETY AND DEVOTION. 1. Let us be at pains to acquire just notions of the Deity; for the opinions which we form of Him will have the greatest influence on our temper and behaviour towards Him. 2. Let us keep up a lively sense of the excellence and the goodness of God in our minds by serious attention to them, and frequent reflections upon them. 3. Let us consider God as always present with us, and the Witness and Inspector of our behaviour. The lively consideration of this cannot but make us exceedingly careful to treat Him with all possible respect and honour, and to do everything which we apprehend will be pleasing and acceptable to Him. 4. Let us attend carefully upon the positive institutions of religion, and the outward duties of devotion. These have been appointed on purpose to maintain in us a lively sense of God and His excellences, to recall to our minds the several considerations which have a tendency to improve and strengthen our good dispositions towards Him, to instruct us in the duty which we owe to Him, and to make us serve Him with the greater zeal and cheerfulness. And if we attend to them for these ends, we shall find them means every way fitted to answer them. (*J. Orr, D.D.*)

Brotherly kindness.—*Brotherly kindness*:—I. OBSERVE HOW IN THE VERY NAME OF THIS GRACE THERE LIE LESSONS AS TO ITS FOUNDATION AND AS TO ITS NATURE. The word is all but a coinage of Christianity, and the thing is entirely so. The gospel bridged over all the divisions, and brought bond and free, Jew and Gentile, man and woman, into a great unity, so deep, so real, that all antagonism vanished. "The mystery hid from ages" was revealed—that a common relation to a Divine Father made all the men who partook of it one. But let us think of what instruction this word contains in reference to the foundation of this Christian unity. We go deep down into the very heart of Christianity when we talk about all Christians being "brethren." It is not a mere sentimental expression to convey the idea that they ought to love one another, but it is a declaration of the deep reason why they ought thus to love one another; and it links on to that great truth, that in Jesus Christ all they that love Him and trust to Him do receive direct from God a real communication of a new and supernatural spiritual life, which makes them no more merely sons of God by creation and after the flesh, but sons of God through the Spirit. The lonely pilgrim travels to the Cross, and when he comes there he finds that he is "come unto the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven." This unity is a far deeper thing than mere identity of opinion. Christ's Church is no voluntary association into which men may pass or not, as they please, but you are born into it, if you are Christian people, as much as you are born into your mother's house. And you can no more denude yourselves of your

relationships to the other men who possess the same life, than you can break the tie of brotherhood which binds you to all them that have received corporeal life from the same source as you. II. OBSERVE THAT THE PLACE WHICH THIS VIRTUE HOLDS IN THE SERIES TEACHES US THE ONE-SIDEDNESS OF A CHARACTER WITHOUT IT, HOWEVER STRONG AND SELF-CONTROLLED. Unless the rock be crowned with a coronet of wild flowers it is savage and black. And unless to our strength that fronts the world, to our quick discernment of duty that looks through illusions and clearly sees duty, to our self-control, that is severe to ourselves, and to ourselves alone; to our patient persistence that bears and does and hopes on and ever, we add the supreme beauty of sympathetic gentleness and Christlike tenderness, all these other lovelinesses will lack their last touch of poignant exquisiteness that makes them complete. On the other hand, it is a very real danger in earnest Christian culture, that we shall concentrate our attention far too much on the self-regarding virtues, and too little upon those which refer to others. The place which this brotherly kindness occupies in our series, may further teach us that it is a great mistake for good men to cultivate the gentler graces at the expense of the sterner and the stronger. Christian love is no mere feeble emotion, but a strong and mailed warrior, who beareth all things, and can do all things. III. THE OCCURRENCE OF THIS GRACE IN OUR SERIES TEACHES US THE LESSON THAT IT IS A DUTY TO BE WON BY EFFORT. It is just as much your duty to cherish brotherly love to all professing Christian people as it is to govern your own passions, or to do any of these other things that are enjoined upon us here. The introductory clause of this whole series covers them all. "Giving all diligence, add to your faith." The hindrances are strong and real enough to make effort to overcome them absolutely essential. There is our own selfishness. That is the master-devil of the whole gang that come between us and true Christian charity to our brethren. And then, besides that, there is in our day a wide distinction among Christian people, in station, in education, in general outlook upon life, in opinion. In addition there is that most formidable hindrance of all, our wretched denominational rivalries. IV. THE PLACE WHICH THIS GRACE HOLDS IN OUR SERIES TEACHES US THE BEST WAY OF MAKING IT OUR OWN. "In your godliness supply brotherly love." The more we realise our dependence upon God the more we shall realise our kindred with our brethren. The electric spark of love to Christ will combine the else separate elements into one. Cleaving to the one Shepherd, the else scattered sheep become one flock, held together, not by the outward bonds of a fold, but by the attraction that fastens them all to Him. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Brotherly kindness*:—I. THE CONNECTION. The apostle joins brotherly kindness to godliness—1. Because brotherly kindness is the daughter of godliness. The river of charity springs from the fountain of piety. 2. Because brotherly kindness is the moderator of godliness. God loves not such mad zeal, that so fixeth the eyes on heaven that it despiseth to look on their poor brother on earth. 3. Because godliness is proved by brotherly kindness (1 John ii. 9). II. THE DEFINITION. It is a love to the faithful; to such as possess the same faith with us, and by that faith are adopted heirs to the same God, through the brotherhood of the same Christ. It is distinguished from charity by nearness and dearness. By nearness, I mean not local but mystical. Charity hath a great latitude, and is like the heaven that covers all; brotherly kindness like the sun that shines upon the one half at once. The firmament sends influence to more than the sun, but the sun comes nearer to that object it blesseth than the firmament. By dearness; for the bond of nature is not so strong as the bond of grace. Our creation hath made us friends; our redemption, brethren. III. THE DISTINCTION. There are three sorts of brethren. 1. By race; and that either by birth, or by blood. 2. By place, such as are of the same nation. 3. By grace. IV. THE CONCLUSIONS. 1. The necessity is great. (1) It is worthy in itself; that virtue which is ranked with godliness must needs be honourable. (2) We are apt to neglect it; therefore St. Peter urges it several times (1 Pet. i. 22, ii. 17, iii. 8, and here); St. Paul thrice (Rom. xii. 10; 1 Thess. iv. 9; Heb. xiii. 1). 2. The practice. (1) What it forbids as opposites to it, and murderers of it. (a) Contentious litigation (1 Cor. vi. 6, 7; Prov. vi. 19; Gen. xiii. 8). (b) An inveterate hatred. God loves all His children; wilt thou hate him that God loves? (1 John ii. 11, iii. 15). (c) Even anger itself is a traitor to this virtue; for as hatred is a long anger, so anger is a short hatred; malice is nothing else but inveterate wrath (Matt. v. 22). (d) Oppression (1 Thess. iv. 6). (e) A proud contempt of one's brethren (Psa. l. 20). (2) Positively. (a) This brotherly kindness is shown in reprehending those we love (Lev. xix. 17). (b) Helping their poor estates. (c)

Praying for them. (*Thos. Adams.*) *Brotherly kindness* :—I. This same apostle has, in his earlier epistle, enjoined it upon the disciples of Christ to “*LOVE THE BROTHERHOOD.*” And whom has the Saviour taught us to regard as being thus our kindred and our brethren? We turn to the Gospels for the needful light in interpreting the Epistles. 1. When our Lord was celebrating with His apostles, the last religious ordinance of His life on earth, He said to them, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another” (*John xiii. 34, 35*). This law was new in its authorship. The Decalogue on Sinai had been given through Moses. The Son Himself was now come to speak, face to face, that law of Love which crowned and solved all the earlier commandments. It was, again, novel in its motives. To intimate His equal Deity, the Son here makes love to Himself, the motive of holy obedience. As it was new, too, in its evidence. It would become, before the world, the badge and public pledge of Christian discipleship. 2. But whilst I am required to cherish a brother’s warm regard for these, are none but these my brethren? We answer to this question: Spiritual ties, whilst overriding, do not annul all natural bonds. And who are our brethren, by these earlier and human ties? We suppose all who are near to us—those attached and grappled to us by the domestic charities; those, again, with whom we are united of our free choice by the bonds of friendship; and those, lastly, who are our countrymen, one with us by the law of patriotism. II. How, THEN, IS IT THAT GODLINESS NEEDS THE ADDITION OF BROTHERLY KINDNESS? 1. Far as the range of worldly brotherhood extends, in our relations to the home, to the circles of friendship, and to our countrymen generally, godliness should be guarded by this grace of human sympathy, to counteract an unjust, but common imputation against true piety. The monk, fleeing to the wilderness; the spiritualist, overlooking his engagements to society and the household, in the care of the closet and his soul, are answerable for an error here. Their godliness lacks brotherly kindness. So, too, the hostility of the worldly to true piety, venting itself of old by statutes and penalties; venting itself in our times, rather in derision and cruel mockery, may easily provoke in the minds of the truly godly an alienation that would, unchecked, issue in utter isolation. But this is rather natural than justifiable. It is not so much the strength of the Christian’s godliness, as the human weakness intermingled with, and diluting that piety, which thus teaches him to withdraw, because he has cause of complaint. 2. But not only may the bonds of worldly and human brotherhood, thus, with or without the Christian’s fault, be seemingly sundered by his godliness; a man’s piety may seem to hinder his recognition at times of the ties of spiritual brotherhood also. If it be asked, how this can be, let it be remembered in reply, that a man of eminent devoutness may easily become absorbed and abstracted in manner. 3. But a more disastrous barrier to this brotherly kindness is the existence and range of controversy among Christians. III. We now reach that division of our subject in which we consider how THE CHRISTIAN GRACE OF BROTHERLY KINDNESS IS TO FILL UP THE SPHERE OF WORLDLY BROTHERHOOD, EMBRACING AS THAT DOES, FRIENDSHIP, KINDRED, AND COUNTRY. 1. As to the power of religion to adorn and cement friendship, the history of the Church speaks emphatically. 2. As to the effects of religion on those who are our brethren because our countrymen, the topic of Christianity in its relations to the nation is too vast and complicated to be at this time discussed. It is evidently a duty of Christian patriotism, to urge thoroughly the work of Home Missions, and to send the Bible and Sabbath-school and ministry on the very crest of the westward waves of emigration. IV. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE CHRISTIAN GRACE, WHICH THE APOSTLE HERE ENJOINS, SHOULD BE DISPLAYED IN THE DISTINCT SPHERE OF SPIRITUAL BROTHERHOOD. 1. Within the same church, then, the disciples of our Saviour need to be more and more given to mutual intercession. 2. Christians in this day need, again to ponder the warnings of James as to social and terrestrial distinctions, unduly dwelt upon in the intercourse of fellow-disciples. Fraternity among Christians, again, requires that we do not abandon merely to the care of the State, the poor and dependent of our fellow-disciples. (*W. R. Williams.*) *Brotherly kindness* :—Now, one of the first impulses of the heart when men are thrown together is to lay hold at once of points of contact, to recognise identity of interests, community of feeling, to get rid, as far as possible, of those things which are exterior and accidental, or else to pierce through these and find how, in all essential and unalterable things, the human heart is at one with its kind. I know that society, and commercial society not least, manifests contending interests, that

the motto seems to be—"Every man for himself, and (sometimes not very reverentially added, by the way) God for us all"; that it appears almost necessary that a man should harden his heart against consideration for his brother man; that he is afloat upon an angry sea; that the struggles of others often dash the water in his face, and threaten his own existence, and that even if he abstain from retaliation, he scarcely dare reach out a hand to help a brother for fear of being dragged down. I know these things from present observation; but still it is true that all such circumstances are an after-growth, and that under the earliest, simplest conditions of human society, "brotherly kindness" is an instinct, an irresistible impulse. You may see it, if you like, springing forth again, with all its early strength and freshness, on occasions such as when men, few in number, and with all differences of position destroyed, have to form among themselves society anew; in any case of shipwreck, say, when some are cast upon uninhabited land. The brotherly instinct is at work again at once, and only expires when simplicity is corrupted, and artificialism blots it out. Now, is it not the wish of the best moments of every man, that this feeling could be maintained, that all contending interests should sign a truce of brotherhood? And I suppose the best of men, as they find the hopes which their fancy had kindled die away in the light of fact, say, "The thing is impossible: while I have to deal with such men as so-and-so, I can afford little room for the exercise, in this relation, of such a virtue as 'brotherly kindness.' We must be living under a different condition of things from the present, all society must be made afresh before this can be." Exactly so, and that is the root of the whole matter. Men must be renewed, redeemed, and then "brotherly kindness" may have its full and perfect exercise. Is not this announced as the mission of gospel truth in this world? It reveals our own nature to us; it shows us in what points we are akin one to another. And now another question meets us; the answer to which will engage our attention. Peter is writing to Christians, "to those," he says, "who have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Why does he think it needful to insist upon the exercise of this virtue, "brotherly kindness"? Is not this the message that we "have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another?" What need, then, for special exhortation as to the mingling of this with the other elements of Christian character? If we think for a moment, the answer to such question will readily occur. Christianity, the religion of faith and love, is the law of the heavenly life, but it is sent to us here, and now, for the ordering of this earthly life. I shall now point out what seem to me the grounds on which the seclusive, meditative, form of piety might be judged likely to manifest itself unduly, and then remind you of one or two facts which show that such judgment is well founded. Gospel truth teaches us this one thing of all most clearly—the individual relation between each human heart and God—personal, not representative, nor corporate religion—the impossibility of vicarious love, of deputy service. Personal susceptibility, personal action are necessary if the soul is to make any way toward heaven. This revelation gives him not only new light concerning his own nature, it gives him new ideas of God. This Infinite Being is revealed as standing in near relation to our spirit, as having made sacrifice for our soul's redemption, so that our life is lifted out of all its appearance of littleness, sublimed by the ordering of His perfect will, sanctified by the might of His Holy Spirit. May not a man, when thoughts like these possess him, when his godliness takes its truest, intensest form, well be wishful to stand in some "quiet place" apart from interruptive society, where he may fathom, in some measure, the vastness of what has been revealed. But there is more; this Divine relation is to be an abiding one: death is no destroyer of it, but rather a caster down of what has been a hindrance to the closer union. These highest delights are, in one sense, solitary ones, we can communicate no idea of them in words, and we are tempted to leave that society in which none can fully know us and have sympathy in our joy, and wait in communion with Him who sees all and knows all, and accepts the silent homage of our hearts. Now, such tendency as this towards seclusion has manifested itself in time past, and it is seen to this day. We know it in the experience of those who are called Mystics, men of the German school like Tauler, men of the French school like Gerson. We see it in the seclusion of hermits, and monks, and nuns. But has the idea no force with us? We are social, but is it Christian or worldly sociality that we practise? Do we not seclude our religious life too much within ourselves? (*D. J. Hamer.*) *Brotherly kindness* :—

I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF BROTHERLY LOVE. 1. This love is based upon the evidence of a Christly character, and is prompted by love to Christ Himself. It is not the

doctrine of a universal fraternity which the text inculcates, but brotherly love between the members of the body of Christ. This brotherly love rests primarily upon a character recognised and approved as the basis of fellowship; it is the love of a friend of Christ for another in whom also he discerns a friendship for, and a likeness to Christ. The profession of love to Christ is not enough to command this brotherly love. We do not then bestow this brotherly affection indiscriminately upon all who call themselves by the name of Christ. We must have evidence that they are His disciples. But, on the other hand, we may not withhold this love from any who show truly the spirit of Christ. The love of Christ will prompt to this. That love is the most potent of moral affinities. Not more surely does the magnet search out and draw to itself particles of steel in a heap of sand, than does the love of Christ in the heart draw to itself, by its sweet and potent magnetism, whatever has a real affinity for Christ. It is not an external and formal fellowship, not the spirit of sect or party, not alliance in a particular Church, which generates and feeds this love; but an inward affection for Christ Himself, which causes us to delight in whatever is like Christ or is pleasing to Christ. Our very love for Christ forbids that we should love as brethren those who do not, above all errors and faults, clearly evince their love for Him. 2. This brotherly love does not require in Christians an entire agreement in opinion or coincidence in practice. 3. This brotherly love does not forbid Christians to controvert the opinions or reprove the faults one of another. 4. True brotherly love does not require the same marks of outward consideration toward all Christians. This love is neither a vague sentimentalism nor a levelling radicalism. II. THE GROUNDS OR REASONS OF THIS MUTUAL AFFECTION OF THE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST. We have seen that this brotherhood of believers is founded originally in their common relations to Christ. Descending now from this general survey, we may note more particularly—1. That brotherly love is the only real bond of union in a Church of Christ. What is a Church? A body of professed believers in Christ, associated under a covenant for mutual watchfulness and help in the Christian life, and for maintaining the ordinances of the gospel. Its basis is a covenant. A covenant differs herein from a constitution. A constitution is a system of rules and principles for the government of persons united under it. But a covenant, as the term is used in Church affairs, is “a solemn agreement between the members of a Church, that they will walk together according to the precepts of the gospel, in brotherly affection.” Now it is obvious that this covenant cannot stand one moment without love. Love is its essence; its vital element. In the normal structure of our churches, we have nothing to hold us together but the simple bond of love. 2. Brotherly love is the truest evidence of a regenerated and sanctified heart. The heart of man is by nature selfish and proud. It careth for its own things and not for the things of others. The gospel makes the soul and its interests paramount to all temporal distinctions; it puts the spiritual infinitely above the physical; it honours character above all rank, and station, and wealth, and power; it honours all men as the offspring of God; and it looks upon the renewed man in Christ as the image of Christ, to be received and loved for His sake. “One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.” 3. This law of Christian brotherhood declared by our Lord, not only secures to each and every disciple the same rights and privileges in His kingdom; it forbids any relation between Christians which is inconsistent with their absolute equality before Him, and their fraternal love for each other. 4. The fraternal love of Christians gives to the world the highest and most convincing proof of the reality and the power of Christian faith, and is the necessary condition for the advancement of Christianity in the world. For the spread of Christianity, therefore, it is not enough that we found schools and colleges, build churches, establish missions, multiply tracts and Bibles; all this apparatus is needed for the work; but they who would reform and save the world, must above all things have fervent charity among themselves. III. HOW SHALL THIS LOVE BE DEVELOPED AND CHERISHED? 1. Wherever this is possible, Christians must cultivate a familiar acquaintance with each other. How often a Church is rather an aggregation of independent units than the coalescing of congenial fervent hearts! 2. We must cherish brotherly love by dwelling in our thoughts and speech upon the excellences of brethren rather than upon their infirmities and defects. (*Joseph P. Thompson.*) **Charity.**—Charity.—We have now reached the last bead on this rosary of Christian graces. As the apostle uses it here, this love is the crown and consummate flower of all Christian excellence; the last result of discipline and self-culture, the very image of God. I. “CHARITY” IS THE SUM OF ALL DUTY TO ALL MEN. We hear it urged—and there is a truth in the saying—“we want less charity and

more justice." Yes! but we want most the charity which is justice; the love which every man has a right to expect from us. You do not do your duty to anybody, however you may lavish gifts upon them, unless this Christ-like sentiment dwells in your hearts. The obligation has nothing whatever to do with the character of the object on which that ray is to fall. The sun is as much bound to shine upon a dunghill as upon a diamond. Our obligation to love our fellows has a far deeper source than the accidents of their character. Now let me remind you that all this is an intensely practical exhortation. People curl their lips at the fine words that Christian teachers talk about universal love, and say, "Ah! a pretty sentiment. It does not mean anything." Well! let a man try for a week to live it, and the want of practicalness in the exhortation will be the last thing that he will complain of. Fine emotion is all very well, but even Niagara is going to be turned to practical use now-a-days, and made to work for its living. And all the rush of the deepest and purest emotion is nought unless it drives the wheels of life. II. NOTICE HOW THIS SAME GRACE OR VIRTUE IS REPRESENTED AS BEING ATTAINABLE ONLY AS THE OUTCOME OF GODLINESS. There is only one thing that can conquer the selfishness which is the great enemy of this universal charity, and that is that the love of God poured into a man's heart shall on its bright waves float out the self-regard which is central and deep almost as life itself. III. THIS GRACE IS THE LAST RESULT OF ALL CHRISTIAN CULTURE AND VIRTUE. The man that is simply righteous, strong, self-controlling, patient, has not yet touched the highest apex of possible development. All these cold and stern graces need to be lit up, like the snow of the glacier, with the gleam of this sweet, solemn light, in order that they may glitter with their serenest whiteness. Add to virtue, love; to knowledge, gentleness; to all the graces which regard our own self-development, the supreme consecration of the excellence that forgets itself, and stretches out loving hands, laden with tender sympathies and large gifts towards the weary, even if it be the hostile world. Further, this Divine charity, not only completes these sterner graces, but it needs them for its development and its perfecting. Our love to our fellows will never be noble, deep, Christlike, unless it be the child of severity to ourselves. And still further let me remind you that this wide, expansive, all-comprehending charity is the child of an intensely personal faith. It is when the love of Christ to me dawns on my heart that I am brought to the broad charity that grasps all the men whom Christ has grasped, and cannot but love in its poor measure, them whom He so much loved that He died for them. (A. Maclaren, D.D.) *Of brotherly kindness and charity*:—I. THE PRINCIPLE ITSELF is easily understood, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The proper expressions of this inward good affection in the mind are as various as the necessities of mankind, and the abilities and opportunities of others to relieve them. To instruct the ignorant, to reclaim the disobedient, to convert sinners, to strengthen the weak, comfort the feeble-minded, to encourage the sincere; these are the noblest offices we can possibly perform to our brethren, because they serve the highest ends, and produce the best and most lasting effects. But, besides these offices of charity, there are others enjoined by the natural law of benevolence, and which the gospel, so far from overlooking, peculiarly enforces. The wise and sovereign providence of God has so ordered that there is a diversity in the state of men; some are indigent, others in a capacity of relieving. In all these, and other cases of a like nature, reason and a compassionate heart will readily suggest to a man how he ought to show his charity. II. THE OBLIGATIONS we are under to the practice of this excellent duty. 1. And the first thing I shall mention is taken from the consideration of ourselves. Let any one look into the workings of his own heart when a pitiable object is presented to him, and try whether he does not feel something within which calls him to stretch forth his hand for the relief of the distressed? if it is not with violence to himself that he can harden his heart, and hide himself from human misery? The greater ability, therefore, which Divine providence gives any man of diffusing the effects of his virtue far and wide by relieving multitudes of his fellow-creatures, the larger occasion he has of enjoying the purest pleasure, even like that of God Himself, whose happiness is in communicating good, for the absolute perfection of His nature raises Him above the possibility of receiving any. 2. Another obligation to the practice of brotherly kindness and charity arises from the object of it, our brethren and neighbours, their condition, and the relation we stand in to them. Do we acknowledge God the Author of our being? He is equally the Author of theirs, which should inspire us with tender compassion towards each other. But the Christian religion has super-added special obligations to those general ones which the common ties of humanity lay upon us, by establishing a new and intimate rela-

tion among the disciples of Christ. 3. In the third place, we are, with respect to God, under great and indispensable obligations to the exercise of brotherly kindness and charity. This is clearly insinuated in the text, for the apostle exhorts us to add charity to godliness. The principles of the fear and love of God will naturally determine us to exercise good-will and beneficence to our brethren. (*J. Abernethy, M.A.*) *Charity*:—We are now got to the roof of this spiritual house, charity. This is the highest round of the ladder: there be eight steps, this is the uppermost, as nearest to heaven. I. THE MOTIVES TO CHARITY. 1. The necessity of it—(1) In respect of God. He charges us with it, both in the law and in the gospel (*Lev. xix. 18; John xiii. 34*). (2) In respect of thyself. Things of greatest use should be of greatest estimation. Thou wouldst know if thou breathest, Christian; the sign of it is thy charity. This is the pulse of faith (*Jas. ii. 18*). 2. The dignity of it. It is a royal office; yea, a Divine practice. Mercy and charity is the sole work communicable to man with God. The Lord is content to acknowledge Himself the charitable man's debtor (*Prov. xix. 17*). 3. The commodity of it. It secureth all, increaseth all, blesseth all. 4. The danger of neglecting it (*Matt. xxv. 41–43; Prov. xxi. 13; Jas. ii. 13*). II. THE MATERIALS WHEREIN THIS EXTERNAL AND PRACTICAL PART OF CHARITY CONSISTS. 1. Who must give charitably (*1 Tim. vi. 17; Luke xii. 21; 1 Tim. vi. 18; 2 Cor. viii. 12; Eph. iv. 28; Luke iii. 11*). 2. What must be given: not words, but deeds; a charitable heart hath a helpful hand. 3. To whom extends our charity: this munificent part of it to the poor (*Luke xiv. 13, 14; vi. 33*). 4. Whereof must we give: not evil-gotten things, but our own. When the oppressor hath built his almshouse, and hopes by his perfunctory devotions to be admitted to heaven, the curses of the undone wretches knock him down to hell. 5. How we must give—(1) Cheerfully. (2) Discreetly. (3) With a right intention; for God's glory, not thine. (4) Opportunely. The more delay in giving, the less honour in the gift. (5) Before giving thy goods to the poor, give thyself to God. (*Thos. Adams.*) *Charity*:—I. THE PLACE CHARITY OCCUPIES. It is brought forward last in our text, not as being in itself independent of, and in order of time, subsequent to those which the apostle has before recounted; but it is exalted, because of its power to keep in unison all the other graces, as the knot completes and holds together the garland. The regenerate soul loves God in the first pulsations of his new-found spiritual life; and gratitude to the Redeemer who has bought him, prompts, early and continually, all his acts of obedience to God, and all his acts of kindly service to his fellow-man. But how is it related to, and distinguished from brotherly kindness? Whilst the latter regards mainly the principle of fraternal obligation to human nature, the former finds its chiefest scope and its highest object, in the filial ties binding man to his Father and God. The love of God subordinates and regulates all the outgoings of attachment in the renewed heart. II. We must now discuss THE TRUE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY, AS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE SEMBLANCES THAT USURP WRONGFULLY ITS TITLES AND HONOURS. It is not, then, as the popular usage of the word would often make it—bare almsgiving. Neither is this grace a mere magnanimous disregard of all doctrinal variances, and a baseless assurance that all forms of faith are, if sincere, equally acceptable to God. No: the charity of the Scriptures loves the true God; and as He is the God of Truth, it loves, ardently and without compromise, His truth, unmitigated and unadulterated. Nor is evangelical charity connivance with sin. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him, but in any wise rebuke it," said the law. "Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth," is Paul's language in his matchless portraiture of this grace. And, as in the nature of God, love to truth and holiness, is an attribute, having as its opposite pole, hatred to falsehood and unholiness; so, in each other true servant of God, the love of piety is necessarily detestation of impiety, and hatred for the workers of iniquity—not indeed detestation of their persons and souls, but of their practices, and principles, and influences. For the charity of the Scriptures is, first, love to God, the Creator and Source of all goodness—to the good amongst men, as bearing His regenerate image—and to the evil of our race it is a charity, that seeks to reclaim and restore. III. And now let us dwell upon SOME OF THE FRUITS WHICH CHRISTIAN CHARITY MIGHT AND SHOULD DISPLAY IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN SOCIETY. Its root is, then, in another world. It is, first, filial towards God; and then fraternal towards man as the creature of God. (*W. R. Williams.*) *Charity*:—Christianity inculcates charity, universal love. This religion of Jesus implies a love that is unrestricted in its exercise, but the implication lies a little farther from the surface than that which teaches social feeling among Christians themselves. You cannot conceive of a man who loves Christ

not having the impulse to exercise kindness of feeling towards those who hold the same "precious faith and promises" with himself. Fellowship, more or less close, is implied in the very nature of the case. But you can conceive of a man who has strong feelings of brotherly kindness, and, in one sense, because such feelings are strong within him, not expanding his love to include those who are not one with him in matters of faith. Conceive of such a thing, did I say? The possibility has become a fact over and over again. Think of the market-place at Smithfield, where Protestants and Romanists were burnt as each adverse party came into power; and why all this? Was it not because men had "brotherly kindness" of so strange and strong a kind, that they had no "charity" at all? We see it in all regions of thought. In politics men are banded into cliques and parties, and because of the very strength of the bonds that hold them together, they find it hard to exercise charity towards opponents. Even in the cold region of philosophy, where there is so much that is abstract, so much that seems unfruitful and uneventful, any acquaintance with the history of the rise and growth of rival schools will remind us that fierce persecution-spirit has not been wanting. As we see this lack of charity manifesting itself in every branch of thought, we need not be surprised that, and in this matter of religion, we find sectarianism rampant, and charity lacking. I have said that the inference from the genius of Christianity is universal love, but that it is not so obtrusive, not so readily reached, as the duty of "brotherly kindness." It shows itself clearly, though, after a little thought. It springs from the fact that Christianity is a religion for the whole earth, and that it teaches us how to strike away all that is accidental in the condition and surroundings of men, and to find under these outward differences of nation and caste, of position and intellect, the heart that throbs with the same passionate impulse as our own. The gospel of Jesus Christ proclaims its mission to be to unite once more all the children of men into one Divine family. Now the fact that charity and love for all men, irrespective of class, or creed, or circumstance, love for them because they are men, created and redeemed by the one God and Father of us all, is so rarely and so imperfectly exercised, presents itself as something for which we should be able to account. Not to excuse it, but to find out the reason of it. Persecution, in its most virulent, in its fiercest form, has well-nigh disappeared now-a-days. But are there not three kinds of relation in which we may stand to men: one of active opposition, one of neglect and apathy, one of active sympathy and hearty co-operation? We may in some measure have shifted from the first to the second in our dealing with those who do not agree with our system of thought, and belief, and action, but that we have not advanced to the third is an unquestionable fact. I do not plead for sympathy with error and sin, but this I say—that we shall be striving after imitation of God Himself if we still love the sinner and the wanderer, not because of, but in spite of their being such, and try to reclaim them from that which has a tendency to interrupt our charity in its full, free, Divine flow. A man with any spark of enthusiasm about him, a man of strong conviction, having settled views of truth, is, by the very force of his own nature, made impatient of dissidence and contradiction. He thinks that all men ought to see with his eyes, and to speak with his tongue. It seems then to follow from this, that the more that intelligent holding of Christian truth obtains among men, the more difficult will the exercise of this grace of charity become! The exercise of charity, universal love, demands an effort; so does everything that is worth having; and this is perhaps the highest form of religious feeling to which we can aspire. Retaining our own moral convictions, not sacrificing our individualism of nature, to look abroad upon others, who, conscientiously as ourselves, have laboured their way towards the attainment of the truth, and, as the result, see it in a different light, and speak of it in a different language—to look abroad upon all these, and love them. Heaven's light shines down upon the world, and some things cast up the red ray, others the green, others the blue, or yellow. Let them not become bitter one against the other, because individuality so asserts itself. It is the same holy light, it touches them, they live in it. Let them rejoice and love one another. (*D. J. Hamer.*) *Charity*.—I. ITS ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS AND CONDITIONS. 1. As an essential element of this love there must be the full recognition of a common humanity in all men, whatever their country, their colour, their language, their birth, or their condition. 2. But the doctrine goes farther, and recognises in all mankind not only the brotherhood of a common physical descent and of like physical characteristics, but a higher relationship as the common offspring of God. 3. And hence again, this love for man which the gospel enjoins, must flow primarily from love to God. 4. The Scrip-

tures always trace this love to a renovated heart. II. ITS PRACTICAL SPHERE AND EFFECTS. 1. We may trace the practical working of this spirit, in charity for the opinions of others in matters of religion. 2. Another application of this law of love is to the faults of others. 3. This spirit of love should be viewed in its application to the necessities of our fellowmen. 4. This spirit of love will prompt also to all wise and beneficent measures of philanthropy and reform. III. HINDRANCES TO ITS EXPRESSION. 1. These hindrances lie in the want of consideration. A candid allowance for the circumstances of others would almost always mitigate that severity of judgment which fastens upon the outward act, or makes one an offender for a word. 2. In the want of intercourse. If travel enlarges the mind, it expands the heart also to a kindlier judgment of men, and sympathy toward them. 3. In some lurking selfishness, which invents excuses for not loving others. IV. THE METHODS OF DEVELOPING THIS AFFECTION. 1. By rightly estimating its power. Power does not lie in noisy demonstration or in visible force. The power that again melts down these barriers and unlocks the frozen earth, can you hear that, though it makes the trees clap their hands and wakes all the birds to song? And can you hear love; or weigh it, or measure it? But in that little word lies a power greater than philosophy, diplomacy, or arms, to rule and mould the world. 2. By the constant and studious practice of love. 3. By elevated communion with God. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." And so we are urged to cultivate this love. 4. By its own dignity and blessedness. The Scriptures place love before all things, in the enumeration of Christian graces. "Charity never faileth." (*Joseph P. Thompson.*) *Charity*:—I. The GLORY of love. We might conclude its surpassing glory from its position in the exhortation. By a sort of spiritual rhetoric it is the word of the climax. It is love which, like the sunlight, giving the landscape its sublimest glories, transfiguring it with something like the lustre of "the golden city," gives to all the landscape of character its beauty. It is love which, like the *Shekinah* that glorified the temple, alone glorifies the structure of a character built on faith, and consisting of virtue, temperance, &c., is an empty shrine till it glows there. It is love that crowns manhood. II. The POWER of love. It is—1. The spring of a true character. Supplying the constant and sufficient motive to lead men to live the right life. It is—2. The sign of a true character. As in their search for nightingales, controversial naturalists discover them by their song, so in their search for Christians, men discover them by their deeds and life of love. It is—3. The sceptre of a true character. We conquer by love. III. The DUTY to love. IV. The WAY to love. How can this glory be attained, this power exercised, this duty discharged? 1. Cherish lovingness. Banish pride, malignity, envy, uncharitableness. 2. Exercise love. 3. Have fellowship with Christ. (*U. R. Thomas.*)

Vers. 8, 9. **Ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful**—*Fruits of the knowledge of Christ*:—Among the most beautiful emblems of the Christian life in Scripture are those employed to shadow forth its fruitfulness. The choicest and noblest trees, the majesty and gracefulness of whose form delight our eye, or whose fruits regale our taste, are the Divinely chosen types of saved and sanctified men. I. THE SUPREME IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN FRUITFULNESS. It was not that your leaves might idly wave in the sun, be fanned with the pleasant breath and sprinkled with the refreshing dews of heaven, that you were taken from the wild forest of nature and planted in the garden of God; but that you might reward the husbandman's care with abundance of the fruits of righteousness. And, if this result is not realised, you may read His deep sorrow and anger in the words pronounced over Israel (Isa. v. 6). Fearful is the doom of barrenness (Heb. vi. 7-9). II. FRUITFULNESS—IN WHAT IT CONSISTS. It is in a man's works and words and influence that, according to the view of the apostle, we are to find the fruits of the Christian life. Do not tell us of feelings and experiences, of qualities and graces, of which you say you are conscious; unless these inward impulses and affections make your life fertile in holy and loving purposes and performances. It is by what a man does that it becomes known what he is. The fruit proceeds from the tree, but is distinct from it. It is elaborated by the tree from the juices that circulate through root and stem and branch. The air, and light, and moisture, and nutritious elements of the soil contribute the materials; but the tree, out of these, by the power of its wondrous life, forms a product altogether new. And so, like the bounteous fruit-tree, every man who rightly fills his place in God's vineyard is not a consumer only but a producer. The world is the better for him. What has been taken into his own soul

from above and from around—the doctrine of God's Word—the influences of God's Spirit—the lessons of nature and Providence—mingles with his being, and is changed and elaborated into holy thoughts, which may refresh thousands of hearts—into precious words of truth and power to become the germs of life in others, and into deeds of holiness and love. III. THE DEGREE IN WHICH FRUITFULNESS IS ATTAINABLE. "Barren and unfruitful"—are not two terms to express the same idea. A fallow field, which yields nothing for the reaper's sickle, is "barren" in the sense here meant. A field which rewards the husbandman's toil with only a scanty crop would be appropriately designated "unfruitful." He is far from exhibiting the perfection of the Divine life, who, like the bleak patch beside the lonely cottage on the side of some stony hill, produces but a poor and precarious harvest, although he has made a great and happy transition from the desert barrenness of an unregenerate state. Maturity in grace, with its rich and mellow clusters, is a spectacle as lovely as it is rare. Where it does exist, it is often hidden from the view in many a humble home, in many a sequestered path. It is by our bearing "much" fruit, our Saviour tells us, that His Father is glorified in us. It is His continual aim that the fruitful branch may become more fruitful still. IV. THE PRODUCTIVE ENERGIES OF THE LIFE OF FAITH. To be fruitful, all the functions of a tree must be in a healthy, vigorous state, its roots drawing nutriment from beneath, its leaves drinking in the dew and sunshine, the sap stirring through trunk and branch and leaf. If all its activities are in full and healthy play, its energies will not be wasted in excessive growths of foliage and useless sprays, but it will in its season bring forth fruit. What qualities must our souls possess in order to secure fruitfulness? They are virtue, knowledge, self-restraint, patience, godliness, brotherliness, charity. They impart to the soul a stamina and vigour, which not only preserve its life in the drought of summer and amid the icy winds of winter, but load the boughs with fruit. (*W. Wilson, M.A.*) *The choir of graces* :—In ancient Athens there was a class of officers called chorus-leaders, who represented the various tribes and at public festivals or religious rejoicings for a victory, brought out a chorus to lead the songs of the people. These leaders were not always singers or practical musicians, but they equipped the chorus and paid the cost of marshalling it upon public occasions. Hence the term which denoted their office came to mean in general, "one who provides supplies," and, therefore, as in the text, add to or supply to faith, virtue, and the whole train of graces. Faith is the leader of this choir; virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly-love, and charity are marshalled under faith as their leader, to swell the praises of Christ from an obedient and loving soul. Faith is the clef which gives the key in which these seven notes of the perfect scale are sounded. Faith organises and sustains the chorus and has a place for each in its well-trained band. When all are assembled faith drills them into harmony. But if any one be wanting faith itself appears defective, and the soul is out of tune. It is as if the first violin were wanting at a Philharmonic concert, or the trumpet obligato should fail to sound in the resurrection scene of Handel's "Messiah." 1. That one who is wanting in these graces and takes no pains to cultivate them has no warrant to believe himself a Christian. Every one of these virtues being thus inward and spiritual, and having an intimate and necessary relation to faith in Christ, where these are wanting there can be no living germinating faith. I do not understand the apostle to teach that completeness in each of these virtues, and the exact proportion and harmony of the whole are essential to a Christian character; but are not these graces themselves, each and all of them, so essential to that character that if any one of them is wholly wanting, neither possessed nor sought after, he who is thus deficient is blind and destitute as to the Christian character and life? A true Christian may betray a lack of moral courage in certain emergencies, as did Peter after the arrest of Jesus. But suppose Peter had continued to deny Christ at every approach of danger, should we not have classed him with the apostate Judas? One may be a true Christian whose knowledge of Christian doctrine is meagre, and who makes frequent mistakes in practice. But if, after five, ten, twenty years, one knows no more of the Bible and has no more heart-knowledge of Christ, shall we continue to regard his experience of conversion as genuine? A Christian may sometimes neglect a call of charity, or set aside a real claim upon his love. But if he never heeds such a call, can he be a child of our Father in heaven? Moreover, since all these graces may be imitated, the positive and entire lack of one proves the rest to be counterfeit or superficial. 2. A full and symmetrical development of these graces is the most satisfactory evidence and the most beautiful

exhibition of Christian faith. The mind delights its symmetry. The symmetrical development of the human form, in which each member and feature, perfect in itself, is well proportioned to every other, is our ideal of beauty. This symmetry of form and feature, extending to every line of the countenance and every muscle of the anatomy, is the life-like perfection of the statue; proportion is indispensable to beauty in architecture; symmetry and perspective to the harmony of colours, to the effect of painting; chord and harmonies, preserved even in the most difficult combinations of sound, are the highest charm of music; rhythm, the measured and regular succession of sounds, is essential to good poetry; the proportion of numbers and of mathematical laws enters into every science which aims at completeness. But in nothing is this symmetry so strenuously insisted upon as in moral character. The sharp and sometimes carping criticism of men of the world upon the faults and even the peccadilloes of professed Christians shows the demand of conscience for completeness of character, and does homage to Christianity itself as a complete system of morality. Hence the New Testament lays much stress upon completeness of Christian character; for the word "perfection" signifies not so much the absolute sinlessness of a sanctified nature, as the completeness, the full symmetrical development of the renewed man in all the graces of the Christian life. This conscious, steady, visible growth in all the graces is the best evidence of a renewed heart. This full and symmetrical development of the Christian graces makes to the world a most beautiful and convincing exhibition of the Christian faith. A perfect Christian character is one in enumerating whose graces you can always say and, and never interpose a but. The average Christian character is sadly marred by that little disjunctive conjunction—He is a very good man—but; He is kind and charitable at heart—but rough and irritable in manner; he is temperate and patient—but lacking charity; he is reverent and devout—but lacks moral courage. 3. The abounding of these graces in the soul will make it fruitful in the knowledge of Christ—will insure for it a progressive and rewarding piety. The relation of heart-culture to the enjoyment of religion is like that of good agriculture to a good crop. You cannot have a garden by merely purchasing a place. The soil may be of excellent quality, and the situation most favourable; the title may be well secured, and the party of whom you buy may make most abundant promises as to the fertility and beauty of the ground; but unless you give all diligence to make and stock the garden, unless you dig and plant, and weed and trim, your title, deed, and promises will not give you a single shrub or flower. If well-selected fruits and flowers are in your garden and abound, they will make you fruitful in the knowledge of its capacities and in the enjoyment of its pleasures. Two reflections are obvious here. 1. If Christians find no enjoyment in religion, it is because they have failed to cultivate its particular and combined graces. 2. The highest fruitfulness of a Church is to be secured by the perfecting of personal character in its members. (*Joseph P. Thompson.*) *Two sorts of Christians:—I. THE BRIGHT PICTURE OF WHAT EVERY CHRISTIAN MAY AND SHOULD BE.* 1. Every Christian may have for his own in assured possession that whole series of lustrous beauties of character (vers. 5-7). You may be strong and discerning and temperate, &c. It is a prize within your reach; is it in any sense a prize within your possession? 2. We may each have an increasing possession of all these graces. "If these things be yours and abound," or, as the word ought more accurately to be rendered "and increase." The expression suggests that if in any real sense they are in you, they will be increasingly in you. The oftener a man lavishes the treasures of his love the richer is the love which he has to lavish. The more rigidly he schools and disciplines himself the more complete becomes his command over his unruly nature. 3. We may all, if we will, have these graces making us diligent and faithful. The meaning of the word rendered "barren" is, as the Revised Version and the margin of the Authorised give it, "idle." Well, that seems a little thing, that all that aggregation of Christian graces has only for its effect to make men not idle, not unfruitful. And it seems, to some extent, too, illogical, because all these graces are themselves the result of diligence, and are themselves fruit. But the apparent difficulty, like many of the other anomalous expressions of Scripture, covers deep thoughts. The first is this—Look after your characters and work will look after itself. The world says, "Do! do! do!" Christianity says, "Be! be! be!" If you are right, then, and only then will you do right. So learn this lesson, do not waste your time in tinkering at actions, go deeper down and make the actor right, and then the actions will not be wrong. The highest exercises of these radiant gems of Christian graces is to make men diligent and fruitful.

Again, it takes the whole of these Christian graces to overcome our natural indolence. The pendulum will be sure to settle into the repose that gravitation dictates unless the clock be kept wound up, and it needs all the wheels and springs to keep it ticking for its four and twenty hours. The homely duty of hard work, the prosaic virtue of diligence, is the very flower and highest product of all these transcendent graces. Then, still further, there is a lesson here in the collocation of the words before us, namely, an idle Christian is certain to be a barren one. And now the last point in this picture of what all Christian people may be is—by the exercise of diligence and fruitfulness attain to a fuller knowledge of Christ. Literally rendered, the text reads, “towards the knowledge.” There be two measures of knowledge of Christ. There is that initial one which dawns upon a heart in the midst of its sin and evil, and assures it of a loving friend and of a Divine Redeemer; and there is the higher, constantly expanding, deepening, becoming more intimate and unbroken, more operative on the life and transforming in the character, which is the reward and the crown of earth, and the crown and heaven of heaven. And it is this knowledge which the apostle here says, will follow if, and only if, we have striven to add to our faith all these graces, and they have made us strenuous in service and fruitful in holiness. II. THE CONTRASTED OUTLINES OF THE BLACK PICTURE OF WHAT SOME OF US ARE. 1. It is possible for a man to be purged from his old sins and yet not to be growing. It is a case of arrested development, as you sometimes see a man with the puny limbs of childhood; or, as you sometimes see a plant, which you cannot say is dead, but it has not vitality enough to flower or to fruit. 2. Further, such a one is “blind,” or, as the apostle goes on to explain, or, if you like, to correct himself, “he cannot see afar off.” The apostle employs a unique word to express “cannot see afar off,” which, if you will pardon the vulgarism for the sake of the force, I would venture to translate “blinks.” There was a time when you had clear vision. The smoky roof of your cabin was rent, and you saw through it up to the Throne, but your eyes have gone dim because you have been careless to develop your faith; and where there is no development of faith there is retrogression of faith. Therefore, all the far-off glories have faded, and the only things that you see are the things that are temporal, the material, the pressure of present cares, and the like. 3. Let me remind you of the last point in this sad picture. “He hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.” Yes! These idle unfruitful Christians have in their memories, if they would only open the cupboard door and look, a blessed gift long ago given that might, and that ought to stimulate them. They are their own worst condemnation. There was a time when they felt the burden of sin upon their consciences when they hated it and desired to be free from it. And what has it all come to? The sins forgiven have come back; the sins hated have reasserted their dominion; Pharaoh has caught them again. The moment’s emancipation has been followed by a recrudescence of all the old transgressions. So they contradict themselves and their own past and contravene the purpose of God in their pardon, and, with monstrous ingratitude, are untouched by the tender motives to growth in holiness which lie in the pouring out of the blood which cleanses from all sin. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) **The knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.**—*Our Lord Jesus Christ* :—As He is “Lord” He can, as He is “Jesus” He will, as He is “Christ” He doth, as He is “Our” He shall save us. “Lord”; consider His righteousness. “Jesus”; consider His sweetness. “Christ”; consider His willingness. “Our”; consider His goodness that gives us interest in Himself and vouchsafes us to challenge His mercy. “Lord,” in regard of His dominion (Psa. xcix. 1). “Jesus,” in regard of His salvation (Psa. lxxviii. 20). “Christ,” in regard of the promise (John vii. 26, 41). “Our,” in regard of His appropriating Himself unto us (Heb. ii. 16). “Lord,” in His power, His works declare Him to be the Lord (Psa. cxxxv. 6). “Jesus,” in being made (Gal. iv. 4; John i. 14). “Christ,” in being sacrificed and crucified for us (1 Cor. xi. 24). “Our,” in respect of the covenant (Heb. viii. 10). Infinite mercy! The Lord’s Christ is become our Jesus (Luke ii. 26). (*Thos. Adams.*)

Ver. 9. He that lacketh these things is blind.—*The miserable state of barren professors* :—I. **PENURY.** It is a received maxim that God and nature have wrought nothing in vain; no part or faculty of the body can be well spared. We can spare nothing for this world; but for heaven we can quietly lack things that conduce to our eternal peace! What is the reason? A man never misses what he cares not for. A man may lack outward things yet come never the later to heaven; yea, the sooner the surer; but woe to him that lacks “these things!” This is the want now

least feared, and this shall be the want most lamented. Grace is solid and real (Prov. x. 22). Whatsoever we lack let us not lack "these things." II. BLINDNESS. 1. Satan blinds the intellectual eye (2 Cor. iv. 4). 2. Lusts darken the mind. 3. The dust of this world makes many blind. III. APOSTASY. "Hath forgotten": the original implies one that did voluntarily attract forgetfulness to himself; the author of his own mischief. 1. The corruption of the heart. 2. The danger of that corruption. "Old sins"—sins that he hath done of old. Long nurture is another nature. 3. The deliverance from that danger. "He was purged." Salvation may be said to belong to many that belong not to salvation. 4. The unthankfulness for that delivery. "Forgotten." The defect of corporal sight hath often mended the memory; but it is not so for spiritual (Mark viii. 18). A carnal mind is blind to conceive, ready to forget. (1) Chrysostom says, "Nothing more helps us forward in a good course than the frequent recognition of our sins." (2) As we remember our sins to repentance, so we must forget them in respect of continuance. Otherwise the memory of them doth not reduce us to life but forward us to death. (*Ibid.*) *Religious nearsightedness*:—The man to whom these grave defects are imputed is supposed to possess an elementary degree of faith and to have once felt the purifying power of God in his dark and guilty spirit. He has received into himself the graft of a Divine life, but through some unhealthy condition of the stock that life has not become active, pulsating, fruitful. The life can only reach the true measure of its excellence through earnest self-cultivation. In the spiritual world there are wasted seeds, stunted developments. This disastrous turning back of God's spring in our hearts starts in our own neglect. To know what these deficiencies that maim a man's religious life are, we must turn to the category of qualities needing cultivation that Peter gives us. "Giving all diligence, in your faith supply virtue." That faith may be brought to bear its perfect fruit of virtue and strength, we must cultivate all the ethical branches of the faith that had been Divinely implanted within us. There is no true beginning for us before the beginning of faith, and that must be created within us by the very power of God. Do we not, however, say sometimes that the religious life not only begins but also ends in faith? So it does; just as when you go to London, if you get into a through carriage, your journey begins and ends in the same compartment. But the compartment rolls through many belts of varying country before you step out of it into the streets of London. And so, though all religious life begins and ends in faith, the faith moves in the meantime through a very wide range of virtues. "In your faith supply virtue." Here man's part in the cultivation of religion begins. Virtue implies the tone and strength of religious life. "And in your virtue supply knowledge." Religious life that has virtue without knowledge is on pretty much the same level as aerial navigation. The balloon may be made to rise into the pathway of forces that will sweep it on with unapproachable speed, but there is no known apparatus by which its course can be accurately directed. Delicate regulating power from within is wanted. So with the character to which virtue has been added without the further complement of knowledge. The lack always makes void much of the grace of the past. "And in knowledge supply temperance" or self-restraint. Strength of character must never make us reckless. Our temperance must be united with "patience." Under the crosses, disappointments, and sufferings of our daily life there must be steadfastness and untroubled hope. Murmuring and petulance are symptoms of subtle spiritual disease. "And in your patience supply godliness." Our resignation to the cross-influences of our life must not begin and end in stoicism. It would be a very poor end to all our tribulations, if they ossified our sensibilities and qualified us for the defiance of pain. And then to the temper we cherish towards God there must be joined a right attitude of mind towards our fellow-believers. "In your godliness supply brotherly kindness." And to "brotherly kindness" there must be joined a world-embracing charity. Narrow tempers are inconsistent with religious life. A true faith will always bring with it, if duly cherished, a generous breadth. Where there is the lack of this you have religious defect, limitation, shortsightedness. Let us just glance at these qualities again, and see how each quality connects itself with some important part of man's nature. "To faith add virtue." Virtue, or inward strength, connects itself with the will, for it is through the will it works. That is the first thing God claims for Himself in His purifying work of grace. "To virtue knowledge." It is through all the channels of the intellectual life that knowledge is received and treasured. When God washes a man from the defilements of the past, He demands the consecration of intelligence to His service. "And to knowledge temperance." Tempe-

rance is concerned with the government of the passions; and God, in cleansing a man from his past pollutions, seeks the subjection of well-ruled passions to His service. "To temperance patience." Patience connects itself with the sensibilities through which we are made to suffer. In cleansing a man, God seeks the after-harmony of all his sensibilities with the Divine will. "And to patience godliness." In separating a man from evil, God seeks for the response of all the religious faculties to His operations. "And to godliness brotherly kindness and charity." These qualities link themselves with the sphere of the affections. In cleansing a man from his old sins, God seeks to bring about the healthy exercise and benevolent direction of his affections. The whole range of man's powers is indirectly specified, the powers through which a man enters into relationship with his fellow-men, as well as the powers through which he knows God and enters into relationship with the Eternal. God cleanses a man to make him holy in all these relationships, holy by the putting on of all these high graces. "For if these things are yours and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." An imputed possession of these excellences will give us no high place in the scale of spiritual being. The stinted, spasmodic possession of these graces will not ennoble us very much more than the mere fiction of an imputed possession. These things are in some people as rare plants are in particular sections of country. You may come across them if you are very lucky and search long enough. A true believer's life should be as full of them as the banks and hedgerows of mid-May are full of the glint and perfume of flowers. Faith oftentimes lies dormant like hibernating insects. A book of Chinese fables tells of a country where the people wake once in fifty days, and take the dreams of their sleep for realities, and the things they see in their waking moments for dreams. The imaginative author might have been describing some believing Christians. The power of innate faith rarely breaks out into moral movement. Now faith is not a fruit-bearing stock, but so much dead lumber within us, unless it lead by the way of these practical graces up to the perfect knowledge of Jesus Christ. That is to be the grand issue of all these excellences. The end has not been reached when they have regulated our present life and beautified our present relationships. The apostle describes the lack of these things, first, under the metaphor of a grave defect in one of the leading physical senses; and, secondly, under the figure of a lapse in the working of the intellectual powers. 1. He who is wanting in one or all of these high qualities lacks the primary organ of perfect spiritual perception. "He is blind." The stagnant and unprogressive believer is blind, no less than the purely natural man who discerns not the things of the Spirit of God. How many of us have inadequate views of what salvation means! Some people see nothing in salvation but deliverance from wrath and tempest and everlasting fire. A miserably defective view that is! God does not save us to put us on to some secure level of moral mediocrity and to leave us there, but to bring us into fellowship with Himself. A shipwrecked sailor has been helped by a timely hand on to a raft or floating spar. He has not been put there that he may live on a keg of rain-water and a cask of biscuits, and spend the rest of his days on a few square feet of planking. That is but a passing means to a larger and a better end. If you watched him drifting on the raft, and saw that he made no effort to secure the larger and better end, you would say he was either blinded by the sea-spray, struck by the lightning of the storm, or driven insane by his misfortunes. He drifts close under the beetling cliffs. Now he is within an arm's length of some fissure in the cliffs. Through that fissure rock-cut steps lead up and out into a land of springs, and corn-fields and orchards, and noble cities, and breadths of summer sunshine, and all the precious fellowships of men. He drifts away as though it were his will to live and die on the raft. Voices call to him from the shore, but he seems careless of the benign destiny to whose threshold he has come. The man, you would say, is blind. So with those of us who, saved by the forgiving grace of God, neglect to enter into that region of privilege and fellowship and ennobling spiritual experience to which virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity are the successive steps for the loyal and believing soul. "He that lacketh these things is blind." And now Peter softens the expression and substitutes a somewhat milder term. 2. At best the blindness is half-blindness. If the man who neglects the cultivation of these qualities is not as dark as an unregenerate man, he at least labours under a most serious disability. He suffers from spiritual myopia, for the word used in the text is precisely the same Greek word the medical man of to-day uses to describe short-sight. "He cannot see afar off." He discerns the near, but is quite at fault when he comes to deal with the distant. Foregrounds are clear, but

all the backgrounds are sheer haze. The shortsighted man can see the puddle at his feet as he crosses the desert, but not the river of crystal, with belt of green, that flows for his refreshment on the far away edge of the desert. And so with the unprogressive believer who is afflicted by this spiritual shortsightedness. In the absence of the knowledge to which these graces lead he does not discern the complete character of the Benefactor who has washed and purified him; nor does he discern the heavenly ideal to which the washing and the purification were to point his aspirations and direct his footsteps. He sees, perhaps, a little of what God converts from, but scarcely anything of what God converts to. He has no perception of the largeness of his own destiny. 3. Again, St. Peter describes the lack of these higher Christian excellences under the figure of an intellectual lapse. "Having forgotten the cleansing from his old sin." When some Lady Bountiful takes pity on a gutter child, and washes it from its nauseous accumulations of filth, it is that having put it into better clothes, she may introduce it to a more genial and generous life. If the child begins to dress itself in its old rags and patches, or stands shivering in the cold, neglecting to wrap itself about in the better raiment that has been made ready for it, it is because the child has forgotten, if it ever understood, the purpose for which the Lady Bountiful took it from the streets and washed it. She wanted to make it her own, and give it a place on her hearth and at her table. God washed us from the guilt and contamination of the past, not that we might stand lounging for ever at the starting-point of our first faith, or possibly go back to our old defilements, but that we might put on Christ and be clothed in these excellences that are summed up in the glorious character of Christ, and stand in His presence, chosen friends and companions for ever. If the new life is not delighting the eye with its inimitable grace, and filling the air with its reviving freshness, it is because there has been some untimely and disastrous arrest. The past cleansing and its Divine motive of perfect life and attainment have been overlooked and forgotten. 4. These words imply that the memory of past grace will be a living and effectual inspiration to us at each successive step of our perfecting. When God first touches our spirits with His cleansing power, that act has in it the potentiality of complete Christian excellence. The sustained remembrance of your conversion will keep fresh and forceful the motive that will stimulate you to the attainment of these various moral and spiritual excellences. You might as well try to grow a cedar tree without roots as seek to cultivate these qualities without the peculiar type of motive supplied by the act of God's gracious cleansing from sin. (*T. G. Selby.*)

Vers. 10, 11. **Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.**—*Diligence in making our calling sure*:—I. EXHORTATION. 1. An induction. (1) "Wherefore." This word infers a consequence on the premises, or is a reason of the precedent speech. The apostle had formerly shown the danger of such as forget their own purging. But there are many who forget not that they were purged by the redemption of Christ, but remember it too much; and from this derive encouragement of a licentious life, quitting themselves from all sins by His passion. He that thus spells Christ, hath but small literature of religion (Rom. vi. 1; John v. 14; 2 Tim. ii. 19; 1 Pet. i. 17). The end of our conversion is to amend our conversation. (2) "Brethren." (a) This word of relation declares in the apostle two virtues—(i) His humility; he prefers not himself to the rest of God's saints, but calls them all brethren. (ii) His policy; he desires to win their souls, and therefore insinuates himself into their love. This title ascribes to the people some dignity; that by faith in Christ they become brethren to the very apostles, and have the fraternity of the heavenly saints. This term is not without some requirable duty. Is the minister thy brother? hear him (Acts iii. 22). But take heed lest God's gentleness be abused by thy contempt; it is the word of thy Judge and Maker, though in the mouth of thy brother. (3) "Give diligence." Doth a man reap without sowing? You have not wealth from the clods without digging; and would you have blessing from the clouds without working? The labour of our bodies for this world was but a curse; the labour of our souls for heaven is a blessing. "Give diligence." This exhortation presupposes no proper strength of our own to do this, for it is God's work in us. (4) "Rather." Let not the goodness of God, which without your desert has chosen and called you to the profession of Christ, forgiving and purging your former sins, make you idle and careless. But rather strive to answer this mercy in your faithful conversation; lest you fall into that pit of destruction, from whence by His death He hath redeemed you. "The rather." He seems to encourage this endeavour, partly by the benefit, partly by the danger, and partly by the reward: the first

whereof incites our gratitude, the next our fear, the last our hope. 2. An instruction. "Make your calling," &c. (1) The matter expressed. (a) For the order: the apostle puts vocation in the former place, which yet in propriety is the latter; for election is before all time, vocation in time. But this is a right form and method of speech, to set that last, which is worthiest and weightiest. Besides, we pass by things nearer to things more remote; first we must look to our calling, and by our calling come to assurance of our election. (b) For dependence: we must know that our calling depends upon our election. The determinate counsel of God doth not take away second means, but disposeth those passages into order. These two, election and vocation, are like Jacob's ladder, whereupon the saints ascend like angels to God: election is the top, vocation the foot. (2) The manner: how this may be assured. There are but two ways for a man to know it; either by going up into heaven, or by going down into himself. In the one there is presumption and danger, in the other security and peace. In Rom. viii. 16 we have two testimonies: not God's Spirit alone; there may be presumption: not our spirit alone; there may be illusion: both must witness together, concur to make up this certificate. II. CONFIRMATION. 1. The qualification. "If ye do these things." (1) The condition—"if." We must first do, and then have. Among men he first serves that deserves: for God, we can merit nothing by doing, yet we shall have nothing without doing (Matt. xx. 8, xxv. 21; Rev. xxii. 12). (2) The practice or fruitfulness in good works—"if ye do"; not think, or say, but do. Idleness never had the testimony of God's acceptance; it is a vice that damns itself. There must be hearty love, lively practice, kindly thanks, costly service. (3) The sincerity—"these things": not what gain prompts, or lust suggests, but what God commands. Such things as pertain to knowledge, virtue, godliness. 2. The ratification. "Ye shall never fall." Does the apostle here attribute something to our works, as if the merit of our doing should preserve us from falling? No, he speaks not concerning the cause of mercy, but the way of grace. Our own works do not uphold us, but assure us by a token that we are upheld by God; they are the inseparable effects of that grace, by which we are kept from falling. (*Thos. Adams.*) *Diligence in the Christian life*:—Do we not in worldly and intellectual circles observe men who deplorably fail to fulfil their election? We see those who in the largeness of their mental gifts are evidently predestinated leaders and ornaments of their generation; but yielding to temptation, they surrender themselves to inferior pleasures and pursuits, the magnificent promise of their nature comes to naught, and their career closes in melancholy failure. Others are born into privileged families, they inherit titles and wealth, they are called by the fortune of birth to be social princes, they are indisputably elected to high position and influence; and yet not infrequently do these predestinated ones manage by ill conduct to tarnish their coronet and finish on the dunghill. As in the intellectual and social life, so is it in the spiritual; souls called to immortal distinction fail through sloth and sin to make their election sure. We must be diligent to cast out the evil things we find in ourselves. Many roots of bitterness springing up trouble us, and it is not easy to cast them out. The Canadian thistle is one of the direst plagues with which the husbandman has to contend. It seems impossible to extirpate it. It is well-nigh proof against the most desperate efforts to get rid of it; fire, poison, and the knife have no more than a temporary effect upon its vitality. Neither the scythe, the hoe, nor the plough can destroy it. Dug up, burnt up, strewn with salt, treated with aquafortis, covered with lime, it springs and blooms and seeds anew. Nothing remains but to blow it up with dynamite. Our faults are so deep and inveterate that we must bend our whole strength to the task of their destruction. We must give diligence to bring into our life all good and beautiful things. The apostle in this passage enjoins us to add one virtue to another until we possess and display them in all their completeness and beauty. It is not enough to cultivate isolated patches of life, to raise this grace or that; we must bring in every virtue, every grace, and cover the whole ground of character and action. Most gardeners are content when their grounds include only a few specimens of the growths of various types and climes; if they can produce a fair show with these, they are satisfied. It is quite different, however, with the national gardeners at Kew; there the grand aim is certainly not display, it is not even to possess a profusion of floral treasures, but to make the grounds and conservatories widely representative, to make them comprehend as far as possible every shrub and tree and flower that grows upon the face of the whole earth. The paradises of God bear all manner of precious fruit, and if our heart and life are to be the King's gardens we shall need to give all diligence.

Having brought all good things into our life, it is only by diligence that we keep them there. "If ye do these things, ye shall never fall"—indicating the tendency and peril of our nature. Unless there is constant diligence and culture we cannot hold the heights we have scaled, the fields we have won, the ground we have reclaimed. Neglect a beautiful garden for a while, and see how savage nature will avenge herself and spoil your paradise! As a French naturalist says: "There is in nature a terrible reaction against man; if we put our hand into our bosom, the garden is in revolt." It is much the same with human nature. Slowly, painfully do we subdue our life to orderliness, to purity, to beauty; but how it springs back if we relax our vigilance! We need all diligence to cast out of our breast the bitter root, the wild grape, the poisoned gourd. Then, having brought good things into our life, we need all diligence to convert them into perfect things. "If ye do these things, ye shall never fall." The original is very impressive and assuring: "Ye shall not fall by any means ever." A man may do his best in the worldly sphere and fail, but no saint can do his best and fail. "For so an entrance shall be administered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom." "Give all diligence." The character of life's ending is much in our own power; we are now determining our end. The measure of our diligence shall be the measure of our victory. Every well-spent hour is another flower for our dying pillow; every earnest effort to please God is so much sunshine for the dark valley; every mastered temptation brings another angel to sing in the chamber where the good man meets his fate. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *On giving diligence in our election:*—I. THAT IT IS IN EVERY ONE'S POWER TO MAKE HIS CALLING AND ELECTION SURE. II. THE ONLY WAY OF MAKING OUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE IS TO LIVE IN THE SINCERE AND CONSCIENTIOUS PRACTICE OF ALL CHRISTIAN VIRTUES. This appears from the beginning of the chapter. III. THOSE VIRTUES AND GRACES BY WHICH ALONE WE CAN MAKE SURE TO OURSELVES ELECTION AND SALVATION, REQUIRE THE GREATEST PAINS AND INDUSTRY. 1. The main fundamental reason why religion is so very difficult is because of that natural propensity we have to sin. 2. Besides this unhappy degeneracy against religion, there are inveterate sinful habits to be rooted out, and these do strangely increase the difficulty. 3. The last reason to evince the difficulty of being religious is the uneasiness of planting new and opposite habits, in the room of our former vicious ones. (*R. Warren, D.D.*) *An exhortation to earnestness in religion:*—Four classes of motives are suggested by this passage urging the exhortation it contains. I. THE SUPREME IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION. II. ANOTHER MOTIVE TO DILIGENCE IN RELIGION URGED BY THIS EXHORTATION IS THE VALUE OF AN UNEQUIVOCAL CHARACTER. III. A THIRD MOTIVE TO DILIGENCE SUGGESTED BY THIS EXHORTATION IS, THAT GOD DEALS WITH US ON A SYSTEM OF REWARD. "Give diligence," and you shall have these three things—assurance, stability, and an abundant entrance into heaven. IV. ONE OTHER MOTIVE TO DILIGENCE FURNISHED BY THIS PASSAGE, IS THE NATURE OF THE REWARD TO BE DESTOWED. How majestic the idea presented here! A kingdom! (*Josiah Viney.*) *From grace to glory:*—But do not our calling and election proceed from God? How then can these be made sure by any action of ours? Can we confirm Jehovah Himself in His purpose, or bring confirmation to any of His promises? The sureness to be attained is the sureness of evidences which men themselves can bring out, take note of, and increase beyond the possibility of a question. I. THE TEXT PRESENTS GOD'S CALLING AND ELECTION OF HIS PEOPLE AS A MOTIVE TO DILIGENCE ON THEIR PART IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. The Bible never represents the fact that all believers are called of God by His Spirit as superseding in the least the necessity of personal effort for the attainment of holiness, but makes this fact a ground of exhortation to diligence and perseverance. The reason why many regard the purposes of God, even in the application of His grace, as in some way a barrier to their own effort, is that they conceive of all God's purposes as being executed by physical and irresistible force. This objection is contradicted by our own consciousness. If God at any point comes in conflict with our free agency, it must be in carrying out His purpose, and not simply in having a purpose. "Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved." God's purpose was to be made sure by the agency of men accustomed to manage a ship. II. THE VIRTUES AND GRACES OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER IN A FULL AND SYMMETRICAL DEVELOPMENT, GIVE TO THEIR POSSESSOR THE ASSURANCE OF HIS PERSONAL CALL AND ELECTION. No amount of technical knowledge of religion can certify our personal interest in Christ. No rapture of occasional experience can certify our calling and election. Assurance grows with the fruits of grace, is inseparable from these, is a dry branch without these. III. THIS COMPLETE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER ATTAINED IN

LIFE ASSURES PEACE AND TRIUMPH IN DEATH, AND A JOYFUL ENTRANCE INTO ETERNAL LIFE. As Dr. Doddridge interprets the text, carrying out the figure of a choir of graces, "if you will lead on the virtues and graces here enumerated in their beautiful order, those graces will attend you in a radiant train to the mansions of immortal glory and blessedness." He who matures these graces in life shall have victory over death. (*Joseph P. Thompson.*) *The gains of Christian diligence:*—Notice how very homely a virtue it is that takes all this motive to persuade lazy people to it—nothing more than hard work. Diligence is a very prosaic grace, extremely unlike the heated emotion and the idle sentimentality which some of us take to be religion, but it is the foundation of all excellence, and emphatically of all Christian excellence.

I. DILIGENCE IN THE CULTIVATION AND NURTURE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER IS THE SEAL OF OUR CHRISTIAN STANDING. Exercise it, says Peter, to "make your calling and election sure," to confirm your possession of these Divine, and, in themselves, unalterable facts. God does not choose men to a salvation, which consists of certain arbitrary privileges which they may possess whatever their character, but He "calls us that we should be holy and without blame before Him." If we are not carrying out His design in that choice, are we not invalidating it? On our faithfulness and Christian diligence depends our continued possession of the privileges which God has given us. There is another side to this thought, viz., that this same diligence confirms our Christian standing to our own consciousness. The real sign to a man that he is Christ's is that he is growing like Christ.

II. THIS DILIGENCE IN THE CULTURE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER BECOMES A STAFF TO OUR ELSE TOTTERING STEPS. "For," says Peter, "if ye do these things ye shall never fall." So our Version has it; but the promise is even more emphatic—"Ye shall never stumble," which comes before falling. Does that mean that if a man will only set himself diligently to try and cultivate these Christian graces he will thereby become immaculate and free from sin? Not so. Observe the language—"If ye do these things." More literally and accurately we might read—"While ye do these things." As long as a man is diligently occupied with the stress of his effort in adding to his character the graces that are here enjoined, so long will he stand firm in righteousness. We have no such efficient prophylactic or shield against the assaults of evil as the pursuit of good. Again, the way to keep ourselves from becoming worse is resolutely to aim at getting better. Again, such diligence, though it may not be crowned with complete success, will certainly secure from utter failure.

III. THIS DILIGENCE IN CHRISTIAN CULTURE IS THE CONDITION OF THE ENTRANCE ABUNDANTLY MINISTERED. There is a "being scarcely saved," and there is an "entrance abundantly." And the principle that lies here is plain, that the degree of our possession of the perfect royalty of Heaven depends on our faithfulness here on earth. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Your calling and election sure.—*The elect making sure of their election:*—There are many things in life about which we all desire to feel "sure." For instance, the firmness of our health; the completeness of cure when we have been sick; the stability of the engagements by which you earn your daily bread; the fidelity of our kindred and friends; and the well-being and well-doing of loved ones who are absent. The marvel is that people who say they are "the called" and "the elect" are sometimes among the careless ones.

I. CERTAINTY AS TO HIS POSITION A MOST DESIRABLE OBJECT FOR THE CHRISTIAN—HE OUGHT TO BE "SURE." If he be not sure, one of two things must be true: either he doubts without cause, or he trusts without cause. The latter, if it continue, will be fatal—he will be ruined by false confidence; and the former, if it abide, will be injurious. Look first at doubt without cause, which we say is injurious. Does it not cripple exertion? What can a man do who is ever questioning his chief responsibilities and capabilities, and who is not even sure as to his position? Doubt breaks up peace. There is no rest to the spirit that is unassured, and at the same time doubt must seriously lessen joy. Now peace and joy are not to be dealt with as religious luxuries, they are states of soul which are required for the most practical of uses. Peace is a holy keeper of the heart and mind, and joy is a Divine invigorator and refresher, for "the joy of the Lord is your strength." Ungrounded confidence, on the other hand, is most dangerous. Of the two, better doubt for ever, where there is eternal cause for confidence, than rely without cause. He who thinks he has found will not seek. But now what profit is there in being "sure"? To be "sure," prevents the waste of energy in groundless doubt and in useless inquiry; for you will find that, in cases of groundless doubt, there is an immense waste of energy in constant introspection, and fearfulness, and foreboding. Moreover, to be "sure" sets the man free for works of faith and labours of love; he can give himself to intercession and to

prayer for others, his own case being settled. To be "sure" places a man at liberty to leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and to go on unto perfection. II. THIS IS TO BE SECURED BY DILIGENT ATTENTION. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." The word used is very expressive—strive, use all activity, strain every nerve. Now the following things must be done before we can be sure. 1. There must be a strict inquiry into God's description of the "called" and the "elect." God does not lay much stress upon the emotions; He lays chief stress upon the state of the will towards Himself. "For ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." 2. We require a close examination of our inner and outer life. In all cases of regeneration the change is thorough. It is not perfected at once, but it affects the whole nature. And, in connection with this, there should be a narrow search for unfavourable signs which might counteract the favourable signs, and a search for special favourable signs which should confirm the rest. We require also the continued pursuit of those attainments which, as made, will involve cumulative evidence. This is a matter which Christians sadly neglect. I see them dwelling on their conversion, instead of acquiring confidence from what is now going on within their souls. Yet, if you be a Christian, there is a glorious work going on now; yesterday it was, and it is now. Then, in connection with all this, I need not say there must be not only an anxious desire to recover any ground which you may have lost, but there must be direct appeal to God on this subject. (*S. Martin.*) *An assurance of salvation*.—I. IS THE ATTAINMENT OF THIS MORAL CERTAINTY AS TO OUR CALLING AND ELECTION REALLY POSSIBLE? We hesitate not for a moment to answer the question in the affirmative. If the object to which this exhortation unquestionably points be altogether beyond our reach, how are we to account for the importance thus manifestly attached to it? The prophet Isaiah (xxxii. 17), speaking of the happy consequences of the outpouring of the Spirit, expressly declares that "the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." St. John also (1 John iii. 19)—"Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him." St. Paul likewise (Heb. vi. 11) thus addresses the Jewish converts, "We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." Nor is the attainableness of this personal assurance, or moral certainty as to our calling and election, less clearly proved by the evidence of fact and experience. II. DOES THE ATTAINMENT OF THIS MORAL CERTAINTY, AS TO OUR CALLING AND ELECTION, BELONG ESSENTIALLY TO A STATE OF GRACE? While on the one hand it has been confidently asserted that assurance as to our personal interest in the blessings of Christ's purchase bears presumption on its very face, not a few have confidently maintained that this assurance of salvation is of the very essence of faith, or, in other words, that without it we can have neither part nor lot in the redemption of the gospel. That this opinion is erroneous appears evident, we apprehend. 1. It is contrary to the nature of the Christian life. Still exposed to temptation, and not unfrequently overpowered for a time by its assaults, the progress of the genuine believer is ever chequered by the visitation of fear, of despondency, and of sorrow, as well as of the opposite emotions of hope, and confidence, and joy. Nay, indeed, such oppressive feelings are often necessary; they are subservient to his present advancement in his spiritual course and his final triumph over his spiritual foes. 2. While the doctrine, against which we are now contending, is thus in obvious contrariety to the nature of the Christian life, it is also, at the same time, very manifestly inconsistent with the general bearing of Scripture statement and exhortation. Nothing is more apparent in God's holy Word than the encouragement that is there given even to those whose state of mind and of heart is just the very opposite to everything like security or confidence. The broken heart, the poor in spirit, are blessed. 3. But not only does the contrariety of the doctrine, against which we are contending, to the nature of the Christian life, and its inconsistency also with the general bearing of Scripture statement and exhortation thus clearly demonstrate its fallacy: the consequences likewise to which it naturally leads are sufficient to convince every candid inquirer that it is at the same time most pernicious and dangerous. III. HOW IS THIS ASSURANCE OR MORAL CERTAINTY, IN REGARD TO OUR CALLING AND ELECTION, REALLY TO BE SECURED? The apostle, turning our attention to the virtues and graces of the Christian life, very distinctly points to the exercises of such virtues as the source of the assurance here more immediately referred to. Nor does this conclusion rest upon the language of the Apostle Peter alone. Our Lord Himself, exposing the false confidence of the

Pharisees, expressly declares to them that the sincerity of the Christian's faith, and consequently his spiritual safety, is to be discovered by its effects. "Either," says He, "make the tree good, and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit." (*John Thomson.*) *Election*:—What does Scripture teach concerning election? At the outset let me remark that wherever the Bible speaks of the elect it speaks, not of God's purpose to make men different, but of the fact that they do differ—a fact not only recognised by God, but determining His conduct towards us. And further, the view Scripture sets forth of the subject is intensely practical, whereas the view too commonly taken of the doctrine has made it one of pure speculation and of no practical value at all. Now, that a doctrine of election should be found in the Scriptures ought to present no difficulty, ought to surprise no one, for the simple reason that whatever the difficulties of the doctrine may be, it is confessedly founded on fact. Election in some shape or form meets us everywhere, wherever we observe the ways and doings of God. In the material world nothing can be clearer than that some objects have endowments which do not belong to others. Some attract us by their beauty of form, their fragrance, and so forth; while others repel us as being unsightly, offensive, noxious. Is not this of the will of God? Is not this His election, that some objects shall possess what is denied to others? In the heavens one star differs from another star in glory. Among the angels there are principalities and powers, elect angels. In fact, throughout the creation of God we nowhere find uniformity or equality of endowment; everywhere we find variety. And similarly amongst men: compare the poet with the ploughman. And similarly amongst races: compare the Anglo-Saxon with the Hottentot. What gifts are lavished on the one that are denied the other! And we find no difficulty in believing that these differences are of God. We ought not to be surprised, therefore, on opening the Bible, to find in it a doctrine of election. And, as a matter of fact, the whole substance of the Bible is a series of elections made by God Himself. Noah was elected of God to be the second father of the race; Abraham to be the father of the elect people; Moses to be their legislator; Samuel to be their prophet; David to be their king; Christ to be their hope; the apostles to be His witnesses. The fact therefore meets us wherever we turn. The only question is, as to the significance of the fact, as to how we are to interpret it. Have we the key? I believe we have, and in the history of Israel I conceive God would have us understand what the Divine election means. First of all, the election of Israel was an arbitrary act of God. The ground of it was not any foreseen excellence in the people, for, as a matter of fact, this they never possessed. A more troublesome, murmuring, rebellious, disobedient, faithless people the annals of history do not know. Then, again, as to the persons elected. The election was national, not personal; of the whole body, not of the individuals. The election, moreover, was not a blessing absolutely—certainly as regards the individuals of the race—but to the offer of one conditionally. In other words, it was not an election to final salvation; not to the enjoyment of the promised land as a possession, but only to a condition of privilege, the result of which might be the ultimate possession, but only of individual choice. The evidence of this is the simple fact that entrance into Canaan was denied to all but two: a blessing was placed within the reach of the people; whether it should be theirs or not depended on themselves. As the vocation and privilege of Israel were higher than those of other nations, so, too, were they subjected to severer discipline. A high standard of national life was set before them, and they were trained to it by a stern and exceptional process. So that their election of God implied sharp discipline. There was, further, a deep purpose in their discipline which we must not overlook, or we shall misunderstand the whole. It was this: that the blessings they were to reap as the result of their fidelity were not for themselves alone. They were to be the instruments of blessing to mankind. The face of God shone on Israel that His way might be known on earth, His saving health to all nations. Israel mistook its vocation, wrapt itself in the cloak of exclusive privilege, and affirmed, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we." If, then, we apply these principles, what shall we expect to find? We shall expect to find that the election will be of the sovereign will of God, unaffected by any foreseen conduct. The former part of this statement is denied by none: the latter part is implied in the Saviour's description of the day of judgment, in the universal declaration of the gospel that this life is a state of trial, and in such positive assertions as those of Paul, that God will render to every man according to his deeds, that God is no respecter of persons, and the like. We shall expect to find several other things.

As to the persons elected, except as regards individuals called to some special work, Scripture tells us nothing. We are all sure that they are the elect of God who prove their election by the loftiness and excellence of their spiritual life, and that this is the only proof that can be given or that could be accepted as reasonable. And as to the election itself, if it is to eternal life at all, surely it is to eternal life as a present possession and experience, and not simply to something to be received in the future. But the analogy of Israel would lead us to say that the election is not to eternal life at all, but to a condition of privilege, the result of which may be the possession of a spiritual life, which links men on to the Eternal God, and is eternal life; but this only where there is choice; otherwise the election to privilege does not secure to men eternal life, as belonging to the Israelitish people did not secure entrance to the promised land. Again, if this fact be clearly apprehended, that the knowledge of God is eternal life, and that this is the life to which the elect are called—not a future so much as a present good, and this good a very lofty level of life, the privilege of aiming higher, working harder, sacrificing more, suffering more keenly than any others in the world—this will explain the fact which has often perplexed men, that the path of the noblest saints has been a path of sternest discipline. Their summons is to a nobler, loftier, more self-sacrificing life, a life of self-forgetting, absorbing, loving service to Christ, and it is as they live this life nobly and well that they make their calling and election sure. (*R. V. Pryce, M.A.*)

Particular election:—When Mr. Whitfield was once applied to to use his influence at a general election, he returned answer to his lordship who requested him that he knew very little about general elections, but that if his lordship took his advice he would make his own particular "calling and election sure," which was a very proper remark. I. First of all, then, there are the TWO IMPORTANT MATTERS IN RELIGION—secrets, both of them, to the world—only to be understood by those who have been quickened by Divine grace: "CALLING AND ELECTION." It will be asked, however, why is "calling" here put before "election," seeing election is eternal, and calling takes place in time? I reply, because calling is first to us. The first thing which you and I can know is our calling: we cannot tell whether we are elect until we feel that we are called. We must, first of all, prove our calling, and then our election is sure most certainly. And this is a matter about which you and I should be very anxious. For consider what an honourable thing it is to be elected. In this world it is thought a mighty thing to be elected to the House of Parliament; but how much more honourable to be elected to eternal life; to be elected to "the Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven"! Election in this world is but a short-lived thing, but God's election is eternal. It is worth while to know ourselves elect, for nothing in this world can make a man more happy or more valiant than the knowledge of his election. "Nevertheless," said Christ to His apostles, "rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven"—that being the sweetest comfort. And this, too, makes a man valiant. When a man by diligence has attained to the assurance of his election you cannot make him a coward. "Was not I ordained by God to be the standard bearer of this truth? I must, I will stand by it, despite you all." He saith to every enemy, "Am I not a chosen king?" II. Come, then, here is the second point—GOOD ADVICE. "Make your calling and election sure." "How, then," says one, "am I to make my calling and election sure?" Why, thus: If thou wouldst get out of a doubting state, get out of an idle state; if thou wouldst get out of a trembling state, get out of an indifferent, lukewarm state; for lukewarmness and doubting, and laziness and trembling, very naturally go hand in hand. Be diligent in your faith. Take care that your faith is of the right kind—that it is not a creed, but a credence. Take care that your faith results from necessity—that you believe in Christ because you have nothing else to believe in; and give diligence to thy courage. Labour to get virtue; plead with God that He would give thee the face of a lion, that thou mayest never be afraid of any enemy. And having, by the help of the Holy Spirit, obtained that, study well the Scriptures and get knowledge, for a knowledge of doctrine will tend very much to confirm your faith. Try to understand God's Word; get a sensible, spiritual idea of it. And when thou hast done this, "Add to thy knowledge temperance." Take heed to thy body: be temperate there. Take heed to thy soul: be temperate there. Be not drunken with pride. Be not passionate: be not carried away by every wind of doctrine. Get temperance, and then add to it by God's Holy Spirit patience; ask Him to give thee that patience which endureth affliction, which, when it is tried, shall come forth as gold. And when you have that, get godliness.

III. THE APOSTLE'S REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE. I put in one of my own to begin with. It is because, as I have said, it will make you so happy. Men who doubt their calling and election cannot be full of joy; but the happiest saints are those who know and believe it. But now for Peter's reasons. 1. Because "if ye do these things ye shall never fall." "Perhaps," says one, "in attention to election we may forget our daily walk, and like the old philosopher who looked up to the stars we may walk on and tumble into the ditch!" "Nay, nay," says Peter, "if you take care of your calling and election, you shall not trip; but, with your eyes up there, looking for your calling and election, God will take care of your feet, and you shall never fall." 2. And now the other reason. "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Just one thought more. It is said that the entrance is to be "ministered to us." That gives me a sweet hint. Christ will open the gates of heaven; but the heavenly train of virtues—the works which follow us—will go up with us and minister an entrance to us. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The nature, possibility, duty, and means of the assurance of one's effectual calling:—*I. IT IS NOT ONLY POSSIBLE, BUT A DUTY IN CHRISTIANS, TO ENDEAVOUR AFTER AN ASSURANCE OF THEIR EFFECTUAL CALLING AND ELECTION. 1. When we say a believer may and ought to be assured of his calling and election, we do not mean as if of his own self he could have this Divine persuasion. As it is with the colours that are the object of the sight, though they be never so good and visible, yet if there be no light the eye cannot see them. Thus it is here: though there be never such excellent graces, and though God hath wrought a wonderful change in thee, yet thou art not able to see it till the Spirit of God enable thee. 2. The soul of a man, being a rational and spiritual substance, hath two kinds of acts. There are, first, the direct acts of the soul, whereby it is carried out immediately and directly to some object. And there are, secondly, reflex acts, whereby the soul considers and takes notice of what acts it doth. It is as if the eye were turned inward to see itself (1 John ii. 3). So that when we believe in God, that is a direct act of the soul; when we repent of sin, because God is dishonoured, that is a direct act; but when we know that we do believe, and that we do repent, this is a reflex act. Now, whether this certainty or assurance be a certainty of faith, or of sense, or rather mixed of both, I shall not dispute. 3. This assurance is a privilege which may be had, and it is our sin if we breathe not after it, or do anything that may justly fill our hearts with doubts and diffidence. Yet it is not of absolute necessity to salvation. 4. Neither yet is this assurance the apostle presses us unto such as admits of no doubts, no temptations or oppositions by Satan. II. CONSIDER WHAT ARE THOSE EFFECTS OF GRACE WHICH, IF A MAN WALK IN, HE MAY BE PARTAKER OF THIS PRIVILEGE: not but that God by His absolute sovereignty, and for holy ends, may leave the most circumspect Christians in darkness, without any light, as it was in Job. And the prophet intimateth, "Who is among you that feareth God, and hath no light, walking in darkness?" (Isa. l. 10.) 1. We must give all diligence and heed to the obtaining of this privilege. We must make it our business; it must be importunately begged for in prayer. 2. The way to obtain this assurance is a fruitful, fervent, and active walking in all the ways of holiness. "If these things be in you and abound," saith the apostle. The sparks that are ready to go out do hardly evidence there is any fire. We doubt of life when we feel scarce any breath. And thus it is here. The more negligent and lazy thou art in the ways of godliness, the less certainty must needs be in thee. And the reason is plain; for if graces exercised be the sign or seal, then the more these appear, the more thriving and flourishing they are, the surer testimonies there will be of thy calling and election. 3. Another way to preserve or obtain this assurance is humility and meekness, going out of ourselves, avoiding all presumption, all self-righteousness (Phil. ii. 12). 4. This assurance is obtained and preserved by a tender watchfulness against all known sin. For it being sin only that separates between God and the soul, this only raiseth up the great gulf, therefore all witting and willing allowing of this is a direct destroyer of all assurance. 5. Another way to obtain this is to take heed of grieving the Spirit of God or quenching the motions of it. For seeing it is the Spirit of God that witnesseth, and it is the Spirit that feeleth, if we would have assurance, we are to nourish it, to do nothing that may resist and repel it. 6. If thou wouldst attain to this assurance, acquaint thyself well with the covenant of the gospel, with the precious promises revealed there, with the gracious condescensions of God's love in Christ. Many of the children of God are kept in a doubtful and perplexed estate because they

consider not the riches of Christ's grace revealed in the gospel. (*Anthony Burgess.*) *Of effectual calling*.—I. I now come to show the GREAT ADVANTAGE OF THIS CERTAINTY. Where the godly heart hath this holy assurance and persuasion wrought by God's Spirit, there it hath many helps which the tempted soul wanteth. 1. Where there is certainty of this heavenly privilege, there the soul is more inflamed and enlarged to love God. 2. Certainty of our calling and election will breed much spiritual strength and heavenly ability to all graces and duties, to go through all relations with much holiness and lively vigour. 3. This certainty and assurance of grace would exceedingly keep up the heart under all afflictions and outward miseries. 4. This certainty of grace is a strong and mighty buckler against all those violent assaults and temptations that the devil useth to exercise the godly with. 5. This certainty is a special means to breed contentment of mind, and a thankful, cheerful heart in every condition. 6. This certainty of grace is a sure and special antidote against death in all the fears of it. This makes the king of terrors a king of all consolations; for seeing that by grace we are the members of Christ, death hath no more sting on us than on Christ our Head. These are the advantages. II. But the godly heart may inquire, HOW SHALL I KNOW THIS HOLY CERTAINTY AND PERSUASION BY GOD'S SPIRIT FROM MY OWN PERSUASION, FROM THE SELF-FLATTERY THAT IS IN ME? 1. Holy certainty is kept up in all exercises of grace and constant tender avoiding of all known sin; but presumption will agree with the practice of all these. 2. Presumption is unwilling to be searched and tried. It flieth from the light, it cannot abide the touchstone; but this holy certainty loveth a deep search. 3. Presumption beareth up a man's heart till a man come to some great and extraordinary calamities, and then this bubble vanisheth away. Dross will melt in the fire, but gold will be the more refined. The wind makes chaff fly away, but leaveth the corn more purified. 4. Presumption is not opposed nor assaulted by the devil. Satan doth not tempt and labour to drive people out of it, but nourisheth them in it. But out of this holy certainty the devil's main scope is to drive them. 5. It is the sure character of presumption that it divideth the means and the end. It hopes for such privileges, though it never do the duties. Now this is not assurance, but a presumptuous delusion, whereas you see this text is, to give all diligence to make your calling sure. 6. Presumption is but a self-deceiving, false logic that a man deceiveth himself with. Whereas you heard this certainty is a knowledge wrought by God's Spirit in us. 7. The presumptuous man is full of haughty arrogance and proud preferring of himself, contemning and undervaluing others. Thus that Pharisee, "Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as other men," &c. Whereas true assurance is accompanied with deep humility and a pitiful respect to others. III. In the next place it may be questioned WHAT THAT GODLY PERSON SHOULD DO WHO HATH NOT THIS ASSURANCE? Though grace be in him, he knoweth it not, yea, he thinketh the clean contrary. Now to such an one we say, let him walk in a faith of adherence and dependence when he hath none of these evidences. This the Scripture calls trusting, rolling, leaning, and staying of the soul upon God. And this dependence of faith is far more noble than the assurance of faith. 1. In assurance, there I go on in holy duties and love of God, because of the sensible sweetness and delight that I have; but in dependence, there I trust in God when I have no sense or feeling. 2. To depend and wait on God though darkness be in thy soul, argueth thy faith more firm and strong. It was an high expression in Job, "Though He kill me I will trust in Him." Do not then give over thy constancy in holy duties; be not discouraged in waiting on God for assurance, for He will at last cause the sun to arise, and the dark night to fly away. (*Ibid.*) *Assurance*.—One may be a believer in Christ and not have attained to a full assurance of salvation. Faith has a beginning and an end. It may be weak or strong, partial or complete. Believers are enjoined to make their calling and election sure. The distinction is an important one. "Many are called, but few chosen." The calling we regard as simply the Word of God, or the truth of God, as objectively put before the mind. To make that sure is to make perfectly certain to ourselves that the Bible is the Word of God. More particularly, that Word sets before us the whole true character of God, the whole true condition of man, and the whole truth as to the way of salvation. One must understand the message, or comprehend to some extent the terms of the invitation. He must be sure that it is really addressed to him, and that he is entitled to accept it as such. Having satisfied himself of that, he must give himself to the more complete understanding of it. How long, then, does it take one to know the truth of the call, objectively considered—the truth concerning God, one's self, and the way of salva-

tion? It will take him to the end of time, neither more nor less. The holiest man that ever lived could not spare a single moment of the whole time given to him by God from the work of making his calling sure. The way of salvation is simply the life-long process of getting into the truth, and, ever as we realise that, the corresponding process of bringing it forth into the life again. It is here that the calling glides into the election. To make one's election sure is the additional matter of attaining to perfect certainty as to one's individual and personal acceptance with God. This is the subjective aspect. It brings into view the living and growing relation of one's own spirit and character to the truth. It is an axiom that the Word of God is true. It is also a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. But it is quite another question as to whether a given individual is among the elect or no. The elect are those whom God chooses as His own, and the only way by which we can either be among the elect or know that we are, is the way of choosing from day to day the will of God as our will or rule of life. The faith that saves and leads to assurance is declared in Scripture to have two aspects. It is "the substance" or fundamental condition of a great and manifold hope; the hope of the ultimate triumph of good over evil and of truth over error; the hope of the personal appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; and the hope of our individual acceptance in His sight. It is also "the evidence" in the present, that these hopes will be realised. As the substance, it is a life-long thought, and as the evidence, a life-long work. As both in one it is an ever-growing spiritual reality, identical with the life-long duty of making our calling and election sure. (*F. Ferguson.*)

An entrance shall be ministered.—*Entrance into the kingdom*:—**I. THE PASSAGE.** 1. The sureness. (1) The reason—"for." As if to say: There are some blind, and forget the way of truth: what then? Therefore make your election sure. Why? For if ye do so ye shall never fall. How are we sure that we shall not fall? For so you have a full entrance to blessedness. (2) The means—"so." Make your election sure; and by living soberly and righteously endeavour the ascertaining to your own hearts, that God hath decreed you to salvation; for so you shall have a free entrance into the kingdom of Christ. 2. The readiness—"an entrance," without trouble. (1) The entrance to grace and mercy is open, and ready to entertain all entering feet (*Rev. iii. 7.*) (2) The removal of such impediments as might hinder this passage. (a) The world is none of the least; and in this there is a double opposition; on the left hand indigence, on the right opulence. (b) The flesh steps in next to bar up our entrance. There is no man hath a worse friend than he brings from home. (c) The devil is a master antagonist, a watchful and wrathful enemy. (d) Death is the last enemy, but not the least. Yet to the faithful that fiend is a friend (*Phil. i. 21; 1 Cor. xv. 54, 55*). (3) The matter of this entrance. It consists in two things. (a) Our union with Christ. If the Head be entered, the members cannot be denied. (b) Our communion with the Holy Ghost. 3. The fitness, or preparation. We are not beholden to ourselves for this entrance: it is "ministered" to us. (1) The means is ministered, therefore it is called the ministry of the Word, the ministration of the sacraments. (2) The apprehension of this means is ministered, for it is given to us to believe (*Phil. i. 29*). (3) The object of this apprehension is ministered, eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ (*Rom. vi. 23*). 4. The easiness—"abundantly." The gate is not narrow in itself, but only in respect of unqualified enterers. It is too low for lofty and aspiring ambition, too narrow for pride, too straight for covetousness; but to faith it is broad. If the worldling would untwist his riches by charity, and the sinner untwist his sins by repentance, they may abundantly enter. **II. THE PALACE.** 1. Its royalty. It is the Lord's own "kingdom." 2. Its immutability. The honour of earthly princes is often laid in the dust; but this is an eternal kingdom. The royalty of Christ is absolute, independent, universal, and everlasting (*Luke i. 33*). It is fit that He should be so honoured who was so humbled. Our sin brought Him exceeding low, let His own righteousness exalt Him exceeding high. (1) The supremacy of the King. By comparing earthly things with heavenly, we may observe the excellency of that regiment in which we stand: it is a kingdom; and the dignity of the Governor: He is an eternal King (*1 Tim. i. 17*). All inferior kingdoms are derived from Him, and subordinate to Him (*1 Tim. vi. 15*). (2) The security of the subjects. We have a King to rule us; a King of majesty, a King of mercy; one who can protect us from all evil, and supply us with all good. (3) The felicity of this kingdom, whose law is truth, whose King is the Trinity, and whose bounds are eternity. (*Thos. Adams.*)

The abundant entrance:—I. The first thing the apostle would have them keep in remembrance is THE GLORIOUS STATE OF A CHRISTIAN IN ETERNITY. 1. One reason why the glorious state of a Christian, either in time or eternity—in one case the kingdom of grace, and in the other the kingdom of glory—is called “the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” is that it is the purchase of His blood; it is a purchased possession. 2. Then this kingdom may very properly be called “the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” because it is the work of His hands. 3. We shall see then what we do not understand now—the nature, the office, the order, and the actions of angels. 4. We see the glory of “the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” in the act of His own exaltation. 5. But there are other peculiarities in this kingdom. There are peculiar privileges, which the inhabitants, and kings, and priests, and subjects of this kingdom enjoy. One of these privileges is this: whatever we see increases our happiness; not only from its own excellency, but it increases our happiness because it is mine. “He that overcometh shall inherit all things.” There is another thing which will finish heaven’s happiness, and that is that every object is mine for ever. It is not only “the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” but it is “the everlasting kingdom.” II. We come now to the GRAND WORK of A CHRISTIAN IN TIME. What is that? 1. To make sure work for heaven, we must get a clear title to heaven. 2. Again, in order that we may make our calling and election sure, we must get a personal meetness for heaven, not merely a title. III. How MUST WE DO THIS WORK? 1. Here is the grand work; all you are to do is to enter into that work with all your hearts—“Give diligence.” Exercise your given power and improve your given opportunity in removing impediments. 2. Again, exercise your given power, and improve your given opportunity, in an immediate application to the blood of the Lamb. 3. And then we must yield to the influence of the Holy Spirit; for without that we can do nothing. IV. THE MOTIVES TO ENGAGE US IN THE WORK AND SUPPORT US UNDER IT. 1. The all-important ground of this duty, and the all-important argument to engage us in this duty, is eternity. 2. Another argument is, the inestimable privileges in life. What are the inestimable privileges in life? Absolute security from apostasy. Give diligence, and you shall “never fall.” 3. Then there is present happiness in making our calling and election sure. 4. There are, therefore, inestimable privileges in life; and there are inestimable advantages in death. “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (W. Dawson.) *Entrance into Christ’s kingdom*:—I. SOMEWHERE IN THE UNIVERSE OF GOD CHRIST HAS A GLORIOUS KINGDOM. II. AN ENTRANCE INTO THIS KINGDOM IS THE HIGHEST DESTINY OF MANKIND. Here he obtains—1. The most perfect freedom. 2. The most exalted fellowships. 3. The most blessed progress. In knowledge, power, dignity, usefulness. III. THE MORE MORAL VIRTUES WE ATTAIN, THE MORE ABUNDANT WILL BE OUR ENTRANCE. (Homilist.) *Getting into harbour*:—There is land ahead, and the spiritual mariner knows that when that land is reached his toils will cease for ever. The picture which Peter here had before his mind’s eye was purely nautical. His idea was that of a ship which, after a prosperous voyage, was entering with full sail into her destined haven. All on board are hopeful and joyous. Nothing has happened to maim either the vessel or the crew. The crowds on the beach seem to be almost within hail. I. THE COUNTRY TO WHICH WE ARE BOUND. 1. It is gloriously governed. It is a “kingdom”; and it is “the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”; that is, He reigns and rules in it. (1) He reigns by right of Divine authority. (2) He reigns by right of irresistible conquest. What a glorious victor is our King! (a) He conquered for us. Sin, death, and hell, allied against Him for our hurt, were completely routed by His almighty arm. (b) He conquered in us. The old rebel heart resisted Him to the utmost, but He ultimately overcame. The day of our subjugation was one of the happiest we ever knew. (3) He reigns by right of universal suffrage. Loyalty to the King is, in the kingdom of Christ, a rule that knows not a single exception. 2. It is permanently established. It is a “kingdom” in which there are no republicans, and it is an “everlasting kingdom,” in which there are no revolutions. 3. It is unspeakably blessed. The King is “our Saviour”! The term is very comprehensive. In every conceivable sense King Jesus is the Saviour of His people. II. THE WELCOME WE MAY ANTICIPATE THERE. 1. We may expect an entrance. Apart from the common contingencies of ordinary navigation, there are two sources of danger sometimes experienced on the sea. The first is that, in sailing to the port, enemies may be met with on the voyage; and secondly, in

attempting to get to the shore, enemies may oppose the landing. 2. We may expect an entrance ministered. And as ships cannot pass unchallenged into our national harbours, so there is no getting into heaven by stealth. Each entrance is "ministered." Out here, on the ocean, you may feel that you are so mixed up with all the rest, that by and by there will be a chance of sailing in with the crowd. But it is a fearful mistake. Do not be deceived! Ships do not enter that harbour thus. The narrow entrance, which you are so fast approaching, will only admit "one by one." Each soul must encounter the Divine scrutiny. 3. We may expect an entrance ministered abundantly. Some months ago a large ship was observed, under full sail, making for Kingstown harbour. Her crew had discovered a fire in her hold, and after exhausting themselves in attempts to get it under, they managed, as a last resource, to run the vessel straight for the port. To the amazement of the people on the shore, she came on, without slackening sail, until she had reached the mouth of the harbour, and then, the sailors being, through exhaustion, unable to control her course, she came dashing right through all the ships that were lying at anchor, and running burning on the beach, she became a total wreck. She reached the port, but none could say she had "an abundant entrance." If he could possibly avoid it, no sailor would care to finish a voyage like that. But I fear that many people content themselves with a prospect of thus getting into heaven. Of course, the poor fellows on board the burning vessel were glad to escape even though they were "saved so as by fire"; but they would have been far happier had they succeeded in bringing safely home their vessel and her cargo. The ship that receives the most abundant entrance is not the one that runs away from every foe, lest she should receive a scratch or lose a little gilt from her figure-head; but the vessel that receives abundant honour is she which, having carried the thunders of her country's guns into the very strongholds of the foe, returns amid the plaudits of the nation—like Nelson's immortal *Victory*—covered with glory. Think of the other shore! What welcomes await the voyager within the harbour! How "abundantly" will he be received by those who have gone before! III. THE CONDITIONS BY WHICH IT IS SECURED. 1. Faith in Christ. 2. Life for Christ. The apostle says, "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue," &c. 3. Glory with Christ. This is the fruit of which faith is the root, and of which life for Christ is as the tree. The sailor often meets with the heaviest gales just before he reaches the port; and the Christian sometimes finds the tribulation keener as he approaches the kingdom. But the weather is not always stormy. It is sometimes sweetly calm, and at such times many get into port. Their entrance is equally blessed, for they have passed through all their dangers and fears during the early portion of the voyage. (*W. H. Burton.*) *Happiness in death*:—The apostle urges the manner of our dying—he would have us die not only in a state of salvation, but of peace—and triumph. I. THE STATE TO WHICH THE CHRISTIAN LOOKS FORWARD—"the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 1. Christians, we know very little of "the hope which is laid up for us in heaven": it is "the glory which shall be revealed in us." Two things are spoken of this kingdom which deserve remark. 1. The first concerns its permanency and duration—it is "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour." "The fashion of this world passeth away." The Assyrian, Persian, Grecian, Roman Empires arose, astonished mankind for a season, and disappeared. 2. It is "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." And what means this relation? It is surely designed to distinguish Him from a mere possessor, and to intimate peculiar prerogative, residence, administration. It is His by claim. As the Son of God He is "Heir of all things." He acquired it as the reward of His obedience and sufferings. He has now the disposal of the offices and privileges of the empire among His faithful followers. This was surely the idea of the dying thief when he prayed, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." He is the Sovereign; and there He rules—not, as here, "in the midst of His enemies"—no treason, no sedition, no disaffection there. There He reigns immediately, always in view, and accessible to all. II. THE DESIRABLE MODE OF ADMISSION. And here we read of an ENTRANCE—MINISTERED—ABUNDANTLY. What is this entrance? Unquestionably—Death. But you should remember that your entrance into the invisible world is administered. Not only is the will of God concerned in the general sentence of mortality pronounced upon us, but death always receives a particular commission from Him. The circumstance of time is fixed by Him: "the number of our months is with Him." The place is determined by His purpose. The means and the manner of our removal are disposed by His pleasure. The death of some

is distinguished by honours not vouchsafed to all: and this is what the apostle means by an entrance ministered unto us abundantly. For all do not enter alike. Some, shipwrecked, are washed by the surge half-dead on the shore, or reach it clinging terrified to a plank; others, with crowded sails and with a preserved cargo of spices and perfumes, beautifully, gallantly enter the desired haven. A triumph was not decreed to every Roman general upon his return to the capital. We may observe a remarkable diversity even in the deaths of common believers. Some die only safe; while their state is unknown to themselves, and suspected by others. In some, hope and fear alternately prevail. Some feel a peace which passeth all understanding—while some exult with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. And in these is fulfilled the language of the promise, "With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the King's palace." They will need it themselves. It is a new, a trying, and an awful thing to die. They will find dying to be work enough, without having doubts and fears to encounter. You should long for this also on the behalf of others. This is the last time you can do anything in serving God in your generation; but by this you may be rendered peculiarly useful. Your dying looks and your dying words may make impressions which shall never be erased. III. TO EXAMINE THE CONDITION UPON WHICH THIS PRIVILEGE IS SUSPENDED, AND WHICH IS OBVIOUSLY HERE IMPLIED—"For so an entrance," &c. This course requires—That you should habituate yourselves to familiar thoughts of death. This will dissipate the terrors which arise from distance and imagination. This will break the force of surprise. And the less powerfully you are attached to earthly things, the more easy will be your separation from them. It requires that you should obtain and preserve the evidences of pardon; without these you cannot be fearless and tranquil in the near views of eternity, since "after death is the judgment." Is he in a condition to die who has lived in the practice of some known sin, and in the omission of some known duty? It requires an attention to religion in your families. I pity that father who will be surrounded when he dies with children whose minds he never informed, whose dispositions he never curbed, whose manners he never guarded. In a word, it requires you to live in the strenuous cultivation of practical and progressive religion. "And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue," &c. If there be such differences among Christians in dying, we may be assured that there will be inequalities in heaven. What preparation have you made for a dying hour? (*W. Jay.*) *An abundant entrance into heaven:*—He had prayed for a triumphant death. One day, when speaking about heaven, some one said, "I'll be satisfied if I manage somehow to get in." "What!" said Robert, pointing to a sunken vessel that had just been dragged up the Tay, "would you like to be pulled into heaven by two tugs, like the *London* yonder? I tell you I would like to go in with all my sails set and colours flying." (*Life of Robert Annan.*)

Vers. 12-15. **To put you always in remembrance.**—*Pastor and people:*—I. THE PASTOR'S INFORMING. 1. His piety; desirous to bring them to the forementioned kingdom. 2. His vigilance; admitting no neglect of their souls, what discouragements soever affront him. 3. His modesty; professing that he doth rather remind than teach them. 4. His fidelity; he will do it "always," without weariness of that which may tend to their edification and comfort. 5. His sincerity; he doth not incite them to vain and unnecessary things, but "these things" that build them up to salvation. II. THE PEOPLE'S PROFICIENCY. 1. Their illumination. 2. Their confirmation. No man runs so fast but he may need some spurring. There is still something that he would teach and they should learn. The horse that would run well of his own mettle doth yet mend his pace by the rider's encouragement. (*Thos. Adams.*) *The writer's diligence and his readers' obedience:*—I. THE WRITER'S DILIGENCE. 1. "Wherefore." Because the foundation of eternal life is to be laid here, and in this life an entrance must be made to that everlasting kingdom, or there will be no fruition hereafter; therefore I will take all possible pains to prepare your souls for it. The state future follows the former, as the upper building follows the foundation. 2. "I will not be negligent." His diligence is well furthered by his sedulity. 3. "To put you in remembrance." We must often be stirred up, line upon line, &c. 4. "Always." This duty of assiduity cannot be performed by any minister of the gospel without a constant abiding among his people. 5. "Of these things"—i.e., such as may save your souls. The minister must labour neither for praise nor for purse, but for conscience; he must fish for souls, not for riches. There are too many that seek the Church goods

rather than the Church's good. II. THE PEOPLE'S OBEDIENCE. 1. The apostle takes for granted that they understood these things already, and were constant in the assurance of the truth of them. A happy progress! If your mind be established in understanding, your heart in affecting, your life in obeying, blessed are you; your minister shall praise you, the Church will praise you, the angels praise you, yea, you shall be praised of Christ Himself. 2. This concession makes way for a further imposition. Though you know these things, and be established, yet you must admit a further confirming (Rom. xv. 14, 15). The cessation of remembrance may easily lapse us to forgetfulness. (*Ibid.*) *Constant remembrance*:—I. A SATISFACTORY POSITION. They are commended—1. For proper knowledge. "Ye know them," i.e., the practical bearings of the Christian religion. 2. For genuine faith. "Established—settled—in the truth." II. A HAZARDOUS CONDITION. The higher a man rises, the more Satan desires to sift him. 1. The natural tendency of fallen nature. 2. The many and urgent temptations to leave even what we know. III. A JUDICIOUS PRECAUTION. "I will . . . put you always in remembrance." 1. The necessity for this course ought to reconcile us to the constant repetition of even the most elementary truths of religion. 2. Christianity consists of two parts—faith and practice. Both are easily forgotten or neglected. Other things absorb the mind. (*Homilist.*) *Ministers as remembrancers*:—The very inwardness of the principal truths of religion makes our being frequently reminded of them so much the more necessary, and renders the ministrations of a Christian pastor so essential to our spiritual welfare. Nay, further, our very familiarity with Christian truths makes the office of the minister as a remembrancer not less necessary. Even the more we know of them, the more we need to be reminded of them. But why is this continual remembrance of religious truths so essential to the Church, that Christ has not only appointed a special order of remembrancers, but has also instituted holy mysteries as sacraments of commemoration? Because only as truths live within the mind can they be influential on the heart and conduct. And only as we are continually reminded of them do they gain this life within us. It is not enough to have received truths, we must feel them. We are living daily in a world of sense; we need to be transferred continually into the world of spirit. We see around us the vanities of time; we need to have heaven opened to our gaze, that we may behold the grand realities of eternity. The grand obstacle to all religion and holiness is sense—the living in the present and the visible, and therefore for the present and the visible. The grand method of deliverance, therefore, from this obstacle is faith. I put you in remembrance that you are the creatures of the one living and true God. I put you in remembrance that before this God, to whom you are thus accountable, you stand charged by His most righteous law as guilty sinners. I put you in remembrance that this same God, whom you have thus displeased, and before whom you stand guilty, is very holy and yet very merciful. I put you in remembrance that in consequence of this compassion this same God—so holy, yet so merciful—sent down His only-begotten Son into the world to take your place, to bear your sins. I put you in remembrance that this pursuit of personal moral excellence and holy character can be successfully begun, continued, and completed by you only as you obtain the influence and help, the life, the love, and the power of God's Holy Spirit. (*T. Griffith, M.A.*) *Established in the present truth*.—*Present truth*:—I. THE GOSPEL SPEAKS OF A PRESENT RECONCILIATION OF GOD TO MAN. II. CHRISTIANS HAVE A PRESENT LIFE IN CHRIST. III. PRESENT RECONCILIATION IN THE PRESENT LIFE MEANS PRESENT CONFESSION. IV. WE HAVE A PRESENT HEAVEN. (*A. J. Gordon, D.D.*) *Shortly I must put off this my tabernacle*.—*The shortness of our life*:—I. From this notion of putting off our bodies it will appear that—WE DO IN REALITY CONSIST OF BODY AND SOUL, which is the foundation of all religion. If we were all body, the pleasures and interests of the body would be our supreme happiness; but since we have a soul to govern the motions of the body, it must be our wisdom and our interest to take diligent heed of that soul, and not suffer the body to engross all our care. A creature that is made of two distinct parts cannot be completely happy by providing for one part only. Our care of the life of the soul will oblige us to take care of any hurt or mischief that may befall it, as we see it does in our bodies. Again, do we bestow much time and labour upon adorning our bodies, it is abundantly more for our interest that we spare a portion of them to the soul, in exalting that with wisdom and holiness. II. This observation that we are to put off our bodies will instruct us in THE DIGNITY AND SUPERIORITY OF THE SOUL ABOVE THE BODY. The soul herself suffers nothing by this separation, but is made more glorious by it. The soul is the seat of knowledge and sensation,

and the body is very insignificant without it. The soul, therefore, is the best part of us. The body has no life without the soul, but the soul has life though it be stripped of body. How, then, can we justify our neglect of the soul and our unmeasurable, our most unreasonable affection for the body?

III. Are we constantly apprehensive that we must leave our bodies? THIS SHOULD TEACH US NOT TO VALUE OURSELVES UPON ANY BODILY ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND QUALIFICATIONS, NOR TO ALLOW TOO LARGE A SHARE OF OUR PAINS AND TIME IN SEARCHING AFTER THEM, BUT TO PURIFY BOTH SOUL AND BODY, AND TO PREPARE THEM FOR A HAPPY RECEPTION INTO THE OTHER WORLD. It is absurd to boast or grow proud of things which we are soon to part with, or be very eager to obtain what we are sure we cannot hold for a long time. The ornaments of sobriety and temperance, humility and meekness, charity, wisdom, and holiness, will stand us in greatest stead when our bodies have left us. And nothing but they will do us service. (*R. Warren, D.D.*) *The shortness of human life*:—1. "I know"—not perhaps precisely the day, or the place, or the manner. But death is not a stranger to my thoughts; my account is cast up, I am ready. 2. "That I must put off," or lay down; willingly, not on compulsion; not pulled down, but laid down. It is a metaphor drawn from a wager; the faithful man doth wager, and pawn his soul to God. 3. "This my tabernacle"—not my castle, or strong tower, or standing house; but a tent, a movable, a tabernacle. 4. "Shortly." The time is not so far off that I dream not of it; not likely to happen in another age, and creeping on by slow degrees. The sun is not descending, but ready to set; the messenger knocks at the door; the clock runs upon the last minute; the epilogue is on the stage; the taper at the last glimpse; the oak falling under the latest blow of the axe. 5. "As the Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me." It is a shame for me to be unprepared when such a Prophet hath certified me, both in prediction and example showing the way. I. A RESOLUTION. "Knowing." The assurance of unavoidable death is a doctrine well known. Make a virtue of necessity; offer God that for a gift, which you are bound to pay as a debt. II. A DISSOLUTION. 1. Personal. "I"—though a preacher, an apostle, &c. These singular deductions out of universal propositions, are profitable to men, and acceptable to God. (1) Seeing we must die, do you pray for us, that we may do your souls good while we live (*Eph. vi. 18, 19*). (2) Seeing our life is so short, do you apprehend the means while it lasteth (*Heb. iii. 45*). 2. Necessary. "I must." If heaven were to be had upon earth, saints should not dwell in tabernacles. 3. Voluntary. "Put off." The apostle calls himself a depository, that hath a jewel committed to him on trust, which he is willing to surrender. 4. Instant. "Shortly." (1) The less space a man hath allowed for his business, the more he should ply it. The fewer days, the fruitfuller lessons. (2) The words of dying men have been most emphatical, most effectual. The last words of good men are best, as the last glare of the sun going down most clear. An admonition uttered by such a teacher, at such a time, to such an auditory, challenges good attention, great devotion. III. A REVELATION. "Even as our Lord," &c. 1. Those who refer it to the manner, conceive this revelation to be given him (*John xxi. 18, 19*). 2. They that refer it to the time of his dying, understand it thus: That Peter should die, he knew in general; that he should die a martyr, he knew in particular; but that he should die shortly he could not know, except by some later revelation, in special. It is probable that where Peter wrote this Epistle, even there he received this revelation. 3. Now howsoever an apostle had some special premonstrance of the nearness of his end, yet this is not common, though old age and consumptions be certain forewarners of approaching death. We, too, have the more preparation, by how much we have the less revelation concerning the time and circumstances of our death. (*Thos. Adams.*) *Putting off the bodily tabernacle*:—1. His exemplary industry and diligence in his ministerial work. (1) The quality of his work, which was "to stir them up by putting them in remembrance," to keep the heavenly flame of love and zeal lively upon the altar of their hearts. He well knew what a sleepy disease the best Christians are troubled with, and therefore he had need to be stirring them up, and awaking them to their duty. (2) The constancy of his work, "As long as I am in this tabernacle." The body is called a tabernacle, in respect of its movableness and frailty, and in opposition to that house, "eternal in the heavens." And it is observable how he limits his serviceableness to them. Death puts an end to all our ministerial usefulness; but till that time he judged it meet to be aiding their faith; our life and labour must end together. 2. The motive stimulating him to this diligence; "knowing that I must shortly put off this tabernacle, even as the Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me." (1) He reflects upon the speediness or near approach

of his death. "I must (shortly) put off this my tabernacle" (2 Tim. iv. 6). (2) The necessity of his death: It is not I may, but I must put off this my tabernacle. (3) The voluntariness of his death; for voluntariness is consistent enough with the necessity of the event. He saith not, "I must be torn, or rent, by violence from it"; but "I must depose, or lay it down." The law of mortality binds all, good and bad, young and old, the most useful and desirable saints whom the world can worst spare, as well as useless and undesirable sinners (Rom. viii. 10). The continuance of these our tabernacles, or bodies, is short, whether we consider them absolutely or comparatively. 1. Absolutely. If they should stand seventy or eighty years, which is the longest duration (Psa. xc. 10), how soon will that time run out! 2. Comparatively. Let us compare our time in these tabernacles. (1) Either with eternity, or with Him who inhabits it, and it shrinks up into nothing (Psa. cxxxix. 5). Or (2) with the duration of the bodies of men in the first ages of the world, when they lived many hundred years. The reasons of putting off the earthly tabernacle so soon, are—1. The law of God, or His appointment. 2. The providence of God ordering it suitably to this appointment. And both these in pursuance of a double design. (1) By dissolving the tabernacles of wicked men, God pays that debt of justice owing to the first Adam's sinful posterity (Rom. vi. 23). (2) By cutting off the lives of good men, God pays to Christ the reward of His sufferings, the end of His death which was to bring many sons to glory (Heb. ii. 10). Inference 1. Must we put off these tabernacles? Is death necessary and inevitable? Then it is our wisdom to sweeten to ourselves that cup which we must drink; and make that as pleasant to us as we can which we know cannot be avoided. Inference 2. Must we put off these tabernacles of flesh? How necessary is it that every soul look in season, and make provision for another habitation? Inference 3. Must we put off our tabernacles, and that shortly? What a spur is this to a diligent redemption and improvement of time? You have but a little time in these tabernacles; what pity is it to waste much out of a little! Inference 4. Must we shortly put off these our tabernacles? Then slack your pace and cool yourselves; be not too eager in the prosecution of earthly designs. Inference 5. If we must shortly put off these tabernacles, then the groaning and mourning time of all believers is but short; how heavy soever their burden be, yet they shall carry it but a little way. Inference 6. Must you shortly put off those tabernacles? Then spare them not whilst you have them, but employ them for God with all diligence. Inference 7. Look beyond this embodied state, and learn to live now as you hope to live shortly; begin to be what you expect to be. (*John Flavel.*) *Man's earthly mode of being*:—I. HERE IS A FELT DUTY CONNECTED WITH THIS MODE OF BEING. "I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up," &c. The spiritual excitation of the Christian soul. He sought to put Christians in mind of five things which he refers to in the context: That spiritual excellence is the great end of Christianity (vers. 3, 4); that spiritual excellence is progressive in its nature (vers. 5, 7); that it requires very diligent cultivation (vers. 5, 10); that it is the only guarantee of salvation (ver. 9); and that it will ultimately meet with a glorious reward (ver. 11). Now there are three important things implied in the apostle's aim—1. A paramount necessity for the Christian ever to feel these things. His own progress and the conversion of the world depend upon this. 2. A sad tendency in the Christian to forget these things. 3. An obligation which one Christian has to endeavour spiritually to excite others by these things. II. A DESTINED CHANGE THAT AWAITS THIS MODE OF BEING. "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle." 1. The nature of the change. It is a putting off the tabernacle. 2. The nearness of the change. "Shortly." 3. The assurance of the change. "Knowing." It is not a subject of doubt. III. A GLORIOUS CAUSE THAT MUST OUTLIVE THIS MODE OF BEING. "Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance." Three things implied: 1. The necessity of Christianity to posterity. All generations require it; therefore it must be handed down. 2. The felt interest of the good in posterity. They are far more anxious to bequeath truth and godliness than estates or empires. 3. The capacity of men to help posterity. Through a holy life, and instructions oral or written. Properly estimate thy mortal mode of life. Thou art dwelling in a tabernacle. I would not have thee ascetically to despise thy body, for it is the workmanship of God; an exquisite instrument of the soul; the inlet of the material, and the outlet of the spiritual. But I would have thee to remember that it is not thyself, but a temporary habitation of that soul of thine, which is identified with a gospel in which the universe is interested, and upon which the salvation of thy race depends. Realise the vastness

of the work thou hast to do while in thy frail tabernacle, and do it. (*Homilist.*) **That ye may be able, after my decease.**—*A noble endeavour and desire* :—I. THE APOSTLE'S ENDEAVOUR. 1. The first thing required to this endeavour is learning. (1) They are dangerous teachers, that never were learners. While they will not be scholars of truth, they become masters of error. They must know their winds, ebbings and flowings, creeks and sea-marks, that will be fishers. Wherein consists this learning? Not in a theory of divers arts, but in the sober use and discreet application of divinity. (2) Some think a minister hath no great need of learning, because he is to speak to the unlearned (*Heb. v. 11, 12*). 2. The next thing required to this endeavour is an honest and religious life. If this have been bad before thy calling, redeem it now. The minister that spends himself like a taper to light others, must not himself go out with an ill savour. An innocent life is a silent testimony of a good minister. 3. The last thing required to perfect this endeavour is constant labour. Pray the Lord to send forth labourers, not loiterers, into His harvest. II. THE APOSTLE'S PURPOSE. 1. "That ye may be able." All is for your sakes, this preaching, this remembering, this writing, all for you. 2. "After my decease," &c. The apostles did not only preach to us vocally while they lived, but even now also exemplarily by their former conversation, and still doctrinally by their holy rules. The words of a preacher die not with him, but live in the hearers' hearts, and shall either convert them here, or convince them hereafter. (*Thos. Adams.*) *The Christian's usefulness in and after death* :—It is worthy of remark how frequently the inspired writers insist on fundamental doctrines. They had, indeed, evidently no desire to tie down either themselves or their converts to any one set of truths, whilst there were others which God's Spirit was ready to unfold. On the contrary, they speak reprovably of that indolence or indifference which made men rest in first principles when it became them to go on to perfection; but nevertheless they had no idea of men abandoning the first principles, as though they were not necessary to the more advanced inquirer. Now, the first thing we wish to point out is the sincere desire for the glory of God in the salvation of sinners, which must have animated the man who could breathe the language of our text. We read in such language an entire forgetfulness of self, the indication of a pure zeal for the welfare of the Church. If carnal motives had actuated the apostle, he would probably have desired that his departure might be injurious to the Church. Suppose that, having been kept sound in the faith, so long as he ministered amongst them, numbers were afterwards to decline, what a testimony would seem to be given to his power and faithfulness as contrasted with those of his successors in office! Something of the same kind is frequently occurring in the world. The felt injury which results from the loss of an individual causes him greater glory than even all the benefits which he may have been enabled to effect. When, for example, a statesman, who has guided with a master hand the vessel of the commonwealth through the breakers and shoals, is withdrawn from his post whether by death or intrigue, and the rudder is given into a feebler grasp, what, if he sought only his own reputation, would that statesman more desire than that dangers should threaten and shipwreck to the state seem inevitable? It would be by the proud inferiority of those who filled his place, that his own greatness would become most conspicuous. And we are not without examples of the same kind in regard of the ministers of Christ. Now, we have hitherto simply argued upon the evidence which we think is furnished by our text to the humility of the apostle, of the readiness of St. Peter to be counted nothing, and less than nothing, provided the cause of Christ might prosper and prevail. But now we wish to take a somewhat different view of the passage. We have already said, that in all probability the apostle was not reckoning upon what might be done by his successors towards preserving in his converts the remembrance of the truths he had taught. He appears rather to have calculated upon the permanence of his own instructions, when himself should have been withdrawn by death. This is very observable. He announces his determination of putting the Church in remembrance as long as he lived; arguing, manifestly, that it would never be safe for him to relax in his work; nevertheless he reckons on the Church retaining the remembrance, when death should have silenced his monitorial voice. You will perceive there is here something like a contradiction. If it were necessary to be always putting them in remembrance whilst he lived, how could he hope that there would not be forgetfulness when he was dead? We think it possible that the apostle had reference to what was likely to be the power of his death; and if so, there is a beauty and a pathos in the passage which is not to be surpassed in the

whole range of Scripture. There is often practically far more of power in the death than in the life of a religious individual. There is something so hallowed around the memory of the dead, something so spiritual and unearthly, that the most hardened are more touched by the remembered words of the departed than by all the utterances of the living. When memory syllables to us the admonitions of those who lie mouldering in the dust, it is almost as if a spectre spoke, and we start and shrink as if in contact with a messenger from the invisible world. Neither is this the only or the chief reason why death gives this impressiveness and this permanence to inculcated truth. It is in death that a man puts to the proof the worth of the principles which he has spent life in recommending and enforcing; and if he be enabled, during the taking down of the "earthly house of this tabernacle," to give evidence of a joy and a peace of spirit which are to be accounted for only by the truth of what he has taught, why there is yet more in his tranquillity and assurance than in all the fervour and power which he may have thrown into his lessons to convince men that he has followed no cunningly devised fable. It is this which lays so great a weight of responsibility upon those who are much with the righteous in the season of their sickness and death. Yes, more, far more, may be done by dying than has been effected by living. It is a blessed thought, and appears in no common degree to strip death of its repulsiveness, and even invest it with beauty. This is what I call victory in death. Even as the Captain of our salvation is said to have destroyed death, so may we, treading humbly in his footsteps, use it to undermine the empire of Satan. Of this the Church teems with proof. Thus was it that confessors and martyrs prevailed. Oh! it should mightily encourage us to persevere in enduring to the end, to know that when we shall be weakest then we may be strongest. In place of feeling when we lie down on our death-bed that all is over, and we can do nothing more, we may feel that if the dying statesman cannot benefit the state, nor the expiring warrior beat down the foe, the departing Christian may fight the battle of God, and speed the march of Christianity. We shall not die as teachers; we shall, God helping, teach in dying. The tears which are wept over us shall be from the fountains of the heart broken up by our removal. Our memory shall haunt the scene of our labours. Now, suppose we take another view of this text. It is not unlikely that St. Peter had respect to his writings when he announced that he would endeavour to instruct after death. He preached to one generation; he wrote for every future. It was his hope and endeavour, as announced in our text, to instruct after death. He did not wish to be forgotten, so that when he passed away from earth he might survive in his writings, and still be instrumental in winning souls to Christ. There is something very grand and ennobling about this ambition. It seems to me that the man who entertains and accomplishes the wish of doing the work of an evangelist after death, triumphs over death in the highest possible sense. I could almost dare to say that he never dies. There is many a private Christian who is long remembered and venerated, whose example is efficacious long after his decease, and whose lessons operate when the tongue which delivered them has mouldered into dust. And we call it the destruction, the abolition of death, when man may thus do good notwithstanding his decease. This is true immortality; for such as these the curse is wholly done away. They know no pause in the highest employments. And may it not be lawful to desire and to strive for the being thus held in remembrance after death? As Christians, we should pant to bring glory to God. We should not be willing to be circumscribed by life. The battle is to go on, and we should long to take part. The Church is to be edified, and we should crave for employment; yea, it might be as pure and as humble a wish as ever was breathed, though it might sound like that of one eager for human distinction, if it did not suffice us to be useful to others whilst we tabernacled amongst them, but if, throwing onwards our thoughts to yet distant days, we were to address our fellow-men in the words of the apostle: "We will endeavour that ye may be able after our decease to have these things always in remembrance." Now, we cannot conclude without pointing out to you the exquisite composedness with which St. Peter speaks of death, and without breathing a prayer that when our last hour shall be near we may as placidly expect its approach. The apostle evidently contemplates without apprehension his dissolution, though he knew that he must die a cruel and ignominious death. And his only anxiety is for the welfare of those from whom he should be separated. It only argues terror of death when men shrink from making arrangements in anticipation of their dissolution. I love to hear the dying Christian speak

calmly of the churchyard where he wishes to be buried, of the distribution of his property, of the place where his children are to live. I feel that he is ready for his last dread account, when he can thus, without flinching, direct all which has concern to his being numbered with the dead; but the noblest thing of all is when the dying Christian shows that his last thoughts are on the welfare of the Church and the glory of God. The wounded warrior, as the life-blood ebbs away, will sometimes kindle at the noise of the battle. He will half raise himself from the earth, listen to the distant shout, and forget his anguish as he fancies that he hears the triumph of his comrades in arms. Yes, chivalry has such stories to tell; but Christianity has nobler. The servants of Christ, when they can no longer join the war, will breathe out the soul in longings for its success. They will think on the yet vast powers of heathenism—on the aboundings of vice—on the spreadings of infidelity; and, though about to put off their armour and enter into rest, will give their last thought to the struggle, and their last prayer for the triumph of the hosts of the Lord. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *A good man's endeavour to compensate for the limitations of a mortal life:*—It is one of the noblest protests of man against mortality. "I will endeavour that after my decease," &c. Many have been the protests of man against mortality, or his efforts to modify its effect. One toils night and day life through to establish a reputation; another a business; another to bequeath a fortune; another, like Peter, to leave behind an influence which shall ennoble other lives (*Gen. xi. 4; Job xix. 23, 24, &c.*). 1. Here observe the desire is not that after Peter's decease people should remember him as much as "the things" he had taught them. To the true minister the message is of infinitely more importance than himself. 2. The ambition of Peter is that he should aid the memories of his brethren in the best direction and for the highest purpose. 3. There is another law which Peter recognises, namely, that by which the utterances of a teacher are not unfrequently best remembered when he is gone—"after my decease." Peter himself had remembered his Lord's words best at such a time (*Matt. xxvi. 75; Luke xxii. 61; see also John ii. 22, xii. 16, &c.*). Now what are those things which Peter considers of such importance for men to remember? (*See vers. 8, 9, 10, 12.*) (1) The largeness of the Divine provision—"All things that pertain unto life and godliness." (2) The promise of its bestowal—"Exceeding great and precious promises." (3) The ultimate end of all—"That ye may become," &c. Now we come to the bearing of all this upon human consecration—"Add to your faith virtue," &c. Here is a summary of Divine grace and human duty. These are the things which he wishes them to remember. "These things" are the conditions of "fruitfulness," vision, and steadfastness, and these are the things that make human life great. Now, he would not have them think that this progressiveness in the Divine life was an easy task. Again, observe that he who asks diligence of them pledges himself also in our text, "Yea, I will give diligence," &c. Now, these are the words of an aged man—a man who during life has undergone much discipline, and, consequently, who has been matured and ennobled. How closely such lives are knitted with the lives of others, and how far-reaching their influence! This is one of the great redeeming features of the brevity of human life: that it projects its force into the ages, yea, into eternity. Death can do nothing to such a man except to transfigure him. (*D. Davies.*)

Vers. 16-20. We have not followed cunningly devised fables.—*From starlight to twilight:*—I. THE MYTHICAL MODE. "In declaring the power and advent of the Lord Jesus, we were not as those who are familiar only with the popular myths which are deemed sufficient for the multitude; we were, rather, as the favoured few who are admitted to the secret mysteries, who are permitted to know the truths that underlie the fables and stories which fill the popular imagination." What, then, were these "myths," and what the "mysteries"? The myths, in their origin, were simply poetical conceptions of the processes and phenomena of Nature. Thus, for instance, the sun sinks, or seems to sink, every night into the sea; in the fervid East, moreover, it dries up the streams. But "sun," and "sea," and "streams" had, in the infancy of the world, masculine and feminine names, as, indeed, they still have in most of the languages spoken by men. These masculine and feminine names were soon turned into proper personal names by the vivid imagination of men to whom the world was fresh and wonderful; and hence, instead of saying "The sun sinks into the sea," they said, "The Sun-God sinks into the lap of the Sea-Goddess, and rests until their child, the Dawn, wakes him from his slumbers."

Instead of saying "The sun dries up the stream," they told a pretty story of a certain River Nymph whom the Sun-God dearly loved, and who would give him no peace till he came to her in all the glory of his heavenly pomp, beholding which she was forthwith consumed. All the great and many of the lesser processes of Nature were thus mythicized, turned into poems and stories—the succession of day and night, the dependence of men and cattle on the shining of the sun, on the fruits of the earth, on the sweet, fresh water of the mountain streams. Still, under all these freaks of fancy there lay concealed the germs of many religious truths, as, for example, these: that the Powers which ruled in heaven cared for the earth and blessed it; that God, or the gods, might take human form and dwell among men; and that there was a fair spiritual world, larger, brighter, happier than the world of sense, into which even man might pass and rise. As years and centuries elapsed, these truths were forgotten out of mind, as were many of the ethical maxims deduced from them. In order that they might not altogether perish from the memory and life of man, certain "mysteries" were founded and ordained. To be "admitted," that is, to be initiated, into these mysteries, was an honour granted to comparatively few of the millions of antiquity; and it was granted only after they had passed through a probation which either was, or was affirmed to be, terrible to any but men of a brave and constant spirit. Their good faith was thus put to a severe preliminary test; tremendous oaths binding them to secrecy were administered to them; to divulge a mystery or to intrude upon it uncalled were offences punishable with death. Now, says St. Peter, when we made known to you the power and advent of our Lord Jesus Christ, we were telling you no pretty popular myth, no fable of a Divine person who came down and dwelt with men, such as you have often heard from your priests or rhapsodists, such as you may still hear from your heathen neighbours. We had been initiated into the very mysteries of truth; we had mastered their secrets, that we might divulge them to you. We spake of that which we ourselves had seen, and handled, and felt, of the Word of Life. II. THE MIRACULOUS MODE. From the mythical St. Peter passes to the miraculous method of revelation. Where was that inner temple, that sacred and oracular shrine, in which, after their initiation, the apostles were admitted to the mysteries and stood to be eye-witnesses of the unclouded majesty of the Incarnate God? It was on "the holy mount," on which the Lord Jesus was transfigured before their eyes. But why does the apostle select this scene in our Lord's life—the Transfiguration—before all others? Simply, I suppose, because at that moment, in that scene, all that was most marvellous in the Lord Jesus Christ was shown forth in its most marvellous forms. The "advent" of Christ was a miracle; every word and deed that disclosed His Divine "power" was a miracle: but the miraculous element of His "advent and power" culminated in His Transfiguration. III. THE PROPHETIC MODE. After describing the honour and glory done to Christ, and the voice which came to Him from the glory that shone around Him on the holy mount, the apostle adds: "But we have something surer still—the prophetic word, whereunto ye do well that ye give heed," &c. Why does he call it "something surer still"? First, because it is "as a lamp shining in a dark place." Now, as we all know, we can find our way even on the darkest night, if only we have "a lamp to our feet"; and, moreover, we can see to do any necessary work, if only we have a lamp shining over our head. In plain words, the apostle's argument is that miracles are not guides, or not safe guides; but that, on the contrary, we are under a guidance that is both good and safe when we follow the moral rules of the written Word. The Divine Word has another claim on our regard and preference. For this "lamp" which shines so helpfully on the activities of human life, has been lit and is fed by God Himself. "No prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation." That is to say, the prophetic Word is not a mere logical deduction from the facts of life and Nature; nor is it a mere guess at things to come, based on a knowledge of what has taken place in the past. There was something higher than human wisdom in the prophetic utterances, something safer than the prognostics of human reason; for prophecy never came only from the will of man, but holy men, borne along by the Holy Ghost, as the ship is borne before the wind, spake the words that were given them from God. There is a Divine wisdom, therefore, an infallible wisdom; there is a Divine power, an almighty power, in the inspired Word, even when it is most human and imperfect in outward form. This was one contrast in the apostle's mind: and the other was that the prophecies of Scripture were superior to the oracles uttered by the ministrants of heathen shrines. When these oracles were consulted, they gave "private interpretations." IV. But, finally, THE SPIRITUAL MODE

of revelation is even safer and better than the prophetic mode, as much better as sunlight is better than lamplight. When Christ is once with us, and in us, what further proof can we require of His "advent" or of His "power" to quicken and redeem? With Christ to teach us what He would have us do, we can dispense with all other teachers, all other aids. Myths! We have been initiated into the very mysteries of the faith, and are joyful eye-witnesses of His majesty. Miracles! He has wrought the great miracle upon us, bringing a clean thing out of an unclean, opening our blind eyes, unstopping our deaf ears, quickening us from our death in trespasses and sins. Laws and hopes! When once we have personally laid hold on Christ, we are a law unto ourselves, and move in the freedom of a glad obedience to His will; we have a hope already fulfilling itself in us, and yet opening up into widening vistas of light—the hope of eternal life and service and peace. The morning star has risen in our hearts; the day has dawned; the darkness is over and gone, and, with the darkness, all our need of the lamps and stars which once made night tolerable to us. (*S. Cor., D.D.*) *Apostolic testimony*:—I. A DISCLAIMING OF ALL FABULOUS MIXTURES WITH THE SACRED TRUTH. II. A PROCLAIMING OF THE VIRTUE AND EXCELLENCY OF CHRIST. 1. The manifestation itself. "We made known unto you." The apostles did not hide the mysteries of salvation revealed to them (*Rom. xvi. 25, 26*). (1) This doctrine makes to the conviction of them that conceal the way of the Lord (*Matt. xxiii. 13; Rom. i. 18*). (2) This reproves them also that content themselves with their ignorances, and never labour for knowledge. 2. The matter manifested. "The power and coming of our Lord." By this the apostle intends the sum of the gospel, and the full salvation that is given us by Christ, in whom are all the treasures of blessedness. Of this he makes two distinct parts. (1) That Christ came in the flesh, suffered for our sins, and rose again for our justification. (2) The virtue and efficacy of this in our hearts, when we manifest the fruit of it in our well living and well believing. III. A TESTIFYING OF THIS, AND THAT FROM THE SUREST WITNESSES. In witnesses there are three things especially required. 1. That they be of good report and repute; for a bad and vicious life enervates their testimony. But these were holy men; He that sent them to give testimony did not deny them sanctimony (*John xvii. 17*). 2. That they be eye-witnesses; so were these. 3. That they agree in their testimony. (*Thos. Adams*.) *Christianity not a cunningly devised fable*:—"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables." The infidel says we have. This is no new cry. It is as old as Christianity itself. The apostles themselves were said to have been imposed upon. Since that day the ground of attack has been changed. We are now told that the apostles were the impostors. I. THE STATEMENTS THAT HAVE BEEN DENOUNCED AS FABLES. II. THE PERSONS WHO ARE SAID TO HAVE FABRICATED THESE FABLES. Infidelity asserts that they were deceivers. Of this we might justly demand proof. They appear to be men of strict integrity. They do not hesitate to expose each other's faults or to confess their own. They appear to be utterly destitute of the art of deception. 1. Is it pretended that these grand impostors were men of renown for their talents and influence, and that, therefore, they acquired an ascendancy over the public mind? This is at once disproved by the fact that, at the very outset of their career, the Jewish Sanhedrin perceived that they were "unlearned and ignorant men" (*Acts iv. 13*), whilst Gentile magistrates and governors regarded them as weak, demented enthusiasts, whose fittest treatment was scourging and imprisonment. 2. Will it be contended that in the construction of their scheme, they adapted their fables to the popular taste? This is at once denied. Their system was absolutely opposed to parties of every class, to men of every clime. How different was the system of Mohammed! and how different have been the schemes of more modern infidels! How careful have these impostors been to pander to the passions of those they have sought to delude, presenting or promising whatever has been adapted to the views and the tastes of the proud, the worldly-minded, the sensual, and the profane! 3. But it is said that they were fools and fanatics. This assertion is more easy than the proof. They were, indeed, accused of folly and of madness, but they convinced their accusers that they spake the words of truth and soberness. Their writings certainly afford evidence that they were men of more than ordinary mental vigour. Their style is nervous and plain. Their story is simply and unaffectedly told. 4. But they were actuated by ambition, it is said. On what object was their ambition fixed? Worldly honour or worldly power is usually the great object of the ambitious. Besides, it was not their ambition to exalt themselves, though they had opportunities of doing so (*Acts iii.*,

xiv.). The entire history of the apostles is pregnant with proof that they sought not their own, but the things of Jesus Christ. What things might have been gain to them, those they counted loss for Him. 5. Impostors generally expect to get something by the impositions they practise; and the greater the risk of detection, or the danger of punishment, the greater is the gain, the hope of which is their animating motive. Now, what was the gain which prompted the apostles to devise and to execute their grand imposture? You must be aware, that so far as this world was considered, they had everything to lose, and nothing to gain. "Bonds and afflictions awaited them in every city." Will it be said that all this was the obstinacy of contumacy? that rather than avow the cheat, they readily underwent privations and sufferings? The life of reproach and trial the apostles lived, and the death of torture that they died, incontestably prove their sincerity.

III. BUT WHO WERE THE PARTIES ON WHOM THESE SO-CALLED FABLES WERE SO SUCCESSFULLY IMPOSED? 1. If the evangelic history had been a fraud, of course the apostles would have been most likely to succeed in the work of deception among the inhabitants of some barbarous clime; or, at any rate, among those who lived far away from the scenes where the plot was laid. Did they then travel into some remote or obscure region, where the inhabitants would have little inclination to suspect them, and less opportunity to detect their deceit? No; they began at Jerusalem. 2. Shortly afterwards, the apostles were induced to go unto the Gentiles; the one who was most active in this great missionary enterprise among the heathen, being a convert to the faith of Christ—not an original disciple of the Nazarene—and a convert, whose accession was one of the noblest triumphs of truth, of which the Church of Christ can boast. Do you not think that the disputer of that day would demand evidence before he gave credence to the statements of the apostles? Do you not think that the wise men of Greece, and the noble of Rome, would easily have detected the deceit of "Christ crucified," had it been a cunningly devised fable, and would indignantly have denounced its abettors as worthless impostors had they not been the ambassadors of God? IV. THE CONSISTENCY OF REVEALED TRUTH WITH REASON AND WITH COMMON SENSE. Let it, however, be remarked that those truths of Divine revelation, which it is necessary for us to understand in order to be saved, are so simple and plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool, needs not to mistake respecting them. And therefore we argue that they are not cunningly devised fables. 1. To begin at the beginning—we mention first the existence of one great, supreme Being, whom the Bible denominates God. This great doctrine is everywhere assumed throughout the sacred volume, and forms the foundation of all religion, and of all morality too. 2. This Bible professes to be a revelation from God, designed to teach us His will, and to point out to us the path that leads to immortal blessedness. Is there anything unreasonable in this? 3. Let us now proceed to ascertain whether those truths which we call, by way of eminence, the truths of the gospel, are incredible or absurd. The first we notice is the entire and universal depravity of man. Go where you will, do you not find your fellow-creatures depraved as well as degraded? Is not the hand that God has filled with plenteousness lifted up in daring rebellion against Him? 4. Another great doctrine is the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ. But it is objected that it is most unreasonable to suppose that the Divine Being should lavish so much love, as the doctrine of redemption supposes, on this insignificant world of ours, while there are so many worlds, and so many systems beside, filled with intelligent beings, all demanding the care of the Great Supreme as well as ourselves. We see nothing unreasonable in this supposition. Does the mother who watches and weeps over her sick or dying child, love her other children the less because her heart is so strongly drawn towards the afflicted one? Does it not magnify the Divine Being to know that when man had sinned and thereby excluded himself from the family of God, the Father of the spirits of all flesh spared not His own Son, in order that the banished ones might be restored? 5. And what inconsistency, either with reason or with common sense, can you find in the doctrines of justification or pardon righteously bestowed, because obtained by faith in the blood of Christ, and of the sanctification of the soul by the Spirit of Christ? V. Among the RESULTS of this lengthened inquiry into the evidences of Christianity, we trust will be—1. The confirmation of the believer in the truth as it is in Jesus. You know what you have believed. You know whom you have believed. You will not sell your birthright for a mess of pottage. 2. Another result we hope will be the establishment of such as may be wavering. 3. A third result we anticipate from this inquiry is a clearer perception of the nature of Christianity, and a deepened conviction of its value.

How vast are my obligations to the blessed God for having devised such a scheme for saving rebellious worms, and for having made it known to me. How necessary for me to avail myself of its privileges. (*P. C. Horton.*)

*The certainty of the Christian faith:—*I. THERE WAS NOTHING ABOUT THE APOSTLES OF WILD ENTHUSIASM. Before they staked everything, present life and life eternal, on the truth of Christianity, they had amplest proof that Jesus of Nazareth was the very Son of the Most High, the predicted Messiah. 1. The miracles wrought by Jesus were the capital proofs of His Messiahship. 2. The miracles of which Jesus Christ was the subject were among the signs of His glorious majesty by which the twelve recognised Him for the Redeemer. Of some of these prodigies, indeed, they were not spectators; not of the meteor star, which, on reaching His birthplace, hung over it. Nor yet, did they witness the sublime scene of His baptism. 3. The transfiguration, I observe, was that view of the Lord's majesty to which holy Peter reverts with singular fondness. II. LET US PASS TO A FEW MARKS OF CHRIST'S POWER AND MAJESTY EXHIBITED IN HIS PERSONAL CHARACTER. 1. The imperturbable temper of the Lord Jesus was among the shining proofs of His moral greatness and Divine nature. 2. His patient endurance of injuries has a further peculiarity about it, which denotes a more than human elevation of mind. For be it remembered that we are often debarred from revenging ourselves by want of power, or by fear of retribution. But Jesus was clothed with almightiness. 3. The condescension of this Man, so mighty in word and deed, to the mean and wretched and vicious whenever they craved His assistance, was another indication of a mind cast in a singular and heavenly mould. Nothing of this kind was found among the Pharisees and popular teachers of the day. 4. The wisdom of Jesus, so immensely beyond what His country, His years, His education gave reason to look for, must also have satisfied candid observers that He was from above. Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians tried their skill from morning to night, and were unscrupulous in the artifices they employed to entrap Him; but without effect. But there was a higher kind of wisdom in which Jesus stood alone. Who can peruse His discourses on moral and religious subjects; the Sermon on the Mount, the parables of the Ten Virgins, of the Prodigal Son, and not confess that no mere human mind of any age, least of all that of a Jew in an age so ignorant, corrupt, and superstitious, could possibly give birth to such pure and holy lessons? 5 The authority of our Lord's diction and manner was another ray of His native grandeur, which penetrated the souls of His adherents and ranks high among the proofs of His divinity. He swept away the treasured notions that had come down from father to son, by the right which belonged to Him as the infallible interpreter of heaven. He debated nothing. He rarely deigned to offer reasons or proofs. He never suggested any doctrine doubtfully. You recognise the style of One quite aware that He is as much above other teachers as the heaven is higher than the earth; and that to put Himself upon a level with them were to belie His own character and mission. 6. Once more His devotedness to God, so pure, so noble, so fervent, so invariable, was it not of a kind to distinguish Him from ordinary saints, as the sun from twinkling stars? His zeal for God's glory in a manner consumed Him. Whatever are the arrangements of Providence He rejoices in them precisely because they are the movements of God's will. (*J. N. Pearson, M.A.*)

*The credibility of Christianity:—*The Bible is no "cunningly devised fable." I. IF IT BE A FABLE, IT WAS NOT DEVISED HALF CUNNINGLY ENOUGH. I allude to many apparent inconsistencies in the Bible. What wise man, in devising a fabulous history, would have loaded it with such difficulties as these? II. IF IT BE A FABLE, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO GUESS BY WHAT CLASS OF PERSONS IT WAS DEVISED. "Kings," perhaps, "invented the Bible in order to keep their subjects in awe of their authority." "Priests," exclaims another, "were no doubt the authors." Yet there is a great deal written here against wicked priests also, which would scarcely have been inserted by them. Was it, then, the rich who devised this fable? Yet what is more common in the Bible than lessons on the worthlessness and vanity of riches? I need not ask whether the inventors of this fable are to be looked for among the poor. They are otherwise engaged than in writing books. "Some learned men, doubtless, compiled this book!" Still the same difficulty meets us. Learned men are often supposed to be proud of their wisdom; but here worldly wisdom is undervalued, and men are told that they must "become fools if they would be really wise" (1 Cor. iii. 18). Here, then, is a book, for which no probable author can be found, if it be a fable. III. IF IT BE A FABLE, IT IS UNACCOUNTABLE THAT IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN SO LONG AND SO EXTENSIVELY

FOLLOWED. IV. IF IT BE A FABLE, THE FOLLOWING OF IT HAS AT LEAST BEEN BENEFICIAL TO MANKIND. V. IF IT BE A FABLE, I MUST NEVERTHELESS FOLLOW IT TILL YOU CAN SHOW ME SOME MORE EXCELLENT WAY. I want a guide in my ignorance; I want a comforter in my troubles. Is human reason that guide? Alas! I find cause to distrust that at every step which I take. Is self-gratification the better comforter? What! to follow the devices and desires of my own heart in spite of this forbidding fable? If the gospel be not a fable, it is truth, and truth of such a nature that you will be saved or lost, according as you believe or neglect it. It must be "followed"; it must affect your heart and influence your life. (*J. Jowett, M.A.*) *All true*:—I. PETER'S PERSONAL PERSUASION OF THE TRUTH OF HIS RELIGION. "We have not," &c. There are seasons when we all feel anxious to know on what ground we stand, just because we cannot go into eternity thinking and guessing about some peradventure. We must have certitude then. II. OBSERVE PETER'S REPETITION OF THE OLD TRUTH ONCE AGAIN BEFORE HE DIES. The testimony of an old man like Peter, who, in his review of the past, felt happy and satisfied in the conviction of the truth he had professed, is worth many a volume of evidences to the Christian religion. III. THE HAPPINESS PETER HAD IN THE RECOLLECTIONS OF THE PAST. All aged people revert to the past with peculiar feelings of interest, if not enthusiasm. There is happiness in having good recollections—in having bright yesterdays to look back upon—in needing no desperate endeavours to forget. IV. THE WAY IN WHICH PETER FALLS BACK ON THE WORD OF GOD AS THE TRUE GROUND OF FAITH AND PEACE. "We have a more sure word of prophecy," &c. He had James and John, his companions, to think of. He had the glory of the mount and the transfiguration to dwell upon. But now he needed more. The friend may deceive you: the recollections of the past may be confused, but the word of the Lord abideth for ever. It is a sure word of prophecy. (*W. G. Barrett.*) *The value of moral evidence*:—Moral reasons are sufficient to guide men in the affairs of the present life. A man will embark on board a vessel which he only knows by the report of others to be seaworthy. He trusts to the skill of a captain and the effectiveness of a crew of whom he knows only by report. He embarks to go to a place which he only believes on the testimony of others to exist. All this he does to obtain a probable good. He acts similarly to escape an apprehended evil. When sick, he will send for a physician of whose skill he has only heard. He takes medicine which he does not certainly know will cure him. In these cases he acts reasonably. It is clear that when, in relation to the life to come, he refuses moral evidence, he acts unreasonably. (*C. Graham.*) *The Christian revelation to be presumed divine*:—The existence of God admitted, another question at once suggests itself. Has this Divine Being directly revealed Himself and made known His will to man? We were taught in childhood that He has. We say, first of all, that the very existence of this alleged revelation, in the form in which we find it, affords a presumption of its truth. 1. The first thing that strikes one on glancing at the books of the Old and New Testament, in which what is called the Christian revelation is contained, is the exceedingly heterogeneous character of their contents. A little of all ages, of all sorts of men, and of all varieties of human thought! But on even a cursory reading of these writings, heterogeneous as they seem, you cannot fail to be equally impressed with a second fact about them, that they have, after all, a strange and most striking unity. One spirit breathes throughout the whole. The same conception of God, as the eternal, self-existent, and infinite Creator, of His natural government of the world, and of His moral government of rational creatures; the same general notions of right and wrong; the same views of the design of human existence, of the individual responsibility of men, of the blessedness of well-doing and of the miseries of sin, of the guilt and want of mankind, of the justice, the goodness, and the grace of God, and of the way of reconciliation with Him. Nor does this unity of sentiment, of spirit, and of general scope and purpose seem less, but rather greater, the more carefully and thoroughly these various compositions are examined. That these men have not been mere copyists from each other, the specific diversities, and the accessions and progressive development of thought afford decisive proof. Two questions meet us therefore, namely, How came they, any of them, by views at once so unique in themselves and so immeasurably superior in intellectual and moral elevation to those attained by the historians, the poets, and the sages of all the world besides? And then, how came they, writing separately and each for his own particular end, living also some of them centuries and even thousands of years apart, so to harmonise with and to supplement each other that, taken together, their writings

form one grand and well-adjusted whole? We will not now assert that with these questions before us the conviction must arise that there is something supernatural in all this. 2. The presumption thus created by the existence of the Christian revelation in the form in which we find it, is greatly strengthened, we further observe, by the obvious and admitted fact that it has entered most profoundly into the life and thought of the world. Nor can it be said that other pretended systems of religion have done the same. There are no facts of history by which such an assertion can be justified. 3. Still further, a third fact lies before us in regard to the asserted Christian revelation, which, fairly considered, must predispose us to receive it. The effects which it has wrought, both on individual man and on society, have uniformly been salutary in a very eminent degree. These, too, are allowed to be the proper products of Christianity, and not things incidentally connected with it. 4. Not less significant is a fourth fact which presents itself at the outset to the inquirer about the Christian revelation. It has thus far stood secure against all assaults of those who have sought to overthrow it, although these assaults have been many, persistent, and often conducted with great ability and learning. The ancient prophets, each in his turn, encountered the resistance of unbelief. Then followed the long and mighty struggle between Christianity and the prevailing systems of philosophy and religion throughout the Roman empire. It was a contest of life and death. Yet, after all, the Christian faith held on its way and triumphed. So it has been in the modern world. The wits, philosophers, and savants of France, in the last century assailed it with pungent satire, with the coarsest ribaldry. English Deism, in a higher style of thought, with greater strength of reasoning, with no little real learning, enlisting champions who, to great metaphysical acumen, added untiring patience and fixed determination, attacked the historical credit, the supernatural credentials, and the asserted revelations of the Christian Scriptures. There was no lack of will, or talent, or diligent endeavour. 5. It is a fact which no one tolerably informed as to the condition and movements of the religious world will question, that at no period of its history was Christianity more vital, more powerful, more expectant and progressive than at the present time. Can falsehood be imagined to have such vitality? 6. Consider, too, that if the Christian revelation, as it has been received for ages, is Divine, it must be the greatest of misfortunes to reject it as a fable. If it be indeed a sun kindled of God to illuminate the moral darkness of our world, it will shine on to cheer, and warm, and bless the happy multitudes who welcome it, though you shall avert your eyes and hide from its beams in the thick shades of unbelief. You have nothing—nothing—to gain if it be false. You have everything to hope for life, for death, for an immortality beyond, if, as you have been taught from childhood to believe, it is indeed a real utterance, a precious gift of the ever-living God to man. (*R. Palmer, D.D.*)

The power and coming of our Lord.—*Christ's power and coming manifested by the apostle's doctrine and preaching:—*

I. THE OFFICE AND MINISTRY OF THE APOSTLE. And that principally consisted in this: In making known the power and miracles, the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But this doctrine that the apostle preached consists of two heads: 1. The coming of Christ. By which is meant His incarnation and appearance in the flesh. This was that mystery that was hid from ages, but was made manifest in these last days. 2. The power of Christ, the apostle is said to make known, which indeed at first seemed much disguised. For who would have expected any miraculous discoveries of power from One whom they had seen poor and helpless Himself? And yet in this state of weakness He was made strong, grew bold and confident, despising the pride, trampling upon the bravery of this world, resisting temptations, triumphing over the powers and charms of riches. Now to make this power known to the world is to show how much all men may be benefited by the power of Christ, if they shall love Him and believe in Him. For to as many as receive Him gives He power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe in His name. **II. THE RULES HE OBSERVED IN MAKING KNOWN THE POWER AND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST.** They used all honest and justifiable arts in preaching the gospel, but declined all ways of sophistry and deceit. As if they had said, Our cause is too plain and evident to need such poor artifices as lies and fables to support it. 1. The consideration of what hath been said should encourage us to embrace this article of our faith, Christ Jesus came in the flesh, and all others, with that zeal and love, as those who will live and die by them. 2. As we are to receive the doctrines of Christianity as most true and unquestionable, so we ought to take care that we build not upon this foundation, hay and stubble (2 Cor. iii. 12). 3. Let us

bethink ourselves how much we are obliged to God for this signal mercy and blessing, the making known to us the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh. Methinks our hearts should be all on fire, and burn within us while we are discoursing and talking of it. (*R. Warner, D.D.*) *The power and coming of our Lord*:—I. THE COMING OF CHRIST WAS IN POWER. If all the devils in hell could have hindered it, He had been stayed. The kings of the earth conspire and take counsel together; but neither their power nor their policy could withstand His coming. Neither was the glory of Christ wanting, though it conveyed itself in a less public form. He had a famous harbinger to go before Him and prepare His way. There was majesty in His humility. II. THE GOSPEL IS NO WEAK THING, BUT COMES IN POWER. Christ came once unto men; He comes still unto men in the Spirit. The law came with more terror, but the gospel comes with more power. For that could not turn his heart that bare it in his hand; but the gospel is able to change the man (*Rom. i. 16*). III. THE WORD OF GOD HATH MORE POWER THAN ALL MEN'S EDICTS. IV. THE INVINCIBLE POWER OF THE GOSPEL IS MANIFESTED IN THROWING DOWN THOSE BULWARKS RAISED AGAINST IT. (*Thos. Adams.*) *Eye-witnesses of His majesty.*—*The majesty of Christ*:—In the midst of the darkest scenes of humiliation, a peculiar majesty was seen to accompany our Lord. These signs of heavenly greatness confirmed the faith of His disciples when sinking under the pressure of disappointment and affliction. I. The apostles were witnesses of His majesty when they witnessed His matchless CHARACTER. 1. He was made in the likeness of man, and He took on Him the infirmities of our nature; but He was unstained by our sins and imperfections. 2. But in Christ we not only see a character without sin, but perfect in its nature; manifesting the highest virtues in transcendent excellence. 3. With these celestial excellencies of character is joined an habitual and singular elevation above the world. His affections and labours are directed to spiritual and eternal objects. They elevate Him in the midst of ignominy; and give glory and majesty to His shameful death. 4. In Christ the various and seemingly opposite graces of character combine; and everywhere appear in their due place and on their proper occasion. II. That in correspondence with the perfection of the character of Christ, is His MANNER while fulfilling the work which His Father had given Him to do. There was a calm and simple, yet deep solemnity, in His demeanour and words, suited to the truths which He declared, and the office which He sustained—which manifested also His sense of their infinite importance, and tended powerfully to affect the minds of those whom He addressed. Without the slightest tendency to haughtiness or pride, a Divine authority. He manifested the native greatness of His character. III. There were EXTRAORDINARY EVENTS AND WONDERS in heaven and on earth, which in the midst of the deepest humiliation, gave indications of the majesty of Christ. (*S. MacGill, D.D.*) *He received from God the Father honour and glory.* *The vision of Christ's majesty*:—I. THE PERSON TO WHOM THIS HONOUR IS GIVEN. "He received." II. FROM WHOM HE RECEIVED IT. The Father gives, the Son receives. The Father speaks from heaven, the Son hears it. III. WHAT HE RECEIVED. 1. Christ would receive honour of His Father. 2. All honour and glory is Christ's, as being delivered to Him by the Father (*Luke x. 22*). 3. All true and blessed honour comes from God, and is to be sought there. IV. THE TIME WHEN THE APOSTLES BEHELD, AND THEIR MASTER RECEIVED, THIS GLORY AND MAJESTY. 1. "When there came." Why did the apostles single out the transfiguration, more than any other event, to exemplify Christ's majesty, and the honour conferred on Him by the Father? (1) Because Moses and Elias appeared to Him there: in all the rest of His miracles He had no company but men on earth, now He had a testimony from two glorious saints in Paradise. (2) Because He was adorned with celestial glory. Nothing of earth was seen, but a Divine and heavenly majesty appeared. 2. "Such a voice." This is the voice that shall one day be heard from one end of the world to the other. 3. "From the excellent glory." There be glories in the world, but they are not excellent (*Gen. xlix. 3, 4*). This glory is admirable. (1) For dignity. It is a glory: and this hath been the scope of most men's endeavours and reaches. (2) For clarity. It is not a hidden, but a revealed glory (*Col. iii. 4*). Clear, both for condition, it shall be excellent; for cognition and apprehension, it shall be seen in the full excellency of it. It is an everlasting solstice; the length is interminable, the brightness unchangeable, the fulness unvariable. (3) For verity. It shall be indeed, not in show only, but upon us. (4) For the eternity. If it had an end, it were not excellent. V. THE MATTER AND SUBSTANCE OF THE TESTIMONY. 1. "This"; the word shows Him to be that Messiah, long before prophesied, and

now manifested. This, singularly; not another, but this is He. 2. "My Son," consubstantially, because begotten of Mine own substance. Originally Mine, by union of nature; though in Him others be made Mine also, by adoption of grace. 3. "Beloved," eternally; not in time accepted, but before all beginning begotten. 4. "In whom I am well pleased," and never was offended: all other men were the children of wrath; I could not be pleased with them; but in this Son I rest. (*Thos. Adams.*) *The Father well pleased in the Son*:—I. It is very important that you have right thoughts of the Sonship of Christ, or of the sense in which Christ is affirmed to be God's Son. Is it clear from Scripture that Christ is the Son of God, in such sense as to prove Him Divine; for St. Paul argues from His Sonship, His superiority to angels, "Unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee?" II. We are now to consider the statement, that in this beloved Son God "is well pleased." We shall now regard the Son solely in His character of Mediator—that character which He was born to assume. The Father may be considered as "well pleased" in His Son, first, because Christ's mediation magnified all the attributes of God, and secondly, because it met all the necessities of man. And now, having investigated the causes of the Father's being "well pleased" in the Son, it becomes us to ask you whether, when Christ is displaying His character of a Saviour, you, too, are "well pleased" in Him. Judge your own restoration to God's forfeited image, by deciding whether any of the like reasons operate to make you "well pleased" in Christ. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Graduated certification of gospel truth*:—I. The Divine revelation which he had on the holy mount was CERTIFYING. II. The Divine revelation which he had in the inspired record was MORE CERTIFYING. 1. The written Word furnishes a greater variety of Divine manifestations. 2. The written Word offers opportunities to a larger number of witnesses. 3. The written Word supplies better conditions for the formation of a sound judgment. III. The Divine revelation that he had in his own consciousness was THE MOST CERTIFYING. Peter draws a comparison between the light of the Bible and the light of Christian consciousness, and implies that the latter is far more valuable than the former. 1. The one is a lamp, the other is a "day, or morning star." 2. The one is without, the other is within. 3. The one is temporary, the other is permanent. 4. The one is the harbinger of everlasting day, the other is not necessarily so. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 19-21. **A light that shineth in a dark place.**—*The Word of God a light shining in a dark place*:—I. In showing THE CORRECTNESS OF THIS DESCRIPTION, I would begin with reminding you that by the "dark place" we must understand this world in relation to its spiritual condition. But in the midst of all this darkness a light has still been shining, and that light is the Word of God. II. TO ILLUSTRATE IT BY A REFERENCE TO FACTS. Has it not uniformly come to pass that true religion has flourished or decayed in exact proportion to the degree in which the Bible has been disseminated or suppressed? 1. In practically applying the subject, the first inference which I shall deduce from it is that suggested by St. Peter himself in the text—seeing that there is such a light shining in a dark place, "ye will do well that ye take heed to it." Bear in mind the purpose for which it was vouchsafed: not to gratify a vain curiosity, not to puff up with fleshly wisdom, but to make wise unto salvation, to enlighten, convert, and purify the soul. Bear in mind that it is not enough to live under the light; you must also walk in the light. It is not enough that the light is around you; it must be also in you. You may have your understanding enlightened with Scriptural truths, and yet your heart may be "a dark place." 2. Seeing that there is such a light shining in a dark place, ye will do well to aid the diffusion of it. Having "taken heed to it" yourselves, let it be your care to extend the blessing of it to others. Can you, indeed, do otherwise? (*E. Cooper, M.A.*) *Unfulfilled prophecy a light provided for the Church of Christ*:—I. STATE SOME OF THE USES OF UNFULFILLED PROPHECY. 1. One use, of course, is to prove the truth and faithfulness of God's Word, establishing by implication His foreknowledge. 2. Another use of unfulfilled prophecy is guidance and direction. 3. Unfulfilled prophecy is also for warning both to the Church and to sinners—to the Church, that they may be found ready, with their loins girt, overcoming the evil, and waiting for the glory; to the world, that they may have opportunity to escape, or, if they refuse, be left without excuse in the rejection of the truth. 4. Hope is specially strengthened and sustained through the communication of what is to come. 5. Among many other uses of unfulfilled prophecy is the answer which it affords to the questionings of infidelity. II. THE

PRINCIPLES ON WHICH PROPHETICAL LANGUAGE AND ITS STATEMENTS SHOULD BE INTERPRETED. To the question, "How can we certainly discover the right way of interpreting unfulfilled prophecy," we answer at once, "By observing how God has interpreted prophecy in what has been fulfilled already." III. Let us now proceed to discuss in a few words the one pre-eminently great event of unfulfilled prophecy—THE SECOND COMING OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. This is the great focus of prophetic light, and all other events and circumstances are gathered in beautiful symmetry around it. IV. THE EVENTS WHICH WE BELIEVE WILL BE CONNECTED WITH THE ADVENT. (*C. J. Goodhart, M.A.*) *Scripture light the most sure light*:—I. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT A GOOD MAN MAY BE IN THE DARK. Was not David in the dark (2 Sam. xxii. 29)? Was not Job in the dark (Job xix. 8)? A good man may live and dwell in a place or town where no means of grace are; in a poor, dark, and ignorant corner of the world. Did not Job dwell in the land of Uz? As a good man may be offended and stumbled, so he may stumble into some mistakes and errors; erroneous times are dark times: every error is darkness, as truth is light. Ye see how it is in a room where there are many pictures; though ye see some of them presently, yet others have a silken curtain drawn before them, which ye see not immediately: so here, though God do reveal much unto you, yet there is a silken curtain that is still drawn before some truths, and therefore even a good man may be much mistaken. And if a good man may be under some temptation and sin, then he may be in the dark. II. THOUGH A GOOD MAN MAY BE IN THE DARK, YET HE HATH SCRIPTURE LIGHT TO WALK BY. God hath not left him comfortless, and without light, in obscure darkness. But have not even wicked men this light also of the Scripture, to walk by in their darkness? I answer, They have it as a blind man hath the sun. And though a wicked man doth hear and may read the Scripture, and know many truths which are therein contained, yet he doth not know the greatness of them. But may not a good man's eyes be held from this Scripture light? When he is converted, then are his eyes said to be opened, then is he anointed with the unction of the Holy One, and doth know all things necessary unto his salvation. He doth not shut his own eyes against any Scripture light. He knows more than he is able to utter and he feels more than he can speak. And though some Scripture truths may be hidden from him sometimes, yet he hath his intervals of sight. And though a good man may be in the dark, yet God doth not leave him so. III. THIS SCRIPTURE LIGHT IS THE MOST EXCELLENT, SAFE, AND SURE LIGHT: it is the light of lights; the most excellent light of all under God in Christ. For—1. It is a true light. There is God seen especially, and Christ seen; there also you see yourself and your own dirty face; there also you see the creatures that are in the room with you, and their emptiness; the emptiness of men, and of all comforts and relations. 2. As it is a true light, so it is an admirable and wonderful light. In other knowledges, the more ye know, the less ye admire; but in Scripture knowledge, the more light ye have, and the more ye know, the more you will lift up your hands and admire, at your own ignorance and God's grace. 3. As it is an admirable light, so it is a safe and sure light. Other false lights do lead men into fens and bogs; but we have a more sure and safe light, and the more of it fall's upon your eye, the more is your eye preserved. 4. As it is a safe and sure light, so it is a pleasant and satisfying light. Light is pleasant to the eye, and the eye ordinarily is not satisfied with seeing: but this is that light which doth bring men to rest; for when a man knows what shall be his portion for ever, then his heart is at rest, and not before. 5. As it is a pleasant, satisfying light, so it is a full and sufficient light, able to make the man of God perfect unto salvation. What state can you be in, but the Scripture will find a commandment for your rule, and a promise for your assistance and reward? 6. As it is a full and sufficient light, so it is a clear light, a light that shineth; it hath no thief in it, as many lights and candles have: not that there are no hard things therein, and difficulties. Yet what truth is in all the Scripture, which is necessary to salvation, but doth lie plain and clear? (Deut. xxx. 11-14; Rom. x. 6). 7. As it is a clear light, so it is the best light in the world, the most excellent light, a light beyond all other things which do pretend to light. (1) Wherein doth this Scripture light exceed or go beyond revelations or visions, and the light thereof? (a) This Scripture light, as you have seen, is a full light, a light which did shine forth at once in and by Jesus Christ. Revelations and visions are more particular; though God did sometimes speak in that way and manner, yet then He spake drop by drop; but now He hath, in these last days, spoken His full mind by His Son. These were but as the apples which did fall

from the tree of wisdom; but in the gospel and Scripture, ye have the whole tree itself. (b) Scripture light is the highest light; Scripture dispensation the highest dispensation: the dispensation of visions and revelations was of a lower rank. (c) This Scripture light is a more sure and certain light: for if God should now speak unto you by visions, or visional revelations, how would you know that this were the voice of God, and not a delusion of Satan? (d) There is no danger in tending upon and taking heed to this Scripture light. But if men do attend to revelations and visions, how easily may they be drawn to despise the Scripture, and such as do wait thereon! (e) Why but, you will say, may not God speak by extraordinary visions and revelations, in these days of ours? Though God may thus speak to some of His servants, yet if I have an itching desire after visions and revelations it is ill. (2) As for dreams and voices, the Scripture or the written Word of God, is more excellent than those; and the light of Scripture is the best light in compare with any light that may come from them. (3) As for impressions made upon the soul, whether by a particular word or without it; the Scripture, or the written Word of God, is more sure than those; and the light thereof the best and most excellent light in comparison with the light of impressions. If I do make an impression the certain judge of doctrines, then am I much deceived. (4) As for that light and law of grace which is in the saints, the light of the Scripture is beyond and more excellent than that. The light and law within us here is imperfect, for we see but in part, and know in part (1 Cor. xiii. 9); but the Word of God written, the Scripture and the light thereof, is perfect (Psa. xix.). The law of grace within, and the light within, is not able to convince others. Though experience be a great help to our faith, yet, take it alone, abstracted from the Word, and it cannot heal our unbelief. But though experience be the parent of hope, yet it is not the ground of our faith; it is an help unto faith, but not the first ground of our faith. (6) As for Divine providence, the Scripture is a more sure light than it. For God doth sometimes try us by His providence. So He led the children of Israel in the wilderness forty years to try them, and to know what they would do, and to humble them. But the Scripture is the rule of our doing, and therefore a more safe and sure light to walk by. And if the providence of God extendeth unto all our actions, good and evil, and to evil as well as unto what is good, then there is no certain rule or judgment to be made up from thence. (7) As for human reason and the light thereof, Scripture light is more excellent than it. For though human reason be a beam of Divine wisdom, yet if it be not enlightened with a higher light of the gospel, it cannot reach unto the things of God as it should. And as mere human reason cannot make a sufficient discovery of sin, so it cannot strengthen against sin and temptation: temptations answered by reason will return again; it cannot convert the soul. "But the Word of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." Though the light of reason be good, yet it is not a saving light. It is revelation light from the gospel that doth bring to heaven: mere human reason cannot do it. Is there then no use of reason and of the light thereof? Yea, much, not only in civil things but in the things of God, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. IV. As Scripture light is the most excellent light, the best and most sure light, so it is our duty, THE DUTY OF ALL THE SAINTS AND PEOPLE OF GOD, TO TAKE HEED THEREUNTO, and that especially in their dark times and places. Yet further, ye shall do well that ye take heed thereunto, for the doctrine of the gospel written is—1. The Word of the Son of God. The more excellent the person is that speaks unto you, the more diligently ye will take heed unto what he saith. 2. As the Scripture is the Word of the Son, so it is the only rule of our lives. Now that which is the only rule of our lives, we are in special manner to take heed unto. 3. As the Scripture and the Word of God written is the only rule, so it is that salt which doth season all your enjoyments. It is the rule and measure of your worship; for if you do not worship according to the appointments of God in His written Word, your worship is but idolatry and superstition. It is the great relief of your souls in time of temptation. It is that which sanctifieth all your outward comforts, even amongst the creatures (1 Tim. iv. 4). And shall the Word of God written be such a blessed treasure, and shall we not take heed thereunto? 4. As it is the salt of all your comforts, so it is, and shall be, your judge at the great day. But the text saith, "That we shall do well to take heed thereunto, until the day dawn, and day-star arise in our hearts": but the day hath dawned on me, and the day-star hath arisen in my heart; and therefore now, what need I take heed to the Scripture or the written Word any longer? I answer, Yea, still you have need to do it: for did not the day dawn and the day-star arise on the hearts of the apostles and Christians in their days, according to your sense and

meaning? yet they still attended on the written Word of God. But why are the saints and people of God to take heed unto the Scripture and the written Word of God especially in their dark times and seasons? I answer, Because they are then in most danger of stumbling and falling: he that walketh in the dark, stumbleth; and who is not then apt to fall? But by taking heed to this sure light, they shall be kept from the power of their darkness. What must we do, that we may take heed and attend unto Scripture? Ye must do three things—I. Ye must attend to know and understand it. II. Ye must attend to keep it. And—III. Ye must attend to walk by the same. And—I. For your knowledge in and understanding of the Scripture, and the written Word of God, ye must—1. Observe, keep, and hold fast the letter of it; for though the letter of the Scripture be not the Word alone, yet the letter with the true sense and meaning of it, is the Word. 2. If you would have the true knowledge, and understand the Scripture, and so behold this great light in its full glory and brightness, you must diligently inquire into the true sense and meaning of it, for the true sense and meaning is the soul thereof. II. But secondly, and more practically: if you would so understand the Scripture, that you may take heed thereunto, as to a light shining in your dark state, then—You must go to God for the Spirit; for without it ye cannot understand the mind of God in the Scripture: no man knows the mind of Paul but by the spirit of Paul; nor the mind of Peter but by the spirit of Peter; no man knows the mind of Christ but by the Spirit of Christ: stand therefore under gospel dispensations, where the Spirit breathes. Take heed of a worldly, fleshly mind; fleshly sins do exceedingly blind the mind from the things of God, and a worldly mind cannot savour them. Yet take heed that you be not too indulgent to your own condition, disposition, or opinion. It is a good speech of Hilary: He is the best interpreter of Scripture that doth rather bring his sense from the Scripture than carry his sense to the Scripture. If you do desire so to understand the Scripture, as it may be a light to all your paths; then be sure that you put nothing else in commission with it for your rule. It is with the Scripture in this respect, as with God, Christ, and the Spirit; if you come to God for help, yet if you join another god in commission with Him, He will not give down His help. And so here: though you come, and tend, and wait upon God in the Scripture, yet if there be anything else which you do make your joint rule with the Scripture, any light within you, or precept of man without you, it will not give down its light to you, but you will be left in the dark. III. Yet one thing more. If you would take heed to the Scripture, you must so heed the same, as you may walk thereby. Therefore prize it much: who takes heed to that which he does not prize? Therefore, also, get your heart affected with love to every truth which you know; for because men receive not the truth in the love thereof, therefore God doth give them up to strong delusions: men take heed unto what they love. And therefore that you may heed it so as to walk thereby, let it be your continual companion, going where you go; if you go into the fields, oh! let the Word go with you; if into your calling, oh! let the Scripture and the written Word of God be with you. Thus shall you take heed unto it, as to a light shining in a dark place. (*W. Bridge, M.A.*)

Until the day dawn.—*The dawn of day*:—The words admit of two rather different meanings. They may refer to the light which sometimes breaks upon the heart after prayer or meditation. I would suppose that you are a real inquirer after truth. You have been searching for it long and earnestly, but the dark places in the Bible—those dark places which underlie all great truths—and the dark places in your own heart are many. You cannot see any light. Least of all can you see that you have yourself any part or lot in the matter. The day cometh and also the night, for the night is as much a part of the coming as the day. It will come in its own appointed time, and not a moment sooner. The day's dawn will arise exact to its moment. Or it may be thus. You have lost the light which you once enjoyed. Something has come between your soul and God, and now all is dark. What shall you do? Pray on, repent on, confess on, plead on a little longer. It only wants your perseverance "until the day dawn." Or perhaps you say, "I have never known any of the rapturous views which some speak of." It is not given to everybody in the same degree, but to each as he needs it, or as he can bear it. The nights are as needful as the days to all the processes of nature. A brightened day of Christian experience may be yet waiting for you. Do not let hope, or faith, or courage fail until it dawn. Meanwhile, that "until" is a very important part of the blessing. Many a good thing has lost all its goodness simply because it came too soon. Do not hurry on the morning. God knows best how long your night

shall be. But there is another interpretation which belongs to the text with equal or greater appropriateness. "The day." The day of all days for this world is the Advent of Christ. That day which will throw over this earth a light never seen before, and clothe it with the most brilliant splendour. Of the exact period of that day's dawn we have been most wisely and mercifully kept in ignorance. Is, then, this life all night? Why speak of the day dawning as if it is all now so very dark? It is all comparative. This life is a very happy life; this world is a beautiful world; but we all find that colour changes its hue under contrast. To-morrow's exceeding joy may make a bright yesterday look dull, however pleasant it was. And when Jesus comes with His glory, and the heavens are new, and the earth is new, all that is now the holiest, and loveliest and best—tainted as it all is with sin and change and sorrow—it will all look like a shadow. Still it is not to disparage the present, but to exalt the future, that we are told to wait "until the day dawn." To all the mysteries of our world and being, to the chaos of our thoughts, to the dark things within and around us on every side, the key, the true solution is "until the day dawn." Bear that key with you, and it will unlock the whole year. Expect and be always looking for more and more light, till one by one the shadows flee away, and the whole orb of truth rises in his majesty, and "the day dawn." (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*)

The day-star arise.—*The rising of the day-star*:—There is a difference between "the dawn" and the "day-star." The light of "the dawn" is general; the "day-star" gives the thought a focus and fixes it to one spot. "The dawn" is to the whole world; "the day-star" arises in our hearts. What "the day-star" is, is left without a shadow of a doubt. For Christ has singled it out as the last title which He claims in the whole Bible. "I am the bright and morning star." As "the morning star" He comes to us in the night of waiting, doubt, and sorrow. "The day-star" is the morning close at hand. "The dawn" is the day begun. Yet they can never be divided. "The dawn" must soon be full day, and "the day-star" loses itself in the risen sun. Now trace, for a moment, the connection which lies in the allegory—between "the dawn" and "the day-star." I will give one or two instances. You have been reading your Bible, and searching into some of the deep things there. You are a sincere inquirer after truth, but for a while it is all dark; and when it is the darkest, just before the light is going to break, a thought comes into your mind; it gives you a fresh view of the whole subject; it gets clearer and clearer; it spreads like "the dawn" over the hills; in another bound it unveils itself to you. Why? Whence comes this "dawn"? Is it from the head, or is it from the heart? Certainly from the heart. There is Christ in it. "The day-star" is in that "dawn." You feel it. The day "dawned" when "the day-star arose in your heart." And so Christ made the night of your ignorance turn into the day of your joy. I will take it thus. Some sin has gradually darkened your mind. It throws its deep shadow over everything. You cannot find forgiveness, and your whole life is wrapped in gloom. The night of your life becomes thicker and thicker. You pray; there is no answer. You repent; but there is no peace. When almost suddenly—as it seems to you—a hope seems to spring up, things begin to look brighter, despair ceases, praise and hope find their way to your thoughts. There is a "dawn"! But whence? Christ and His tender love has come nearer to you. He reveals Himself to you as your complete and all-sufficient Saviour. All is changed. Why? "The day-star" has "risen in your heart." Or see what shall be presently. The second Advent of Christ is breaking upon this earth. A new day shall burst. This is wonderful. Are you frightened at the solemnities of that hour—the convulsions of nature—the rolling of the heavens up into a scroll—the sight of God! Do they appal you? No. You are calm; you rejoice. Why? For "the day-star" is there, and long before, He has been "the day dawn" in your soul. He is yours. You know Him. He has "risen in your heart," and now has come the noontime of your joy! Now let us observe a little more concerning "the day-star." And first I notice that it "ariseth" of its own free action, of the very necessity of its being; in its very nature it ariseth. It must "arise." We do not make the day-star "arise"; neither do we make Jesus come into our poor dark hearts. He does it of His own free grace and favour. He comes of His own necessity. Such is His love He cannot but choose to come. He "arises" in your heart. The expression shows that it is gradual. "He arises." He goes higher and higher. The light gets stronger, and we see Him more and more. And where the days are His, we know that there will be day—perfect day. The great question for every one of us is, "Is that day-star yet arisen in my heart? If not, why?"

Are you wilfully hindering it? Are you turning away from it? (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Christmas, or the two risings of the Day-star* (Luke i. 78, 79; 2 Pet. i. 19):—Christ has two incarnations—the one outside of man, the other inside; two births—the one in the manger, the other in the soul. I. His OBJECTIVE birth or rising. “The day-spring from on high,” &c. This day-star arose in Bethlehem. First, the origin of this rising. “Through the tender mercy of our God.” God’s sovereign, compassionate, boundless love was the cause. Secondly, the purpose of this rising. “To give light to them that sit in darkness.” This was the condition of the world—in moral night, ignorant, polluted, miserable. II. His SUBJECTIVE birth or rising. “The day-star arise in your hearts.” Christ is in His disciples (1) as the dominant object of affection, (2) as the dominant theme of thought, (3) as the dominant motive of action. III. His objective and subjective rising COMPARED. Both agree in this. They are from the “tender mercy of our God.” But the following are points of difference: First, the objective rising exists independently of the subjective; but not the subjective without the objective. In other words, unless Christ had been born in the manger He would never have been born by faith in the human soul. Secondly, the objective rising may become a curse, the subjective never. The man who does not receive Christ into the heart, but continues to reject Him, is injured immensely by the fact of His outward revelation. Thirdly, the objective rising is independent of human choice or effort, but not the subjective. Fourthly, the objective rising is not a matter of consciousness; the subjective is. That Christ came into the world can only be proved by logic and dealing with known facts; consciousness, the strongest and ultimate proof, can yield no testimony to the fact. But the subjective rising is a matter of consciousness. Conclusion: Learn—first, what personal Christianity is; secondly, what the duty of the preacher is. Try to get Christ, and not creeds, into human souls. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 20, 21. **No prophecy . . . is of any private interpretation.**—On the indiscreet application of Scriptural prophecy:—As the term “prophecy” is here used without any limitation, it seems clearly designed to comprehend all those prophetic enunciations which have been vouchsafed by the Holy Spirit of God. All such prophecy is a light vouchsafed to man from the great Source of all light and all knowledge. But it is a light purposely shaded at first with some obscurity; it shines only as in a dark place until the day of its fulfilment shall dawn. The epithet here applied to prophecy is rendered in our translation “more sure,” but it would be more correctly rendered “more firm, more constant, more enduring.” Prophecy affords a more firm and enduring evidence than miracles, inasmuch as it has a slow and gradual development, unfolding its proofs more clearly and completely as ages roll on; its light shines forth to the eyes of men with a fuller and brighter lustre in proportion as the veil is withdrawn from futurity. When miracles are no longer vouchsafed for the confirmation of the truth, prophecy becomes, by the lapse of time, a more powerful and convincing head of evidence as it is proved, by the course of events, to be really prophecy. And thus may it be said that in the more clear and full development of one species of evidence we have a growing compensation for whatever may be conceived to be lost by the lapse of time to the strength, or clearness, or fulness of the other. To this “word of prophecy,” he says, “ye do well that ye take heed,” that ye pay the serious attention which it deserves; but he cautions them first, before they do so, to know, to recollect, to bear in mind that “no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation.” The apostle intends to caution his disciples against the hasty, fanciful, and inconsiderate interpretation of all Scriptural prophecy. Our attention then becomes directed by these words to a subject of great importance—the indiscreet application of the prophetic parts of Scripture. Now undoubtedly we may trace one fruitful source of this practice to the propensity which prevails with all of us to magnify and exaggerate everything that passes within the narrow sphere of our immediate observation. As in the objects presented to our bodily senses, that which stands immediately before us absorbs the greatest portion of our attention and precludes the sight of others that are more distant. Misled by these false and prejudiced views, individuals have been easily carried away with the notion that the occurrences of their own little day and contracted sphere of observation are of sufficient distinction to be made the specific subject of Scriptural prophecy. But operating in unison with this undue appreciation of the importance of events which are present have been an over-forward disposition to display superior penetration and ingenuity amongst those who interpret prophecy, and credulous superstition and prying curiosity

amongst those who believe their interpretations. Now in the case of the prophecies contained in Scripture a peculiarly tempting field is opened for those persons who are given to these adventurous speculations. But it is of far less importance to inquire into the causes which have led to the indiscreet application of Scriptural prophecies, or to detail what has taken place in times past, than to endeavour to repress the practice by pointing out the injury which it must ever cause to the general interests of religion and to the authority of the Christian records. Now the principal evil which must with too great certainty be derived from this practice is that of exciting a general prejudice against the truth of all Scriptural prophecies. When different persons are found, many of sufficient credit for learning and acuteness, eagerly and confidently applying the prophecies to events widely different, what impression must be made on the public at large, on those who form their judgment of these matters at a distance and without paying close and accurate attention to them? The inference will too obviously be that the prophecies of Scripture may be turned to any sense at the will of the interpreter. Nor, if such an imputation be cast on the prophetic parts of Scripture, will the cause of revelation in general wholly escape. Or, if the credit of Scripture be saved, it will be saved only at the expense of the veracity and good faith of those who attempt these interpretations. While so much positive evil results from the licence, which has been too often assumed, of hazarding, on light grounds and hasty views, novel interpretations of Scriptural prophecy, the most powerful of all arguments is afforded by this consideration to induce all persons who feel the reverence due to the inspired Word of God to abstain most carefully from this indiscreet practice. Prophecy was not given to gratify the prying curiosity of men ever anxious to dive into the recesses of futurity, nor to exercise their forward ingenuity in searching out new interpretations which might arrest the attention of the public. It was designed for a more availing, a greater, and a nobler purpose—for the purpose of affording to the truth of Christianity its growing testimony, which might be unfolded by degrees and open fresh conviction on the mind as the revolutions of time should produce its gradual accomplishment. Consistently with this purpose, a certain degree of obscurity was unavoidable. Under these views of the real character and true intent of Scriptural prophecy, let it be hoped that the interpretation of it will never be attempted carelessly and lightly from any private motive of exhibiting penetration and ingenuity, but only from the deliberate consideration of what may conduce to the right understanding and elucidation of it. (*G. D'Oyly, D.D.*)

Holy men of God spake as they were moved.—*The inspiration, conscription, and exposition of Scripture*:—The apostle had formerly commended reading of the prophets by the benefit of them; now in reading them he gives warning from the difficulty of understanding them. There often lies a deep and hidden sense under a familiar and easy sentence. Let not men rush into their exposition, like hasty soldiers into a thicket, without seeking direction from the captain. When we come to read them we must subject ourselves to the government of the Spirit.

I. THE INSPIRATION FROM GOD. It was not a vision of their own heads, but they “spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

1. Consider the infallible completion of things long before prophesied in their due seasons (1 Kings xiii. 2).
2. Consider that their being hath continued from Moses unto this day. This is miraculous—that in so great hurly-burles and alterations they should not be lost!
3. That the scope of it should be to build up no worldly thing, but only the kingdom of heaven, and to direct us to Jesus Christ.
4. That it should pass with credit through the whole world, and find approbation of all languages, nations, and places, and where it meets with oppositions should make way through them as thunder through the clouds.
5. That the Hebrew tongue, wherein the Old Testament was written, doth so excel all tongues, in antiquity, sanctity, majesty.
6. The majesty of the style, which yet is not only powerful in words, but effectual in working (Heb. iv. 12).
7. From the very baseness of falsehood, we learn to admire the lustre of truth. To disgrace and weaken the credit of the Scriptures Satan had his poets and fabulists, whose mythologies were obtruded for true reports.
8. This is an argument of the finger of God and supernatural power in Holy Writ, that the penners of it renounced all affectation and delivered the true message even against their own reputations.

II. THE CONSCRIPTION. Although not by the will of man, yet was it done by the hand of man.

1. “Men.” Why did not God choose some other nature of greater authority and credit? (1) That no glory might be ascribed to the means (2 Cor. iv. 7).
- (2) In commiseration of man’s weakness (Exod. xx. 19).
- (3) For the

security of our souls. If our preacher were an angel, Satan could transform himself into that shape. (4) In fit response to the work of our redemption (Acts iii. 22). 2. "Men of God." This is an ancient attribute (1 Kings xvii. 18; 1 Tim. vi. 11; 2 Tim. iii. 17). But especially they are called men of God because their dispensation comes from God (1 Cor. ii. 13). 3. "Holy men." The Lord who sent them qualified them. III. THE EXPOSITION, which is by no private spirit, but by the Holy Spirit's illumination of man's mind and directing the Church. He that expounds the Scripture upon the warrant of his own spirit only doth lay the brands of the fire together without the tongs, and is sure at least to burn his own fingers. (*Thos. Adams.*) *The Bible*:—That is the Scriptural way of stating the great doctrine that the Bible is inspired, that the Bible is the Word of God. And you remark the grand simplicity and directness of the statement. The Holy Spirit speaks to us in Holy Scripture: we can understand that; let us hold by that. How He does so is not revealed, and so we cannot tell. We are all well assured that the supernatural influences of that Divine Spirit do still, in every Christian man and woman, weave in with the natural workings of soul and mind, of heart and head. When the Blessed Spirit helps us to pray He avails Himself of our natural faculties—of our memory, of our perception of things which may befall us, of our capacity of feeling, trusting, and loving. The prayer is the prayer of the Holy Spirit; but it is also the individual and characteristic prayer of this man, of that woman, of that little child. It is exactly so with that rarer gift which we call inspiration, as with the sanctifying, comforting, prayer-prompting communications for which ordinary Christians ask and look day by day. You know how the inspired writers of the Bible retain their individuality. St. Paul does not write like St. John; St. Luke writes quite differently from either, and St. Peter from all three. And yet do you not feel that there is a something which belongs to all of the many men that wrote the Bible? One Breath has breathed upon them, one Hand has touched them all! In a certain loose way we may speak of the inspiration of the poet, the orator, the painter; and it would be mere pedantry to quarrel with a phrase so well understood in the main. But never forget that differing not in degree but in kind—differing essentially, vitally, altogether—is the true, holy, Divine inspiration of the men who wrote the Bible. And we are to distinguish likewise between the supreme inspiration thus described and the ordinary and still-continuing gifts of the Holy Spirit. There is a wide difference between that guidance which you and I may get for the asking and the true inspiration of those few among our race concerning whom St. Peter tells us that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." And now, having said so much as to the nature of the inspiration of the Bible, let me suggest some thoughts upon God's Word generally. The Bible, remember, is the Word of God. It not merely contains the Word of God, as in some sense all things do, for "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork"; it is the Word of God. It is the flower and crown of all God's revelation to man: everything that we can read, or fancy we read, on the pages of Nature or Providence we find far more plainly stated in the Bible. And we find a vast deal more. We find there things most needful to salvation, about which earth and sea and stars are dumb. Even the lesser characteristics of the Bible are noteworthy. The very language of this blessed book is such as wonderfully suits its claim to be God's message to all races and tongues. The Bible bears translation into other languages as no other book does. It is at home, and at its ease, in all languages. You hear it said that there is no more remarkable miracle of skill than the language of our English Bible, which is indeed the standard of perfection in our tongue. But there is something more in this than the industry, tact, scholarship of the translators. Surely it is that when the Holy Ghost used holy men of old to write God's message to all human beings, He moved them so to write it in such tongues and in such words as would bear, as human words never did, to be rendered into the mother tongue of every being who has speech and reason. And then how this wonderful volume suits all men in matters more vital than its language! There are extraordinary national differences in ways of thinking and feeling, and extraordinary differences in such things between the people of different times and ages. And yet this wonderful book, dealing as it does throughout just with religious faith and feeling, suits man wherever you find him, comes home alike to Eastern and Western nations, never gets out of date, never is outgrown by the increasing intelligence of educated men, and expresses no feeling in which all Christian people cannot sympathise. How it suits all our moods, all our circumstances! In every state of thought and feeling we find what we want

in the Bible. And just remember, too, what is the secret of the Bible's so coming home to all. It is not a question, here, of those intuitions of moral truth which, when we read or hear them, make us say, "Now that is true," or even say, "We have often thought that ourselves, though we never heard it expressed before." The Bible comes home to all, because it treats of great facts which we never could have found out, yet which, when told, commend themselves, not to sensibility, not to taste, not even to intellect merely, but to our conscience and heart, to our deepest and most solemn convictions of what is Divine and right and true! Therefore it is that the little volume is the first prized possession of childhood, and old people have it in their hands to the last; therefore it goes into the soldier's knapsack; therefore the aged statesman and judge would read it like a little child; therefore you find it under the pillow of the dying, wet with tears. (*A. K. H. Boyd, D.D.*)

The plenary inspiration of the Scriptures.—That the book which we emphatically call the Bible was written by the inspiration of suggestion. I. Let us INQUIRE

WHAT IS TO BE UNDERSTOOD BY THE INSPIRATION OF SUGGESTION. Some suppose there are three kinds of inspiration, which they distinguish from each other by calling the first the inspiration of superintendency, the second the inspiration of elevation, and the third the inspiration of suggestion. 1. It was necessary that the sacred

penman should be conscious of Divine inspiration all the while they were writing. It was not sufficient for them barely to know that they began to write under the influence of the Spirit. For nothing short of a constant realising sense of His motion and direction, could give them full assurance that what they wrote was the infallible Word of God, which they might honestly present to the world under the sanction of Divine authority. 2. The Supreme Being was as able to afford them the highest

as the lowest kind of inspiration. 3. That the sacred penmen were utterly incapable of writing such a book as the Bible without the constant guidance of the Holy Ghost. 4. To suppose that they sometimes wrote without the inspiration of suggestion, is the same as to suppose that they sometimes wrote without any inspiration at all. The distinguishing of inspiration into three kinds is a mere human invention, which has no foundation in Scripture or reason. And those who make this distinction appear to amuse themselves and others with words without ideas.

5. That the sacred penmen profess to have written the Scriptures under the immediate and constant guidance of the Holy Ghost. II. It may be proper to take particular notice of the MOST WEIGHTY OBJECTIONS WHICH MAY BE MADE AGAINST THE

PLENARY INSPIRATION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. 1. It may be said there appears a great diversity in the manner and style of the sacred penmen, which cannot be

easily reconciled with the supposition of their being equally and constantly guided by the inspiration of suggestion. It is true, indeed, we plainly discover some variety in the manner and style of the sacred writers. But this is easy to account for, by only supposing that God dictated to each sacred penman a manner and style corresponding to his own peculiar genius, education, and manner of living. But on the other hand, we find a much greater similarity in their manner and style than could be reasonably expected on supposition of their writing agreeably to their own

genius and taste, without the suggesting influences of the Spirit. 2. It may be said that the mistakes and contradictions to be found in the Scriptures plainly refute

the notion of their being written under the inspiration of suggestion. To this it may be replied in general, that most of the supposed mistakes and contradictions to be found in the Scriptures may be only apparent, and so might be fully removed, if we were better acquainted with the original languages in which the sacred books were written, and with the customs and manners of the different ages and places in which the sacred penmen lived. But the direct and decisive answer to this objection

is that it operates with equal force against every kind of inspiration. 3. It may be said, since God originally intended that the Bible should be transcribed by different hands and translated into different languages, there was no occasion for His suggesting every thought and word to the sacred penmen; because, after all, their writings must be subject to human defects and imperfections. It is sufficient to

observe here that every transcription and translation is commonly more or less perfect, in proportion to the greater or less perfection of the original. And since the Scriptures were designed to be often transcribed and translated, this made it more necessary, instead of less, that they should be written, at first, with peculiar

accuracy and precision. 4. It may be said that the Apostle Paul seems to acknowledge, in 1 Cor. vii., that he wrote some things in that chapter according to his own private opinion, without the aid or authority of a plenary inspiration. In one verse he says, "I speak this by permission, and not of commandment." And in

another verse he says, "To the rest speak I, not the Lord." If we understand these expressions literally, then we must suppose that the apostle and all the other sacred penmen always wrote under a plenary inspiration, only when they gave intimations to the contrary. But we find no such notice given, except in the chapter under consideration; and therefore we may justly conclude that all the other parts of Scripture were written by the immediate inspiration of God. But if, in the second place, we understand the apostle as speaking ironically in the verses before us, then his expressions will carry no idea of his writing without Divine aid and authority. And there is some ground to understand his words in this sense. There is, however, a third answer to this objection, which appears to be the most satisfactory; and that is this: the apostle is here speaking upon the subject of marriage; and he intimates that he has more to say upon this subject than either the prophets or Christ had said upon it. Accordingly he says, "I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. To the rest speak I, not the Lord." By these expressions he means to distinguish what he said from what other inspired teachers had said upon the same subject. On the whole there appears no solid objection against the plenary inspiration of any part of the Sacred Scriptures; but, on the other hand, every argument which proves them to be partly, equally proves them to be altogether, given by the immediate inspiration of God. Improvement: 1. If the Bible contains the very ideas and sentiments which were immediately suggested to the sacred penmen by the Divine Spirit, then great caution and circumspection ought to be used in explaining Scripture. The words of Scripture may not be lightly altered, nor expunged, nor supplied, nor wrested from their plain and obvious meaning according to the connection in which they stand. 2. If the Divine Spirit suggested every word and thought to the holy penmen, then it is not strange that they did not understand their own writings. These the apostle tells us, in our context, they did not understand. They might, by the aid of the Spirit, write precepts, predictions, promises, and threatenings, of whose import they were ignorant, that would be very intelligible and very useful in future ages. They wrote not for themselves, but for others; not for present, but future times. And this affords an additional evidence of the plenary inspiration of all the sacred writings. 3. If the Bible was written under the inspiration of suggestion, then it is an infallible rule of faith, and the only standard by which to try our religious sentiments. 4. If holy men of old wrote as they were moved by God, then it is reasonable to expect that the Bible should bear clear and strong marks of its Divine author. Accordingly, when we look into the Bible, we find the image and superscription of the Deity on every page. It displays all the perfections of God. 5. If the Bible be the immediate revelation of God's mind and will to men, then it is a most precious book. 6. If the Bible contains the mind and will of God, then all who enjoy it may know in this world what will be their state in the next. It clearly describes both heaven and hell, and the terms upon which we may obtain the one and escape the other. 7. If the Bible be indeed the Word of God, then it is not strange that it has had such a great influence over the minds of men. (N. Emmons, D.D.) *An inspired definition of inspiration*:—"Men spake—from God" (R.V.). It is a definition of inspiration. A definition simple, precise, exhaustive. "Men spake"—spoke, without ceasing to be men; spoke with all those characteristics of phrase and style, of thought and mind, of position and history which mark and make the man; yet "spoke from God," with a message and mission, under an influence and an impulse, a control and a suggestion, which gave to the word spoken a force and a fire, a touch and a contact, a sight and an insight, unlike other utterances because of a breath of God in it, the God of the spirits of all flesh. "Men spake." "Human beings," St. Peter says—the "men" is emphatic. Shall we blame those who, first of all, would ask, Who? would busy themselves in the endeavour, by examination and comparison, to learn what can be learnt of the authorship of particular books; and would then go on to ask, What? in other words, to bring every appliance, of manuscript and version and ancient quotation, to bear upon the text of Scripture. Inquiries like these are only for the learned. But let us, who can but look on or listen, at least refrain from denunciations of a process for which we ought to have the deepest respect. Men spake. And does not St. Peter as good as say, And remained men in the speaking? Where is the authority for supposing that the inspiring Spirit levelled the intellects, obliterated the characteristics, overwhelmed the peculiarities, of the several writers? Men spake. And one of them has told us how. By a careful investigation of various writings going before, and an earnest endeavour to arrange in their true order the facts of the history which he was to chronicle. Men spake—and men wrote—and

they were men still. Matters which toil and pains could ascertain—matters which lay in the province of intellect, whether in the way of research or in the way of discovery—matters for which God had provided the instrument of knowledge in the human being as by Him created, even though ages and generations might come and go before the actual knowledge was made his own—on these things inspiration was silent. Men spake, and in speaking were men still. Even their message, even the thing they were sent to tell, must be expressed in terms of human speech, through a medium therefore of adaptation and accommodation. Men spake—from God. “Moved by the Holy Ghost.” The two halves of the text are dependent upon each other. Not angels—or they had no sympathetic, no audible voice for man. Not machines—or speech (which is, by definition, intelligence in communication) had been a contradiction in terms. These human beings spake from God; for He had something to say, and to say to man. There is something which God only can say. There is something which reason cannot say, nor experience, nor discovery, nor the deepest insight, nor the happiest guessing, nor the most sagacious foresight. There is a world of heaven, which flesh and blood cannot penetrate. There is a world of spirit, impervious even to mind. There is a world beyond death, between which and the living there is an impassable gulf fixed. More than this—there is a world of cause and consequence, which no moralist can connect or piece together. There is a world of providence, which gives no account of itself to the observer. More yet than this. There is a fact of sin, inherited and handed on, working everywhere in hearts and lives, spoiling God’s work and ruining man’s welfare. Who can tell, concerning this, whether indeed there is any recovery from this deep, this terrible, this fatal fall? And yet man needs to hear of these things. And confess now, you who have gone with us thus far, how utterly beside the mark of such a work as this would have been an inspiration of science, or an inspiration of geography, or an inspiration of history, or an inspiration of geology, astronomy, botany, or chemistry. Men spake, and they spake from God. He had that to tell which men by searching could not find out. He set this human being to tell it to his fellows. But oh, trust God to do the right thing! Do not mistrust Him, and summon Him to the bar of your poor intellect every time that you cannot quite see what He was about. How can you account for a slaughter of twenty thousand men in one tiny battlefield in Beth-horon or on Mount Ephraim? how can you explain the dumb ass speaking with man’s voice, and Samuel coming up again at the bidding of the witch of Endor, &c. Say, if you are wise, with the three Israelites to King Nebuchadnezzar, “I am not careful to answer thee in this matter.” Men spake—and, while they spake, they were men still. But they spake from God—and what they said from Him was truth and nothing but truth, and in it, thus spoken, is the very light of my life. Never will I part with that light till I reach a world which no longer wants it, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the light thereof. (*Dean Vaughan.*)

CHAPTER II.

VER. 1. But there were false prophets also.—*False prophets and false teachers*:—**I. A NARRATION.** 1. The connection of the words. “Also” implies that there were always true prophets. God never leaves His people without tutors. 2. The corruption of the persons. “False prophets.” (1) They that came in the name of God, but were never sent by God (Jer. xliii. 21). (2) They that come in God’s name, and are sent, but deliver a false message. 3. The intrusion of their mischief. “Among the people.” But durst these black impostors press into so famous a light, and not fear discerning? (1 Kings xviii. 19, xxii. 6.) They say it is half a protection to foreknow a danger: behold the apostle’s fidelity, and therein God’s mercy. **II. A CAUTION.** 1. Who they be that assault us. Falsehood insinuates itself always in the semblance of truth. For error is so foul a hag, that if it should come in its own shape, all men would loathe it. 2. Whither they come. Not to the Turks, or Gentiles, or other heretics only; but to “you” that have the gospel. They seem to come unto you, but indeed they come against you; they promise your good, but they perform your hurt. (1) God suffers these for the trial of our faith (1 Cor. xi. 19). (2) God suffers them, that the true pastors might more

patiently exercise their knowledge. Heresy makes men sharpen their wits, the better to confute it. (3) God permits them for men's ingratitude. 3. These false teachers intrude themselves—as sometimes a gamester, being flushed with his luck—and they meet with three encouragements: (1) The numbers and applaudings of their auditors (Jer. v. 31). (2) The honour and respect that is done them. (3) Large gifts and riches. 4. Their unavoidable necessity. They will press in, and we cannot easily stave them off. Jesus Christ must enlighten our hearts to decline these false teachers. Now the means whereby Christ teacheth us is the Scripture.

III. A DESCRIPTION of these pernicious liars, concerning whom we find a threefold mischief: one that issues from them, another that abides in them, a third that is inflicted on them. 1. Their seminary mischief, offensive and noxious to others. (1) The matter, what they bring in—"damnable heresies." (a) Heresy is that which doth diametrically oppose the truth, and set up an opinion against it. Error is when one holds a wrong opinion alone; schism, when many consent in their opinion; heresy runs further, and contends to root out the truth. (b) "Heresies," in the plural, to point at a multitude. The troubles of the Church seldom come single; but either unite their forces, as the five Amorite kings combined against Gibeon (Josh. x. 5); or separately they vex her on every side, as Solomon was assaulted by Hadad, Rezon, and Jeroboam (1 Kings xi.). (c) They "shall bring in." Here is the necessity. "Shall"; though provision spend all her wit, and prevention all her strength, yet no avoiding it. (d) The malignity of them. "Damnable heresies."

(i) Because they are reprobated of God. (ii) Because pestilent to the kingdoms or nations where they are admitted. (iii) Because they bring destruction to all their followers and defenders. 2. The causes that produce such inevitable effects. 3. The manner of their induction: underhand, "privily." (1) Their subtlety, whereby they insinuate their unseen poisonous seeds (Eph. iv. 14). (2) Their vigilant care to spy out the opportunity, how they may privily bring heresy in (Micah ii. 1). (3) Their hypocrisy, with the covertly carriage of their intended plagues (Rom. xvi. 18). Vice dares not walk without a borrowed shape. 4. Their criminal evil. (1) They "deny." It were bad enough to slight Him, worse to forget Him, yet worse to forsake Him; but to deny Him is fearful. (2) "The Lord." Not a creature, not a man, not a father, not a friend, not an angel, not themselves; but the Lord, this is more fearful. (3) "That bought them." It is much to deny a benefactor, more to deny a parent, more to deny a Creator; but yet there is a step higher: to deny a Redeemer. Denial of Christ is of two sorts—either in judgment or in practice; denial in faith or denial in fact. The latter is of infirmity, the other of infidelity. 5. The punishment. (1) They "bring upon themselves." (a) The wicked are the causes of their own condemnation (Isa. i. 1; Prov. v. 22; Psa. lxxiv. 8; Jer. ii. 17). (b) God is not the cause of man's transgression or damnation (James i. 13; Rom. ix. 19). (c) They themselves bring it; therefore not any fatal necessity out of themselves, but their own malice within them. (2) "Destruction." This is the measure of their punishment—total ruin. (3) "Swift." Man may shoot and miss, or his arrow be so slow of flight that it may be avoided; but if God shoots, He hits and kills. (*Thos. Adams.*) — *Error in the Church*:—1. The futility of insisting on having even now what might be called a pure Church. "It must needs be," said our Lord, "that offences come." 2. It is none the less the duty of the friends of truth and righteousness to maintain the spirit of a vigilant and strenuous resistance to the assaults of error and corruption. 3. That a doctrine or a practice has many followers, even among church members, affords but a poor presumption that it deserves to be followed (Matt. xxiv. 5, 10-12). 4. The certain and irretrievable ruin of ungodly men. 5. Finally, let us bless God that, through the waste wilderness of obstruction, deceit, and delusion, His own holy Word has clearly marked for us "the way of the truth." (*J. Lillie, D.D.*)

Doctrinal poison:—The poison that ended the life of Alexander VI. of Italy was no less destructive because it was concealed in a glass of wine. The virus that sent to the grave Sir Thomas Overbury was not the less fatal because it was hidden in a jelly handed to him by a fascinating lady. The bite of the asp that closed the career of Cleopatra was not the less deadly because the reptile rested on roses. Doctrinal poison is none the less mortal because the pen of a prince in erudition inscribes on it the word "scholarship." (*S. V. Leech, D.D.*)

Damnable heresies.—*Destructive heresies*:—1. It is a destructive heresy for a man to think that he can be saved without faith in Christ, while ignoring, or, it may be, denying the redemptive work of Christ. 2. It is a destructive heresy for a man to think that he is safe and in the way of salvation while yielding to corrupt passions and living a careless life,

3. It is a destructive heresy for a man to regard himself as a Christian, and think he is right for heaven, while possessing nothing of the mind and spirit of Christ. 4. It is a "heresy of destruction" for a man to think that if he abstains from great and glaring transgressions he may safely indulge in sins of the heart, and need no be over particular about what has been called "the minor moralities of life." 5. It is a "heresy of destruction" for a man to think that he is a Christian sheltered by the blood of Christ while he consciously and continually disregards the commands of Christ. 6. It is a "heresy of destruction" for a man to boast that Christ is all in all to him while he withholds himself and all he has from Christ. 7. It is a "heresy of destruction" for a man self-complacently, to suppose that he may "gird up the loins of his mind, be sober, and hope unto the end" while he is conscious of no love to God, and while cherishing hatred of his fellow-man. Let us examine ourselves, lest we should—(1) Endanger our own soul's salvation. (2) Endanger the souls of others. (3) Deny the Lord that bought us. (4) And so dishonour God, bring upon ourselves "swift destruction." (*The Study.*)

Denying the Lord that bought them.—*The master and his slaves*.—There were three great stains on the civilisation of the world into which Christianity came—war, the position of women, and slavery. The relation of the New Testament to the last of these great evils naturally connects itself with the words before us. This same wicked thing, slavery, is used as an illustration of the highest, sacreddest relationship possible to men—their submission to Jesus Christ. With all its vileness, it is still not too vile to be lifted from the mud, and to stand as a picture of the purest tie that can bind the soul. The word in our text for "Lord" is an unusual one, selected to put the idea in the roughest, most absolute form. It is the root of our word "despot," and conveys, at any rate, the notion of unlimited, irresponsible authority. Nor is this all. One of the worst features of slavery is that of the market, where men and women and children are sold like cattle. And that has its parallel too, for this Owner has bought men for His. Nor is this all; for, as there are fugitive slaves, who "break away every man from his master," and when questioned will not acknowledge that they are his, so men flee from this Lord and Owner, and by words and deeds assert that they owe Him no obedience, and were never in bondage to Him. I. CHRIST'S ABSOLUTE OWNERSHIP. To material things and forces He spake as their great Commander, saying to this one "Go," and he went, and showing His Divinity, as even the pagan centurion had learned, by the power of His word, the bare utterance of His will. But His rule in the region of man's spirit is as absolute and authoritative, and there too "His word is with power." Loyola demanded from his black-robed militia obedience so complete that they were to be "just like a corpse," or "a staff in a blind man's hand." Such a requirement made by a man is of course the crushing of the will and the emasculation of the whole nature. But such a demand yielded to from Christ is the vitalising of the will and the ennobling of the spirit. The owner of the slave could set him to any work he thought fit. So our Owner gives all His slaves their several tasks. As in some despotic Eastern monarchies the sultan's mere pleasure makes of one slave his vizier and of another his slipper-bearer, our King chooses one man to a post of honour and another to a lowly place; and none have a right to question the allocation of work. What corresponds on our parts to that sovereign freedom of appointment? Cheerful acceptance of our task, whatever it be. The slave's hut, and little patch of garden ground, and few bits of furniture, whose were they—his or his master's? If he was not his own, nothing else could be his own. And whose are our possessions? If we have no property in ourselves, still less can we have property in our property. These things were His before and are His still. Such absolute submission of will and recognition of Christ's absolute authority over us, our destiny, work, and possessions, is ennobling and blessed. We learn from historians that the origin of nobility in some Teutonic nations is supposed to have been the dignities enjoyed by the king's household—of which you find traces still. The king's master of the horse, or chamberlain, or cupbearer, becomes noble. Christ's servants are lords, free because they serve Him, noble because they wear His livery and bear the mark of Jesus as their Lord. II. THE PURCHASE ON WHICH THAT OWNERSHIP IS FOUNDED. This master has acquired men by right of purchase. That abomination of the auction-block may suggest the better "merchandise of the souls of men" which Christ has made when He bought us with His own blood as our ransom. First, then, that is a very beautiful and profound thought, that Christ's lordship over men is built upon His mighty and supreme sacrifice for men.—We are justified in saying to Him, "O Lord, truly I am Thy servant" only when we can go on to say, "Thou hast

loosed my bonds." Then consider that the figure suggests that we are bought from a previous slavery to some other master. He that committeth sin is the slave of sin. If the Son therefore make you free, you shall be free indeed. III. THE RUN-AWAYS. We do not care to inquire here what special type of heretics the apostle had in view in these solemn words, nor to apply them to modern parallels which we may fancy we can find. It is more profitable to notice how all godlessness and sin may be described as denying the Lord. All sin, I say, for it would appear very plain that the people spoken of here were not Christians at all, and yet the apostle believes that Christ had bought them by His sacrifice, and so had a right over them, which their conduct and their words equally denied. How eloquent that word "denying" is on Peter's lips! It is as if he were humbly acknowledging that no rebellion could be worse than his, and were renewing again his penitence and bitter weeping after all those years. All sin is a denial of Christ's authority. It is in effect saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us." It is at bottom the uprising of our own self-will against His rule, and the proud assertion of our own independence. It is as foolish as it is ungrateful, as ungrateful as it is foolish. That denial is made by deeds which are done in defiance or neglect of His authority, and it is done too by words and opinions. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 2. **Many shall follow their pernicious ways.**—*Pernicious ways*:—I. AN ATTRACTION. 1. The ringleaders. (1) The necessity of a head to every schism and faction; never was breach made in the vineyard of Christ but some principal beast led the whole herd. If their reward in heaven be so great that save one soul from death, how great shall their torment be in hell that pervert many souls to destruction! (a) The way to suppress a schism is to cut off the head; it will be hard for a body to move headless. (b) Seeing there are such corrupters of our truth, and disturbers of our peace, let us be sure to hold the truth in peace, cleaving to our Head, Jesus Christ (Col. ii. 19). (2) The great force of example. (a) Let this teach men of place to look unto their exemplary lives, lest, as they have made themselves examples of transgression, God make them examples of destruction. (b) Seeing we are all apt to be followers, let us seek out the best patterns (Phil. iii. 17; Psa. xvi. 3). (3) Their mischiefs. (a) There is a plurality, diversity of their "ways." Truth is but one, errors are infinite. Goodness is a uniform simple, sin a multiform compound. Satan baits his hook according to the appetite of the fish. He studies many ways to make you wretched; do you study one way to make yourselves blessed. (b) These ways are pernicious or damnable. The wicked never rest till they meet with final ruin. 2. The rabble. (1) Their multitude—"many." Wickedness is never scant of followers. (2) Their tractableness—"shall follow." There is a pliable disposition in all men naturally to evil, in these a desperate precipitation. (a) The greediness of the ungody to sin, that they scarce tarry for temptation. (b) Sin is strong when it meets with a weak resister. How easy is it for error to domineer over ignorance! (c) Observe the power of evil men over their associates, whether in perverting the higher faculties of the soul, reason, and understanding, and conscience, or in corrupting the lower will and affections. (d) We must not fall off from the faith and Church of Christ because multitudes travel another way. (e) Seeing there is such certain danger in following after common copies, let me avert you from all these pestilent examples, and propose to you one worth your imitation. II. A DETRACTION. 1. The patient that suffers. (1) The singularity—"the way," that excellent way. There is only one way of truth and of salvation by it. (2) The sincerity—"the way" of truth." (a) It is certain. It is called "the testimony" (Isa. viii. 20) because it bears witness unto itself; so is it called "the truth" because it shall accomplish itself. (b) It is excellent, as being the letters patent of our salvation. 2. The injury that is offered to it. (1) "By whom." The instruments or occasioners of this scandal—those misled proselytes. The seminaries of infection have poisoned them, and they spread that pestilence, to the dishonour of Christ and the scandal of His gospel. (a) Not only the principals, but even the accessories in schism are guilty of sin, and liable to punishment. (b) The authors of this seducement are not discharged, though their scholars have dissipated the evil. (2) "The way of truth shall be evil spoken of." The aspersion laid upon the gospel by their means is blasphemy, the worst kind of evil speaking. (*Thos. Adams.*)

Ver. 3. **Make merchandise of you.**—*False teachers as merchantmen*:—The apostle here makes a continuation of their sins and a declaration of their plagues. They

extend the thread of their mischief very long, till hell fire burn it off. They broach heresies, corrupt multitudes, sell souls, as merchants do their wares; cozen men's consciences, colour foul natures with fair words, blaspheme the gospel, deny Jesus Christ. Oh, how constant and long-winded are they in their wickedness! But there is a judgment that wakes while they slumber. I. THE GENERAL SIMILITUDE (MERCHANTISING) HERE USED. The calling of a merchant is of great antiquity and necessary use. Merchants are the feet of the world, whereby distant countries meet together. Yet it is a dangerous profession, not only for wreck of life and goods, but also of conscience; which is not always made in their ships abroad, but too commonly in their shops at home. 1. The merchants are false teachers. As Judas sold Christ for thirty pieces, so they sell men to sin, little esteeming the price that a soul cost. 2. The wares—"you"; your estates, liberties, lives, and souls. They set up a mart of holy things, and with their impostures fill their purses. An evil pastor may sell his flock three ways—(1) By flattery. He that encourages a man in his errors sells him for his own gain. (2) By heresy. Broaching schisms and factions and erroneous opinions, as it were feeding the people with bones, or rather poisons, instead of wholesome meat. (3) By silence. The watchman who does not ring the alarm bell at the approach of danger betrays the city to the enemy. 3. "Through covetousness." This is the ground or motive of their traffic. It is true of every schism, what was said of Lucilla's faction, with a little inversion: anger bred it, pride fostered it, and covetousness confirmed it. (1) This sin of covetousness is iniquity in all men, blasphemy in a clergyman. The titles we bear, the office we sustain, the Person we represent, the nearness of our calling to that absolute integrity, are remembrances unto us that we be not covetous. (2) There is no fault in a minister like covetousness, because there is no sin reigning in the world like worldliness. We may preach our hearts out to dissuade men's affections from this world; if we embrace it ourselves, they will never believe us. (3) The vice of covetousness is an epidemical disease, the grand Cairo of mischief, the metropolis of wickedness, a universal plague that has infected all conditions of people. 4. The means of their utterance, "feigned words"! Heresy was never found disjoined from hypocrisy. Their speeches are so ambiguous and equivocal, that they seem to hold both ours and our adversaries' tenets. What they cannot perform by the evidence of truth, they seek to attain by the eloquence of art. As rebels make their proclamations in the name of the king, and pirates intending to rob merchants hang out the flags of other nations, both to scandal them and to conceal themselves; so do hypocrites wear Christian colours that they may be the devil's cozeners. II. THEIR PERDITION. 1. The severity of it. (1) Their "judgment." The menaces of God are not always followed with an infallible event, being sometimes on purpose signified, that they may be by penitence prevented. (2) For whose sake doth God execute judgment upon these false teachers? For His own glory and the Church's good, that they may no longer cozen men's souls with their impostures. (3) Though the Lord will judge these wicked persons, yet this forbids not magistrates to execute justice upon them. (4) Their "judgment"—their own; as proper to them as the inheritance they bought with their money. Sin doth naturally draw a punishment. (5) Their "judgment." But is it so certainly theirs, that no repentance can prevent it? Yes, serious repentance may avert the vengeance, if their gracious God gives the repentance. (6) Their "judgment and their damnation." Observe the proportion and adaptation of their punishment to their sin. It holds in divers analogies. (a) They denied the Lord that bought them, therefore the same Lord shall judge them. (b) They acted all their villainy in secret, therefore now it shall be laid open. (c) The way of truth hath been blasphemed by them, therefore now it is fit that it be glorified on them. (d) Before they sold men in covetousness, therefore now they shall be sold themselves in justice. (e) Before they brought in the heresy of damnation, therefore now they shall sustain the penalty of damnation. (f) Before they did pull on themselves destruction voluntarily, therefore now must father the child of their own begetting, and suffer destruction necessarily. (g) Their sin did hasten punishment and make it swift, therefore fit it should no longer tarry; it "lingereth not." (7) "Damnation" is principally taken for the censure or sentence condemning; as the sentence follows the trial, and the execution the sentence; here it intends the execution of the judgment. 2. Sleepeth not, lingereth not, slumbereth not. Though it be not yet present, it is propinquant; if not extant, yet instant. (1) This wakeful vengeance is threatened against the ungodly very fitly; for nothing is more proper to the nature of sin than to sleep in security. (2) Sin will not let justice sleep, but sends it up continual challenges, provoking Him to draw that

sword, which He had rather should rest in the scabbard, than be sheathed in His own creatures. 3. "Long ago." There is a preordination of plagues for reprobates, and the very moment of the execution appointed (Jude, ver. 4). Lessons: 1. Seeing God doth not sleep in His justice, let not us sleep in our injustice. 2. As this is terror to the ungodly, so comfort to the righteous. As justice is ever waking, so mercy is never asleep. (*Thos. Adams.*) *Manhood in the market*:—Who are they that are engaged in this business? 1. The liquor-dealers. 2. Writers and publishers of obscene literature. 3. Purchasers of the virtue of women. 4. Bribers and bribe-takers. 5. Mercenary journalists. 6. Atheistic orators and religious quacks. (*A. Little.*)

Vers. 4-10. **If God spared not the angels that sinned.**—*Angelic sinners*:—I. That they are the most ANCIENT sinners. They were the first transgressors of Heaven's eternal law. 1. The uniqueness of their circumstances. They had no tempter. Adam had; so has his race ever since; so have we. All their propensities were in favour of holiness. 2. The force of their freedom. Having neither an outward tempter nor an inward propensity to wrong, they must have risen up against all the external circumstances and internal tendencies of that being. II. That they are the most INFLUENTIAL sinners. 1. They were the original introducers of sin to this world. 2. They are the constant promoters of sin in this world. III. That they are the most INCORRIGIBLE sinners. Instances of man's conversion from sin are numerous. Their incorrigibility shows two things. 1. That intellectual knowledge cannot convert. 2. That an experience of the evil of sin cannot convert. IV. That they are the most MISERABLE sinners. There are three things which indicate the extent of their misery. 1. Contrast between their present and past condition. 2. The vastness of their capacity. 3. The utter hopelessness of their state. (*Homilist.*) *Fallen angels a lesson to fallen men*:—"These are ancient things." Most men hunger after the latest news; let us on this occasion go back upon the earliest records. It does us good to look back upon the past of God's dealings with His creatures; herein lies the value of history. We should not confine our attention to God's dealings with men, but we should observe how He acts towards another order of beings. If angels transgress, what is His conduct towards them? This study will enlarge our minds, and show us great principles in their wider sweep. I. Consider our text FOR OUR WARNING. "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell." Behold here a wonder of wickedness, angels sin; a wonder of justice, God spared them not; a wonder of punishment, He cast them down to hell; a wonder of future vengeance, for they are reserved unto judgment! Here are deep themes and terrible. 1. Let us receive a warning, first, against the deceivableness of sin, for whoever we may be, we may never reckon that, on account of our position or condition, we shall be free from the assaults of sin, or even certain of not being overcome by it. Notice that these who sinned were angels in heaven, so that there is no necessary security in the most holy position. This should teach us not to presume upon anything connected with our position here below. You may be the child of godly parents who watch over you with sedulous care, and yet you may grow up to be a man of Belial. You may never enter a haunt of iniquity, your journeys may be only to and from the house of God, and yet you may be a bond slave of iniquity. The house in which you live may be none other than the house of God and the very gate of heaven through your father's prayers, and yet you may yourself live to blaspheme. 2. The next thought is that the greatest possible ability, apparently consecrated, is still nothing to rely upon as a reason why we should not yet fall so low as to prostitute it all to the service of the worst of evils. A man may not say, "I am a minister: I shall be kept faithful in the Church of God." Ah me! But we have seen leaders turn aside, and we need not marvel; for if angels fall, what man may think that he can stand? 3. Neither must any of us suppose that we shall be kept by the mere fact that we are engaged in the sublimest possible office. Apart from the perpetual miracle of God's grace, nothing can keep us from declension and spiritual death. 4. I want you to notice, as a great warning, that this sin of the angels was not prevented even by the fullest happiness. The most golden wages will not keep a servant loyal to the kindest of masters. The most blessed experience will not preserve a soul from sinning. No feelings of joy or happiness can be relied upon as sufficient holdfasts to keep us near the Lord. 5. This warning, be it noted, applies itself to the very foulest of sin. The angels did not merely sin and lose heaven, but they passed beyond all other beings in sin, and made themselves fit denizens for hell. Oh my unrenowned

hearer, I would not slander thee, but I must warn thee: there are all the makings of a hell within thy heart! It only needs that the restraining hand of God should be removed, and thou wouldst come out in thy true colours, and those are the colours of iniquity. 6. The text may lead us a little farther before we leave it, by giving us a warning against the punishment of sin as well as against the sin itself. "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell." They were very great; they were very powerful; but God did not spare them for that. If sinners are kings, princes, magistrates, millionaires, God will cast them into hell. You unbelievers may combine together to hate and oppose the gospel, but it matters not, God will deal with your confederacies and break up your unities, and make you companions in hell even as you have been comrades in sin. Neither did He spare them because of their craft. There were never such subtle creatures as these are—so wise, so deep, so crafty; but these serpents and all the brood of them had to feel the power of God's vengeance, notwithstanding their cunning. II. But now I want to ask all your attention to this second point for our ADMIRATION. 1. I want you to admire the fact that though angels fell the saints of God are made to stand. Oh, the splendour of triumphant grace! Neither the glory of our calling, nor the unworthiness of our original, shall cause us to be traitors; we shall neither perish through pride nor lust; but the new nature within us shall overcome all sin, and abide faithful to the end. 2. Now let us learn another lesson full of admiration, and that is that God should deal in grace with men and not with angels. One would think that to restore an angel was more easy and more agreeable to the plan of the universe than to exalt fallen man. I rather conceive it to have been the easier thing of the two if the Lord had so willed it. And yet, involving as it did the incarnation of the Son of God and His death to make atonement, the infinitely gracious Father condescended to ordain that He would take up men, and would not take up the fallen angels. It is a marvel: it is a mystery. I put it before you for your admiration. Behold how He loves us! What shall we do in return? Let us do angels' work. Let us glorify God as angels would have done had they been restored and made again to taste Divine favour and infinite love. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

The punishment of the wicked:—I. THE CERTAINTY OF THE SINNER'S FUTURE PUNISHMENT might be argued from that attribute of justice which belongs to the Divine character, and the entire purity of which is in Scripture so frequently insisted on. For it is manifestly contrary to justice, that no distinction should be made between the righteous and the wicked. 1. The first instance he adduces is that of "the angels that sinned." The angels, it may be admitted, fell from a loftier elevation in the scale of being than man did; but the final fall of those who perish through their own neglect of the salvation of the gospel, will be more terrible than that of angels. 2. But the apostle deduces the same inference from the Divine judgments at sundry times inflicted upon men—specifying particularly the general deluge, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. And the inference on this latter ground is as just as in the former. For in the first place there can be no reasonable doubt that these remarkable events were purposely intended to manifest in a conspicuous manner the Divine displeasure against sin. 3. But while they serve as manifestations of the general truth, that God cannot look upon sin with allowance, they serve more particularly, as argued by the apostle, to remind us that a day of still more awful judgment is approaching, in which the ungodly shall be subjected, not to the calamity of a temporal destruction, but to a punishment commensurate with the magnitude of their guilt. II. *THE MAGNITUDE OF THE EVIL AND SUFFERING IN WHICH THEIR PUNISHMENT IS TO CONSIST.* 1. It has already been apparent in some degree, that the punishment is indescribably dreadful; and it is farther manifest from the fact that it is a punishment which cannot be inflicted upon them in the present life. Our nature in its present state, if subjected to such a torment, would faint, and be consumed; and the punishment, so far at least as the body is concerned, would presently be ended. 2. There is another terrible indication on this subject, in the circumstance that the punishment is one in which man will be associated with the fallen angels. What must be the nature of that torment which constitutes an adequate punishment to fallen angels! 3. And then to all these considerations is to be added the tremendous thought that the punishment is everlasting. The fearful characteristic of those who die under "the curse of the law" is that they die "without mercy." "Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;" and "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." (T. Crowther.)

The punishment of the angels that sinned:—1. He "delivered them": but into whose hands? Indeed, He delivers guilty mortals into the hands of guilty angels

(Matt. xviii. 34; 1 Cor. v. 5; 1 Tim. i. 20). Some answer, that themselves are the instruments to torture themselves. After a sort, every transgressor is his own tormentor; and wickedness is a vexation to itself. Ambition racks the aspiring; envy eats the marrow of his bones that envieth; the covetousness which would be most rich, keeps the affected with it most poor; ebriety begets the headache; lust afflicts the body that nourishes it; and we say of the prodigal, he is no man's foe but his own. 2. "Into chains of darkness." Into darkness—there is their misery; into chains—there is their slavery. (1) Darkness signifies the wrath of God, and is opposed to that favour of His which is called the light of His countenance (Psa. iv. 6). (2) "Chains." (a) The power of Divine justice. (b) The guiltiness of their own conscience. (T. Adams.)

Noah . . . a preacher of righteousness.—*Noah's preaching*:—1. Noah had his calling immediately from God; whereas we are mediately ordained by the imposition of hands. 2. The Lord honoured Noah in conferring his office upon him. Certainly a minister's life is full of honour here and hereafter, too; so it is full of danger here and hereafter, too. 3. Noah faithfully executed this calling, and continued preaching a hundred years. Both in his doctrinal instructions and exemplary life he was a preacher of righteousness. 4. He had not such happy success of his preaching as his own soul desired, and he might in reason have expected. A man may be lawfully called by God and His Church, and yet not turn many souls. It is the measure, not the success, that God looks to; our reward shall be according to our works, not according to the fruit of our works; which is our comfort. 5. So long as Noah preached, the world was warned. God needed not to have given them any warning of His judgments; they gave Him no warning of their sins. Yet, that He might approve His mercy, He gives them long warning that they might have space enough of repenting. Oh, how loth is He to strike that threatens so long before He executes! (*Ibid.*)

Sodom and Gomorrha.—*Sodom and Gomorrha*:—1. The strongest cities are not shot-proof against the arrows of God; but even things ordained for refuge are by His justice made destructive. There is nothing peaceable where God is an enemy. 2. Sin can bring down the most magnific cities. 3. None of these wicked cities escaped. Men, women, children, houses, plants, monuments, all that grew on the earth were destroyed (Gen. xix. 25). 4. Great is the danger of living in opulent and delightful places. Where is no want is much wantonness; and to be rich in temporals hastens poverty in spirituals. In a scantiness, the things themselves do stint and restrain our appetites; but where is abundance, and the measure is left to our own discretion, our discretion is too often deceived. (*Ibid.*)

Sodom and Gomorrha an example of the fate of the ungodly:—1. No society of men or policy can hinder the judgment of God, which He will bring upon them for their sins. 2. The same judgments of God are executed by contrary causes. The old world was destroyed by water, these cities by fire. Sinners should not think themselves safe because they have escaped one judgment, for when they are farthest off from one evil, another is ready to fall upon them (Amos v. 19). 3. Extreme judgments follow extreme sins. 4. They that are unto others examples of sin shall be also unto them examples of punishment. (Wm. Ames, D.D.)

Delivered just Lot.—*Lot in Sodom*:—I. THE SPIRIT'S TESTIMONY CONCERNING LOT. Lot was a "just" man and a "godly." What disclosures shall the last day make! What changes in our views of individuals! 1. His state before God. Only as justified by faith can we be accounted righteous. 2. Lot's character. The bent and purpose of his soul was towards God. He ran not as he should have done in the way of God's commandments; trial upon trial was needed to keep alive the flickering lamp of spiritual life. II. HIS SITUATION IN SODOM. He first "pitched his tent towards" it, and the next step was downwards—he dwelt in Sodom. 1. I ask of that residence, was it profitable? I would not make it the chief motive to serve the Lord, that it shall be well with you here; but I would yet say lose not this world and that which is to come. 2. I ask, further, concerning that residence, was it happy? Did it bring peace to his soul? could he rejoice whilst there abiding? What saith the Word of God? It speaks of him as "vexed from day to day." "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation," and He did deliver Lot; but He suffered His servant to feel that "an evil and a bitter thing" it is to depart from the narrow way; whilst dwelling in Sodom, happiness must not be his. 3. Nay, was that residence safe? He came forth from it a fugitive who had entered it as a prince. Are you seeking to avoid reproach by some concession contrary to God's truth? Are you planning for the world's aid? Cast off your vain confidences, safety is not in them! III. THE HINDRANCES TO HIS REMOVAL

MIGHT BE THESE. 1. The tie of property. There Lot had laid up his goods. For a time, doubtless, worldly prosperity was his, and the entanglement was strong. How strong that tie is to all! How great the grace to those who have burst from its hold! 2. The ungodly amongst whom he dwelt would be opposed to Lot's departure. He evidently stood in fear of them, and he might dread to give them any excuse for violence. 3. His family had, fearful to relate, formed alliances in that city of evil; these would cling around him, and prevent the determination to depart. 4. But far more than all was that lethargy of soul the hindrance, which—nourished by the atmosphere in which he lived—increased by each day's sojourn in the infected city—would make him less and less capable of the effort needed for his escape. Conclusion: 1. What a God is He with whom we have to do! 2. What a world is that with which we have to contend! We dwell as it were on enchanted ground. 3. What depths of heart-deceit does the history of man bring to light! (*F. Storr, M.A.*) *Just Lot*:—I. HIS GRACE—a just man. 1. What this justice is. (1) Legal righteousness is of three sorts—(a) Perfect, which consists in an absolute completion of the law: this is lost beyond all recovery. (b) Civil, which consists in an outward deportment conformable to the law (*Matt. v. 20*). (c) Internal, when a man by repentance, and by endeavour after repentance, inwardly serves God. This may justify our faith; it cannot justify us. (2) Evangelical righteousness is that which is revealed in the gospel; and should never have been revealed if that of the law could have saved us. 2. Thus is a man just before God, but Lot was also just before men; and there is a visible justice, as well as the invisible. (1) There is a righteousness of preparation, which is a resolution of heart to be righteous (*Psa. cxix. 106*). Though he do sometimes admit sin, he doth never intend sin. (2) There is a righteousness of separation, because it is seen to decline the places of temptation (*1 John v. 18*). (3) There is a righteousness of reparation which consists in the reforming of errors and conforming of manners, salving past defects by a bettered life, and is indeed the righteousness of repentance. Righteous, not because there is no sin committed, but because there is no sin that is not repented. (4) There is a righteousness of comparison; so was Lot just comparatively among the Sodomites. (5) There is an operative righteousness. The best traveller may stumble in his journey, yet have his eye observant and his foot constant on his way. (a) If we will be delivered, let us be just. (b) Never did man serve God for nothing; if Lot be just, he shall now find the benefit of it. (c) The Lord first makes us just and then saves us. II. HIS PLACE, which was sinful. But why would Lot stay in such a wicked city? Not as a neighbour affected with their customs, but as a physician to cure their diseases. But he that looked for a paradise found a hell, and the cup of his prosperity was spiced with the bitter fruits of a cursed society. What doth Lot in Sodom—a saint among sinners? Fishes may be fresh in salt waters; live in the sea and not partake the brinish quality. It is not so with man; rather some evil for neighbourhood's sake. Can a man be clean among lepers? Sooner are the good corrupted by the bad than the bad are bettered by the good. III. HIS CASE. "Vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked." 1. The matter of his vexing was their sin; the evil of the place came from the persons, who were fully, filthily, palpably wicked. (1) The impudence. It was manifest wickedness; their faces did not blush at it (*Isa. iii. 9*). (2) The continuance. As their sins were extant, so constant; their ways were always grievous (*Psa. x. 5*). It is not so much sin, as the trade of sin, that is damnable. (3) The uncleanness. Their sin was not only palpable and durable, but detestable. They were exposed to turpitude, their bodies prostituted to fleshly pollutions. 2. "Vexed." This was no ordinary disturbance, nor common displeasure; but oppressed, excruciated, tormented; his senses, his very soul, exceedingly afflicted. He was not an idle looker-on, as if he minded not what they did; nor in a timorous observation of the proverb, "Of little meddling comes great rest"; but knowing it to be the cause of God, his heart was perplexed about it. He was not vexed with them, but with their deeds; we are to hate none for their creation, but perverting the end of their creation. "Vexed." That which is here passive is in the next verse active: he "vexed his righteous soul." Who bade him stay there to be vexed? He vexed himself when he might have quitted himself. Yet because he was vexed he is delivered. Because he avoided their sins he escaped their judgments. And surely they were both miraculous; for his declining their sins was no less a wonder than his deliverance from their flames. As the latter was God's gracious prevention, so the former was His preventent grace. (*Thos. Adams.*) **Vexed his righteous soul**—*a saint's vexation*:—I. THE INCENTIVES. 1. Causal or

radical—"He being righteous." As in natural things, like things are not opposed by like things, fire fights not against fire, but against water; so in moral things, the innocent are not opposed by the innocent; one good man does not persecute another. Wolf and wolf can agree, lamb and lamb fall not out; but who can reconcile the wolf to the lamb? 2. Occasional—"Dwelling among them." One reason why God suffers evil men is to try the good. They are the best lilies that thrive amongst thorns. (1) "Amongst them" that hate righteousness, and him for it. (2) "Among them" that thought Lot to be the only man that molested them. (3) "Among them" that thought Lot a proud and imperious fellow. (4) "Among them" that thought him a fool for his labour. (5) "Among them" that thought him exorbitant, because he walked not after their rule. (6) "Among them" that hated the truth, and loved the prophecy of wine and strong drink. Among these bad men dwelt this good Lot, and still he was righteous. It is likely they endeavoured to win him to them, either by rewards or menaces. 3. Objectual—"Their unlawful deeds." Sin is the object or matter of a saint's vexation. That which grieves God should also vex us: this hath tried the zeal of the saints. (Exod. xxxii. 19; 1 Kings xix. 14; 1 Sam. iv. 22; Numb. xxv. 7, 8). 4. Organical or instrumental—"In seeing and hearing." The eye and ear are those special doors that let into the heart its comfort or torment. (1) The sight of sin makes a man either sad or guilty; if we see it, and be not sorrowful, we are sinful. (2) The most offensive sins are such as be objected to sight and hearing. Spiritual and internal sins may be more culpable, outward are more infamous. (3) He did see and not see, hear and not hear. Connivance at rank impiety is bad in all men, intolerable in some; such are the ministers of either gospel or justice. (4) Sodom's sin was so much the more heinous to God, for offending man, and vexing the heart of His servant Lot. (5) He that would not be vexed with evils, let him turn his eyes and ears another way. Let us frequent their company, where in seeing and hearing we may reap comfort. II. THE FIRE ITSELF. "Vexed his righteous soul." 1. Its property. (1) It is the argument of a righteous man to be far from his Maker's service. As sails to the ship and wind to the sails, so is fervency to righteousness. A soldier without courage, a horse without mettle, a creature without vivacity, such is a Christian without fervency. (2) It doth also improve righteousness; like the fire which came down from heaven upon the sacrifices, causing them to ascend thither in acceptance. Fervency is that mark which God would have us set on all His services, that so they may be discerned to be His own. (3) It honours righteousness; many thousands have been righteous whose names are not on record; but of those who have been zealous in their piety, the Scripture takes special notice. 2. Its sincerity. As this was no common fervency, so no counterfeit; he little dissembles whose soul is moved. (1) There be some that vex themselves out of envy; Lot did not so. This is a black zeal, reckoned among the works of the flesh (1 Cor. iii. 3; Acts v. 17; Gal. v. 21; James iii. 14; 1 Cor. xiii. 4; Rom. xiii. 13). (2) There be that vex themselves out of choler; transported with intemperate passions. We do not read that Lot was cruel and turbulent, vexing others; but he vexed himself. (3) There be that vex themselves without cause, and strike their friends for their enemies. Let our zeal come in to part, not to partake the fray; all endeavouring and praying, that peace may be within the gates of Zion. (4) There be that vex themselves out of hypocrisy; they have other ends than God's glory. (5) There be that vex themselves out of ignorance; for there is a zeal not according to knowledge. Here is a pitiable fervency, like mettle in a blind horse, or a sting in an angry bee. (6) The very name of a counterfeit presupposeth an original. That virtue which even hypocrites put on to grace them, is, questionless, some rare and admirable thing. The true Lot, whose fervency is in the spirit, not in show; in substance, not in circumstance; for God, not for himself; guided by the Word, not by humour; tempered with charity, not driven with turbulence; such a man's praise is of God, though it be not of men; and through all contempts on earth, it shall find a glorious reward in heaven. 3. Its singularity. One Lot will be righteous amongst and against all Sodom, and express this righteousness in the midst of their vicious customs. It hath been the lot of fervent holiness to be rare, as to be excellent: adherents may hearten, opposites must not dash zeal out of countenance. (1) So near as we can, let us make choice of the good; for man naturally produces works conformable to the objects before his eyes. (2) If, like Lot, we be necessitated to the society of bad people, yet let us be good still; yea, therefore the more holy, because in the midst of a perverse generation, shining as lights in a dark place. (3) Let us follow the examples of the best, not

of the most. Who had not rather be righteous with one singular Lot, than perish with all ungodly Sodom? 4. Its constancy. "From day to day." The fixed stars are even like themselves, whereas meteors and vapours have no continued light. To run with the stream, or sail with the wind, or, like the marigold, to open only with the sunshine, is no praise of piety. Give me that Job that will be as honest a man among his thousands as under the rod, when the number of his present ulcers exceeds his former riches. (*Thos. Adams.*) *How ought we to bewail the sins of the places where we live?*—It is the disposition and duty of the righteous to be deeply afflicted with the sins of the places where they live. I. For the obvious Scripture examples.—Our Lord (Mark iii. 5) was "grieved for the hardness of their hearts," namely, in opposing His holy and saving doctrines. David professeth that "rivers of waters ran down his eyes, because men kept not God's law"; and that when he "beheld the transgressors, he was grieved; because they kept not His Word" (Psa. cxix. 136, 158). The next example shall be Ezra's, who, hearing of the sins of the people in marrying with heathens, in token of bitter grief for it, "rent his garment and his mantle, and plucked off the hair of his beard and of his head, and sat down astonished" (Ezra ix. 3); and he did neither "eat bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away" (Ezra x. 6). To these I might add the example of Jeremiah (Jer. xiii. 17). I shall conclude this with that expression of holy Paul (Phil. iii. 18).

II. The manner how this duty of mourning for the sins of others is to be performed.

1. In our mourning for the sins of others in respect of God, we must advance—(1) His great and unparalleled patience and long-suffering extended toward those whose sins we lament. This was evident in Nehemiah's bewailing the sins of the sinful Jews (Neh. ix. 30). (2) In mourning for the sins of the wicked, advance God in the acknowledgment of His justice and spotless righteousness, should He with utmost severity take vengeance upon offenders. (3) In spreading before God the wickednesses of great sinners, admire His infinite power, that can not only stop the worst of men in, but turn them from, their course of opposing God by their rebellions. We are not so to mourn for, as to despair of the conversion of, the worst. They are as much within the converting reach as the destructive reach of God's hand. (4) In mourning admire that grace and power that hath kept thee from their excesses. It should more comfort thee that thou sinnest not with them, than trouble thee that thou sufferest from them. 2. The second branch of the manner how we must bewail the sins of others is as it respects those for whom and for whose sins we lament and mourn. (1) We must bewail the sins of our bitterest enemies, as well as of our most beloved relations—a rare and seldom-practised duty I fear that this will be found. (2) We ought to bewail the sins of our near and dear relations in a greater measure than those of mere strangers—natural affection, sanctified, is the strongest. (3) They that mourn for others' sins, especially the sins of those they most love, must mourn more for their sins than their afflictions and outward troubles. (4) We ought to bewail the sins of others according to the proportion of the sins of the times and places where we live. (5) We ought to mourn for the sins of others advantageously to those for whom we mourn, with the using of all due means to reclaim and reduce them. (a) By prayer for their conversion and God's pardoning them. (b) We must endeavour to follow the mourning for sinners with restraining them from sin (if we have it) by power. (c) We must mourn for sinners with advantaging them by example, that they may never be able to tax us with those sins for which we would be thought sorrowful. (d) We must follow our mourning for others' sins with labouring to advantage them by holy reproof for the sins we mourn for. (e) With expressing that commiseration toward a sinner in private which thou expressest for him before God in secret. (6) We must mourn for those sins of others that are in appearance advantageous to ourselves. 3. I shall consider how we should mourn for the sins of others in respect of ourselves. (1) They whom God hath set in any place or station of superiority over others, either more public or in families, should be the most eminent mourners for the sins of those committed to their charge. (2) Those who, now converted, have been the most open sinners in their unconverted state should more lay to heart the sins of the openly wicked than those who have lived more civilly and without scandal. (3) They that mourn for others' sins must more mourn because those sins are offensive and dishonourable to God and hurtful to sinners, than because they are injurious to themselves that mourn over them. (4) They that mourn for others' sins should mourn more in secret than in open complaining. (5) They that mourn for others' sins must mourn to a high degree who have been the occasions and

promoters of their sins—either by neglecting to reprove them for, restraining them from, or giving them examples of, sinning. This sanctified conscience will make one of the bitterest ingredients into sorrow for the sins of others. (6) They that mourn for the sins of others must mourn with a holy reflection upon themselves. (a) They must reflect upon themselves with sorrow, because they have the same impure natures that the most-to-be-lamented sinner in the world hath. (b) With a reflection of examination. (i) Whether you have not some way or other furthered this sinner in his much-to-be-lamented impieties. (ii) Whether the same open sins that are acted by him—the noted offender—or sins almost or altogether as bad, are not acted and entertained by thee in secret places, or at least in thy heart. (c) With a reflection of care and watchfulness that thou mayest never dare to fall into the sins that thou bewailest in another; that thou who labourest to quench the fire that hath seized upon thy neighbour's house, mayest be careful to preserve thine from being set on fire also. III. To show why this holy mourning is—

1. The disposition, and 2. Duty of the righteous, I shall express the reasons of both distinctly. 1. It is their disposition, and that under a threefold qualification—(1) Because they are a knowing people. They know what tears and heart-breakings sin hath stood them in; they know that sin will cost the wicked either tears of repentance or damnation; they know that sin is but gilded destruction, and fire and brimstone in a disguise (2 Cor. v. 11). (2) As to a saint's disposition: he is compassionate and tender-hearted. If sinners mourn, he mourns with them; if not, he mourns for them. (3) The righteous are a purified, sanctified people. A saint, as such, hates nothing but sin. 2. It is the duty as well as the disposition of the righteous to mourn for the sins of others; and that as they are considerable in a threefold relation. (1) In their relation to God. As "the sons of God" they are commanded to be "blameless, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation" (Phil. ii. 15). (2) Their relation to the Mediator, the Lord Christ. Here I shall mention only a double relation between Christ and saints, that engageth them to mourn for the sins of others. (a) The first is His relation to us as a suffering Surety, in respect whereof He paid the debt of penalty which we owed to God's justice; for it was sin in man that made Christ "a man of sorrows." (b) There is a second relation between Christ and saints that should make them mourn for the sins of the wicked; and that is the relation of Teacher and Instructor. We are His disciples and scholars; and it is our duty as much to make Him our Example as to expect He should obtain our pardon. Christ never had a pollution, but oft a commotion, of affection; Christ never wept but for sin or its effects. (3) Their relation to the wicked, for whose sins they should mourn. (a) The saints are men with the worst; they have the relation of human nature to the greatest sinners upon earth (Heb. xiii. 3). It is a wickedness to hide ourselves from our own flesh (Isa. lviii. 7). (b) The righteous are the same with the wicked in respect of corrupt, depraved nature; born in sin as much as they, with a principle of inclination to all their impieties (Eph. ii. 3). Should it not, then, make thee mourn to consider, by the wickedness of others, thine own inbred depravation? what thou hadst done thyself if God had not either renewed or restrained thee? yea, what thou wouldest do if God should leave thee, and withdraw His grace from thee? (c) Perhaps the holiest men have been, some way or other, furtherers of the sins of the wicked among whom they live; perhaps by their former sinful example when they lived in the same sins themselves which now the wicked wallow in. Shouldest not thou, then, mourn for killing that soul which God so severely punisheth, though free grace hath pardoned thee? Should we not quench that fire with our tears which we have blown-up with our bellows of encouragement? (d) In this relation of saints to sinners that should put them upon mourning for them, it is very considerable that the godly and the wicked make up one community, or political body, in the places where they live. In which respect the sins of some particular offender or offenders may pull down judgments upon the whole body. So that every one had need do his utmost, by mourning, and in whatever other way he can, to redress the sins, and so to prevent the plagues, of the place where he lives. IV. Application. Use I. OF INFORMATION in sundry branches. 1. Godliness is uniform in all times, places, and companies. A righteous man is not, as the swine in a meadow, clean only in clean places; he will maintain opposition to sin in the midst of inducements to sin. His goodness may justly be suspected that only shows itself in good places, companies, and times. 2. The greatest sinners cannot constrain us to sin. The greatest temptation is no plea for committing the least sin: if we give not away, none can take away our holiness. 3. One cause may

produce contrary effects. Others' sins draw the wicked to follow them, but they put the saints upon bewailing them. 4. It is our duty to rejoice in the holiness, if to mourn for the sins, of others. Love to God's house in others was David's gladness (Psa. cxxii. 1). It was the greatest joy of holy John that his spiritual "children walked in the truth" (3 John 4). Holy ones were Paul's "joy, crown, and glory" (1 Thess. ii. 19, 20). 5. Christianity abolisheth not affection, but rectifies it. Grace is like the percolation or draining of salt water through the earth; it only takes away the brackishness and unsavouriness of our affections and faculties. 6. Everything betters a saint. Not only ordinances, word, sacraments, holy society, but even sinners and their very sinning. Even these draw forth their graces into exercise, and put them upon godly, broken-hearted mourning. 7. The great misery that sin hath brought into the world, to make sorrow and mourning necessary. It should make us long for a better world, where that which is here our duty to practise shall for ever be our privilege to be freed from. 8. There must needs remain a better state for the saints. 9. How ought sinners to mourn for their own sins! The nearer the enemy is, the more dreadful he is. Nothing more dismal than to see a sinner to go, not swiftly only, but merrily, to eternal mourning. "He that hath no tears for himself, should be helped by others." Use II. The second use is of REPREHENSION; and that to sundry sorts. 1. To those that reproach the holy mourning of saints for others' sins. They are falsely esteemed the incendiaries in a state whose great study is to quench God's burning wrath. If sinners kindle the fire, let saints quench it. 2. This doctrine of mourning for the sins of others speaks reproof to those that take pleasure in the sins of others (Rom. i. 32). 3. This doctrine reproves those that mourn for the holiness of others. I have known some parents that have greatly desired their children should be good husbands, to get and increase their estates; but then have been very fearful lest they should be too godly; and it hath been the righteous judgment of God that their children proved spendthrifts, neither godly nor good husbands. It is often seen that, as gardeners with their shears snip off the tops of the tallest sprigs, so men most labour to discountenance the tallest in Christianity. 4. This doctrine reproves those that put others upon sin, so far are they from mourning for their sins. Poor souls! have they not sins enough of their own to answer for? It is little enough to be a leader to heaven, but too much to be a follower to hell; what, then, to be a leader! Use III. OF EXHORTATION, to mourn for the sins of the wicked among whom we live. 1. If we mourn not for others' sins, theirs become ours. 2. Mourning for others' sins is the way to awaken thy conscience for thine own former sins. 3. Without mourning for sinners you will never seek the reformation of sinners. 4. This mourning for others' sins will make us more fearful to admit sin into ourselves. 5. Mourning for others' sins speaks thee a man of public usefulness to thy country. 6. Mourning for others' sins makes the sins of others beneficial to thee. 7. Holy commotion of soul for others' sins sends forth a most acceptable and fragrant savour into the nostrils of God. Use IV. I shall add one use more; and that is DIRECTION to the means of practising this duty of holy mourning for others' sins: 1. Look not upon this duty with self-exemption. As if it belonged only to the highest in the practice of religion, or persons in office. All desire to be marked, and therefore should be mourners (Ezek. ix. 4). 2. Look upon mourning for sin to be no legal practice, but an evangelical duty. The gospel-grace makes tears sweeter, not fewer. 3. Preserve tenderness of conscience in respect of thine own sins. 4. Strengthen faith in divine threatenings against sin. 5. Be holily, not curiously, inquisitive into the state of the times. 6. Take heed of being drowned in sensual delights. (*W. Jenkin, M.A.*) *Distress of the pious at the wickedness of the godless*:—The pious are distressed at the sins of the godless because—1. These sins sully the glory of God; 2. They show the tyranny of Satan over men; 3. They conduce to the condemnation of the godless. (*J. Frommüller.*) *Grief at sin*:—John Bunyan's wife having, after several previous applications to different judges, made a specially importunate appeal to Judges Hale and Twisdon for the release of her husband from Bedford gaol, and being again unsuccessful, said: "I remember that though I was somewhat timorous at my first entrance into the chamber, yet, before I went out, I could not but break forth into tears, not so much because they were so hard-hearted against me and my husband, but to think what a sad account such poor creatures will have to give at the coming of the Lord, when they shall then answer for all things whatsoever they have done in the body, whether it be good or whether it be bad." (*Tinling's Illustrations.*) *A Christian in the world is like a rose among noxious weeds*:—Does a rose refuse to grow and to

emit a sweet odour because there are noxious weeds in the same field? And does the rose complain and declare that it will not fulfil its mission until every weed is pulled up? A rose is a rose in the midst of thorns and thistles. A Christian is a Christian under all circumstances, and whether the world is full of noxious weeds, and the Church swarming with hypocrites, the man of faith continues to grow and bear fruit, exhaling a sweet and salutary fragrance on all around. A Christian who refuses to shed spiritual fragrance upon the desert air, because of the presence of mean and defective church members, is a mere fungus sort of Christian, being devoid of the seeds of truth, and hence empty of spiritual vitality.

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly.—*The Lord's knowledge our safeguard:*

—I. THE LORD'S KNOWLEDGE IN REFERENCE TO CHARACTER. 1. He knows the godly

—(1) Under trial, when they are not known to others. (2) Under temptation, when scarcely known to themselves. 2. He knows the unjust—(1) Though they make loud professions of piety. (2) Though they may be honoured for their great possessions.

II. THE LORD'S KNOWLEDGE IN REFERENCE TO THE GODLY. He knows how to let them suffer, and yet to deliver them in the most complete and glorious manner. 1. His knowledge answers better than theirs would do. 2. His knowledge of their case is perfect. 3. He knows in every case how to deliver them. 4. He knows the most profitable way of deliverance. 5. His knowledge should cause them to trust in Him with holy confidence, and never to sin in order to escape.

III. THE LORD'S KNOWLEDGE IN REFERENCE TO THE UNJUST. 1. They are unjust in all senses, for they are—(1) Not legally just by keeping the law. (2) Nor evangelically just through faith in Jesus. (3) Nor practically just in their daily lives. 2. The Lord knows best—(1) How to deal with them from day to day. (2) How to reserve them under restraints. He makes it possible to relieve them, and yet to maintain law and order. (3) How to punish them with unrest and fears even now. (4) How and when to strike them down when their iniquities are full. (5) How to deal with them in judgment, and throughout the future state. The mysteries of eternal doom are safe in His hand. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

God's dealings with the godly and their persecutors:—I. THE DELIVERANCE OF THE GODLY. 1. A deliverance.

It is a great comfort in every distress to hope for a deliverance; to believe it, greater; to be sure of it, greatest of all. Thus certain is every Christian, by the assurance of faith, grounded on the infallible promise of God. God often defers His deliverance. (1) To return us home: when no man will harbour that unthrift son, he will back again to his father. (2) To make us seek our deliverance in the right place: while money can buy physic, or friends procure enlargement, the great Physician Helper is not thoroughly trusted. (3) To set a better price on His benefits; for suddenly gotten are suddenly forgotten. 2. The persons delivered are the "godly." Godliness consists in two things: (1) The devout admiration; and (2) Sincere imitation of God. 3. From what—"out of temptations." They, of all men, are most subject to temptations. The higher a tree shoots up, the more tempest-beaten. To suggest evil is Satan's blame; to resist it our praise. The more we are tried in the furnace, the purer gold we shall go to the treasury of heaven. Lord, make us as strong as the devil is malicious. (1) We that pray for deliverance from evil must endeavour against evil. Let us have wary eyes, for it is not the self-appearing devil, but the same or transformed angel, that doth corrupt us. (2) Consider what preventions the provident God useth against our sinnings. Sometimes He shortens our own arms, sometimes strengthens others against us. Sometimes reason is heard, when religion sits out; and the dishonesty, inutility, or difficulty of a sin is perpended. But it is best, when the fear of God hath corrected us, or the Word of God averted us, or the Spirit of God recalled us. (3) Let us meditate how we are blessed of God, and have reason to bless God, for these happy deliverances. (4) If we love not evil, let us long for our final and plenary deliverance from it; that immortal court, where sin can no more enter; out of this the tempter is excluded for ever. Here the Lord delivers us from the damnation and domination of sin, there from the temptation and assault; here it shall not overcome us, there it shall not come near us. 4. Our deliverer—"The Lord." His sovereignty is—(1) Independent. (2) Absolute. (3) Universal. (4) Necessary. We could not live but by His dominion. (5) Immutabile. What God once is, He is for ever. (6) Incomprehensible. (7) Glorious and blessed. 5. "The Lord knoweth how." As there is nothing impossible to His might, so there is nothing concealable from His understanding. (1) He knows our temptations before they be upon us; He sees the preparing of the potion, weighs the ingredients to a scruple, qualifies the malignity of the purgatives with sweet consolations. (2) He knows them when

they be upon us (Exod. ii. 25; Psa. xxxi. 7). (3) He knows how to rid them from us. They are often so perplexful and intricate, that neither we see, nor the world sees, nor reason apprehends how, yet the Lord knoweth. II. THE END OF THEIR PESECUTIONS. 1. The malefactors. The wicked are 'unjust.' (1) To God. Righteousness is an obedience to the will of God, and injustice is no other than disobedience. (2) To man. Such are they that measure their right by their power, and therefore will do injury because they cannot do it. Unjust—(a) To the commonwealth. (b) To the Church. (c) To private persons. (3) To a man's self. So is the thriftless, that spends himself into poverty by pride and luxury; the envious, that loses the sweetness of his own by grudging at his neighbours; the covetous, that adds to the content of his treasure what he should add to the content of his nature. 2. The binding over. "Are reserved." Whether they sleep or wake, play or work, stand or walk, their time runs on, their judgment is nearer; and they are more surely kept unto it, than any dungeon, with the thickest walls and strongest chains, can hold a prisoner till his arraignment comes. (1) Wickedness hath but a time, but the punishment of wickedness is beyond all time. (2) The unjust are already reserved, the decree is passed against them. They are bound over to the last assizes by a threefold recognisance, as it were with infrangible, though insensible, chains of judgment—the bond of their sins, the bond of their conscience, and the bond of omnipotent justice—and this threefold cable is not easily broken. 3. The assizes. "To the day of judgment." (1) The sufficiency of the Judge. (2) The necessity of the judgment (2 Thess. i. 6, 7). 4. The execution. "To be punished." In this judgment, God respects no persons; He knows no valour, no honour, no riches, no royalty, in the matter of sin; but Rom. ii. 9. (*Thos. Adams.*) *The trial and deliverance of the godly*.—I. OUR RELIGION MUST BE FAIRLY TRIED. 1. The pleasures of life, as they are generally deemed, present themselves before you; many of them decidedly sinful, others of them, though not directly immoral, yet very ensnaring, they invite you to the indulgence of gratifications which war against the soul. Do you habitually resist these salutations? 2. The world, apart from its disgusting vices, exhibits to your mind, in bright colours, the numerous comforts, the many enjoyments, the family advantages, the great interests, belonging to a state of prosperity and affluence. Do you when thus tempted adhere firmly to the great Christian principle of renouncing the world? 3. Even religion itself, with imposing professions, will invite your attention and adherence for the purpose of ensnaring and deceiving your souls. Do you continue steadfast in the faith, true to your only Lord and Master? Do you reject every substitute for Christ Himself? 4. A persecuting spirit, under the pretext of holy zeal for God and religion, has often been exerted, and has proved a severe trial of faith and sincerity. Do you notwithstanding cleave to the Lord?—hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering? 5. Afflictions generally are a trial of our religion. It is when we are brought low in trouble that the excellency of faith, the sincerity of our hearts, the truth of our profession, the reality of our love to God, and the purity of our faith in the Son of God will be most satisfactorily manifested. Yet, let it be seriously remembered, that it is not the impression of the moment, but the subsequent permanent, abiding effects of affliction that become a real test of godliness. II. THE ENCOURAGING PROMISE CONVEYED IN THIS PASSAGE TO MEN OF TRUTH AND SINCERITY. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation." A faithful God is not only able to comfort and sustain them that wait upon Him, but He will do it most wisely; He knoweth how to dispense His grace most advantageously to them that really love Him and cast their care upon Him. (*S. Morell.*) *Deliverance from temptation the privilege of the righteous*.—1. Who are here to be understood by "the godly." He, and he only, can lay claim to so glorious a qualification who is actually in covenant with God, and that not only by external profession, but by real relation. In a word, he, and he only, ought to pass for godly, according to the unalterable rules of Christianity, who allows not himself in the omission of any known duty, or the commission of the least known sin. And this certainly will, and nothing less than I know of can, either secure a man from falling into temptation, or (which is yet a greater happiness) from falling by it. 2. The other thing to be inquired into is, what is here meant by "temptation"; a thing better known by its ill effects than by the best description. The Greek word signifies "trial," and so imports not so much the matter as the end of the dispensation. But (the common and most received use of the word having added something of malignity to its first and native signification) generally in Scripture it denotes not only a bare trial, but such a one as is attended with a design to hurt or

mischieve the people so tried. As for the sense in which the word ought to be taken here, it may be, and no doubt with great truth is, in the full latitude of it, applicable to both sorts of temptation: it being no less the prerogative of God's goodness and power to deliver men from such trials as afflict them, than from such as are designed to corrupt them. Nevertheless, I think it also as little to be doubted, that the text chiefly respects this latter signification, and accordingly speaks here most designedly of such a deliverance as breaks the snares and defeats the stratagems by which the great and mortal enemy of mankind is so infinitely busy, first to debauch, and then to destroy souls. And now, if it be inquired whether they are the righteous only whom God delivers from temptation, and that no such deliverances are ever vouchsafed by Him to any of the contrary character, I answer that I can find nothing in Scripture or reason to found such a doctrine upon, but that such deliverances both may be and sometimes are vouchsafed to persons far enough from being reckoned godly, either in the accounts of God or man. And first, that they may be so, we need no other reason to evince it than this, that God in these cases may very well restrain the actions, without working any change upon the will or affections. And in the next place, that such deliverances not only may be, but sometimes actually are afforded to persons represented under no note of piety or virtue, but much otherwise, those three memorable examples of Abimelech, Esau, and Balaam (Gen. xx., xxxiii.; Numb. xxii.) sufficiently demonstrate. So that we may rationally conclude that even wicked persons also are sometimes sharers in such deliverances; but still so, that this by all means ought to be observed withal, that the said deliverances are dealt forth to these two different sorts of men upon very different grounds, viz., to the former upon the stock of covenant or promises; to the latter upon the stock of uncovenanted mercy, and the free overflowing egress of the Divine benignity, often exerting itself upon such as have no claim to it at all. I. To show how far God delivers persons truly pious out of temptation. 1. God delivers by way of prevention, or keeping off the temptation; which, of all other ways, is doubtless the surest, as the surest is unquestionably the best. For by this is set a mighty barrier between the soul and the earliest approaches of its mortal enemy. Unspeakable are the advantages vouchsafed to mankind by God's preventing grace, if we consider how apt a temptation is to diffuse, and how prone our nature is to receive an infection. For though the soul be not actually corrupted by a temptation, yet it is something to be sullied and blown upon by it, to have been in the dangerous familiarities of sin, and in the next approach and neighbourhood of destruction. Such being the nature of man, that it is hardly possible for him to be near an ill thing and not the worse for it. 2. We are now to consider such persons as advanced a step further, and as they are actually entered into temptation; and so also God is at hand for their deliverance. For as it was God who suspended the natural force of that material fire from acting upon the bodies of the three children mentioned in Dan. iii., so it is God alone who must control the fury of this spiritual flame from seizing upon the soul, having always so much fuel and fit matter there for it to prey upon. And for an eternal monument of His goodness, He has not left us without some such heroic instances as these upon record in His Word, that so the saints may receive double courage and confidence, having their deliverance not only sealed and secured to them by promise, but also that promise ratified and made good to them by precedents and examples, like so many stars appearing, both to direct and to comfort the benighted traveller. 3. And lastly, we are to consider the persons hitherto spoken of as not only entered into temptation, but also as in some measure prevailed upon by it. But that I may give some light to this weighty case of conscience, how far a person truly godly may, without ceasing to be so, be prevailed upon by temptation, I will here set down the several degrees and advances by which a temptation or sinful proposal gradually wins the soul, and those all of them comprised in James i. 14, 15. 1. The first of which we may call seduction. 2. The second degree of temptation may be called enticement or allurements. 3. The third degree is, when after such possession had of the thoughts and fancy, the temptation comes to make its way into the consent of the will, and to gain that great fort also, so that the mind begins to propose, and accordingly to contrive the commission of the sin proposed to it. 4. The fourth degree of prevalence which a temptation gets over the soul is, the actual eruption of it in the perpetration or commission of the sin suggested to it. 5. The fifth and last degree, completing the victory which temptation obtains over a man is, when sin comes to that pitch as to reign, and so by consequence put out of all possibility either of resistance or escape. Having thus reckoned up the several degrees of temptation, and set before you the fatal round

of the devil's methods for destroying souls, let us now in the next place inquire how far God vouchsafes to deliver the pious and sincere out of them. In answer to which, I first of all affirm, that God's methods in this case are very various, and not to be declared by any one universal assertion. Sometimes by a total and entire deliverance, He delivers them from every degree and encroachment of a temptation. Sometimes He lets them fall into the first degree of it, and receive it into their thoughts; but then delivers them from the second, which is to cherish and continue it there, by frequent pleasing reflections upon it. Sometimes He gives way to this too, but then hinders it from coming to a full purpose and consent of will. Sometimes He lets it go thus far also, and suffers sin to conceive by such a purpose or consent: but then, by a kind of spiritual abortion, stifles it in the very birth, and so keeps it from breaking forth into actual commission. And lastly, for reasons best known to His most wise providence, He sometimes permits a temptation to grow so powerful as to have strength to bring forth and to defile the soul with one or more gross actual eruptions. But then, in the last place, by a mighty overpowering grace, He very often, as some assert, or always, as others affirm, keeps it from an absolute, entire, and final conquest. So that sin never comes to such a height as to reign in the godly, to bear sway, and become habitual. But though its endeavours are not always extinguished, nor its sallies out wholly stopped, yet its dominion is broken. It may sometimes bruise and wound, but it shall never kill. Now the foregoing particulars, upon a due improvement of them, will naturally teach us these two great and important lessons. 1. Concerning the singular goodness as well as wisdom of our great Lawgiver, even in the strictest and severest precepts of our religion. Certainly it is a much greater mercy and tenderness to the souls of men to represent the first movings of the heart towards any forbidden object as unlawful in themselves, and destructive in their consequence, and thereby to incite the soul to a vigorous resistance of them while they may be mastered, and with ten times less trouble extinguished, than after they are once actually committed, they can be repented of. No doubt sin is both more easily and effectually kept from beginning than, being once begun, it can be stopped from going on. 2. The other great lesson is concerning the most effectual method of dealing with the tempter and his temptations; and that is, to follow the method of their dealing with us. A temptation never begins where it intends to make an end. II. To show WHAT IS THE PRIME MOTIVE, OR ORAND IMPULSIVE CAUSE, INDUCING GOD TO DELIVER PERSONS TRULY PIOUS OUT OF TEMPTATION. Now this is twofold: 1. The free mercy of God; and 2. The prevailing intercession of Christ. III. To show WHY AND UPON WHAT GROUNDS DELIVERANCE OUT OF TEMPTATION IS TO BE REPUTED SO GREAT A MERCY AND SO TRANSCENDENT A PRIVILEGE. In order to which, as all deliverance, in the very nature and notion of it, imports a relation to some evil from which a man is delivered; so in this deliverance out of temptation, the surpassing greatness of it, and the sovereign mercy shown in it, will appear from those intolerable evils and mischiefs which are always intended by, and naturally consequents upon, a prevailing temptation. Four things more especially are designed and driven at by the tempter in all his temptations. 1. To begin with the greatest, and that which is always first intended, though last accomplished, the utter loss and damnation of the soul. For this is the grand mark which the tempter shoots at, this being the beloved prize which he contends so hard for. 2. In the second place, loss of a man's peace with God and his own conscience, and the weakening, if not extinguishing, all his former hopes of salvation. It confounds and casts a man infinitely backwards as to his spiritual accounts. It degrades him from his assurance; renders his title to heaven dubious and perplexed; draws a great and discouraging blot over all his evidences, and even shakes in pieces that confidence which was formerly the very life and support of his soul, with new, terrible, and amazing objections. 3. The third consequence of a prevailing temptation is the exposing of a man to the temporal judgments of God in some signal and severe affliction. For though in much mercy God may, as we have shown, save such a one from eternal death, yet it rarely happens that He frees him both from destruction and from discipline too; but that some time or other He gives him a taste of the bitter cup, and teaches him what his sin has deserved, by what at present it makes him feel. 4. The fourth and last mischievous consequence of a prevailing temptation is the disgrace, scandal, and reproach which it naturally brings upon our Christian profession. The three former consequences terminated within the compass of the sinner's own person; but this last spreads and diffuses the mischief much further: nothing in nature casting so deep a stain upon the face of Christianity as the blots which fall upon it from the

low and scandalous behaviour of Christians. (R. South, D.D.) **And to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.**—*The reality of future punishment*.—I. **THINK OF THE CRISIS WHICH IS INDICATED BY THE TEXT.** "The day of judgment." At the day of judgment those of whom our text speaks will be present. These unjust ones will avowedly be all there. They are still existing, because then they will be forthcoming. Yes, and all besides these unjust ones are still existing, in order that they may be forthcoming then. Every descendant of Adam is existing unto this hour; living as much as we are living, away amidst the intermediate blessedness or woe; awaiting there the coming of the Lord to judgment. Public pronouncement must there be of the allotted destiny, world without end. The present does not terminate upon itself. II. **THINK OF THE PARTIES DESIGNATED BY THE TEXT.** "The unjust." This word is used to represent the ungodly. To be unjust towards our fellow-man is to do unto him that which should have been avoided, and to neglect to do unto him that which should have been performed. We sustain to him relationships involving manifold obligations. We sustain towards God relationships involving manifold obligations. Certain things are due from us to God; certain tempers of heart; certain modes of thought; certain habits of life. They are in no wise optional. Now, in the judgment of the great day inquisition will be instituted accordingly. Not a godly man has lived who will not then be honourably recognised. Not an ungodly man has lived whose ungodliness will not then be brought transparently to light. Compromise will be impossible. Suppression will be impossible. Evasion will be impossible. III. **THINK OF THE DOOM DECLARED BY OUR TEXT.** "Punishment unto which they have been reserved." There was, according to the intimation, an idea of ultimate escape. The penalty which had been merited would somehow be averted. So in their folly men imagined they should not surely die. But God was knowing them all the while; preparing, moreover, all the while, as His forewarnings told, to execute His will. Dare any man amongst us to suggest that the great God was inconsiderate when He spoke of a fearful looking-for of judgment? Dare any man amongst us to suggest that He who holdeth us responsible for the full sincerity of our own words has been so far indifferent to the full sincerity of His own as to speak of tribulation in the future life when there is no such thing as tribulation? Real, downright positively real, this future punishment of the unjust. Forecasts of the punishment are sometimes realised in the present life. Instances of punishment have now and then occurred among the children of men which are enough to silence the objections which some of you are making now. You want the preacher to remember the goodness of God. I have it in remembrance; but I have in remembrance also the blindness of Elymas the sorcerer, and the latter end of Herod, who was eaten up of worms. You want the preacher to remember the goodness of God. I have it in remembrance; but I have in remembrance also the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise; the cherubim with the flaming sword being placed there to dare them ever to return. (W. Brock.)

Ver. 10. Them that walk after the flesh, . . . and despise government.—*Walking after the flesh*.—Now from the thesis he accommodates the general doctrine to his own purpose. If God will take vengeance on all the wicked, let not these pernicious seducers think to escape. 1. They follow "the flesh," not reason, much less the Spirit. 2. They "walk after" the flesh: the flesh is not like some stranger, whom they meet rarely; or some friend, whom they see but now and then; or a domestic companion, with whom they eat, drink, play, sleep. But it is their commander, whose colours they march under. It is the weight that sets all their wheels a-going; the horses that draw their chariot, the very life of their corruption, and corruption of their life, without which they do nothing. 3. "In the lust of uncleanness"—a sordid, irrational, stinking turpitude. After this the reprobate walks; his whole self, all the parts of him: his eyes walk after to look upon it; his ears walk after to hearken to it; his mouth walks after to talk of it; his feet walk after to pursue it; his hands stay not behind to act it; his heart is foremost of all to desire it. 4. Finally, whatsoever may cross their lusts, they set themselves to condemn. "Despise government." Not that Almighty Word which rules heaven and earth, but all the beams of God's omnipotent royalty, in His deputed magistracy. As if they resolved to disgrace that wherein God had imprinted the most immediate characters of His own supreme majesty. (Thos. Adams.) **Presumptuous.**—*Presumption*.—Presumption is a deliberate and wilful sinning against conscience, example, or warning. 1. There be some that presume of safety in sin, not doubting to fare well, while they

fear not to do ill: as if this world were to last for ever, and the corn and tares were never to be parted. 2. There be some that attempt things without warrant, or expect things without promise; this is the common presumption of the world. And they that know they cannot live without feeding, or change places without moving, yet will hope to be saved without practical obedience. 3. There be some that take their salvation without all question, and are so sure of heaven that they never doubt the contrary; and this is presumption. Every good grace hath its counterfeit: if in the faithful there be a modest assurance of their blessedness in Christ, the carnal will be blown up with an impudent arrogance, as if their footing was as sure in heaven as any man's. That we may not be thus cozened, observe some differences between presumption and assurance. (1) Presumption is natural, assurance supernatural: we were born with that, we are new-born to this: that was the legacy of Adam, this of Christ. (2) Presumption submits not itself to ordinary means, assurance refuses no means of being made better. (3) Presumption is without all doubting, assurance feels many perplexities: he that doubts not of his estate, his estate is much to be doubted of. (4) Presumption is joined with looseness of life, persuasion with a tender conscience: that dares sin because it is sure, this dares not for fear of losing assurance. (*Ibid.*) *Presumption* is a firework, made up of pride and foolhardiness. It is indeed like a heavy house built upon slender crutches; like dust, which men throw against the wind, it flies back in their face, and makes them blind. Wise men presume nothing, but hope the best; presumption is hope out of her wits. (*Ibid.*) *Presumption*:—I heard the Hon. Thomas Marshall, of Kentucky, make a ten minutes' speech in Broadway Tabernacle, in which he said, "Were this great globe one chrysolite, and I offered the possession if I would drink one glass of brandy, I would refuse it with scorn; and I want no religion, I want the temperance pledge." With that wonderful voice of his he thundered out, "We want no religion in this movement; let it be purely secular, and keep religion where it belongs." Poor Tom Marshall, with all his self-confidence, fell, and died at Poughkeepsie in clothes given him by Christian charity. (*J. B. Gough.*) *Self-willed*.—*Self-willed sinners*:—The natural and unsanctified will of man is hard to tame. No prince can tame the will: he may load the body with irons, vex the sense with pains, yea, surcharge the affections with sorrows; yet still a man's will is his own: in his will he is a king, even while his body is below a slave. The will can make a man's life happy or wretched, when fortune cannot do it. The self-willed man needs no greater enemy than he is to himself. 1. The malicious and spiteful (Numb. xvi. 3). 2. They that despair of proffered grace, and with both hands put back the proffered goodness of God. 3. Contemners of the Word (Hos. viii. 12). 4. Blasphemers. (*T. Adams.*) *Self-will*:—The self-willed is a slave to the worst part of himself; that which is beast in him governs that which is man: appetite is his lord, reason his servant, religion his drudge. His five senses are all the articles of his faith; and he had rather be a famous man upon earth than a saint in heaven. He likes nothing for any goodness, but because he will like it; and he will like it because others do not. If an unseasonable shower cross his recreation, he is ready to fall out with heaven, and to quarrel with God Himself, as if he were wronged because God did not take his time when to rain and when to shine. He is a querulous cut that barks at every horse; and in the silent night the very moonshine opens his clamorous throat. All his proceedings are so many precipices, and his attempts peremptory. He hath not the patience to consult with reason, but determines all merely by affection and fancy. There is no part about him but often smarts for his will. His sides be sore with stripes, and thank his will for it. His bowels are empty, and complain that his will robs them of sustenance. Yea, not seldom, his will breaks the covenant, and his neck pays the forfeit. He is the lawyer's best client, his own sycophant, and the devil's wax, to take what impression he will give him. (*Ibid.*) *Not afraid to speak evil of dignities*.—*Speaking evil of dignities*:—In the discharging of this artillery of hell against the glories and powers which God has ordained, we may consider four particulars: the bullet, the musket, the powder, and the mark. The musket is the malice of the heart; the powder the spitefulness of the tongue; the bullet is blasphemy, disgracing of magistrates; the mark, or butt, is dignities. 1. This piece is charged with three deadly bullets, libelling, murmuring, mutinying. (1) Libellers think it a point of wit to traduce magistracy. Scandals of great men have seldom any fathers; they kill, and make no report. (2) Murmurers, though they disperse not written scandals of the magistracy, yet mutter out repining exceptions against their actions. (3) Mutineers so speak evil of dignities that they raise up evil against

dignities. He that poisons the people with a mal-opinion of their prince, is the most dangerous traitor. 2. The engine that carries this mischievous burden is the tongue. It flies lightly, but injures heavily. It is but a little member, but the nimblest about a man, able to do both body and soul a mischief. 3. The powder that chargeth the tongue, and carries this shot of blasphemy, must needs be malice, the saltpetre of a rancorous hatred. 4. The butts at which this pestilent artillery lets fly the apostle calls dignities, glories. God hath not only set them as vicegerents in His own room, but also enabled them with gifts for so great a designment. Good kings are no ordinary blessings: a worthy general is worth half an army; such as Moses and Joshua were, whose faith fought more for the camp than the camp fought for them. Inferences: (1) Glories they are, why then should they not be glorious? Let their pomp, apparel, diet, dwelling, all be magnificent; let nothing be wanting to their state upon whom depends the state of all. (2) Dignities they are, therefore should be worthy—(a) Of admittance. (b) In performance. No dastards, not proud and disdainful, nor covetous. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 11. **Whereas angels . . . bring not railing accusation.**—*Lessons from the angels*:—From this angelical moderation we learn—1. Not to accuse. This is one of the most significant names of the devil, to be an accuser of the brethren. Love covers a multitude of sins; malice discovers what should be concealed. 2. Not to rail. This is indeed properly the language of hell. Angels do not rail, devils do; angels do not curse, devils do. Your curse is an arrow shot against a stone, it shall wound yourselves. 3. To be afraid of these impieties, as being always before the Lord. A good man would not admit them, were he sure that God would never take notice of it; but before the Lord, who dares rail on His delected image? Corrupt fear dreads the penalty, loves the sin. Gracious fear dreads the sin, and escapes the penalty. The fear of the Lord is pure, because it keeps the heart from being defiled. (*Thos. Adams.*)

Ver. 12. **But these, as natural brute beasts.**—*Men like beasts*:—I. **THEIR RESEMBLANCE.** 1. What they are like—beasts. You have read many fables and apologues, wherein beasts are feigned to speak like men; but who would endure that theatre, where men be seen to play the beast? Such is the power of sin, it can transform men into beast. While idolaters turn beasts into gods, they turn themselves into beasts. 2. Wherein they are like them. (1) The whole intendment of the beast is sensuality; and so of wicked men. (2) Beasts cannot foresee the future, nor provide for it. (3) Beasts are not ashamed of their deeds; where is no reason, there is no sin; and where no sin, no shame. These have reason, yet are not ashamed of their abominations (Jer. viii. 12); and therein are beasts, or worse. II. **THEIR ORDENANCE.** “Made to be taken and destroyed.” 1. God is an absolute Lord over His creatures, and hath as just right of their disposition, as He had power of their creation (Matt. xx. 15). 2. God is always most just, nor can He do other than what is perfectly good. His judgments are sometimes manifest, often secret, always wonderful, never unjust. 3. The will of God is the cause of all causes, in which we must make a stand; and neither beyond it, nor without it, seek for any reason. 4. God hath not ordained any to destruction without the respect of sin. III. **THEIR IGNORANCE.** “Speak evil of the things that they understand not.” Not to understand, is the infirmity of a man; to speak of that he understands not, is the part of a fool; but to speak maliciously evil, is the part of a devil. They will not understand, they will not be silent, they will not speak well. If they will not know, let them hold their peace; nay, they will speak; but then let them give good words; nay, they will speak evil. IV. **THEIR VENGEANCE.** “Shall utterly perish in their own corruption.” 1. No cause doth more necessarily produce its proper effect, than sin doth naturally beget punishment. 2. Forbearance of punishment is no argument of immunity; though not presently, they shall perish. 3. Obstinate sin would make its own rod, were there none prepared. The grace of God resisted, turns to desperateness; and wicked men, like some beasts, grow mad with baiting. They cannot be quiet till they have wrought out their full destruction. (*Thos. Adams.*) *Sensuality*:—1. Sin, where it reigns, turns a man into a brute beast as it were. This is showed in all those places of Scripture where wicked men are compared unto brute beasts, either in general or in special, to horses, mules, dogs, swine, foxes, wolves, bears, lions, &c. 2. The fountain of all this sin and misery is the want of a right and spiritual judgment. 3. A sign of such a condition, that is, of a man turning to a brute beast, is to follow the

passions of corrupted nature without reason. 4. Such men do corrupt also whatsoever natural goodness they have in them. 5. Such sinners are entangled in their sins, and kept unto destruction like as brute beasts in their snares, wherewith they are taken (2 Tim. ii. 26; Lam. i. 14). (*Wm. Ames, D.D.*)

Vers. 13, 14. Shall receive the reward of unrighteousness.—Sin punished :—

1. When we think of the sins of wicked men, we should likewise think of their punishments. (1) Because these two are in God's purpose, and their own nature knit together. (2) Because the consideration of sin often does more hurt than God, if the consideration of the punishment be not joined unto it. 2. Profuse luxury is a sign of a man sinning securely. 3. Luxury, the more it is shown openly, the more it is to be condemned. 4. There is the greatest danger in those sins from which the greatest pleasure and delight ariseth. (1) Because pleasure is a sign of a perfect habit. (2) Because pleasure is very hardly left. 5. They that please themselves most in their sins, do most contaminate both themselves and others. 6. The outward members also of wicked men are full of wickedness. Because out of the abundance of the heart all our faculties, and all the instruments of operations receive impressions answerable unto the heart. 7. The uncleanness of the body is oftentimes joined with impurity of religion (ver. 14). 8. In such men covetousness is oftentimes joined with their impiety. 9. The exercising of the heart unto such sins doth very much strengthen and increase them. 10. They that are after this manner accustomed unto their sins are hardened in them. 11. Such men are most to be detested. (*Wm. Ames, D.D.*)

Pleasure to riot.—Pleasure :— 1. Whether a man may take any pleasure in this world, or no? Yes, certainly; one special use of wisdom stands in tempering our pleasures: to be delighted is not evil, but to be delighted in evil. Why hath God given man such a choice of earthly commodities, but for his use? The wise man can distinguish between the love of pleasure and the use of pleasure; and while others serve delight, he teacheth delight to serve him. 2. How may a Christian take pleasure in the world? By having respect to three things: whether it be lawful, expedient, or becoming. The pleasure must be lawful, there can be no safety in a sinful delight. Poison may be qualified, and become medicinal; there is use to be made of an enemy; sickness may turn to our better health, and death itself to the faithful is but a door to life; but sin can never be made good. Pleasure therefore first must have the warrant, that it be without sin; then the measure, that it be without excess. If the cup be evil, we may not taste it; though good, yet not carouse it. We are not born to play or sport. Nor is the lawfulness only observable, but the convenience; a man may wear good clothes unhandsomely. The stuff may be good, yet while the fashion of the garment does not become him, it appears ridiculous. The place, occasion, company, opportunity, all must be fit. (*Thos. Adams.*)

Spots they are, and blemishes.—Spots and blemishes :—In every sin there is not only guilt, that binds over to punishment, but defilement; which makes the sinner not less filthy than guilty; and even when the guilt is remitted, the filth remains still. The hurt is not so soon cured, as the fault is pardoned. 1. All men are spotted, originally from their parents; of actual spots themselves are the parents. If all our internal spots should break out, we could not endure one another. The whole world would be an hospital, and every man a leper. 2. The whole world is spotted, that is another step: in the universal blemishes of nature let us read our own. To charge God with this degeneration is the highest blasphemy: coldness may sooner arise from fire, than any evil from the fountain of goodness. 3. But if every man be spotted, who shall then enter into heaven, seeing into that city no unclean thing shall come? (Rev. xxi. 27.) This is true, yet many that have been unclean persons are since admitted (1 Cor. vi. 11; Rev. vii. 14; Jer. iv. 14). The grace of God may go a great way in our souls, and yet not leave us without spots. Not to have no spot here, but to have no spot imputed hereafter, is the happiness of a Christian. 4. We have all spots, but these are spots; for the apostle speaks not of their actions here, but their persons; not the blemishes of the men, but that the men themselves are blemishes. This is a high degree of sin, to be wholly turned into sin. 5. To whom do these appear spots and blemishes? (1) To God, who hath pure eyes, and can abide no unclean thing. (2) To the angels. Iniquities be sport for devils, but an eyesore to the angels; they that rejoice at a sinner's conversion do rather grieve at his aberration. (3) To good men, whom nothing pleaseth that displeaseth their Maker. (4) To bad men; for howsoever sinners love to be evil themselves, yet they would have others good to them. (5) To the creatures; they grieve that they

are compelled to wait on a wrong master. (6) And do they not offend themselves? No, the sick man may feel, the dead does not. 6. Sin is of a defiling quality; like a bemired dog, when it fawns upon us it fouls us. It may in this one thing be compared to fire, it converts matter into itself. 7. Open and notorious offenders ought to be denied these holy feasts; and instead of communicating with us, to pass under the censure of excommunication from us; till in penitent tears they have cleansed their pollutions. 8. We may not abstain from the sacrament, because there be spots and blemishes in the society. 9. As all sins are spots, so some have a more special resemblance, as carrying in them a natural poison and filthiness. Such particular instances we find in Scripture, wherein God discovered the spots in their consciences by sticking spots on their bodies (Exod. ix. 11; Numb. xii. 10; 2 Kings v. 27). Application: 1. Learn to see thy spots. Many have unknown sins, as a man may have a mole on his back, and himself never know it (Psa. xix. 12). But many a one knows his fault, yet loves it. 2. Confess these spots. The spots that God hateth, are the spots that man hideth. 3. It is madness to confess ourselves foul, and not to wash, therefore let us endeavour our own cleansing. In our making there was work for God only; in our marring there was work for ourselves only; in our restoring there is work for God and ourselves together. 4. There is only one fountain to purge all these spots, the blood of the Lamb. For this purpose Christ was baptized, even to wash us. His first baptizing was with water, His last with blood; both of them wash the world from their sins. (*Ibid.*) **Sporting themselves with their own deceivings.**—*Sporting with sin*:—It is hard when the fool can find no bauble to play with but sin; casting firebrands, and arrows, and death; and then jeers (Prov. xxvi. 19). Custom brings sin to be so familiar, that the horror of it is turned into pleasure, and homicide is held but a sport. It is ill for a man to make himself merry with that which angers God. If sin were rightly considered, it were more worthy our tears than our sport; the fool laughs at it, but the saint weeps for it. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 14. **Having eyes full of adultery.**—*Adultery*:—1. It is a conquering sin, for it hath overcome the strongest. 2. It is a cheating sin, for, instead of repentance, it works the adulterer to labour a concealment. Instead of clearing their sin, they labour to cloak it. 3. It is a commanding sin; no iniquity that stands in the way must be refused if adultery be once admitted. 4. It is a condemning sin, and carries its own sentence about it. It must needs abandon all love of God, for that and the love of a harlot cannot stand together. As malice is damnable, because it is so diametrically repugnant to God who is love, so God is also purity, and therefore nothing more directly contrary to Him than uncleanness. I. **Their eyes be the beagles that hunt after the game.** 1. There is no sense which is not at the heart's command; but the principality of those servants is varied according to the disposition of their mistress. If the heart be gracious, the ear hath the superiority; if vicious, the eye. 2. The eye is of all senses the quickest of apprehension—a port to land the commodities of hell before the soul have warning. 3. The eye is the pander of a lustful heart; the window that lets in the infection, the first betrayer of the fort. Pliny writes of a chalky brimstone that draws to itself distant fire: the wanton eye attracts this adulterous fire to the heart. Alexander refused so much as to see Darius's wife, a lady of incomparable beauty, fearing lest he that had conquered the husband should be overcome by the wife. 4. Satan's first project is to take the eye; if that be once his friend, he hopes well of all the rest. Indeed, if the door stand open to the thief, what safety can be in the house? 5. Where be the eyes that have not been faulty? If the eyes have sinned, why should not the eyes be punished? Oh, let those eyes that have been the cisterns of corruption become the fountains of compunction! II. **"ADULTERY" is the game, the beast they hunt.** 1. The main attractive of the eye is beauty, and of this the fancy is informed by the eye; yet being so informed, then the eye is ruled by the fancy, and as that imagines her, so the eye sees her. Many a woman's beauty hath been her ruin; but blessing never forsook a beautiful soul. 2. But if a man's eye be delighted with beauty, may he not enjoy it with chastity? What a laborious, what a dangerous way the lustful finds out to his pleasure! 3. It is an adulteress they love, and that is but one bow short of Satan. We hate the Turks for selling Christians as slaves. How odious are they that sell themselves! III. **"FULL of adultery"**—this is the pursuit of the game, full cry. The eyes do not engross all their uncleanness; they are not only full, and the other parts empty. The caterer fills his basket with provision, but this serves afterward to fill the mouth and to fill

the stomach. The eyes be first full, as the cistern; but the cistern serves all other offices of the house. Nor is this a fulness of satisfaction, for as "he that loveth silver shall never be satisfied with silver," so he that loves women shall never be satisfied with women. Unnatural desires are infinite: hunger is soon appeased with meat, and thirst allayed with drink; but in burning fevers, the more water is drunk, the more it is thirsted for. "Full." There is no mediocrity in sin: in extremes can be no mean; and every sin is an extreme, either deficient or excessive. (*Thos. Adams.*) **That cannot cease from sin.—The fixity of habit:**—"Having eyes full of an adulteress." All who possess eyes at all have them full of something. I have heard one of exquisite æsthetic sensibility, who had seen some of the glorious painted glass at St. Gudulc, in Brussels, on a summer day, declare that for days his eyes were "full of those colours, especially the blue." The eye of the woman of "meek and quiet spirit," wherever circumstances may lead her, is full of love. Even so the sensualist's eye is "full of an adulteress," filled full, so that it can hold no more. The eyes are fixed in an evil expression which they can never lose. They give signal to all whom it concerns that they are ever on the watch. That which is choke-full often means, in the original, satiated. But such eyes are insatiate and insatiable. This is one of God's terrible voices of moral judgment, one of those hints which tell us what a man may become. Let us consider that law of human character which is the foundation of the law of Divine punishment, without which, indeed, the latter cannot be spiritually construed to the spiritual nature. Character, then, as the derivation of the word implies, has a tendency to become, and frequently does become, absolutely stereotyped, from a practical point of view. Generally speaking, up to a certain date, a man may issue a second edition of his moral life, revised and corrected, perhaps even entirely recast. Still a day comes when the second edition, with the "errata" expunged, is not possible any longer. The eye once "full of an adulteress" may be filled with dust, but the ineradicable image has been carried to, and abides for ever in, that "inward eye," which is the "bliss" or bane, the heaven or hell of "solitude." This is a solemn argument for youth, when the vapour of imagination and passion are beginning to condense into habit; for that portion of manhood during which habit is becoming of insoluble density. Let us beware of the lust of the eyes. Be ours the prayer, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken Thou me in Thy way." Nor let any who ponders this argument turn from it with a sigh of despair, "For me it is too late." If we have enough of will left to desire earnestly a new mind, it is not too late. Such can still hear the voice—"Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." (*Abp. Wm. Alexander.*) **Covetous practices.—Covetousness:**—Some of us may remember the fable of a covetous man, who chanced to find his way one moonlight night into a fairy's palace. There he saw bars, apparently of solid gold, strewed on every side, and he was permitted to take away as many as he could carry. In the morning, when the sun rose on his imaginary treasure, borne home with so much toil, behold! there was only a bundle of sticks, and invisible beings filled the air around him with scornful laughter. **Covetousness:**—Oh do not so marry yourselves to money that you are resolved nothing shall part you but death; be not like the medlar, which is never good till it be rotten. A covetous man may be compared to a Christmas-box—he receives money, but parts with none till death breaks this box in pieces; then the silver and gold comes tumbling out. (*T. Watson.*)

Vers. 15, 16. **Following the way of Balaam.—Balaam:**—I. We begin with the good part of the character of Balaam. Balaam was a true prophet of God. He was the last prophet under the patriarchal dispensation. He had the knowledge of religion, faith in the future Messiah, and prayer for the great blessing—a death of peace and hope. II. Let us now consider the character of Balaam; as it may be called, the bad part. The bad part of Balaam's character was that he united with his religion, faith, and prayer, the errors of the head, which ruined his religion, and the vices of the heart, which ruined his faith and prayer. He complied with the practices of the idolaters that surrounded him; and he was guilty of that love of money which made him desire the wages of unrighteousness and receive the rewards of Balak, against the warnings of his conscience and his knowledge of God. We must now consider the especial reason why the dumb ass, on which the prophet rode, was the fittest channel by which God would reprove, first, his idolatry, and then his covetousness. 1. And first the dumb ass was the fittest channel by which God would reprove the idolatry of Balaam. It was as if a voice

came from the God of Israel, saying to the prophet, "Wilt thou forsake the one true God, and join thyself, for the sake of money, to the foolish idolatry of the people around you? I will open the mouth of the most stupid of their idols to reproach thee, the prophet of God, to convince thee, and so convince them, that I am the only God, the only giver of all the usefulness of the instinct which has caused the dumb ass to be worshipped and honoured." 2. So also the ass was the fittest channel for the reproof of the covetousness of Balaam. The wild ass of the East was not, as is too often imagined, the same sort of animal as that among us. It was selected, because of its size and beauty, to be the bearer of kings, magistrates, and princes; and its use may be said, therefore, to be confined to those who were the leaders and the wealthy among the people. Now the only palliation that can be alleged for the love of money is the poverty which fears want, or which desires the advantages which money confers. Balaam had no excuse for the covetousness which loved the wages of unrighteousness, and the proof of all this was the mere fact of his possessing the animal which was possessed only by the rich, the great, and the wealthy. When the Lord, therefore, opened the mouth of the ass, it was as if God said, "Why should the prophet of the true God thus be led away by the hope of money? why should the prophet of the true God love the wages of unrighteousness? Is not the possession and the use of the dumb ass on which you ride, the proof, and the demonstration to all around you that you already enjoy all that human ambition is wont to desire, and all that human avarice is wont to covet?" Be content. The most wonderful of all God's miracles was wrought to prove to us God's abhorrence of the most usual of all the sins that beset us, that we may learn to avoid that "covetousness which is idolatry." (*G. Townsend, D.D.*)

Balaam.—Of the melancholy history of this wicked man let us make its proper use. 1. It teaches the danger of giving way in the first instance to temptation. After we have been once conquered, we have lost half our strength. 2. Again, we are taught by this story that a religious disposition makes always the greatest and best part of every man's character. Shining talents are what men desire, as they procure the admiration of the world; but we see in God's sight it is otherwise. He often gives them to the most unworthy. A good heart is worth them all, and will make us illustrious, when all the rest become nothing. 3. We learn, further, from this story, the dreadful state of being what the Scriptures call forsaken of God. 4. But the most obvious use of the story is to convince ourselves of the folly and wickedness of acting under two characters—of hiding a bad heart under the pretences of religion. What pains it costs—the constant attention to every word and action. In fact, it would cost less to be good in earnest. Rarely did hypocrisy ever carry its deceit to the grave. Will the best gains of hypocrisy repay us for a bad conscience? (*W. Gilpin, M.A.*)

The dumb ass . . . forbade the madness of the prophet.—*Lessons from Balaam's ass*.—Balaam's madness had turned him into a beast, and why might not one beast teach another? In some things the ass excelled her master. 1. She saw the judgment, he was blind: instinct better instructed her than reason and religion had enlightened him. 2. The ass had a tongue of equity; the prophet a tongue, hand, and heart of iniquity. 3. The ass was not capable of sin, and did therefore justify herself; the master was so mad upon sin that he would needs ruin himself. *Observations*: 1. The weaker vessel may hold the better liquor. The uncleansed lay hold on heaven, whereas men of knowledge often wallow in the lusts of flesh and blood. We are ordained to judge the angels; but if we degenerate from our prerogative, angels, men, infidels, harlots, yea, even beasts and stones, shall be our judges. 2. As Balaam proceeds in forwardness, so doth the ass in reprehension. At every turn she answered him, in every passage she was quit with him. We cannot run so fast but God can overtake us, nor be so cunning but He can teach even a beast to overreach us. 3. The sensual creatures are set to condemn our sins and to reflect our evils upon us. Peter hath a cock to tell him his cowardice, and Balaam an ass to reprove his avarice. There is no creature dumb when God bids it to speak. If there were no preachers to declaim, no conscience to accuse, the very creatures themselves would cry. The beds, boards, walls, windows, markets, closets should have tongues to condemn us. (*T. Adams.*)

Balaam.—To us the narrative as a whole is stamped visibly and broadly with the arrow-mark of heaven. As Canon Kingsley says, it is one which never would have been, never could have been, invented by the Jews. They never would have put into the mouth of a heathen prophet the sublime evangelic statements which Balaam utters. The character is evidently drawn from life. A few of those traits of truth and experience we shall proceed to notice. I.

The first thing which strikes us in Balaam's history is that we have here a very bad man, though a true prophet. He was covetous—"his heart was exercised with covetous practices," "he ran greedily after reward." Some of you may think that not a very great sin, but Scripture brands it as idolatry. Balaam, however, was worse than that. Like Simon Magus, he was desirous of turning the gifts of inspiration to low mercenary gain, and of making the things of the kingdom an affair of barter. Yea, worse than that. He rushed pell-mell to evil; and not only when remonstrated with did he refuse obedience, he became desperate in disobedience. There is no telling what a man may descend to! Gifts are not graces; great men are not always good men. Intellectual attainments, like some other things, may be valued too highly. Better the most drivelling idiot that crawls than the laurelled victor who, to attain his end, has prostituted his powers to the prince of darkness. II. WE HAVE A STRIKING INSTANCE OF APPARENT OBEDIENCE TO THE DIVINE WILL MASKING AN INSINCERE HEART. Balaam has been called a conscientious man. We should demur to that. Still, he had a remarkably clear idea of the fidelity of God, of His unchangeableness, of His unimpeachable righteousness, of His inflexible truth. He had a conscience, though very poorly he used it. Conscience was strong enough in him to make a coward of him; to make him now this, now that. It was not strong enough in him to lift him above the fascinating power of evil. Hence those inconsistencies which, like the confusing influences of light and shade, render this man as much a problem as any in history. Oh, whatever we are, God help us to be true! III. WE SEE HOW GOD FREQUENTLY CONCEDES IN JUDGMENT A MAN'S WISHES. Some of us have greatly wondered why God, the second time of Balaam's asking Him, said, "Go with the men"; and yet "that His anger should be kindled" because Balaam did precisely what He had told him to do. Now this difficulty is met by two passages of Scripture: one is in Ezek. xiv., where we are told certain of the elders of Israel came and sat before the prophet, and the Word of the Lord came to him, saying, "Shall I be inquired of at all by them? Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face and cometh to the prophet, I, the Lord, will answer him according to the multitude of his idols." The other passage is in 2 Thess. ii.: "God will send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie." He "had pleasure in unrighteousness." Do you think God was going to give that man repeatedly right and gracious answers when he knew that the thing he asked was displeasing to God? No! to the froward God will show Himself froward. If a man "will have none of the Divine counsel," it is no use repeating and repenting what God would have him do, nor is it becoming the majesty of God. He will say, "Well, then, you will not take no for an answer; I have told you the consequences; be it then even as you wish." Often there would be no surer way to afflict us than to give us what we wish. IV. HERE IS ILLUSTRATED THAT SECRET LAW BY WHICH THE SINNER IS ALMOST COMPELLED TO CONTINUE. He thinks he can stop when he pleases. No such thing! except the grace of God aids the endeavour. "Go with the men!" said the angel. I see that your heart still hankers after Balak's gold, you are not in earnest confessing your sin or in real acquiescence with the Divine judgment. "Go" then with them! Does not that illustrate the way of God's providence with thousands upon thousands? The sensualist no sooner has indulged a lawless passion than he begins to see the folly of it; but how few turn and implore help and ask pardon of Almighty God! Go on! says the angel. The fear of discovery, the growing power of habit, the augmented strength of evil passion, the shame of acknowledgment, the bonds of association, all, like the weeds around the drowning man, hinder endeavours at self-rescue. There is an inevitable pressure from behind which, once the false step is taken, almost necessitates continuance. V. WE HAVE HERE PRESENTED US THE PICTURE OF A GOD-DESERTED MAN, NOT AT FIRST, BUT FINALLY. If we may say so, at first God seemed to have a liking for that man; as indeed for what finally reprobate transgressor at one time had He not a liking? "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." (G. Short, B.A.)

Vers. 17-22. **These are wells without water.**—*False teachers*:—I. THEIR UNPROFITABLENESS. "Wells without water." 1. Pastors are like wells—(1) For constancy. They keep their residence; men know where to find them. (2) They are wells of piety; the water of life, the word of salvation is in them. (3) They are wells of sanctity, and therefore must be clean. (4) They are wells of knowledge,

and of sufficient depth, skilled in the mysteries of salvation. (5) They are wells of pity, full of compassion, yearning over the danger of men's souls. (6) They are wells of peace and amity, such as reconcile feuds and appease discords; as the water of a well serves to quench flames. (7) They are wells of charity, that do not only give good counsel with their lips, but good relief with their hands. 2. False teachers are "wells without water." A blind guide, an ignorant physician, a candlestick without light, a penny without provision, a well without water, is a miserable provision. Suppose we are thirsty and would drink, foul and would wash, hot and would be cooled, our houses are on fire and we would have them quenched; if we come to the well with our buckets and find it empty, we know not whether our grief or indignation be greater. II. THEIR VARIABLENESS. "Clouds that are carried with a tempest." 1. The fitness of the metaphor (Ezek. xx. 46; Deut. xxxii. 2). (1) Clouds are made to contain water, and preachers should be filled with wholesome doctrine. (2) Clouds are drawn up by the sun, and teachers called to that holy profession by the Sun of Righteousness. (3) Clouds are nearer to heaven than common waters, and ministers are advanced nearer to the secrets of God than other men. (4) Clouds hang in the air after a strange manner, and preachers live in the world in a wondrous sort; all the winds of the earth and furies of hell band against them, yet still they are supported by their Ordainer. (5) Clouds are set to distil rain upon the dry places of earth, and preachers to satisfy the thirsty soul. 2. The levity of these hypocrites. "Carried with a tempest." Some are not stable in the truth; but it is not possible for any man to be constant in errors, for the next fancy will take him off from the former. As wanton children are won to be quiet with change of toys, so the devil is fain to please such men with variety of crotchets. He forgets what he hath been, understands not what he is, and knows not what he will be. III. THEIR UNHAPPINESS. 1. The nature or quality of it—"the mist of darkness." Such a mist shall be on their souls, as comes upon a swooning man, who cannot see though his eyes be open, the organs being (for the time) incapable of illumination. 2. The congruity of it—"reserved." These black clouds did wholly endeavour to superinduce darkness on the Church, therefore the mist of darkness is reserved for them for ever. It is but justice if God be not found of those that were content to lose Him. 3. The perpetuity of it—"for ever." (*Thos. Adams.*) *Disappointing teachers*:—These false teachers bear the semblance of teachers, just as, for a little time, a place in Eastern lands where water has flowed will continue green, but disappoint the thirsty traveller who may be led by a little verdure to hope for water. There was water, and perhaps not long ago, but there is none now, and so with these deceivers. They give promise, but that promise is never realised. (*Prof. J. R. Lumby.*) *Wells without water*:—Water! How precious it is! Because God has given it to us so plentifully, we are apt to underestimate its worth. Were we tormented with thirst in the desert, we could consider water a priceless boon. In the East wells of water were very precious. Passing through the desert, the traveller would alight at one with joy, quaff the cooling draught, and then refreshed pursue his onward way. "Wells without water." Travellers in Eastern climes have often come across them. Hot and weary, they have gone with anticipative joy, only to be disappointed at finding parched emptiness. In passing through life's wilderness, have we not often come across "wells without water"? In the life-endavour have we not often been disappointed? How many enter into business and anticipate success? They work with a will. But their efforts have all been "wells without water"! Others, again, have succeeded in business. But the dark shadow is there; and, so far as happiness is concerned, successful business men have found that mere earthly possessions have proved "wells without water." What a desire some persons have to be known! The essential characteristic of their existence is to be prominent. But in mere fame there is little or no satisfaction. Scotland was singing in her crowded towns and in her bonny glens the songs of her favourite poet, Burns, while he wrote as he lay in his last illness, not in the flight of poetic genius, but in the uncoloured utterance of homely prose—"I have known existence of late only by the presence of the heavy hand of sickness, and have counted time by the repercussions of pain." Then followed these words of anguish: "I close my eyes in misery, and open them without hope." When Dr. Johnson finished his dictionary, the more particular literary effort of his life, the Earl of Chesterfield offered that patronage to the completed work which he had refused to the struggling writer. Dr. Johnson replied: "The notice which you have taken of my labours has been delayed till I am indifferent and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary and cannot impart it; till I am known and do not want it." The mere notice of the titled

greedy, earthly reputation, worldly fame, these are but empty wells that mock the thirsty wanderer through the desert—"wells without water"! Some may say we do not aspire to fame. True, but is not excitement sought in other ways? Is happiness being sought in the attractions of society, or in any of the numerous vain amusements of the world? In all walks of life, in all the varied paths of the journey, we find "empty wells." They are on all sides of us. We see persons standing, thirsting, and unable to gratify their thirst, looking, with disappointment written on their careworn faces, into "wells without water." You have met with individuals cold, hard, selfish. They live merely for themselves. They have the human head, but the statue's heart. No word of sympathy escapes their lips, no look of pity comes from their cold eyes. To make appeals to them is like "dropping buckets into empty wells," which would certainly grow old in drawing nothing up! Then there are some who attempt to build wells. They dig deep. They pile one charitable action upon another. They exercise the greatest self-denial in carrying on their task, and when it is done they find their labour in vain. No man's thirst is slaked; it may be an elaborate work, but it is a piece of beautiful emptiness—one of the "wells without water." There is a well of living water. With joy the pilgrim can drink from the well of salvation, a well where the thirsty can drink to their heart's content, and thirst no more for streams that are impure. (*J. P. Hutchinson.*)

They allure . . . those that were clean escaped.—*Deceivers and deceived*:—I. THE DECEIVERS. 1. Their posture. (1) They think to carry it away with "words." (a) Error hath always most words; like a rotten house, that needs most props to uphold it. (b) In much speaking is foolish speaking: it is very difficult to speak much and well. The ship that hath more rigging and sail than ballast, will never make a good voyage. (2) Their full-mouthed speeches—"great swelling words." Nothing is more loud than error: the more false the matter, the greater noise to uphold it (*Acts xix. 34*). "Swelling words" are like the reports of ordnance—they blaze, and crack, and smoke, and stink, and vanish. (3) The last attribute of their speech is vain, "words of vanity." If the matter were good, yet many words were vain, great words were vain; but here both the matter and words and all are vanity itself. 2. Their imposture—"they allure." The metaphor is taken from fishing or fowling. Those fishes that were taken out of the feculent pond of this world, and put into the crystal streams of the church, are by these seducers again drawn out of the streams of the church into the pool of the world. The hook whereby they perform this is fraud: the same devil teacheth his trade to all his followers: the lion is strong enough, but the serpent doth the mischief. II. THE DECEIVED. "Those that were clean escaped." 1. They were not quite delivered from sin, but from the external profession of sin, and from the doctrine that maintains sin. The children of the world may outwardly be gathered to the congregation of Israel, yet not be of Israel. They are escaped from the lion and the bear, gross and raging impiety and idolatry; but in the house of God they are bitten by a serpent, sly hypocrisy. 2. They are again returned to error. What a poor way went they toward heaven, so soon to turn back! It is but Ephraim's morning dew; let the sun of prosperity rise but two hours high, the dew is gone. A Galatian humour, to begin in the spirit, and to end in the flesh; like a meteor or gliding star, that seemed in heaven, shot through the air, and lighted on a dunghill. (1) All sin is a labyrinth; the entrance is easy; all the difficulty is to get out again. (2) The practice of these deceivers is upon them that are escaped from their errors. The malignant jailer pursues after him that hath broken prison. 3 "Through much wantonness." This is that little postern set open, to which Satan is so much beholden for his readmittance. (*Thos. Adams.*) **While they promise them liberty.**—*The method of the seducers*:—I. THE ALLUREMENT OF THE WEAK. It was Christ's charge to Peter (*Luke xxii. 32*). It is Satan's charge to his agents—Now you are confounded, confound your brethren. II. THE WAY OF THIS ALLUREMENT IS BY PROMISE. 1. Promises are the cheapest things man can part with, and yet the strongest enchantments. 2. Fair promises are strong snares to entangle fools. 3. It is ill to promise and to deceive; but it is worse to promise with a purpose to deceive. 4. Seducers refuse no way, so they may deceive; they swear, they forswear, propose and interpose, to make strong their party. III. THE FORCE OF THAT PROMISE IS LIBERTY. Sensuality and a carnal freedom is the spell that conjures these wild spirits, and brings them in subjection to their heretical teachers. They may promise them civil liberty: this they are not sure to perform; or consciential: this they will not perform; or spiritual: this they cannot perform; but profane excess, riotous intemperance, the uncontrollable swing of their lusts, this

they will endeavour to perform. IV. THE CONVICTION OF THAT FORCE. "They themselves are the servants of corruption." All sin is a servitude; and that which flatters men with the greatest opinion of liberty, makes them the most miserable vassals (2 Tim. ii. 26). They may think that they have the world at command, and not the world them. They have a secret and insensible tether, which that enemy ties to their heels, and holds in his hand: while they run whither he allows them, they shall have scope enough; but if they offer towards goodness, he instantly snatches them up. V. THE PROOF OF THAT CONVICTION. "For of whom a man is overcome," &c. The metaphor seems to be taken from war; where the conqueror brings the vanquished into captivity. And this misery of the captive differs according to the disposition of the victor; if he be imperious, and given to cruelty, he doth so much the more embitter the slavery. 1. It is an ignominious state. 2. A hard and troublesome condition. 3. Intolerable. 4. Useless. 5. Irrecoverable, sold to sin with small hope of recovery. 6. Piteable, the grief of every Christian. 7. Destructive. The end of every service is wages, and this is a wages without end, even everlasting pain. (*Ibid.*) *On spiritual or inward liberty*:—I. My text implies THAT VICIOUS MEN ARE SLAVES; that it is an absurdity in them to pretend to be advocates for liberty; and that consequently the practice of virtue is necessary to give men true liberty. The wicked men that St. Peter had in view opposed the restraints of law and authority—they vilified civil governors—renounced the obligations of righteousness; and by doing this they boasted that they stood up for liberty; not considering their own slavery, and not distinguishing between licentiousness and liberty. You must be sensible that these observations imply that there is a moral slavery which ought to be the principal object of our detestation, and consequently a moral liberty which ought to be the principal object of our attachment. My present business will be to explain this, and to show its importance and excellence. Now liberty being an exemption from all such force as takes away from us the capacity of acting as we think best, it is plain that whenever any passion becomes predominant within us, or causes us to contradict our sentiments of rectitude, we lose our liberty, and fall into a state of slavery. When any one of our instinctive desires assumes the direction of our conduct in opposition to our reason, then reason is overpowered and enslaved, and when reason is overpowered and enslaved we are overpowered and enslaved. On the other hand, when our reason maintains its rights, and possesses its proper seat of sovereignty within us, then are we masters of ourselves, and free in the truest possible sense. A submission to reason is not in any way inconsistent with liberty; on the contrary, it supposes natural liberty, and is the very idea of that moral liberty which is my present subject. The more we are in subjection to reason, the more power we have to do as we like. The dictates of reason are the dictates of our own hearts; and therefore the very reverse of anything that can be deemed force or slavery. II. TO MENTION A FEW REASONS IN ORDER TO RECOMMEND THIS LIBERTY TO YOU. The bare description of it is indeed enough to make every one desire it. It is replete with blessings and advantages. 1. Consider particularly what an honour there is in liberty, and what a baseness in sin. To lose inward liberty is to lose all that can procure esteem, and to become poor, abject, and impotent. 2. Let me desire you to consider what advantages and blessings liberty of mind will bring with it. The discerning faculties of the person who possesses this liberty must be more clear than that of any other man. There is in such a mind a consciousness of dignity, which is more desirable than any sensual gratification, and which cannot be given by the possession of any worldly honours and titles. (*R. Price, D.D.*) *Moral theory of civil liberty*:—This is a true delineation of the fact that animalism leads to despotism, and necessitates it; and the whole chapter illustrates that fundamental idea. There are two essential conditions of civil liberty: first, self-government, and second, the civil machinery of free national life. Self-government is a better term than liberty. There is no such thing as absolute liberty. It is quite inconsistent with the very creative notion which we express. We gain strength and bodily ease and comfort in proportion as we obey law. We are not, therefore, free physically, in regard to the body; and just as little are we free mentally; for there is an order within, which is as real, and the observance of which is as indispensable to comfort and liberty, as the order of the body and its physical organisation. Nor are we absolutely free in our relations to the material world. Physical laws round about us are more potent than walls in a prison are round about the prisoner. Do, obey, and live; disobey, and die. A man is hedged up in his own nature; and he is hedged up just as much in the world in which he was born, and in which he moves. All these restraints would seem to be restraints upon the sum

of life and individual power; but if you analyse it it will be found that, while there is no such thing as absolute liberty, these restraints all work primarily against the animal nature. So that while a man is restricted at the bottom, he spreads out at the top, and gains again, with amplitude and augmentation, in the higher realms of his being, all that he loses by the restrictions which are imposed by great cardinal laws upon his lower nature. The more effectually, then, these lower elements are repressed, the more liberty is given to the affections. The degree of liberty attainable by an individual depends upon the restraint which he puts upon the lower nature, and the stimulus which he gives to the higher. The liberty which is attainable by masses of men living together depends on the training that the society which they constitute has had in keeping down the animalism, and exalting the true manhood of the citizens in the community. Society cannot be free, except as the reason and the moral sentiments have a sufficient ascendancy. You have often heard it said that a free government depends upon the intelligence and virtue of the citizens. This is an empirical fact. It is in accordance with the radical nature of man that it should be so. The first and most important condition of liberty, psychologically stated, is that men should learn how to restrain their lower, basilar, passionate natures, and should be willing to restrain them, and so give liberty to their reason, their affections, and their moral sentiments. The other condition which we mentioned as indispensable to civil liberty is the possession of the machinery of free civil society. There is to be the presence of laws adapted to that state of things, and there is to be a knowledge of those laws. Ages were employed in experimenting and finding out what was the mode by which a free people might discuss, deliberate upon, and decide their own questions of policy. It has been a slow invention, improved and improving from age to age. These two elementary conditions—the moral condition of the people, and the apparatus of civil government adapted to freedom—must unite and co-operate, before there can be any permanent civil liberty in any nation. On this foundation I remark—1. The desire to be free is not a basis broad enough for liberty. All men like liberty, if by that expression is meant dislike of restraint; but if the love of liberty means the repression of all one's lower nature, and the education and dominancy of all one's higher nature, then I deny that men desire liberty. The love of liberty is, like virtue and religion, the result of culture in men. The love of liberty is a virtue. It is a moral inspiration. It is not merely a wild disposition to throw away government; it is a disposition to supersede the necessity of an outward government by the reality of a government within. Let me see a man that loves liberty, and I shall see a man that loves freedom not only for himself, but for others. And when it takes on this form, mankind and manhood have advanced far along the road of intelligence and true piety. 2. The adoption of free governments by an untrained and unrestrained people will not secure liberty to them. Liberty does not come from machineries, though it uses them, and must have them. You might build a hundred cotton factories in the wilderness where the Indians are, and the Indians would not on that account be an ingenious and manufacturing people. The manufacturer must precede the machinery, and know how to use it. You might carry cannon, and muskets, and rifles, and endless magazines of ammunition, into the midst of a peace-loving and cowardly nation, and that would not make them a war-like people. The instruments do not make courage, though where there is courage the instruments are indispensable to its use. And where armed tyranny prevails, the whole machinery of free nations substituted in its place does not make the nation free. A nation is not free until it is free in its individual members. Christ makes men free. The spirit of Christ—the spirit of faith, the spirit of self-denial, the spirit of self-government, the spirit of aspiration, the spirit of benevolence—that it is that makes men free. 3. The directest road to civil liberty lies in augmenting the true manhood of a people. You cannot make a people free that are ignorant and animal; and, on the other hand, you cannot for ever keep any people in bondage that are thoroughly educated and thoroughly moral. Schools, virtuous home-training, free religious knowledge, whatever will swell the manhood of the individuals of a nation—these are the means which produce liberty. If, therefore, one desires in Europe to sow the seeds of true liberty, I would not say, "Keep back books that teach about the machinery of society." Let them be instructed in those things. But do not rely on those things. Ply the bottom of society with schools. Ply the masses with those things which shall teach them how to live with organisation; how to deny themselves; how to live to-day for future periods of time; how to practise the simple virtues; and how to carry those virtues up to the

spiritual forms in which they are to eventuate. He that teaches men how to be true men in Christ Jesus is aiming as straight at liberty as ever any archer that bended the bow aimed at the target. That is the reason why true preachers are always revolutionary men. To preach a larger manhood is to unsettle, by prophecy, all thrones. You cannot force knowledge into a man; and just as little can you force liberty into men. It is a thing of development. It is a thing that cannot be brought into a man or a nation, but that has to be wrought out of the elements of the man, or of the nation. Make men's limbs so large that there is not iron enough to go around them. Make men's muscles, like Samson's, so strong that withes and cords are like flax touched with fire when they strain them. That will cure bondage; and that is the best way to cure it. Make men larger; make them measure more about the girth of the conscience, and less around the animalism, and then you cannot oppress them. 4. Modern nations, with a certain degree of civilisation, are all tending to civil liberty; and democracy, as it is called, is inevitable. This is admitted by all heads, crowned as well as others. It is only a question as to how long a time will be required to bring about the result. The universal brain is showing itself to be mightier than the class brain. The crowned head must give way to the thinking head of the millions. In this tendency, the first step should be popular intelligence, or real growth at the bottom of society. Then the institutions of liberty will come gradually themselves. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

The temptation of liberty:—Nothing more strikingly characterises the teaching of the early preachers of Christianity, while it attests their faithfulness, than the uncompromising distinctness with which they put forth the claims of the gospel to the whole obedience of mankind, and declared the peculiar characteristics of the Christian service. Self-crucifixion, the absolute submission of their wills to the law of another will, &c. Such doctrine is not acceptable now, and it was not when St. Peter wrote. Accordingly, we find that while the apostles were busily engaged in enforcing this doctrine, there were other teachers no less busily occupied in endeavouring to counteract their endeavours, and who, to this end, with a thorough knowledge of human nature, addressed themselves to just those cravings of that nature which are at once the strongest and the blindest. The teachers of Christianity preached obedience; they taught the necessity of self-subjugation; they enforced the duty, while they showed the blessedness, of submission to the law of God and of Christ. What, then, was the argument, and what the enticement, with which these false teachers endeavoured to hold men, and too often succeeded in holding them, in disobedience and rebellion? It was then, as now and ever, "liberty." Liberty! that first temptation that was whispered cunningly amid the fresh leaves and flowers of unfallen Eden, and which has smoothed the way to all other temptations and all other sins whatsoever. Liberty! that form of light with which Satan so often delights to clothe himself. Liberty! that treacherous phantom that has slain more living men—ay, slain them eternally—than all the blood-dripping tyrants of the world. Liberty! that fair child of heaven which for six thousand years men have blindly sought, and which not even six thousand years have taught them, can nowhere else be found than in the house of law.

I. THE NATURE OF THE TEMPTATION WHICH THESE EARLY OPPOSERS OF THE TRUTH HELD OUT TO MEN TO KEEP THEM FROM SUBMISSION TO THE LAW OF CHRIST. 1. Doubtless the apostle exactly states the promise made by these opposing teachers; and it is therefore worth while to observe that no limit is placed to the range or application of the liberty promised. These teachers very well knew the corruption and weakness of the human heart; and while therefore they misrepresented the service of Christ as a needless and cruel bondage, they took care to place before men the service of sin as a full and perfect liberty. "They promise them liberty"—deliverance from the iron authority of the Divine will; deliverance from a sense of constant condemnation and restraint; freedom for their whole nature in all its parts; liberty to think and feel and do without hindrance and without fear. And what is this but the temptation which we every day see coiling itself around, and fixing its fascinating eye upon the hearts of men; and to the promise of which we see men everywhere striving to attain? 2. Observe how another fact is brought out by this statement of the apostle—the fact, namely, of a recognised line of separation dividing always between the servants of Christ and the servants of the world. It is its exclusiveness that makes Christianity so repulsive. It is because Christ will divide His claims with none other, that it is so easy to represent His service as a bondage, when compared with the "liberty" of the world.

II. THE PROMISE MADE BY THE WORLD AND ITS VOTARIES OF AN ABSOLUTE LIBERTY IS FALSE AS A MATTER OF FACT. 1. Man, by the requirements of his very nature

and condition, must serve. He cannot be without a master—some dominant power, that is, ruling supremely in his heart; and as a moral being there are only two services between which he can choose—the service of good and the service of evil, the service of Christ and the service of the world. 2. There is no greater delusion than to imagine because a man has cast aside his allegiance to his Maker, or has even succeeded in excluding entirely all thought of his Maker from his heart, that therefore he is free. He is not free. There is no such deep bondage—a bondage fixing its relentless grasp upon the inmost powers of the soul—as the liberty of the world. The garlands of its holiday are flowers wreathed on chains; and although its victim himself, owing to the very stupor of his degradation, the delirium which falls on those long bound in prison, may come at times to be ignorant of his state, that state can in no wise be hid from any one who is not himself a servant of the world. No; he is not free. (1) He is held in bondage, first of all, to the world's opinions. Boasting, perhaps, of what he calls his intellectual freedom, scoffing, perhaps, at the authoritative teachings of God's Word, he is yet held in thralldom by the judgments of other men, and does not, in opposition thereto, obey the dictates of his own. (2) He is a slave again to his own body. His lower nature, that which allies him to the brute, rises up in proud supremacy, and rules triumphantly over all that connects him with his God. (3) He is a slave, moreover, to his own fears. Ever and anon his torpid conscience will uprear its crest and inflict its sting. III. The only question with which we, as wise men, are concerned is, WHICH OF THESE TWO IS THE BETTER SERVICE? WHICH WILL RESULT TO US IN THE GREATER RECOMPENSE OF REWARD? We have not spoken unfairly of the service of the world. We have admitted all its claims, so far as those claims are true. It promises liberty, and we have shown you the liberty that it gives. Undoubtedly there is an earthly gain and a present enjoyment to the natural heart in such freedom—the freedom of an untrammelled will, the freedom to enjoy without stint all the pleasures that this world can give; and if the full results, and therefore the final value, of man's acts were present and finished in the acts themselves, there would perhaps be little to be said. But the real advantage and value of all human acts, even the commonest, and therefore of all human states, are decided by their ultimate results, whether, as to time, those results are immediate or remote. To determine, therefore, the true, and consequently the abiding, value, whether of the service of Christ, or the service of the world, we must consider the permanent results of each as they remain fixed in our own nature, or affect permanently the conditions of our own existence. 1. Applying this test, what must we say of the service of the world? How can we characterise results which, as we have seen, are poor and miserable indeed, utterly unworthy of man, debasing and unsatisfying even upon earth, and, instead of brightening, covering with cloud and darkness his real existence, even the eternal existence of his soul? It is, as the apostle says, "corruption." Yes, "corruption"—slavery to this body which, with all its strength and all its pride and all its lust, shall presently be hid away from sight and sense as an offensive thing; slavery to this poor world of men around me, corruptible like me, and day by day dropping into this great charnel-house of earth; slavery to the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, which send their destroying power into eternity itself, and turn into "corruption" the immortal soul. 2. Test in the same way the service of Christ, and see if the Christian—Christ's true servant—is a slave. If deliverance from his greatest adversary, if superiority to all human power, if a constant sense of perfect security and peace—if this be slavery, then he is in bondage indeed; but if, on the other hand, these are the evidences of liberty, then is he free. Through the power of Christ he vanquishes the temptations that once vanquished him. Living a life of obedience like that of the angels, knowing, through the approving witness of the Spirit, that he is accepted as a repentant son by his loving Father, he lives, through faith, in that Father's home—that home so bright and beautiful upon the summit of the universe; and the laws of that home are the laws of his life. And so, living with angels, what cares he for unrighteous men? or what on earth can harm him? He is above all bondage and above all fear. Death itself has lost all power over him. Its darkness even now is filled with the kindling rays of eternal life. Is not this liberty? and is not such liberty worth seeking for? Is there a sane man here present who, determining this question from the true point of right judgment, even that bed of death which may be spread for him to-morrow, would not give all the honours and all the gains and all the joys that this world can offer to be—a freedman of God? (*W. Rudder, D.D.*) **The servants**

of corruption.—*The sinner's natural power and moral weakness:*—I propose to discuss the moral state of the sinner. I. THE FIRST IMPORTANT FACT TO BE NOTICED IS THAT ALL MEN ARE NATURALLY FREE, AND NONE THE LESS SO FOR BEING SINNERS. THEY NATURALLY HAVE FREEDOM OF WILL. This freedom is in the will itself, and consists in its power of free choice. To do, or not to do—this is its option. It has by its own nature the function of determining its own volitions. The soul wills to do or not to do, and thus is a moral sovereign over its own activities. In this fact lies the foundation for moral agency. Still further: man can distinguish between those acts in which he is free, and those in which he is acted upon by influences independent of his own choice. He knows that in some things he is a recipient of influences and of actions exerted upon himself, while in other things he is not a recipient in the same sense, but a voluntary actor. The fact of this discrimination proves the possession of free agency. Again, the Bible always treats men as free agents, commanding them to do or not to do as if of course they had all the power requisite to obey such commands. A young minister once said to me, "I preach that men ought to repent, but never that they can." "Why not preach also that they can?" said I. He replied, "The Bible does not affirm that they can." To this I replied that it would be most consummate trifling for a human legislature, having required certain acts, to affirm that its subjects have the power to obey. The very requirement is the strongest possible affirmation that, in the belief of the enacting power, the subjects are able to do the things required. Freedom of will lies among the earliest and most resistless convictions. Probably no one living can remember his first idea of oughtness—his first convictions of right and wrong. It is also among our most irresistible convictions. The fact of personal responsibility is fastened on us so that we might as well escape from ourselves as from this conviction. II. While it is true, past a rational denial, that men have this attribute of moral liberty, IT IS EQUALLY TRUE THAT THEY ARE MORALLY ENSLAVED—in moral bondage. The liberty they have by created constitution; the bondage comes by voluntary perversion and abuse of their powers. The Bible represents men as being in bondage—as having the power to resist temptation to sin, but yet as voluntarily yielding to those temptations. What the Bible thus represents, experience proves to be true. Wicked men know that they are in bondage to Satan. What do you think puts it into the heart of young men to plot iniquity and drink it in like water? Is it not the devil? How many young men do we meet with who, when tempted, seem to have no moral stamina to resist, but are swept away by the first gust of temptation! Men are in bondage to their appetites. What can be the reason that some young men find it so hard to give up the use of tobacco? They know the habit is filthy and disgusting. So when a man is in bondage to alcohol, and so with every form of sensual indulgence. Satan helps on the influence of sensuality, and does not care much what the particular form of it may be, provided its power be strong enough to ruin the soul. It all plays into his hand and promotes his main purpose. So men are in bondage to the love of money; to the fashions of the world; to the opinions of mankind. By these they are enslaved and led on in the face of the demands of duty. Every impenitent man is conscious of being really in bondage to temptation. What man, not saved from sin through grace, does not know that he is an enigma to himself? What! does he not know that his weakest desires carry his will, the strongest convictions of his reason and conscience to the contrary notwithstanding? This is a most guilty state, because so altogether voluntary—so needless, and so opposed to the convictions of his reason and of his understanding, and withal so opposed to his convictions of God's righteous demands. To go counter to such convictions, he must be supremely guilty. Of course such conduct must be most suicidal. The sinner acts in most decided opposition to his own best interests, so that if he has the power to ruin himself this course must certainly do it. This is a state of deep moral degradation. Intrinsically it is most disgraceful. Everybody feels this in regard to certain forms of sin and classes of sinners. A drunkard we regard as a long way towards beasthood. Nay, rather must we ask pardon of all beasts for this comparison, for not one is so mean and so vile—not one excites in our bosom such a sense of voluntary degradation. So of the miser when he gets beyond all motives but the love of hoarding; when his practical question is—not, How shall I honour my race, or bless my generation, or glorify my Maker; but, How can I make a few coppers? Even when urged to pray, he would ask—"What profit shall I have if I do pray unto Him?" When you find a man thus incapable of being moved by noble motives, what a wretch he is! How ineffably mean! So I might bring before you the

ambitious scholar, who is too low in his aims to be influenced by the exalted motive of doing good, and who feels only that which touches his reputation. Is not this exceedingly low and mean? (*C. G. Finney.*) **Of the same he is brought in bondage.**—*A fatal promise*:—1. This conquest shows the falsehood of the tempter in his promise. They promise liberty, and here is the result—bondage. 2. This conquest shows the ultimate wretchedness of the victim. He is brought in “bondage.” What is the bondage? (1) Their slavery is the most real. Chains and prison walls can only enslave the body. (2) Their slavery is the most criminal. Corporal slavery is generally a misfortune; the sufferer is not responsible for his position. 3. Their slavery is the most lasting. Death destroys corporal slavery. (*Homilist.*) *On the slavery of vice*:—Bondage and subjection are disagreeable sounds to the ear, disagreeable ideas to the mind. The advocates of vice, taking advantage of those natural impressions, have in every age employed them for discrediting religion. To be free imports, in general, our being placed in such circumstances that, within the bounds of justice and good order, we can act according to our own deliberate choice, and take such measures for our conduct as we have reason to believe are conducive to our welfare; without being obstructed either by external force, or by violent internal impulse. This is that happy and dignified state which every wise man earnestly wishes to enjoy. The advantages which result from it are chiefly these three: freedom of choice; independence of mind; boldness and security. I. Vice is inconsistent with liberty, as it deprives sinners of the power of free choice by bringing them under the dominion of passions and habits. Religion and virtue address themselves to reason. But vice can make no pretensions of this kind. It awaits not the test of deliberate comparison and choice, but overpowers us at once by some striking impression of present advantage or enjoyment. It hurries us with the violence of passion, captivates us by the allurements of pleasure, or dazzles us by the glare of riches. The sinner yields to the impulse merely because he cannot resist it. After passion has for a while exercised its tyrannical sway, its vehemence may by degrees subside. But when, by long indulgence, it has established habits of gratification, the sinner's bondage becomes then more confirmed and more miserable. For, during the heat of pursuit, he is little capable of reflection. But when his ardour is abated, and, nevertheless, a vicious habit rooted, he has full leisure to perceive the heavy yoke he has brought upon himself. Vice confirms its dominion, and extends it still farther over the soul by compelling the sinner to support one crime by means of another. II. THE SLAVERY PRODUCED BY VICE APPEARS IN THE DEPENDENCE UNDER WHICH IT BRINGS THE SINNER TO CIRCUMSTANCES OF EXTERNAL FORTUNE. One of the favourite characters of liberty is the independence it bestows. He who is truly a free man is above all servile compliances and abject subjection. But the sinner has forfeited every privilege of this nature. His passions and habits render him an absolute dependant on the world and the world's favour; on the uncertain goods of fortune and the fickle humours of men. Having no fund within himself whence to draw enjoyment, his only resource is in things without. His hopes and fears all hang upon the world. This is to be, in the strictest sense, a slave to the world. Religion and virtue, on the other hand, confer on the mind principles of noble independence. The upright man is satisfied from himself. He despises not the advantages of fortune, but he centres not his happiness in them. III. ANOTHER CHARACTER OF THE SLAVERY OF VICE IS THAT MEAN, COWARDLY, AND DISQUETED STATE TO WHICH IT REDUCES THE SINNER. Boldness and magnanimity have ever been accounted the native effects of liberty. The man of virtue, relying on a good conscience and the protection of Heaven, acts with firmness and courage; and, in the discharge of his duty, fears not the face of man. The man of vice, conscious of his low and corrupt aims, shrinks before the steadfast and piercing eye of integrity; is ever looking around him with anxious and fearful circumspection, and thinking of subterfuges by which he may escape from danger. The one is bold as a lion; the other flieeth when no man pursueth. Corresponding to that abject disposition which characterises a bad man are the fears that haunt him. The terrors of a slave dwell on his mind and often appear in his behaviour. For guilt is never free from suspicion and alarm. I have thus set before you such clear marks of the servitude undergone by sinners as fully verify the assertion in the text that a state of vice and corruption is a state of bondage. In order to perceive how severe a bondage it is, let us attend to some peculiar circumstances of aggravation which belong to it. 1. It is a bondage to which the mind itself, the native seat of liberty, is subjected.

2. It is a bondage which we have brought upon ourselves. (*H. Blair, D.D.*) *Vicious bondage*:—I. THAT GOD ASKS US TO GIVE HIM OUR HEARTS. II. WHAT IS LIBERTY? Is it licence and lawlessness? Must all conduct be without order and without law in order to constitute it freedom? We know better. Look at Paris and the bloody Commune! There is no tyranny like that of lawlessness. The would-be sinner complains of being tied to the apron-strings of his mother in order that he may put himself under the bonds of Satan. He does this to prove his independence. But no man in any condition of life is allowed to act as he pleases. If he were, society would be impossible. III. WHERE THE WISEST LAWS ARE, THERE IS THE TRUEST LIBERTY. We voluntarily place ourselves under such laws that our rights of liberty may be protected. It is so in the state, so in society, so in religion. That cannot be a bond which carries with it an endorsement of the high nature within us. IV. THE BEGINNINGS OF EVIL ARE DANGEROUS. 1. It was a bondage of the soul, of the spirit, of the higher nature within us. The fetters of sin were riveted around these. 2. The aggravation of this slavery is its voluntary assumption. It is a bondage more galling because self-chosen. 3. In this slavery we become subjects to our own servants. It is a revolution in our moral nature, by which the highest parts become the lowest, the lowest the highest. (*H. Johnson, D.D.*) If . . . they are again entangled . . . the latter end is worse.—*Entangled again*:—I. A PROPOSITION. 1. "They have escaped." Next to the finding an unexpected benefit, it is a great happiness to escape an unsuspected danger; yea, the escaping of a great danger is more joy than the receiving of an ordinary benefit. 2. "The pollutions of the world." (1) The pollutions which we contract from the riches of the world. (2) The pollutions we derive from the honours and dignities of the world pride here challengeth the first place, and let her have it, even to be the queen of all sordid filthiness. (3) The pollutions we deduce from the pleasures of the world. Oh, what a torrent of turpitudes here stream in upon us! (a) Immoderate diet. (b) Drunkenness. (c) Lust. 3. "Through the knowledge," &c. (1) There is no knowledge to do good in corrupted nature and filthiness of the flesh. (2) There is no escaping out of this filthiness and corruption, but by knowledge. (3) No knowledge can deliver us, but that of our Saviour Christ. (4) No knowledge of our Saviour can effect this, but that which is sanctified with faith and repentance. II. A SUPPOSITION. 1. The easiness of falling back. "If"—it is no impossible thing. Yes, the commonness proves it too easy. Man goes forth in the morning weak and unarmed, to encounter with powers and principalities. To fight this combat he takes a second with him, and that is his flesh, a familiar enemy, a friendly traitor; the devil comes against him with his second, too, and that is the world. Soon doth the flesh revolt to the world, and both stick to Satan; so here is terrible odds, three to one. 2. The difficulty of recovering them, after their relapse. (1) "They are entangled," as birds are caught in an evil net; where the more they struggle to get out, the faster they stick. (2) "And overcome." That which puts a man from the use of his reason, and a Christian from his exercise of religion, overcomes him. The ambitious are overcome with the desire of honour, so that they are not their own men. Of all, the worldlings are basely overcome; for they think they have the world in a string, when the world hath them in a strong chain. (3) "Entangled and overcome"—put them both together. It is the depth of misery to fall under the curse of Ham, a servant of servants. III. A CONCLUSION. "The latter end is worse," &c. 1. Their sins are worse now than they were at first, therefore their estates must needs be so. 2. Besides all their other sins, they have the sin of unthankfulness to answer for. 3. Because custom in sin hath deadened all remorse for sin. 4. Because their hypocrisy prevents all ways of remedy. 5. Because they wilfully destroy themselves by renouncing all gracious remedies. 6. Because a relapse is even more dangerous than the first sickness; sooner incurred, more hardly cured. (*Thos. Adams.*) *A great gain, a great loss, and a great curse*:—I. A GREAT GAIN. What is the gain? An escape from "the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 1. The world is a scene of moral corruption. 2. To escape these corruptions is of the greatest importance to man. 3. This escape is effected through "the knowledge of Christ." Other sciences have signally failed to purify the world. II. A GREAT LOSS. Peter supposes the position of escapement, after being gained, lost. They are "entangled and overcome." 1. Good men, being moral agents, can fall. 2. Good men, in this world, are surrounded by influences tempting them to apostasy. 3. Good men in this world have fallen from the positions they have

occupied. David, Peter, &c., are examples. III. A GREAT CURSE. "The latter end is worse with them than the beginning." 1. Because he is the subject of greater guilt. 2. Because he has the elements of greater distress. 3. Because he is in a condition of greater hopelessness. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The danger of relapse*:—The infant faith of Christ had to encounter three mighty foes. First of all there was the Judaism on the foundation of which the new system was based, or rather the complement or fulness of which the new system was. The next enemy was the ancient Paganism. Here the conquest was more decisive, though the combat was the sharper. The third enemy of the early Church is not so easily recognised upon the surface of Holy Scripture as the other two, but it is there notwithstanding. The Acts of the Holy Apostles relate a strange passage as occurring at Samaria between St. Peter and Simon Magus, but they do not mention that Simon was the first heretic—was the most active propagator of that deadly Gnosticism which for so many centuries preyed upon the vitals of the Church, and even now in these last days from time to time shows itself in some new and strange manifestation. Oriental in its origin, it was founded in a belief of the doctrine of the antagonism between mind and matter, the one of which it held to be good, the other intrinsically evil. Such a system as this was essentially hostile to God's truth, and accordingly we find that St. John, in his Gospel and Epistles, St. Peter and St. Jude in the works attributed to them, devote themselves to the condemnation of the system. St. John applies himself to confute the doctrinal errors, and to show that Christ the Word is no mere æon, or personal attribute of the Deity, but very God of very God, as the Creed says. The other apostles direct their teaching against the moral effects of the same system, the vanity and conceit, the shallowness and pretence, the laxity and profanity of the adherents of this vain philosophy. Moreover, not only was the fight against these three foes carried on in fair and open field, but the times called for other solicitudes with regard to them. It was not that they injured the Church by assault from without and by resistance to its holy aggression; they more subtly worked as a leaven within the Church itself. We have then to inquire, How does this text apply to us? I. First of all, **THIS TEXT STRIKES AT THE ROOT OF THE ERROR THAT GRACE IS INDEFECTIBLE**: that a man once in the favour of God can never fall away from it. This is a very common belief in this country, and no wonder, for it is well suited to the self-righteousness and slothfulness of fallen human nature. The apostle, however, teaches the very contrary. An awful truth, then, is it that they who have at one time been truly faithful, may totally and finally fall away! II. But without taking into consideration such a fact as final reprobation succeeding upon the despoise of the graces we have received, we have to consider the general proposition of our apostle, **THAT THE CASE OF RELAPSE IS SO MUCH MORE DEPLORABLE THAN ANY OTHER SPIRITUAL CONDITION**; that in the case of those that are entangled and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. Why should this be so? 1. Because the fall is by so much more criminal by how much it has been committed voluntarily and with the eyes open. 2. And next, such an act implies not only rebellion and insolence, but also heinous ingratitude. 3. Relapse is dangerous, on account of the exceeding difficulty of recovery. As in the physical frame in illness a relapse is ever more to be dreaded than the original ailment, and makes the patient worse than he was before; so in the world of faith, the state of the Christian who, after baptism and repentance, falls again into the disorders he has forsworn, is so grievous, that the coarsest similes, such as the vomit of the dog, and the wallowing of the swine, are used by the apostle to picture his condition. In every kind of wickedness relapse is most dangerous, not only in destroying the power of resistance, but in many other ways: for perhaps the most fearful of all the results of sin is the withdrawal of the grace of God. However generous God may be of His benedictions (and never, never till the great day of account shall we know all that He has done for us), He cannot bear that they should be misused. Nor are we to maintain that this law refers merely to great and heinous crimes, such as intemperance, and impurity, and the like; the same runs through every infraction of God's law. Whenever a man relapses into any wilful sin of which he has repented, he incurs in a degree the condemnation of the text. Whatever his fault may be, ill-temper, touchiness, ambition, avarice, over-solicitude for the things of this life, &c. The conscience has fairly done its work, and being despised, in time refuses to act; the moral sense is blunted; the casuistry of indulgence begins to pervert the whole nature; God begins to withdraw His assistance, and the stereotyping of an evil habit begins to take effect! A grievous condition to be

in! As the man sunk in temporal misfortunes looks back on the days of his departed prosperity and esteems no kind of misery so great as the recollection of his former happiness, so one can conceive no picture so desolate as the retrospect of a man, plunged in some sin which is slowly and surely destroying him, to the scenes of his long lost innocence. He knows them well, he recognises their beauty, he bewails their loss as he turns from them with a sigh, but he cannot have the heart to conquer the evil one. But while I press these serious thoughts upon you, I would not have myself misunderstood. What I have said of deliberate relapse into sin, does not apply to those little backslidings which are the consequence of the weakness of our nature. The grand distinguishing idea between these two states, is the earnest will to keep straight and the fervid desire after holiness. Why should we be disheartened? Is not the Christian course a course of constant falls and risings again? (*Bp. Forbes.*)

*The danger of relapsing:—*I. THE SINS OF THOSE WHO RELAPSE ARE, WHILST CONTINUED IN, MORE HEINOUS. 1. Because committed against greater knowledge. The surest knowledge of moral duties is that which is attained by practice. It is, indeed, possible for a man to know his duty who never performs it; but still there is as much difference betwixt a speculative and a practical knowledge of our duty, as between our being acquainted with a road from a transient view of it in a map, and from our having frequently travelled over it. As well may an experienced pilot pretend not to know his compass, as he, who hath for some time steered his course by the laws of God, pretend to be ignorant of them. They have, during his integrity, taken up his thoughts; he must have frequently meditated upon them, in order to his regulating his actions by them; and when he hath reflected on his past actions, they have been the measure by which he hath examined the rectitude or obliquity of them. By these means they have made a strong impression on his mind, and he must offer great violence to himself before he can deface characters which are so deeply imprinted on his soul. 2. Because committed against greater strength to obey. Our spiritual enemies, when they have once been entirely defeated, cannot on a sudden recover their strength. 3. Because they tend more to the dishonour of God. He who hath for some time made himself remarkable by a strict observance of God's laws, hath thereby openly declared for the interests of virtue and piety. He is now to sustain no less a character than that of a champion for the cause of God, and men will be apt to judge of the merits of this cause by the conduct of him who pretends to maintain it. They will think it reasonable to form their opinions of religion by his, and to have no greater concern for it than he hath. 4. Because committed against greater obligations to obedience. Those who have conformed their lives to the precepts of the gospel, must be supposed to have been once convinced that a religious life was to be preferred to a wicked course; the nature of good and evil is not since changed; their experience cannot have convinced them of any mistake; there is no reason for altering their judgment; and whilst that continues the same, their practice ought to be conformable to it. But yet further, such men must reasonably be supposed to have made frequent vows of obedience. They have entered into a solemn covenant with God, and this covenant hath been often renewed.

II. THERE IS MUCH LESS PROBABILITY OF THEIR RECOVERING THEMSELVES OUT OF THIS SINFUL STATE BY REPENTANCE. 1. There is less probability such persons should ever go about to repent. Those evil habits which require much time to master, and which are not to be rooted out but by slow degrees, yet if after some abstinence they are again indulged, do return upon us with all their former strength. The relapsed sinner meets his former crimes with the same pleasure with which we are wont to receive an old bosom friend, and the intermission gives the sin at its return a new and better relish. 2. Should the relapsed sinner entertain thoughts of repentance, it is yet to be feared that this repentance may not prove effectual. In every work which we undertake, we proceed more or less vigorously in proportion to the different hopes we have of success. Now these are the circumstances of a relapsed sinner; his repentance is a work of great difficulty, and his hopes of acceptance are very faint. There must be some extraordinary effusion of God's grace to recall the relapsed sinner. But what reason hath he to expect this supernatural aid, who hath already so much abused it? III. Now if the sin and hazard of relapsing be so great, it will be THE DUTY OF ALL WHO YET STAND, TO TAKE CARE LEST THEY FALL; and of those who are fallen, to use all diligence to recover their ground. The state of the former is happy, but not secure, and therefore they ought to be upon their guard; the conduct of the latter is very dangerous, but not quite desperate, and therefore they ought to work out their salva-

tion with fear and trembling. (*Bp. Smalridge.*) *Apostasy*:—I. THE STATE SUPPOSED.

1. They had escaped, &c. An escape of any kind—from a prison, from shipwreck, from a railway accident, from a dangerous sickness, is ever deemed a cause of thankfulness, and, in some instances, is commemorated for many years after it. But the escape here spoken of is the greatest that a man can ever know. 2. These persons had again become entangled therein and overcome, or “having again become entangled therein,” they “were overcome.” How many sad illustrations of these words might be gathered from the annals of every Church! We have seen young men of great promise and of superior abilities rescued from the snare of the devil—from intemperance, dishonesty, or lust, and becoming earnest members of a Christian community, to the joy of many hearts; but in an evil hour they have listened to the voice of the charmer, they have been led back to their former sinful habits. 3. Hence, “the latter end is worse with them than the beginning,” or “their last state is worse than the first.” It is our Lord’s own saying (*Matt. xii. 45*).

II. THE FULFILMENT OF CERTAIN PROVERBS. 1. The dog possesses many valuable qualities, and for its fidelity and kindness is naturally a favourite. But it is often rapacious, and is especially greedy. It seldom knows when it has had enough; and when it vomits its food, it will, as I have seen it, return and lick it up again. Backsliders are compared to it in this respect. 2. The sow is an unclean animal, and loves filth of every kind; wash her, and as soon as she can she will plunge herself again into the mire, and is never so happy as when wallowing in some dirty bog. Are not sinners often like her? How many reformed drunkards have returned to the intoxicating cup, and plunged again into the filthiest excesses of their previous lives! (*Thornley Smith.*) *Necessity of perseverance in well-doing*.—If it be not enough for a Christian to begin well unless he continue in the profession and doing of that wherein he hath begun, then followeth it that perseverance is so needful, as without which we cannot see the face of God. This is required in the performance of every duty. Is it prayer? we must always pray. Is it thanksgiving? we must in all things give thanks. Is it fasting? we must continually cease from sin. Is it faith? we must never be without it. Is it obedience to God’s commandments? we must always perform it. Is it love unto our neighbours? we must continue therein. The like may be said of every other duty. It is not enough for a time to escape them who live in error, and thereafter give way unto them, but as Caleb and Joshua constantly followed the Lord, and were partakers of the promised land, so must we constantly go on in the course of godliness that we may obtain that kingdom of heaven. (*A. Symson.*) *Sin renewed after pardon*:—Oh, tempt not God’s Spirit any more—ye have provoked Him too much already; let not your consciences soothe you up in your sins; remember that I do now give you warning of them, fall not therein. The more thou renewest thy sins the more thou feedest thy corruptions and makest them the more rebellious. A chained dog breaking loose becometh more fierce; a river long stopped, if a breach be made, runneth the more violently; so for thee to restrain thy sin for a time, and then to give way unto the same, is most dangerous. Thou fallest from God to the devil, from a holy profession to profaneness, thus showing thyself unthankful unto God. What should we not give to obtain grace, to get God’s favour? nothing should so entangle us, as that for the love thereof we should reject both God and grace. Oh, there is no loss compared to the loss of grace, to the loss of God’s favour; no ruin to the ruin of the soul; what will it advantage us, to gain the whole world with the loss of our souls? (*Ibid.*) **THE WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.**—*The way of righteousness* is so called, because both formally it is a righteous way; and effectively, it makes the walkers in it righteous. Certainly there is but one way to heaven, and this is it. There be many ways to some famous city upon earth, many gates into it. But to the city of salvation and glory there is but one way, one gate, and that is a narrow one too, the way of righteousness. There was a way at the first; the way of the law, or rather of nature; Adam was put into it, but he quickly went out of it. Since that, no man ever kept it one hour; but only He that knew the way, that made the way, that is the way, even the new way of righteousness, Jesus Christ. What then is the way of righteousness? (*John iii. 16*). This way hath two boundaries, repentance and obedience. 1. Repentance on the one side, a mourning for sins past; which is as sure an effect or demonstration of faith, as faith is a cause of the peace of conscience. 2. Obedience on the other side; for though we live by faith, yet our faith doth not live, if it produce not good works. We suspect the want of sap in the root of a tree, if we find barrenness in the branches. (*Thos. Adams.*) **THE DOG IS TURNED TO HIS**

own vomit again.—*The dog returned to his vomit*:—I. A CONCLUSION. 1. The verity of the proverb. Good proverbs are commended to us for five special excellences, wherein they transcend other discourses. (1) For their antiquity. The sayings of our fathers and ancestors have a reverend estimation among us; nor do we wrap them up in the bundle of our ordinary lessons, but preserve them as dear relics of their happy memories. (2) For their brevity. They are concise and compendious, and so more portable for the memory. (3) For their significancy, comprehending much matter in few words. (4) For experience. The sages have tried that doctrine themselves, which they commend to others. (5) For their truth. False proverbs are Satan's logic, which he hopes will be received for their wit, though they savour not of honesty or verity. 2. The verification of the proverb. "It is happened unto them." Swine and dogs will return to their old filthiness; but woe unto those men that shall degenerate into such brutish qualities! It becomes them worse than those beasts, and a far worse end shall come unto them than unto beasts. II. A COMPARISON. 1. Consider the two creatures together. (1) Sin doth liken men to beasts, to sordid beasts, and that in their basest filthiness. (2) God made us little inferior to angels, and we make ourselves little superior to beasts. 2. Severally. (1) The dog hath many good qualities, and is divers ways useful and serviceable to man; yet still he is a dog. A wicked man loatheth not his substance, or faculties, so that he ceaseth to be specifically a man; but he ceaseth to be a good man. There is such a corruption diffused through all those powers and faculties, that he is a wicked one. (2) The hog is not without some good properties. There is no creature not endued with some goodness in its kind; though nature be corrupted, it is not abolished. But my argument is their filthiness. (a) The hog is a churlish creature, grudging any part of his meat to his fellows. And have we no such covetous men, whose insatiate eye envies every morsel that enters into their neighbour's mouth? (b) The swine is ravenous, and devouring all within his reach: a fit emblem of worldly men, who because they have no inheritance above, engross all below; nor is there any means to keep them quiet, till they see no more to covet. (c) Swine are ever rooting in the ground, and destroying the very means of increase. If the covetous could have their will, the whole earth should not yield a handful of corn, but that which grows on their own lands, or lies mouldering in their garners. (d) If the swine be troubled, he sets up his bristles, and foams with anger. Such a savage impatience possesses many hearts, that with fierce wrath they foam at their mouths, and strike with their tusks, and supply the defect of words with wounds. (*Ibid.*) "*No place like home*":—In a cellar I found a family consisting of five persons, all huddled together in a most miserable condition. Their story moved the compassion of a kind lady, who commissioned me to take better and more healthy lodgings for them at her expense, and remove them out of that wretched, damp place. She said she could get no sleep for thinking of these poor creatures. I soon obtained a two-roomed lodging for them, with a good fire, but this failed to please them as well as their old abode. The following day, on calling, I saw that they had darkened the windows with paper; "the light," they said, "made them feel so cold." In a day or two after, I found to my surprise that they had gone back to their "own sweet cellar." "There's no place like home." (*W. Haslam.*) *Altogether become abominable*:—To describe in all its horror the abysmal depth to which these false teachers have sunk, the apostle makes use of two proverbs, one of which he adapts from the Old Testament (Prov. xxvi. 11), while the other is one which would impress the Jewish mind with a feeling of utter abomination. The dogs of the East are the pariahs of the animal world, while everything pertaining to swine was detestable in the eyes of the Israelite. But all the loathing which attached to these outcasts of the brute creation did not suffice to portray the defilement of these teachers of lies and their apostate lives. It needed those other grosser features—the return to the disgorged meal; the greed for filth, where a temporary cleansing serves, as it were, to give a relish for fresh wallowing—these traits were needed ere the full vileness of those sinners could be expressed. (*J. R. Lumby, D.D.*)

CHAPTER III.

VERS. 1, 2. This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you.—*St. Peter's love token*.—I. **THE NATURE OF IT**—a letter written. What shall we render to the Lord for His mercy in writing these blessed covenants? II. **THE NUMBER OF IT**—a second after the former. "This second"; not so much fearing the miscarriage of the first, as hoping to work better confirmation by the next. III. **THE TENOR OF IT**—to stir up their minds. Why are the words of the wise compared to goads (Eccles. xii. 11) but to show that the best in God's team need pricking forward? IV. **THE ORDER**—by way of remembrance. This is a just order and method; first, to teach the way of the Lord, then to remind men of walking in it. We are not only called teachers, but remembrancers (Isa. lxiii. 6). (*Thos. Adams.*) **I stir up your pure minds.**—*A Christian memory*.—The power of memory is, perhaps, the most amazing part of our mental equipment. It is a golden thread that links infancy and age, on which are hung, like pearls, varied facts and experiences of every hue. Memory has her servant, recollection, an invisible librarian running about the chambers of the mind, to find what she calls for. Now God uses this faculty in the work of building up Christian character. 1. The gospel has a history to be remembered. 2. History repeats itself ordinarily; but this history of the gospel can never be repeated. Christ has suffered once for all. A Christian memory is swift to remember this. 3. In the revelation of His "memorial name" Jehovah has emphasised the significance of memory. He is not an abstraction, a far-distant personality, even, but "the Father of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob"—a historic God. 4. Again, keep in mind that the life of our Lord in glory is linked with that of His redemptive work on earth, as truly as your existence there, some day, will be connected with your residence here on earth. 5. Finally, a Christian memory holds in trust these historic dates of Christ and His redemption, because of the fact that they are to be the theme of adoring praise throughout eternity. (*J. M. English, D.D.*) **Mindful of the words which were spoken before.**—*Mindfulness*.—I. **THE OBJECT OF THEIR MINDFULNESS.** 1. "Words," for their plain certainty; not shadows and abstruse paradoxes. 2. "Spoken before," for their antiquity; not things of yesterday; no new devices. 3. "By the prophets," for the authority; men that had their commission immediately from God Himself. 4. "Holy prophets," for the sanctity; they passed not through the lips of a Balaam, or Caiaphas. 5. "The commandment of us," &c. The prophets were legal apostles, the apostles are evangelical prophets. Both these came to the world with commandments. (1) Neither prophets nor apostles did ever command in their own names; but the former came with "Thus saith the Lord," and the other in the name of Christ. (2) St. Peter refers us to the words of the prophets and commandments of the apostles, and precisely chargeth our mindfulness with these lessons. (3) Neither the prophets without the apostles, nor the apostles without the prophets, but both together. The gospel without the law may lift men up to presumption; the law without the gospel may sink them down to desperation. (4) The rule of truth is delivered to us by the prophets and apostles. II. **THEIR MINDFULNESS OF THAT OBJECT.** This consists in two things: 1. **Observation.** God never meant His Word for a vanishing sound; that which is kept upon eternal record in heaven, and is a constant dweller in the elected heart (Col. iii. 16), must not be a sojourner, much less a passenger, with us. 2. **Conversation.** It is a barren mindfulness that does not declare itself in a holy fruitfulness. Conclusion: 1. Let us desire the faculty and facility of doing; earnestly to desire it is one half, yea, the best half. 2. Let us be thrifty husbands of time and means to be spiritually rich. 3. Let us reduce all to practice. (*Thos. Adams.*) **Compendious commandments**.—Cultivate the habit of reflective meditation upon the truths of the gospel as giving you the pattern of duty in a concentrated and available form. It is of no use to carry about a copy of the "Statutes at Large" in twenty folio volumes, in order to refer to it when difficulties arise and crises come. We must have something a great deal more compendious and easy of reference than that. A man's cabin-trunk must not be as big as a house, and his goods must be in a small compass for his sea voyage. We have in Jesus Christ the "Statutes at Large," codified and put into a form which the poorest and humblest and busiest amongst us can apply directly to the sudden emergencies and surprising contingencies of daily life, which are always sprung upon us when we do not expect them, and demand instantaneous decision. (*A. MacLaren.*)

Vers. 3, 4. **There shall come in the last days scoffers.**—*The character of the last days*.—I. THE PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS OF THE DISPUTERS HERE DESCRIBED. To be a scoffer is sure no very laudable character, being the joint result of pride and malice, the doing mischief, and the doing it in sport. But as this temper is most injurious, it is also ignorant and indocile. The sure effect of knowledge is an humble sense of the want of it; the deeper we immerse ourselves in any art or science, the greater difficulties are started by us. But over and above the ingredients, of pride, ill-nature, and incorrigible folly, the mockers of the text are branded with immorality and vice—"to walk after their own lusts." And sure there cannot be a more prodigious impudence than that guilty persons liable to the severest punishments should dare to awaken observation by being sharp on others.

II. THE FORCE OF THEIR DISCOURSINGS. "Where is the promise of His coming?" The delaying of performance is no prejudice against it. With Almighty God everything, however distant it may seem, is actually present. First, the apostle denies the proposition that all things continue as they were since the Creation; and secondly, he denies the consequence drawn from thence, Though all things did continue, it no way follows they shall for ever do so.

III. AS THEY ARE A RECITAL OF A PROPHECY. The appearance of these scoffers in the world is itself a very signal mark of its approach (Jude 17, 18; 1 Thess. v. 1; Matt. xxiv. 37). Will they find arguments of mockery and laughter in the place of weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth? If they can do this, in God's name let them mock on, deny a future judgment, or what is more brave, let them dare it. (*John Fell, D.D.*)

The nature, folly, and danger of scoffing at religion.—I. TO CONSIDER THE NATURE, FOLLY, AND DANGER OF SCOFFING AT RELIGION, than which nothing can be more offensive to a considerate mind. 1. Is there anything ridiculous in the belief of a Deity, a supreme, infinite, and intelligent mind, the creator and governor of the universe? Is it absurd to assert that He who made the world exercises an universal providence and directs all the affairs of it? What is there ludicrous in any of the duties of piety, in a supreme reverence and love of God? What is there that has a ridiculous aspect, or can excite any but the laughter of fools, in justice, temperance, &c.? Again, is it at all unsuitable to our most worthy notions of God to believe, that when the world was universally corrupted, He would graciously interpose for the good of His creatures, and teach them their duty by an extraordinary revelation? Is it in the least irrational to suppose that this revelation has fixed, with the utmost distinctness, the terms of our acceptance with God, and thereby removed distracting suspicions and superstitious terrors? 2. Further, the grand principles and duties of religion are so far from having anything ridiculous in them, that they are some of the plainest and most obvious dictates of reason, which renders the guilt of the scoffer much more aggravated and his impertinence and folly more insupportable. 3. Let me only add that religion is of the utmost consequence to the comfort of men's minds, the peace of society, and the general good of the world. So that whoever sets himself to vilify these important truths not only fixes certain reproach upon himself by misplacing his ridicule on what has really nothing absurd in it, but is, in fact, whatever his intention may be, whether to gratify a trifling humour, display the forwardness of his genius, or corrupt the morals of the age, an enemy to society and the general happiness of mankind. 4. And as the guilt of these scoffers is very great, their danger is in proportion. For if the principles of religion should happen to be true, he that has so abused his reason, that noblest gift of God, as to employ it against his Maker, and all that is amiable and useful in human life, must expect to be treated with the utmost rigour and severity.

II. TO INQUIRE INTO THE CAUSES OF IT. 1. It sometimes springs from a levity of mind which disposes men to treat all subjects ludicrously. 2. Again, bantering religion frequently proceeds from ignorance and superficial inquiry. 3. Sometimes again it happens that the fashion of the age they live in, or the general humour of the company they frequent, makes persons set up for scoffers. 4. Scoffing at religion may, in some persons, proceed from a direct hatred of it, occasioned by a prejudice in favour of their vices. This was the case of the scoffers mentioned in the text, who are expressly described as walking after their own lusts. I may safely assert that immorality in the practice is the source of the most invincible prejudices against religion. How natural is it for those, who live as without God in the world, to wish that there was no such Being, that by destroying the first principle of all religion they may justify the want of it in their practice. I shall only add, that when men are averse to the principles of religion, they will naturally decline all further inquiries

into the reasonableness of them, and be fond of everything that looks plausible on the side of infidelity. Learn: 1. Into what extreme corruption the mind of man, which is indued with such noble faculties and formed for Godlike perfection, is capable of being sunk, even to mistake confusion for order and deformity for beauty? 2. Again, that we may not be imposed on by the scoffers of our own times, let us always take care to distinguish between reasoning and ridicule. We should examine what it is that is really ridiculous: whether it be religion itself, or something of a different nature substituted in the place of it. 3. Finally, that we may keep at the utmost distance from this crime, let us employ our reason in defending religion and representing it in a just and amiable light. Let our natural abilities be devoted to this service, and all our studies and improvements made subservient to it. (*James Foster.*) *The folly of scoffing at religion.*—I. We will consider **THE NATURE OF THE SIN HERE MENTIONED**, which is scoffing at religion. "There shall come scoffers." In those times there was a common persuasion among Christians, "that the day of the Lord was at hand." Now this, it is probable, these scoffers twitted the Christians withal. They looked upon all things as going on in a constant course.

II. THE CHARACTER WHICH IS HERE GIVEN OF THESE SCOFFERS. They are said to walk after their own lusts. St. Jude, in his epistle, gives much the same character of them that St. Peter here does (vers. 18, 19). To deride God and religion is the highest kind of impiety. And men do not usually arrive to this degree of wickedness at first, but they come to it by several steps. I remember it is the saying of one, who hath done more by his writings to debase the age with atheistical principles than any man that lives in it, "that when reason is against a man, then a man will be against reason." I am sure this is the true account of such men's enmity to religion—religion is against them, and therefore they set themselves against religion. Besides that, men think it some kind of apology for their vices that they do not act contrary to any principle they profess. **III. THE HEINOUSNESS AND THE AGGRAVATIONS OF THIS VICE.** If it prove true that there is no God, the religious man may be as happy in this world as the atheist. Besides that, the practice of religion and virtue doth naturally promote our temporal felicity. It is more for a man's health, and more for his reputation, and more for his advantage in all other worldly respects, to lead a virtuous than a vicious course of life. And for the other world, if there be no God, the case of the religious man and the atheist will be alike, because they will both be extinguished by death and insensible of any further happiness or misery. But then if the contrary opinion should prove true, then it is plain to every man, at first sight, that the case of the religious man and the atheist must be vastly different; then where shall the wicked and the ungodly appear? I will but add one thing more, to show the folly of this profane temper. And that is this: that as it is the greatest of all other sins, so there is in truth the least temptation to it. Profane persons serve the devil for nought. Lessons: 1. To take men off from this impious and dangerous folly of profaneness, which by some is miscalled wit. 2. To caution men not to think the worse of religion, because some are so bold as to deride it. 3. To persuade men to employ that reason and wit which God hath given them, to better and nobler purposes, in the service and to the glory of that God who hath bestowed these gifts on men. (*Abp. Tillotson.*)

The sin of scoffing at religion.—I. **THE NATURE OF THE VICE.** 1. It is not the serious inquirer that I complain of, let his objections be raised against whatever doctrines they may, but the individual who treats the subject with a spirit of levity, derision, and contempt. (1) In some instances this unhappy and unholy disposition goes so far as to despise every kind of religion, natural as well as revealed. (2) In other cases, the scorner appears in the character of a deist, who, while he professes to believe the truth, and to submit to the obligations of natural religion, attacks the system of Divine revelation. He reviles the Scriptures as forgeries. (a) Much unhalloved ridicule is thrown by some on what are considered by us as the most sublime and important doctrines of revelation—I mean the trinity of persons in the Godhead, and the atonement of our Lord. (b) The scorner will not unfrequently be found avowing his belief in the important articles which I have just mentioned, while, at the same time, he ridicules the only legitimate influence and valuable results of these doctrines. Has not the term saint, that highest appellation which can be given to man or glorified spirit, been bandied about society as a term of reproach? (c) Another way of scoffing at religion is to pitch upon the imperfections of good men and to expose them to public ridicule. But how hateful is the malignity which delights to throw all the praiseworthy parts of the character into the shade of one ludicrous trait. (d) It is a miserable device, which

many have had recourse to, to select the absurdities of fanaticism and the hollow pretences of hypocrisy, as they have been exhibited in some false professors, and thus to raise a prejudice against all genuine religion. 2. To inquire where and when the practice of scoffing is indulged in. (1) In the theatre. (2) How often the social circle is the scene of this unhallowed sport and the entertainment of the convivial party is heightened by profane ridicule. (3) How saturated with the sin of scoffing at religion are many of the publications, and much of the periodical literature of the present day. II. THE CAUSES OF SCOFFING. 1. There are many subordinate and proximate ones. (1) Of these, pride and an unmortified opinion of self takes the lead. (2) Scoffing is sometimes the result of a prevailing and indecent levity of mind, an habitual and indulged frivolity, which alike indisposes and unfits a man for any serious pursuit. (3) A silly affectation of novelty combined with a wish to be thought superior to the terrors of superstition, leads in many cases to the sin of ridiculing piety. (4) Many are led on to assume the character of the scorner by the power of fashion and the contagion of evil company. (5) Inability to attack religion in any other way induces some to assail it with their scorn. 2. But the chief source of scoffing is that which the apostle has mentioned in the text, "Scoffers walking after their own lusts."

III. THE CHARACTER OF THIS VICE. 1. It is irrational. Ridicule is neither the test of truth in others nor the way to obtain it for ourselves. 2. It is rude and uncivil. A decent respect is due to every man's convictions on the subject of religion, though they may be erroneous. 3. It is a most cruel and inhuman sin. Did he but consider how many there are who, amidst the vicissitudes and the trials of life, have no ray of consolation from any other source to fall upon their dreary path, would he follow them to their last refuge and attempt to drive them by unhallowed scorn even from thence? 4. It is a most hardening vice. The sacred writers speak of a scorner as almost irreclaimable. 5. But its impiety in the sight of God surpasses all description. Religion is at once the production and the image of Deity; and to scoff at religion, therefore, is to scoff at God. 6. It is a contagious and injurious vice. Sorners are the chief instruments of Satan, the promoters of his cause, his most zealous apostles, his most able advocates, and his most successful emissaries. IV. THE PUNISHMENT OF THE SCORNER. 1. Are there, tell me scoffers, no midnight scenes of terror and self-reproach? How will this be increased on the bed of death? 2. I cannot conceive of any character with whom Jehovah will be so awfully severe as the scoffer; his is the loftiest height of vice, and his will be the lowest depth of punishment. God's patience in bearing with such impious creatures is wonderful; and His justice in punishing them will be in proportion. 3. And then, who shall tell the secrets of his prison, or conceive of what the scorner shall endure in the dark world of hell? There will be no saint near him there on whom to utter the effusions of his ridicule. Not one flash of wit will for a moment relieve the darkness of eternal night; not one sally of humour resist the oppression of eternal despair. (J. A. James.)

Where is the promise of His coming?—*The delay of the advent of Christ*.—I. THE SCIENTIFIC DIFFICULTY. 1. So far as the objection relates to the delay of the second advent, it would seem that, in a scientific age like the present, it would least of all have weight. For the history of the earth, as related by geology, and the history of the cosmical system, as related by astronomy, present periods so vast, that the eighteen hundred years, during which Christianity has been evolving its work among men, shrink into utter insignificance in the comparison. Certainly, the man of science, of all men, should recognise the utter inadequacy of human standards of time as measures of the development of the plans of the Creator. 2. Again, so far as the objection relates to other aspects of the subject, such as the regularity and immutability of natural law which, it is alleged, forbid any such catastrophe as the end of the world, I suggest—(1) That creation is the fundamental fact on which all our knowledge rests. Science is compelled to admit the beginning of the Kosmos. The very principle of evolution which, in some form or other, is now generally adopted as a twin generalisation with gravitation, carries with it the idea of a beginning. Even if the Kosmos had been self-evolved, the seed out of which it evolved itself must be assumed. But does not this suggest that it is working towards an end? an ultimate solution? (2) That the three leading ideas involved in the second advent, and that which is associated with it, at least in perspective, the end of the world, find clear analogies in the latest theories of science. (a) The second advent involves the idea of the imagination of a higher stage of life and being for man—emancipation from old fetters, the ascent to a higher plane, the taking on a new body with new powers, and under new and higher

conditions. But this is just in the line of the story which science is telling us—whether in astronomy, geology, natural history, or sociology—the several spheres in which the law of evolution is traced. (b) The second advent involves the sudden manifestation of the Son of God, and a new birth of the world resulting from it. But again, the scientific man at our side teaches us that the ascent of matter and force to higher planes, though indeed in orderly succession, has not been by infinite gradation as upon a sliding scale, but always by paroxysms. The story of a chemist is a story of successive births of force into higher and higher forms, the transformation of dead into living matter, of physical into chemical force, and again of chemical into vital force. These are all instances of sudden births into higher conditions with new properties and powers which could not have been imagined before. (c) The second advent—or that great event which, in the perspective, is contiguous with it, though in reality it may lie far beyond it (like two distant peaks, which seem to spring from the same base though a wide valley really intervenes)—involves also stupendous natural phenomena—the regeneration by fire, the new heavens and the new earth. But here again the analogy of science is in harmony with the scriptural revelation; for the geologist, in telling of an internal treasure-house of fire, as well as the astronomer in his theory of “planetary old age,” clearly establish that harmony. And, moreover, if there is a law of conservation of force, there is also, as its antithesis, a law of dissipation of energy. Says Le Comte, “All scientific speculations on the subject of the final destiny of the Kosmos bankrupt nature. The final result is, the running down of all forms of force into heat, and so the final death of the Kosmos.” II. THE HISTORICAL DIFFICULTY. Christ promised to come again in person to judge the world. He said, “Behold, I come quickly.” But He has not come. Long cycles of history have rolled round, yet still He comes not. Now how do we meet this objection? Exactly as St. Peter did—by reminding the objector that with the Lord “a thousand years are as one day.” He is the strong and patient worker. Whether we study the record of races or of civilisations, the conclusion is the same—that the God who orders the course of history does indeed reckon “a thousand years as one day,” maturing His purposes through long tracts of time, and refusing to hasten His work in obedience to the impatience of men. Great nations are not born in a day; strong civilisations are not the product of a generation; both are rather the resultant of a combination of forces and influences whose origin must be sought in remote antiquity. Judging, then, from the analogy of history, what should be the case of Christianity? Here was a new spiritual kingdom set up on earth, designed to be as wide as the world, and as universal as man. How would its results be reached? Surely we should expect that such a design could only be wrought out through long cycles of time; or, at least, this is certain, leaving out of view what *could* be done (for who shall limit the power of the Almighty?) if experience shall prove that the kingdom of God is to establish itself slowly and through long ages of development, this is only what the analogy of history would teach us to expect. But does not this slow ripening of the great periods of history and civilisation, while it removes the difficulty occasioned by the long delay of the second advent, create at the same time a presumption against the manner of its imagination? The Scripture picture represents a sudden event, a great crisis and catastrophe in the history of the world, in the second coming of Christ. But this, too, finds its frequent analogies in history. The records of mankind afford instances not a few of great crises in the history of cities and nations and races, when sudden destruction has overtaken them, when the long pent-up clouds of wrath have burst upon them and swept them away from among the families of the earth. Such was the case with Nineveh and Babylon. Such was the case with Accad, a city older than either of these, which was indeed the cradle of civilisation, but which so utterly disappeared, that its existence was not even known forty years ago, and was only brought to light by the discovery of the key to the arrow-headed characters, in which the story of the Accadians, with their laws and literature and religion, had remained securely locked up for more than three thousand years. Such was the case with Jerusalem, which when it filled up the measure of its guilt, perished in that sudden storm of indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish. Such was the case with the Roman Empire, when it sank to rise no more before the devastating flood of the Northern barbarians. Similar examples are not wanting in modern history, illustrating the principle in question, and giving ground for the assertion that the analogy of history is in harmony with the prophecy that the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night—a day of judgment and indignation and wrath to those who are disobedient and rebellious against the Son of God, but

a day of Redemption to all them that wait for His appearing. (*R. II. McKim, D.D.*) **All things continue as they were.**—*Man's external universe as read by the scoffing sceptic*.—I. THEY GET FROM IT A ONE-SIDED IDEA. The idea they obtained from the observation of nature was, that it was unchanging. "Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue," &c. This is only partially true. We thank God for this constancy. Without it the farmer would have no motive to cultivate his field, the mariner no chart to guide him over the deep, the philosopher no data on which to prosecute his inquiries or to build up his science. All would be confusion. Man, without plan, and without hope, would move under the wild impulses which the casualties of the moment awakened. Still, nature has her changes. Nay, amidst all this constancy are there not incessant revolutions? Does not the inorganic change in its appearance? Old mountains, rivers, islands disappear, and new ones emerge. The vegetable and animal worlds succeed each other. Nay, perhaps there is nothing the same—all things change. A one-sided view of a many-sided thing is evermore erroneous. II. THEY APPLY THIS ONE-SIDED IDEA AGAINST THE WRITTEN WORD. "Where is the promise of His coming?" Now, has not the sceptic always read nature in this way? Whether he has looked at its astronomical, geological, or physiological phases, has he not always so read it as to get some false idea of it, in order to turn it against the Bible? III. THEY DO THIS FROM A SAD PERVERSITY OF HEART. They are "scoffers walking after their own lusts and willingly ignorant." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Miracles are now neither necessary to the conviction of unbelievers, nor the conversion of sinners*.—I shall consider the words as a standing objection of scoffers or free-thinkers against the truth and authority of the Christian religion. I. THAT MIRACLES ARE NOT NOW NECESSARY TO THE CONVICTION OF UNBELIEVERS. It is sufficient that we are assured there was a time when the Christian religion was confirmed by numerous and undoubted miracles. Those who contend for the continuance of miracles in order to evince more effectually the truth of revealed religion, proceed upon one of these suppositions. Either that it is necessary every particular person should for his own satisfaction be an eye-witness of some miraculous fact, or else, that once at least in every age and nation, God should exert His omnipotence, and the miracle be committed to some public and standing record for the information of those who were not eye-witnesses of it. As to what is here required in the last place, it is obviated by saying that we have all the evidence of the miracles recorded in the gospel, that any man, who is not an eye-witness of it, can have of a miracle done in his own age or nation. Upon the former supposition, miracles would be so frequent that they would become of little force or consideration. This is certain, that the effects which miracles have upon men depend upon a good, docile, and obedient temper of mind. He that is in this good disposition needs no further evidence of miracles for his conviction; but he that is not, would not be convinced by them, though we should suppose them more frequent. II. But if miracles are not necessary to the conviction of unbelievers, MAY THEY NOT BE NECESSARY TO THE CONVERSION OF SINNERS? or to reclaim those who already believe from walking after their own lusts, and bring them to repentance? I answer again in the negative. 1. The same motives which now induce men to put off their repentance would, in all probability, be as prevalent, though we should suppose miracles more frequent. Would a miracle tend to convince a sinner of the Divine authority of the laws of the gospel? That we here suppose him convinced of already. Would it tend to enforce his obedience to those laws by conveying any sanctifying graces into his nature? What would it then do in order to his conversion? You will say it might be an occasion of bringing him to a better temper of consideration, and to make him take up some speedy resolutions of amendment. It is granted; but then such a resolution is no more than what we see sinners taking up daily, and yet, notwithstanding this, how ordinary is it for them to shift off their repentance from time to time, till it be past time! 2. It is not reasonably to be expected such an impression should be of any long or lasting continuance. 3. Though what is here asserted could not be made appear from probable reasons and arguments; yet it is confirmed by experience and undeniable matters of fact. We have numerous examples in Scripture, and it may not be improper to instance some few of them to this purpose. (1) Who would have thought that Pharaoh, after all the miracles which were done before his eyes, and which he did not only see, but feel the dreadful effects of, should still have persisted in his disobedience to the commands of God? (2) So, again, notwithstanding the many miracles Moses afterwards wrought in the deliverance of the Jews, what little effect had they towards reclaiming them either from the error or evil of their ways!

1. And when I say that miracles are not now necessary to the conviction of unbelievers, I would be understood as speaking only of such unbelievers as live among Christians, and may at any time have the proofs of Christianity laid clearly before them. 2. If, then, God Almighty has afforded us all sufficient means to convince us of the truth of our holy religion, let us faithfully endeavour to employ those means to the ends they are designed; let us frequently reflect on the reasonableness of Christianity, and the evidence of its truth, that our faith may be built upon a solid foundation. (*R. Fiddes, D.D.*)

Vers. 5-7. **This they willingly are ignorant of.**—*Willing ignorance*:—Nelson, at St. Vincent, putting the telescope to his blind eye, and swearing that he could not see the signal to cease firing, affords an apt illustration of many who, for less worthy motives, will not, because they wish not, see the truth. I. **THE AVOWED INFIDELS AND ATHEISTS.** They are willingly ignorant—1. Of the teachings of the Bible which they affect to despise. 2. Of the evidences of its Divine origin and inspiration. 3. Of the evidences of the being, wisdom, and love of God. 4. Of the evidences of the Divine origin of Christianity. II. **MANY MEN OF SCIENCE AND CULTURE.** III. **MULTITUDES WHO PROFESS AND CALL THEMSELVES CHRISTIANS.** All those who habitually neglect the sanctuary, and to whom the Bible is an unknown book. (*The Study.*) **The world that then was, . . . perished.**—*The flood*:—I. **A MALEFACTOR.** "The world that then was." Locally, a piece of it perished: the earth; materially, a great deal of it perished: all the riches and commodities of the earth; principally considered, all perished but eight persons: formally, there was nothing left. Only God's quarrel to the world was for the men of the world; and His quarrel to the men of the world was for their sins. The world itself was, in this, like the sea; and sins, like the winds: the sea would be calm and quiet if the winds did not trouble it; if iniquities, like storms, had not put the course of nature into an uproar, the world had not perished. II. **AN EXECUTIONER.** "Being overflowed with water." This is an excellent servant to us, so God made it; but an ill master, so our sins make it. Nothing is so sovereign, which being abused by sin, may not, of a blessing, become a curse. III. **THE CONVENIENCY OF THE EXECUTION.** The water was not far to fetch; either with danger, as David's water from the well of Bethlehem, through an army of Philistines; or with labour, as Jacob's water from a deep well in the bowels of the earth; but near at hand, ready. (*Thos. Adams.*) **Man's external universe as regarded by the thoughtful Christian**:—What is the Christian's view of nature? The answer we get from this passage is—I. **HE REGARDS IT AS ORIGINALLY PRODUCED BY THE DIVINE WORD.** "By the Word of God the heavens were of old," &c. It had an origin—it is not eternal; it arose not from chance, but from the Divine Word. II. **HE REGARDS IT AS DEPENDENT EVERY MOMENT UPON THE DIVINE WORD.** "The heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same Word are kept in store." 1. That the past changes of nature are to be referred to the Divine Word. Peter here refers to one tremendous catastrophe. "The world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." The deluge was no accident. "I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth," &c. The earthquake, the tornado, the blight, the pestilence, all these things in nature come from the Word of God. His will is in all. 2. That the present existence of nature is to be referred to His Word. "But the heavens and the earth which are now by the same Word kept in store"—are preserved in their present state. If this is a right view of material nature, we may infer three important considerations. (1) That it is absurd to cite the so-called laws of nature against the fulfilment of God's revealed purposes. This is just what the scoffing sceptics did in the days of Peter. The laws of nature seemed against the deluge; but God purposed that these things should take place, and the laws of nature yielded. The laws of nature may seem against a resurrection, &c., but the purpose of God will be fulfilled. If material nature was originally produced by, and is ever dependent upon, the Word of God, we infer—(2) That there can be no real contradiction between its facts and those of the Bible. Moreover, if material nature was originally produced by, and is ever dependent upon, the Divine Word, we infer—(3) That its relation to the soul should be especially realised. As the Word of God is thus in material nature, material nature has a meaning. It is the voice of God to the human heart, a Divine appeal to the human conscience. Nature has a moral meaning, God's Word is in it. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **One day is with the Lord as a thousand years.**—*God's estimate of time*:—I. First, take this statement as a GENERAL PRINCIPLE, "that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years," &c. 1. In opening up this general principle we remark that all

time is equally present with God. Childhood, manhood and old age belong to creatures, but at the right hand of the Most High they have no abode. Growth, progress, advancement, all these are virtues in finite beings, but to the Infinite the thought of such change would be an insult. Yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow, belong to dying mortal, the Immortal King lives in an eternal to-day. This is a subject upon which we can only speak without ourselves fully understanding what we say, but yet, perhaps, a metaphor may tend to make the matter a little simpler. There is a river flowing along in gentle slope toward the sea. A boatman is upon it; his vessel is here; anon it is there; and soon it will be at the river's mouth; only that part of the river upon which he is sailing is present to him. But up yonder, on a lofty mountain, stands a traveller; as he looks from the summit he marks the source of the river and gazes upon its infant stream, where as yet it is but a narrow line of silver; then he follows it with his clear eye until it swells into a rolling flood, and he tracks it until it is finally absorbed into the ocean. Now, as the climber stands upon that Alp, that whole sparkling line of water adorning the plain is equally present to him from its source to its fall; there is not one part of the stream that is nearer to him than another; in the long distance he sees the whole of it, from the end to the beginning. Such, we think, is the stream of time to God. From the altitude of His observance He looketh down upon it and seeth it at one gaze; taking in, not at many thoughts, but at one thought, all the revolutions of time and all the changes of ages, and seeing both the thousands of years that have gone, and the thousands that are yet to come, as present at one view before his eye. 2. The text teaches us next that all time is equally powerless with God to affect Him. A day does not make any particular change in us that we can notice. But if you take fifty years—what a difference is perceptible in any of us! But as a day seems to make no change with us, so, but far more truthfully, a thousand years make no change with God. Ages roll on, but He abideth the same. We need be under no apprehension that God will ever be affected with weakness through the revolutions of time. The Ancient of Days, ever omnipotent, fainteth not, neither is weary. And as time brings no weakness, certainly it shall bring no decay to God. Upon His brow there is ne'er a furrow; no signs of palsy are in His hand. And as no weakness and no decay can be brought to God by time, so no change in His purpose can ever come through revolving years. To that whereto He hath set His seal He standeth fast, and what His heart decrees, that will He do. Moreover, as there can be no change in His decree, so no unforeseen difficulties can intervene to prevent the accomplishment of it. As long as there is a work to do, He shall do it; as long as there is an enemy to conquer, that enemy shall be overcome. 3. Yet further—no doubt the text intends to teach that all time is insignificant to God. Within the compass of a drop of water we are told that sometimes a thousand living creatures may be discovered, and to those little creatures no doubt their size is something very important. There is a creature inside that drop which can only be seen by the strongest microscope, but it is a hundred times larger than its neighbour, and it feels, no doubt, that the difference is amazing and extraordinary. But to you and to me, who cannot even see the largest creature with the naked eye, the gigantic animalcule is as imperceptible as his dwarfish friend, they both seem so utterly insignificant that we squander whole millions of them, and are not very penitent if we destroy them by thousands. But what would one of those little infusorial animals say if some prophet of its own kind could tell it that there is a creature living that could count the whole world of a drop of water as nothing, and could take up ten thousand thousand of those drops and scatter them without exertion of half its power; that this creature would not be encumbered if it should carry on the tip of its finger all the thousands that live in that great world—a drop of water; that this creature would have no disturbance of heart, even if the great king of one of the empires in that drop should gather all his armies against it and lead them to battle? Why, then the little creatures would say, "How can this be; we can hardly grasp the idea?" But when that infusorial philosopher could have gotten an idea of man, and of the utter insignificance of its own self, and of its own little narrow world, then it would have achieved an easy task compared with that which lies before us when we attempt to get an idea of God. 4. I think we ought also to learn from the text that all time is equally obedient to God. You and I are the servants of time, but God is its sovereign Master. II. GOD'S ESTIMATE OF A DAY. He can make a day as useful, and to Him it shall be as long as a thousand years. I think this is one of the most brilliant of the Church's hopes. We have been saying, "How many converts have been made by the Missionary Society during fifty or

sixty years?" and we have said, "Well, at this rate, how long will it be before the world is converted?" Ah! "At this rate"; but how do you know God's rate? God can do as much in a day as has been done in a thousand years that are past, if so He wills it. Only let Him will it, and there shall be one day written in the records of the Church that shall be equal in achievements, and in triumphs, to any thousand years of her history recorded aforetime. This should lead us to remember that when God speaketh of judging the world at the day of judgment, He will find no difficulty in doing it. Two hundred judges might find it difficult to try in one day all the cases that might be brought before them in a single nation, but God, when He holdeth the great assize, shall be able to convict every guilty one, and to absolve every penitent, and that, too, in one day. III. GOD'S ESTIMATE OF A THOUSAND YEARS. A day is to Him as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. "How long, how long?" the saints under the altar cry. "How long?" and the saints at the altar here to-day take up the same wailing notes, "How long?" But He answereth, "I am not long. What if I have waited and the time is long to you; yet it is not long to Me." God bids you think for a moment, that if you really measure aright, it is no lengthened period of time that He has made the vision to tarry. For see you first, the time that has elapsed since Christ's crucifixion is not long compared with eternity. Then, again, when ye say that God is long in the accomplishment of His great purposes, remember that He has no need to be in a hurry. Whatsoever you and I find to do, we must do it with all our might: for there is neither work nor device in the grave whither we are hastening; but God liveth for ever. Besides, there is an advantage in His being slow—it tries our faith. To win a fight when it lasteth but for an hour, what is there in it? One gallant charge and the foemen have fled. Comrade, but that is a battle worthy to be written with your Waterloos and your Marathons, when hour after hour, and day after day, valour disdains to succumb, and patience endures the fight while foot to foot the soldiers stand. Further, it is well that God should thus be long, because He is unravelling revelation. The Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed to loose the seals, and to open the book for us, and year after year He reads another page, and yet another in the Church's history. If Christ should come to-day, if we should have no more conflicts, no more trials, then we might suppose that the book had come to its brilliant golden finis; but if it keepeth on a thousand years to come, so much the better: the glowing eyes of angels wish not for the end of the story, and the bright eyes of immortal spirits before the throne, when it shall be all over, shall not regret that it was too long. No, let it go on, great Master; let a thousand years run on; our loving hearts will patiently bear it, as though it were but one day. And more: the victory of Christ at the end will be all the greater, and the redemption all the more glorious, because of this long time of strife and confusion. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Time a rate of motion*:—The apostle evidently wishes us to look upon the flight of the years more as God in His eternity looks down upon them. We are to approach the idea of eternity not by multiplying years together in indefinite figures of time, but more truly by remembering that with the Eternal our measurements of time have no importance. I. I ask you to reflect, first, THAT TIME IS A GIFT OF GOD TO THE CREATION. Time is a bequest from the Eternal conveyed and secured in the constitution of the creation. These visible, revolving worlds are by nature temporal. Time is the rate of motion determined by the Creator in His own thought of the worlds. Now, inasmuch as time itself is an original gift of God to the creation, we may well stop to reflect upon the value of this gift. It is one of the primal evidences of the benevolence of the Creator. This original providence of perfect time for the world, true to the infinitesimal of a second through the ages of ages, is evidence of the far-seeing thoughtfulness of the Creator. It is the first condition and means of conveyance of all other good gifts of God. Time is the *magna charta* of all man's rights upon the earth. The ancient order of the heavens is the surety that our God is not a Sovereign who has made us of His mere pleasure, but one who has made all things according to His good pleasure; and whether man's works upon the earth be good or evil, this solar system which God made shall keep true time without variableness, or shadow of turning, until the end comes and time shall be no longer. II. Keeping in mind this fact that time is a gift of God to the creation, reflect, secondly, THAT WHAT WE KNOW AS TIME IS ONLY THE PARTICULAR RATE OF MOTION TO WHICH OUR LIFE ON THIS EARTH HAS BEEN ADJUSTED. For example, you can easily imagine that the human race might have been put to school upon a planet of swifter revolutions than our earth, and all our vital powers adapted to the more rapid succession of

day and night upon that orb—our pulses made to beat proportionally quicker, and the whole mechanism of life and thought made to run more swiftly—so that the same human history might be lived through upon that faster world. So, on the other hand, God might have graduated our rate of living and thinking to the motions of a slower planet than this earth, and still our consciousness of the duration of the years, our sense of time, have remained precisely the same. Time, then, is only a relative thing, the rate of motion of the mechanism; nothing of absolute determination or worth in itself. God has chosen this earth for our time-keeper, and adjusted our consciousness of life to its rate of motion; God has determined the existing time-rate of human history for us, out of many possibilities of different time-rates, for reasons which He thought best, and which we do not know. I may make this idea of the relative nature of time still plainer by reminding you how often in our own experiences we escape from the ordinary course of the world's time, and in a sense make our own time for ourselves, as we live in memory or in anticipation. Fear and hope, sorrow and joy, thought and action, when intense, have a certain witchery and mastery over our time; and not the revolutions of the earth, but the beatings of our spiritual pulses, and the life of our hearts, make our days short or long upon the earth. We mortals are all of us swept along in the flood of the years; yet it seems as if we have power in sudden upspringings of thought to leap, as it were, out of this stream of time and change, and to catch some gleam upon our spirits of a higher element of existence, like God's eternal light, and then we fall back again into the hurrying stream which is our proper element of existence now. All this superiority of soul to time in memory, thought, and hope, means that there is something timeless and deathless within us—something of the being of the Eternal in the living soul of man. You and I are made of the dust of the earth; but within these bodies bound to the earth, and destined to-morrow to return to its dust, is a godlike something which refuses to measure its life by the revolutions of the stars; a something which sinks back into its own consciousness of being, and in its brooding thought and love forgets the passing hours and separations of this mortality; a mystery of spirit within man which by its own thought of God and immortality proves itself to be above the course of nature, and possessed of a Divine birthright. First of all, let us take the help for faith in God's character which the text was intended to give. We wonder how God can live these long ages in the calm blessedness of His presence around our human history of sin and death: where is the promise of His coming? But be not ignorant of this one thing—God does not measure His times by our clocks; a thousand of our years is as one day to Him. Everything depends upon the point of view from which things are judged; and God looks from eternity to eternity! You look out in the morning, and see a cloud overhanging the top of a mountain. At noon you glance up, and the south wind still leaves its vapours upon the mountain. At evening you may notice that the cloud is still there, though beginning to be changed by the setting sun into a glory. It has been a short day to you in your business and your pleasures. But had you been on the mountain waiting for the cloud to lift, and hoping for a clear broad view, the hours would have lengthened, and as you watched the time and the shiftings of the mists, the day would have seemed almost endless. We are now under the cloud—a very little cloud of sin and sorrow, it may be—a passing cloud—in the large, bright universe of God! We are waiting for the hour of clear revelation; and this world-age seems long. But what is it to Him who inhabiteth eternity—who sees all around? Again, these reflections may serve to teach us afresh the real value of time to us. Time, I have said, is simply the rate of the mechanism; hence it is worth in any life simply what it is used for—what is worked out in it. We should look upon our lifetime as a means towards an end—time the means, and a Christlike character, worth God's keeping in His own eternity, the end of our life here. The one thing needful is that the soul go hence clothed in Christ's wedding garment; not how long a time God gives us to dress our souls for that perfect society. Has He not already given us time enough? (*Newman Smyth, D.D.*) *God's eternity considered in reference to the suspension of His promised purposes*:—I. ENDEAVOUR TO ILLUSTRATE THEIR IMPORT, AND ESTABLISH THE TRUTH OF THE PROPOSITION WHICH THEY CONTAIN. These words are designed as an answer to the objections which irreligious scoffers advance against the certainty of the accomplishment of the Divine declarations, founded on its long delay. 1. Every portion of duration is something real, and has a true and proper existence; but the epithets great and small, when applied to this (as well as to anything else), are merely comparative. We should consider fifty years as

forming a very large portion of human life ; but the same number of years in the history of an empire would be justly considered small. Thus is the same quantity either great or small, as you place it by the side of something much inferior to it in magnitude, or much superior. 2. Hence it results that absolute greatness belongs only to what is infinite ; for whatever falls short of this, however great it may appear, its supposed greatness is entirely owing to the incidental absence of another object that is greater. 3. In duration, absolute greatness belongs only to eternity. 4. We must then conceive that He who has subsisted throughout eternal ages ; who knows “ no beginning of days, nor end of years ” ; who possesses eternity ; to whom all its parts (if we may be allowed so to speak) are continually open, both past and future ; must have a very different apprehension of that inconsiderable portion of it we call time, from creatures who are acquainted with no other. Nor let any one object, and say it must appear as it is, and therefore there is no reason to suppose it appears to Him different from what it does to us. No doubt it appears to Him exactly as it is. His apprehensions are, unquestionably, agreeable to the nature of things ; but it does not follow from thence that it must appear in the same light as it does to us. That each portion of duration appears to Him real, we admit : we are not contending for its being annihilated in His view. Something it is, and something it appears, unquestionably, in His eyes. The measure by which God estimates time is, consequently, quite different from that which we are compelled to apply in its contemplation. We measure one portion of duration by another ; He measures time by eternity. How inconceivably different must be the apprehension arising from these different methods of considering it !

II. THE USE TO WHICH THE DOCTRINE OF THE TEXT MAY BE APPLIED. 1. It removes the ground of objection against the fulfilment of the Divine declarations, arising from the accomplishment being long delayed. 2. It accounts for the peculiar cast of Scripture language, when employed in announcing the coming of Christ, and the end of all things. 3. Though we cannot immediately change our senses, let us endeavour to conform our ideas and convictions to the dictates of Infallible Wisdom on this subject. Let us consider the whole duration of things here as very short. (*R. Hall.*) *Heaven's clock goes at a different rate from our little timepieces. (A. Maclaren.)* God's calm view of events in time is one of the marks of Divinity. For not only is it true that a thousand years are to God as one day to us, but it is also true, as St. Peter tells us, that “ one day is with the Lord as a thousand years ” are with us. We know what the effect of a thousand years past (for of a thousand years to come we cannot know the effect) is upon the human mind. We regard things that happened a thousand years ago very calmly, without any of the passion which thrilled the breasts of the men who lived when the events we now read of in history were taking place. That is the way in which God regards events the very day they happen. They are to Him as if they had happened a thousand years ago ; so calm is the Divine temper, so far from the impatience and haste characteristic of us men who live for threescore years and ten. This comes of His being the Everlasting One. Yet, strange to say, while God takes things so calmly and never hurries, He at the same time never forgets. A thousand years are to Him as one day to us. He is as much in earnest in His purpose at the end of a millenium as we are with ours the day we form it. (*A. B. Bruce, D.D.*)

The Lord is not slack . . . but is long-suffering.—*Reasons why God delays the punishments of wicked men* :—I. THAT MEN MAY BE BROUGHT TO A SENSE OF THEIR CONDITION, and led to use those methods which may serve to avert God's anger. II. That in many cases READY PUNISHMENT CANNOT BE INFLICTED ON BAD MEN WITHOUT LAYING A CONSIDERABLE SHARE OF IT ON THE GOOD, and therefore God spares them for the present that the righteous may not be involved in the calamities of the wicked. III. THE AGENCY OF ILL MEN MAY BE MADE USE OF IN ORDER TO BRING ABOUT MANY GREAT DESIGNS OF PROVIDENCE, and, in particular, the delays of vengeance on some ill men may serve for the chastisement of others. IV. BUT IT IS MUCH ONE, WITH RESPECT TO THE DIVINE BEING, WHEN PUNISHMENT IS INFLICTED ON ILL MEN IF IT BE INFLICTED AT ALL : one day is with Him as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. Nor can the sinner, if he reflects, take any great satisfaction in thinking that those punishments are distant which are yet certain. V. THAT THE PRESENT DELAYS OF VENGEANCE, IF THEY DO NOT WORK THEIR PROPER EFFECTS AND LEAD MEN TO THAT REPENTANCE THEY WERE INTENDED TO PRODUCE, WILL BUT AGGRAVATE THEIR RUIN. (*Bp. John Conybeare.*) *God's forbearance to sinners* :—I. I AM TO GIVE SOME ACCOUNT AND TO ASSIGN SOME REASONS OF GOD'S FORBEARANCE TO SINNERS. 1. That the delay bears no proportion either to the eternity of His own or to the

future continuance of our being. 2. God never intended this world for the place of our final recompense, and therefore is the less concerned to interpose with frequency for the immediate punishment of the sinner. 3. We may presume it designed in much mercy to sinners that He does not catch at every advantage. 4. It is designed to lead us to repentance. There are critical junctures in religion, as well as in life and fortune. II. THE LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD IS NO REASON TO BELIEVE HE WILL NEVER TAKE VENGEANCE. The reasons which account for His forbearance destroy that inference. 1. If the end of the world and the dissolution of all things be the vengeance expected, it was no way proper to raise so vast a fabric except it had been designed for some ages' continuance. 2. For if sin could never be committed without immediate vengeance closely pursuing it, there could be no proper foundation of reward to our obedience. 3. Whatever continuance the world may seem made for, yet the lives of particular men are short and uncertain. III. THE DELAY OF HIS VENGEANCE CAN BE NO JUST REASON FOR OUR CONTINUANCE IN SIN. It does not lessen our danger; it gives no colour to the notion that God is an unconcerned spectator of wickedness. But now His present forbearance makes proof that He will hereafter pursue the wicked with His vengeance. IV. HIS LONG-SUFFERING IS MUCH RATHER AN ARGUMENT TO US TO FORSAKE SIN, AND TO PROCEED HENCEFORWARD IN ALL HOLY OBEDIENCE. 1. It is so in point of gratitude, because we have seen that it is an effect of His mercy. 2. But if the motives of gratitude fail of persuading us, we should at least consider that our interest is very deeply concerned in this matter. For it is a very great aggravation to turn the means of grace into occasions of sin. (N. Marshall, D.D.) *The long-suffering of God a proof of His power*:—Suppose I were one of those scoffers, what should I be most inclined to doubt from observing how God's threatenings did not take effect? I suppose the power of God. I should be inclined to say, "God has threatened what He is not able to perform; hence, the reason why sun, moon, and stars still rise and set in their appointed order." Well, if this were my way of arguing, would it be any answer to me to say, "The Lord is long-suffering to us-ward." Yes, indeed it would. There is no proof of the Divine power so great as the Divine long-suffering. How beautifully does one of our collects express this truth! "O God, who declarest Thine almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity." Now, before beginning to prove to you that long-suffering is a great proof of the power of God, we would allow this idea to be at variance with that most commonly entertained. We have only to make mention of the power of God, and the thoughts are instantly far away amid the fields of immensity, busying themselves with accumulations of the workings of Almightyness—star upon star, and system upon system. And, from the fact of creation, we pass onward to that of preservation: we tell you that the complicated machinery of the universe is superintended and upheld by God. Far be it from us to imply that such a mode of demonstrating the power of God is other than correct. But it would appear to be possible, that whilst searching through the universe for evidence of the power of God, we may pass by the more signal demonstration lying individually in ourselves. We speak not of the testimony which is undoubtedly given by the construction of our bodies, and by the surprising manner in which the material incloses the immaterial. But there may be evidence which is still more overlooked, and that, too, an evidence which each may fetch from his own experience and his own habits. Towards each transgressor there has been an exercise of long-suffering on the part of the Almighty; so that if the greatest demonstration of God's power be God's long-suffering, then each of us may find in himself that great demonstration in all its completeness. "With an hatred of sin which outruns our conception, and much more our imitation, God is looking down on every misdoing by which the earth is polluted. He is present at the perpetration of each species of crime—standing by the blasphemer whilst pouring out his curses, and by the murderer whilst bearing down on his victim. If this fact be pondered, it must always startle us. And yet He strikes not. We just ask you to imagine a tender-hearted man standing by whilst some monster of his species was foully ill-treating some fellow-creature or animal. Suppose him possessed of the most perfect ability of putting a stop to the cruelty, and awarding due punishment. The first impulse would be to exercise this ability. And if, in place of yielding to the impulse, he should reflect within himself—If I spare this guilty one awhile, if I visit not on him, on the instant, his iniquity, he may possibly repent—why we do not deny that, by a great effort, reflection might carry over the impulse, and the man might pass on in the hope of future amendment, resolved to administer no present correction. We allow that there is no actual impossibility against the

exercise of such forbearance. But we think you will all agree that a vast moral effort would be needed for the repressing his feelings. Long-suffering is power over one's self. If, then, it be reverent so to speak, God's long-suffering is power over Himself. And assuredly God's power over Himself must be greater than the power which He puts forth when He deals with what is material and finite. You may read of such instances as of a man in the hardihood of his Atheism challenging, so to speak, the Deity to prove His existence by striking him to the earth. "If there be a God, let Him show Himself, by smiting me, His denier." Now you can hardly picture to yourselves a Being exercising over Himself so much control as that, with all the apparatus of fiery reply at His disposal, He should not answer the challenge by levelling him who utters it with the ground. Can you measure to me the effort which it would be to the Creator to keep back the thunderbolt and chain up the lightning? Yet the Atheist is allowed to depart unscathed. What lesson does the believer in God derive from this absence of all anger. He learns God's might a hundredfold more from the unbroken silence of the firmament than he would do from the hoarse tones of vengeance rushing down to the destruction of the rebel. The Atheist overthrown is as nothing to the exhibition of the Atheist spared. We shall probably arrive at right apprehensions of God's long-suffering as connected with God's other attributes, if we carefully review two simple facts. The first is that God can punish every sin; the second, that God can pardon every sin. It is essential to the long-suffering of God that each of these assertions should, in the largest sense, hold good. Unless there be the power of punishing, there can be no long-suffering; for long-suffering necessarily pre-supposes that the Being, who might on the instant take vengeance, passes over for a while the iniquity. On the other hand, unless God can pardon every sin, what is there in His long-suffering? We can have no idea of long-suffering except as exhibited in our text—that it is bearing with the offender in order that, time being given him to consider his ways, he may yet by repentance turn away punishment. If we can satisfactorily show that God is pre-eminently powerful, inasmuch as He is both the punisher and the pardoner of sin, we shall have established the point under debate—that God's long-suffering is a great measure of His power. You will readily admit that it is proving God powerful to prove Him superior to every creature, so that were the whole universe banded against Him, it would have no power in trenching upon His sovereignty. But how can we more thoroughly assure ourselves of God's superiority to every creature than by ascertaining that over every creature who swerves from obedience God can exercise the office of avenger. Whoever the creature who apostatises from God, whether standing high or low in the scale of intelligence, beyond all question the power of God can reach to restrain or crush this creature. It may indeed be that the creature is permitted to go on in rebellion; and thus no direct evidence is given of the supremacy of God. Wherein, then, would be the proof of God's power? Simply in God's long-suffering. Long-suffering is the greatest exhibition of power on this side the day of judgment. It is our evidence that God now possesses all that God shall then exercise. And when I am told that God is long-suffering, and no limitations are placed on the attribute, you bring before me a picture as overwhelming in its details as stupendous in its outlines. I see at once that if God can be long-suffering, then God can punish every sin. He could not be long-suffering unless He could punish; He could not punish unless He were supreme. And then observe, secondly, that God can pardon every sin. Of all extraordinary truths, perhaps the most extraordinary is that sin can be forgiven. It may be a bold thing to say; but if you examine carefully, you will see that there is a strong sense in which it may be said that long-suffering is not natural to God. For was God long-suffering without effort? Could He be long-suffering without a preparation? He could be long-suffering only as He had resolved to give up His well-beloved Son to the fiercest agonies and the foulest wrongs. And when I think of the difference between God, the Creator of worlds, and God, the Pardoner of sin, the one done without an effort, and the other demanding an instrumentality nobly sublime; the one effected by a word, the other wrought out in agony and blood—oh! the world created is as nothing to the sin blotted out! That God can pardon is the very summit of what is wonderful; and, therefore, O Lord, do I most know Thee, the Omnipotent, when I behold in Thee, the Long-sufferer! (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The patience of God*.—I. CONSIDER THE PATIENCE AND LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD TOWARDS MANKIND, AS IT IS AN ATTRIBUTE AND PERFECTION OF THE DIVINE NATURE: "God is long-suffering to us-ward." 1. The patience of God is His goodness to sinners in deferring the punishment due to them for their sins;

and the moderating as well as the deferring of the punishment due to sin is an instance likewise of God's patience; and not only the deferring and moderating of temporal punishment, but the adjourning of the eternal misery of sinners is a principal instance of God's patience; so that the patience of God takes in all that space of repentance which God affords to sinners in this life—nay, all temporal judgments and afflictions which befall sinners. 2. It is not necessarily due to us, but it is due to the perfection of the Divine nature; it is a principal branch of God's goodness, which is the most glorious perfection of all other; and therefore we always find it in Scripture in the company of God's milder attributes. 3. Give some proof of the great patience and long-suffering of God to mankind. And this will evidently appear if we consider these two things—1. How men deal with God. Every day we highly provoke Him; we grieve and weary Him with our iniquities (Isa. xliii. 24). 2. The patience of God will farther appear if we consider how, notwithstanding all this, God deals with us. He is patient to the whole world. He "prevents us daily with the blessing" of His goodness, prolonging our lives and vouchsafing many favours to us. But the patience of God will more illustriously appear if we consider these following particulars—(1) That God is not obliged to spare and forbear us at all. (2) That God spares us when it is in His power so easily to ruin us. (3) That God exerciseth this patience even when we are challenging His justice to punish us and provoking His power to destroy us. (4) That He is so very slow and unwilling to punish and to inflict His judgments upon us. (a) God's unwillingness to punish appears in that He labours to prevent punishment; and that He may effectually do this He endeavours to prevent sin, the meritorious cause of God's judgments; to this end He hath threatened it with severe punishments that men may fear to offend. (b) He is long before He goes about this work. Judgment is, in Scripture, called "His strange work"; as if He were not acquainted with it and hardly knew how to go about it on the sudden (Deut. xxxii. 41). (c) When He goes about this work He does it with much reluctance (Hosea xi. 8). He is represented as making many essays and offers before He came to it (Psa. cvi. 26). God withholds His judgments till He is weary of holding in, as the expression is (Jer. vi. 11), until He can forbear no longer (Jer. xlv. 22). (d) God is easily prevailed upon not to punish, as in the case of Nineveh. With what joy does He tell the prophet the news of Ahab's humiliation! (e) When He punisheth He does it very seldom rigorously and to extremity, not so much as we deserve (Psa. ciii. 10). (f) After He hath begun to punish, and is engaged in the work, He is not hard to be taken off (2 Sam. xxiv.). Nay, so ready is God to be taken off from this work, that He sets a high value upon those who stand in the gap to turn away His wrath (Numb. xxv. 11–13). 5. The patience of God will yet appear if we consider some eminent instances of it. His forbearance is so great that He hath been complained of for it by His own servants. Job, who was so patient a man himself, thought much at it (Job. xxi. 7, 8). Jonah challengeth God for it (Job iv. 2). II. THAT THE PATIENCE OF GOD AND THE DELAY OF JUDGMENT IS NO GROUND WHY SINNERS SHOULD HOPE FOR IMPUNITY: "God is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness." III. THE TRUE REASON OF GOD'S PATIENCE AND LONG-SUFFERING TO MANKIND: "He is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." This is the primary end of God's patience to sinners; and if He fail of this end through our impenitency He hath other ends which He will infallibly attain; He will hereby glorify the riches of His mercy and vindicate the righteousness of His justice; for God does not lose the glory of His patience, though we lose the benefit of it, and He will make it subservient to His justice one way or other. Lessons: 1. That nothing is more provoking to God than the abuse of His patience. 2. That the patience of God will have an end. 3. That nothing will more hasten and aggravate our ruin than the abuse of God's patience. (*Abp. Tillotson.*) *Man's external universe as maintained by God for a moral purpose*.—I. THAT MAN'S EXTERNAL UNIVERSE IS MAINTAINED BY GOD. 1. However long He may continue to uphold it, He does not overlook the claims of His justice. There are before Him "a day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." 2. However long He may continue to uphold it, duration is nothing to Him. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." He is not limited to time as we are. 3. However long He may continue to uphold it, He does not forget His promise. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness." 4. However long He may continue to uphold it, His forbearance is manifest through the whole. He "is long-suffering to us-ward." II. THAT MAN'S EXTERNAL

UNIVERSE IS MAINTAINED BY GOD FOR A MORAL PURPOSE. "Not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." What is the purpose? Why is this world kept in existence for so many ages? Is it that men might luxuriate amidst animal gratifications, revel amidst the elements which minister to the senses, and pander to the passions? Is it that they might train the intellect to think, and to fill the mind with knowledge? Not even this. It is the moral restoration of man. "That none should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

1. This moral restoration of man requires "repentance." 2. This moral restoration of man is according to the Divine will. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *God true to His purpose*:—Sometimes in architecture and sculpture designs are formed as an exercise of skill, without any intention of embodying them in work. And sometimes politicians frame schemes which are intended only for Utopia, and for the carrying out of which no attempt will be made. But God's design is for execution and His scheme for embodiment. A purpose to work out His design has firm hold of every portion and feature of that design. (*S. Martin.*) **That all should come to repentance.**—*The rules and directions for the right performing the duty of repentance*:—1. The first is this, implore repentance at the hands of God (2 Tim. ii. 25). 2. Have due regard to the sacred Word. Suppose we were travelling in the dark, what could we do better in such a case than procure a light to guide us? Naturally we are in the darkness of ignorance and mists of error, and want to be illuminated in the right way (Psa. cxix. 105; 2 Pet. i. 19). And that the Holy Scripture has a peculiar efficacy to purify from sin, which is done by repentance, is evident (Psa. cxix. 9). 3. Consider the nature of God. As His word rightly heard, so His nature duly contemplated, will be not only a mighty antidote against sin, but as strong an inducement to repentance. Now the nature of God we may best learn from His glorious name (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7). God in His nature is holy, and even essentially and infinitely holy (Isa. lx. 3). And can we endure to rest in wilful sin when it is an evil abominable to God, and makes us as odious to Him as it is in its own nature? Reflect then seriously again, that He is just too. And as His perfect purity sets Him against sinners, so His absolute justice inclines and constrains Him to punish all that persist in it. And then we may consider further that He is powerful too, and armed with omnipotence. And so He is able to punish us (Psa. lxxvi. 7). 4. Place the promise and assurance of pardon before your eyes (Ezek. xviii. 30; Luke xxiv. 47; Acts iii. 19, v. 31). 5. Fix your thoughts upon Christ's sufferings. They were various, sharp, and terrible; but all for our sins. (*R. Warren, D.D.*) *God's willingness to pardon*:—I. THAT GOD IS "NOT WILLING THAT ANY SHOULD PERISH," APPEARS BY HIS OWN POSITIVE DECLARATIONS. II. THAT GOD "IS UNWILLING THAT ANY SHOULD PERISH," IS ILLUSTRATED BY THE INVITATIONS WITH WHICH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES ABOUND. III. THE SAME TRUTH IS STILL FURTHER ILLUSTRATED BY THE ENCOURAGEMENT GOD EVERYWHERE PRESENTS TO THOSE WHO SHOW AN INCLINATION TO RETURN. IV. THE SAME TRUTH IS ILLUSTRATED BY THE THREATENINGS AND WARNINGS WHICH ARE GIVEN TO PERSONS AND NATIONS BEFORE DESTRUCTION COMES ON THEM. V. THE DELAY OF JUDGMENT ILLUSTRATES MY TEXT. VI. THE MOST NOTORIOUS CHARACTERS ARE SPECIFIED IN THE OFFERS AND INVITATIONS OF MERCY WHICH WE FIND IN SACRED SCRIPTURE. VII. THE DEATH OF CHRIST IS AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE PROPOSITION IN THE TEXT. VIII. THE MEANS EMPLOYED TO KEEP UP THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST BEFORE THE WORLD AND THE CHURCH DECLARES THE SAME TRUTH. IX. THE PAINS TAKEN TO REMOVE DISTRUST PROVE THAT GOD IS "NOT WILLING THAT ANY SHOULD PERISH." He not only gives us His declaration that He is not willing that any should perish, but He gives us His oath. X. THE PROPOSITION CONTAINED IN THE TEXT IS ILLUSTRATED BY MANY EXAMPLES: Manasseh. Thief on cross. (*W. Freeland, LL.D.*) *God's unwillingness*:—I. What does the apostle mean here by the expression "PERISH"? What is it to perish? This will be most appropriately answered in the words of Holy Scripture. Paul called it "Being punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power" (2 Thess. i. 9). "Sudden destruction" (1 Thess. v. 3). "Swift destruction" (chap. ii. 1). "The vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7). II. WHAT REASONS HAVE WE TO CONCLUDE THAT ANY WILL THUS PERISH? 1. Fallen angels have perished (Jude 6). 2. Sodom and Gomorrah have "suffered the vengeance of eternal fire" (ibid. 7). 3. Other men deserve to perish. "The Scripture hath concluded all under sin." 4. That part of the punishment which consists in natural death is daily being inflicted before our eyes. 5. God has said that some characters shall perish. "He that believeth not shall be damned." III. But who are thus in danger? 1. "Despisers" (Acts xiii. 41). 2. Profane persons, and all who "forget God" (Psa. ix. 17). 3.

All the impenitent (Luke xiii. 5). 4. All unbelievers (Mark xvi. 16). IV. How are we to understand the expression God is NOT WILLING that any should perish? Hell does not exist without His permission! Death is His messenger! The judgment of the great day will be held by His appointment! But then—1. God will not punish without occasion. Nor 2. Till the guilt of man has rendered it necessary. Nor 3. Without having provided a remedy:—the best possible remedy. Nor 4. Without having authorised the publication of that remedy. Nor 5. Without having implored men to accept it. Nor 6. Without having given space for repentance. 7. Nor will He inflict eternal judgment on one soul which has not proved its final enmity to Him, to truth, to holiness. V. WHAT EVIDENCES HAVE WE THAT GOD IS “NOT WILLING THAT ANY SHOULD THUS PERISH”? 1. The evidence arising from His character. 2. From His word. 3. From His oath (John iii. 16). 4. From the gift of His Holy Spirit. 5. From the revelation of His truth. 6. From the exaltation of Christ as a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance. 7. From the promise of the personal help of the Holy Spirit—to them that ask it. 8. From every instance of true repentance which has occurred. 9. From sparing mercy from day to day. 10. From warnings, exhortations, invitations, directions, promises, &c., without number. VI. WHAT is the imperative and only ALTERNATIVE that men may not perish? We answer, “repentance.” (*The Evangelist.*)

Ver. 10. **The day of the Lord will come as a thief.**—*The day of the Lord*:—I. The text first points us to a period advancing rapidly upon us, in the future; and as such DIFFERS FROM ANY OTHER WHICH MAY HAVE MARKED AN EPOCH IN THE SUCCESSION OF AGES SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN. 1. The bright display of the Lord's attributes which will then be made. 2. The affairs of the mediatorial kingdom of grace, the reign of Christ, as such, will then be completed. 3. The exhibition of His equity, which will then be made in the regular dispensations of His providence among men. 4. The Lord will then receive in and from His people glory and renown. II. THE DECLARATIONS MADE IN THE TEXT CONCERNING ITS COMING. 1. The certainty of it. 2. The sudden and unexpected manner of its approach. (1) To excite men to watch for the event. (2) The knowledge of the exact time might alarm men, and prevent attendance to the present duties of life. III. SOME OF THE OCCURRENCES OF THE DAY OF THE LORD. (*J. Thompson Smith.*) *Preparation for death and judgment*:—I. THE PERIOD REFERRED TO. There have been memorable days in the history of the world and in the histories of nations. 1. On that day the dispensation of mercy will close. 2. It will be the day of the second coming of the Lord Jesus. Believer, it will be the consummation of thy bliss to have a perfect sight of Christ “without a veil between,” and to bear an exact conformity to His likeness. But O sinner! how wilt thou meet His frown? 3. It will be the day of the Lord's especial honour. 4. It is the day on which all His declarations will be fulfilled and verified—His declarations of mercy to His people and His threatenings of destruction to the impenitent and unbelieving. II. THE DUTIES TO WHICH ITS EXPECTED COMING CALLS US. 1. We should watch against a spirit of slothfulness and indifference. 2. We should anxiously desire to be found ready whenever that day may come. (1) Reconciliation with God is necessary. (2) A close and humble walk with God is requisite. (3) Frequent meditation on the consequences of that day will prepare us for its coming. III. MOTIVES TO LEAD US TO THE DISCHARGE OF THESE DUTIES. 1. The uncertainty of the time when this day shall come. 2. The danger and ruin resulting from the want of preparation for its coming. (*Essex Remembrancer.*) **The heavens shall pass away with a great noise.**—*The destruction of the universe*:—1. The destruction of the universe affords us a picture of the power of our Judge. How powerful is this Judge! Who can resist His will? 2. The conflagration of the universe affords us a picture of the horrors of vice. Behold how far God carries His resentment against sin. Heavens, earth, elements, are ye guilty? But, if ye be treated with so much rigour for having been the unconscious instruments of the crime, what must the condition of the criminal be? 3. In the burning of the universe we find a representation of the vanity of the present world. What is this world which fascinates our eyes? It is a funeral pile that already begins to burn, and will soon be entirely consumed. The hope of an imaginary immortality hath been able to support some men against the fear of a real death. The idea of existing in the minds of those who exist after them hath, in some sort, comforted them under the miserable thought of being no more. Hence pompous buildings, hence rich monuments, and vainglorious titles inscribed on marble and brass. But behold the dissolution of all those bonds, and the memory of all that is fastened to

the world will vanish with the world. 4. The conflagration of the universe furnisheth a description of the world to come. Ye often hear us declaim on the nothingness of earthly things. How is it that God, who hath resolved to render us one day happy, doth not allow us to continue in this world, and content Himself with uniting all happy circumstances in our favour? Ah! a life formed on this plan might indeed answer the ideas of happiness which finite geniuses form, but such a plan cannot even approach the designs of an infinite God. A life formed on this plan might indeed exhaust a terrestrial love, but it could never reach the love of an infinite God. To accomplish this love there must be another world; there must be new heavens and a new earth; there must be objects far more grand. 5. Finally, the destruction of the universe displays the excellence of piety. Oh that I could represent the believer amidst fires, winds, tempests, the confusion of all nature, content, peaceable, unalterable! (*J. Saurin.*) **The earth also . . . shall be burned up.**—*The world on fire*:—I. THE LAST GENERAL CONFLAGRATION. In this Epistle there is one truth very plainly taught, namely, that this present world is to be consumed by fire. We learn also that this conflagration will take place in connection with the judgment, for “the heavens and the earth which now are, are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” We gather also from our text that this fire will burn up all the works existing upon the earth—everything which man has constructed shall perish. Chemists tell us that the great noise which Peter speaks of would certainly accompany such a combustion. The whole world shall become one molten mass again, and this terrestrial firmament shall cease to be. We may here note that the prophecy that the earth will thus be consumed with fervent heat is readily to be believed, not only because God says it, but because there are evidently the means at hand for the accomplishment of the prophecy. Pliny was wont to say that it was a miracle that the world escaped burning for a single day, and I do not wonder at the remark, considering the character of the district in which he spent much of his time. In visiting the country around Naples the same thought constantly occurred to me. Yonder is Vesuvius ready at any moment to vomit fire, and continually sending up clouds of smoke. Then go across to the Solfatara on the other side of Naples, stand at the vent of that ancient volcano and listen to the terrific rumblings which attend the rush of steam and sulphur; then stamp your foot or dash a stone upon the ground, and hear how the earth resounds; it is evident that you are standing over a vast cavern. Look around you and remark how the earth steams with sulphureous exhalations. Observe, also, how the earth in some places has risen and fallen, again and again. Yet this volcanic region around Naples is but one of the many ventholes of the great fires which are in the bowels of the earth; three hundred or more burning mountains have already vomited flame. According to the belief of many geologists, the whole centre of the earth is a mass of molten matter, and we live upon a thin crust which has cooled down, and is probably not so much as one hundred miles thick. The probabilities are that the whole internal mass is in a liquid, and, perhaps, in a gaseous state. Astronomers tell us that within the last two hundred or three hundred years some thirteen fixed stars have disappeared, and according to their belief they have been burned up. If such things happen in other worlds, is there anything improbable in the belief that the like will occur to us? But if there were no internal sea of fire, and no instance of other worlds being consumed by fire, who can guess the power which lurks in electricity, and other subtle forces? God’s dreadful armies lie in ambush everywhere. He has but to speak the word, and the servants of His omnipotence will rise, terrible in their destructive power. Earth is as a pile of wood, and the torch-bearers stand ready to kindle it at any moment. Although we read of the world being burned by fire, we are not told that it will be annihilated thereby. We believe from various things which are hinted at in Scripture, though we would not dogmatise, that this world will be refitted and renovated; and in that sense we expect new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Luther used to say that the world is now in its working clothes, and that by and by it will be arrayed in its Easter garments of joy. One likes to think that the trail of the old serpent will not always remain upon the globe, and it is a cheering thought that where sin has abounded God’s glory should yet more abound. II. The apostle has drawn PRACTICAL INFERENCES. “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?” What connection can there be between the burning of the globe and holy conversation and godliness? The first connection is this. Our position as Christians is at this moment like that of Noah

before the destruction of the world by water. What manner of person ought Noah to have been? I should suppose such a man, daily expecting the rain to descend and the flood to burst up from beneath, would lead a life very free from worldliness, a life the very reverse of the rest of his fellow-men. Now our life ought to be like that of Noah. Look around on the beauties of nature, and when you enjoy them say to yourself, "All these are to be dissolved and to melt with fervent heat." You understand that the things which are seen are but a dream, that the things unseen are alone substantial. Therefore sit loose by all things below the moon, and clutch as with the grasp of a dying man the things eternal which God has revealed to you. Such conduct will separate you from your fellow-men. As there is down deep in your heart an object different from theirs, and as you set a different estimate on all things, your conduct will be wide apart from theirs; being swayed by different motives, your life will diverge from theirs, and they will misunderstand you, they will impute ill motives to you. I remark further, that the nearness of the Lord as suggested by the fact that the world is to be destroyed, according to His word, suggests holiness. The sinner finds a reason for sin when he says, "God is not here: everything goes on in the ordinary way: God does not care what men do." "No," says the apostle, "He is not away, He is here, holding back the fire forces; He is reserving this world a little while, and by and by He will let the fires loose and the world will be destroyed. He is not far off: He is even at the door." How can ye sin against One who is so close at hand? The apostle says, "What manner of persons ought ye to be?" Remember he was talking to saints, and he teaches us that even saints ought to be more saintly than they are. We have not attained to what we ought to be, and I may say to the best child of God here this morning, "There is a yet beyond." And then he goes on to specify two branches of holy life. "In all holy conversation," that is to say, all holy behaviour towards men; "and godliness," that is, all pious dealing towards God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

On the dissolution of the world :—I. CONTEMPLATE THE SUPREME BEING DIRECTING THE DISSOLUTION, AS HE DIRECTED THE ORIGINAL FORMATION, OF THE WORLD. II. Let us contemplate THE DISSOLUTION OF THE WORLD AS THE END OF ALL HUMAN GLORY. This earth has been the theatre of many a great spectacle, and many a high achievement. III. CONTEMPLATE THE SOUL OF MAN AS REMAINING UNHURT IN THE MIDST OF THIS GENERAL DESOLATION, when the whole animal creation perishes, and the whole frame of nature falls into ruins. Here, then, let us behold what is the true honour and excellence of man. IV. WE CONTEMPLATE THE DISSOLUTION OF THE WORLD AS THE INTRODUCTION TO A GREATER AND NOBLER SYSTEM IN THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD. We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. (*H. Blair, D.D.*)

Man's external universe as awaiting a tremendous crisis :—There is a spiritual conflagration now going on. Christ came "to send fire on the earth." His word like a fire consumes the false and the corrupt. But the conflagration in the text is a material one. I. THAT THE CHARACTER OF THIS CRISIS WILL BE VERY TERRIBLE. 1. The agent by which it will be accomplished, "fire," is terrible. Fire, when not in its latent but active state, is the most terrible force in the world. There is agony in its touch. Forms the most beautiful it turns to ashes. Water, which destroyed the old world, is in some of its forms a terrible power, but life can subsist in it. You can touch it without pain, you can float on its surface, you can construct a vessel to bear you over its surging floods and seas. But not so with "fire." No ark will bear you over a fiery deluge. 2. The extensiveness of its scene makes it terrible. "The heavens shall pass away." "The earth also and all the works that are therein." 3. The tumult with which it will be attended is terrible. "A great noise." There are some sounds that shake one's very soul with horror. The howl of the wind rising into the tempest, the rumble of the approaching thunderbolt, the wild and dismal roar of the ocean when lashed into fury—these are all sounds more or less of terror. But there are animal sounds still more so. The groans of the dying, the moanings of bereaved love, the shrieks of an agonised heart—these are fearful sounds. What a noise is produced by a little bonfire, what a noise, too, by a little steam from the engine; but what must be the noise of burning forests, and boiling oceans, of falling cities and rocking mountains! This "great noise" will be very terrible. 4. The unexpectedness with which it will come is another element of terror. "It will come as a thief in the night." It will not come as a thief in some respects. (1) A thief comes without warning. (2) A thief has no right to come. (3) A thief may be resisted. There is a possibility of turning him back; but not so with this crisis. It must come.

II. THAT THE APPROACH OF THIS CRISIS IS VERY CERTAIN. 1. It is certain that there

is a point in the future that will terminate men's present connection with this earth. 2. There is conclusive evidence that this period will be attended with a conflagration. III. THAT THE PROSPECT OF THIS CRISIS SHOULD EXERT ON MANKIND A HALLOWING INFLUENCE. The apostle states two effects which the prospect ought to produce upon us—1. Practical holiness in every part of our life—"Holy conversation and godliness." If all our material interests are thus to pass away, with what earnestness ought we to cultivate those principles of character, those dispositions of mind, and those habits of life which will abide for ever? 2. An earnest longing of the soul for the future. "Looking for and hasting," &c. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Elements that will enhance the final conflagration*:—Since the noblest attribute of water is its blandness, who would be prepared to find that, chemically speaking, it is remarkable for its fiery composition? When its two constituents are burned in the oxy-hydrogen blowpipe, they produce a flame of extraordinary ferocity. Such is the violence with which they combine that it is necessary to keep them from mingling, except in small quantities, unless they are just at the point of ignition. Dr. Clarke placed a brick screen between himself and the dangerous gases when he first experimented on their power, but was nearly killed by an explosion. Perhaps, when the world and all the works that are therein shall be burned up, the ocean may really be the magazine from which fuel may be drawn to support the great conflagration. But let this be as it may in God's good counsel, is it not a startling thought that water, the uncompromising adversary of fire, should be compounded of two elements whose conjunction is accompanied by a passionate burst of flame and a terrible eruption of caloric? (*Scientific Illustrations.*)

Vers. 11-18. **Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved.**—*Immortality and science*:—It is a singular fact that these words have far more probability of truth than they had a generation ago. Then, the stability of the physical universe was held to be a settled fact of science; it is not so regarded now. If this world and the universe of worlds are to undergo at times such catastrophes as science and Scripture indicate, even to possible destruction, where shall immortal man abide? Physical science chiefly touches human destiny at two points of what is technically known as the principle of continuity; namely, the resolution of thought and feeling into molecular changes, and the development of man from preceding lower orders of life. The principle is thought to militate against immortality, as it implies that all the potency of life is within matter, and that all mental and moral activities are but the operation of organised matter. Under this hypothesis thought and feeling are resolved into the whirl of molecules and the formation and destruction of tissue, a wholly material process, necessary in its character and admitting of no permanent personality. To find anything outside of this all-comprehending law of which immortality can be predicated, anything that survives when the bond breaks that holds the whirling atoms together, is an impossibility under this conception. On the contrary, its analogies seem to point to an opposite result. It is not strange that the dreariness of such conclusions repels the mind towards some better hope, and that physicists are working other veins of truth if for no other end than to escape the horror of desolation their own triumphs have compelled them to face. Mr. Fiske says: "There is little that is even intellectually satisfying in the awful picture which science shows us of giant worlds concentrating out of nebulous vapour, developing with prodigious waste of energy into theatres of all that is grand and sacred in spiritual endeavour, clashing and exploding again into dead vapour balls, only to renew the same toilsome process without end—a senseless bubble-play of Titan forces, with life, love, and aspiration brought forth only to be extinguished." Such sentiments characterise the ablest physicists of the age. We reach at last either nothingness, or a cinder, or a ceaseless clash and repulsion of vapour-balls called worlds, with possible moments of life amidst vast cycles of lifeless ages. We reach the end of a road, but find nothing to tell us why it exists. The question forces itself upon us, if by looking in other directions we cannot reverse this process and find some worthy end of creation, something instead of nothing, the play of mind instead of the whirl of molecules, life instead of death. The recent verdict of science as to the fate of the material universe drives us with irresistible force to belief in an unseen, spiritual world—not the belief of religious faith, but of cold, hard reason. The other main point at which physical science touches human destiny is in connection with that part of the doctrine of physical evolution which holds that all forms of life are developed from preceding forms under the impulse of some unknown force—a theory not yet

exactly defined, and far from being fully proved. Take the extremest form of evolution—matter having all the potency of life within itself—it does not necessarily exclude future existence. If matter can attain to mind that longs for immortality, may not its potentiality be able to achieve it? If it can develop the conception, may it not be able to develop the fact? If the question still recurs, at what point in the process of evolution, granting its truth for the moment, the principle of immortality is inserted, or gets possession?—a question of great pungency under the principle of continuity, we answer it by instancing an analogy. At what point of its growth does a plant acquire the power of self-perpetuation? As a shoot it utterly perishes if cut down; the lusty after-growth of stem and branches also withers into nothingness; the flower is not “a self-reviving thing of power”; but the flower, gathering light and dew into its glowing bosom, intermingles with them its own life essence and so bears a seed around which it folds its faded petals as a shroud, and falls into the dust, no longer to perish, but to live again. This is more than illustration, it is an argument. A living thing under the law of development comes to have a power of self-perpetuation that it did not have at first; why should it not be so with the life that has culminated in man? He is the flower of life, and in his heart alone may there be found the seed of eternal existence. But this phase of the subject is unsatisfactory; it is not necessary to consider it under these suppositions, and we turn to another. We want not mere continuance, but some solid ground for belief in personality after death. Evolution cannot impair the fact of personality here or hereafter, simply because man transcends nature, which is the field of evolution. Man may comprise all that has gone before him in nature, but he is not summed up by it. As the grand proof of this, we adduce the fact of the moral nature with its prime characteristic of freedom. Mr. Darwin himself admits that “free-will is a mystery insoluble to the naturalist.” Necessity, which is the equivalent of law, never could evolve freedom. But choice, or freedom, is the constituting characteristic of man, upon which is built the whole fabric of his life and moral nature. It makes him a person; it is the basis of his history. It puts him above the order and on-going of nature. Professor Tyndall says that the chasm between brain-action and consciousness is impassable, that “here is a rock upon which materialism must split whenever it pretends to be a complete philosophy of the human mind.” The admission is valuable, not merely because of its origin, but for its impregnable truth. With such a chasm between the two parts of man’s nature—molecular processes and perpetual flux on one side, and conscious identity, moral sense, and freedom on the other side—we need not feel troubled at anything physical evolution may assert of man: it simply cannot touch him. We may now build our argument as to his destiny, unhindered by any clamour that may reach us from the other side of this chasm—a chasm that science itself recognises in our composite nature. But other difficulties may arise, such as the thought that this sense of personal identity may be temporary, that as our life was drawn out into separateness from the great ocean of being, so, having some cycle within itself, it will sink back into it, as a star rises and sets. Age and infancy are very like, especially when each is normal; sleep and unconsciousness mark both. As there is no identity before infancy, is there any after age? The fact that, notwithstanding the extreme plausibility of this familiar analogy, the human mind has never accepted the suggestion, has great significance; it has instinctively felt that this resemblance does not indicate a reality. Descartes argued: “I think, therefore I am.” Had he continued, I am, therefore I shall continue to be, he would have uttered as cogent logic. Granted the consciousness of personality, and it is impossible to conceive of non-existence. If self is a unit, and not a conglomerate of atoms, how is it to be got out of existence? But it may be said, if there is another life, there must be another world. Where is it? Of what composed? If it is within the limits, or under the laws of matter, it can have no endurance. The soul must have a sphere like itself, permanent, unfluctuating. Surely if philosophy may create a universe in which to float the worlds, and convey those quiverings of burning suns that we call heat and light, it will not withhold a fit sphere for the soul when it breaks away from the bonds of matter. We base our proof, however, not on mere analogy, but on the simple ground that the nature of the soul demands a proper and answering sphere, as wings demand air, and fins water. Otherwise, creation is without order and coherence. Were we to search for this sphere of the soul, we would not look for it in any refinement of matter, nor in any orb beyond the “flaming walls of the world,” but rather in an order over against this visible order, as mind stands over against the body. If, however, it be said that the mind must always have a body,

or something like it, to hold it up, a *sub-sto*—a something like quicksilver upon a mirror, to take up and turn back its operations, something to sustain reaction and perhaps necessary to yield consciousness—we may follow a hint dropped by science in its latest suggestions. Physicists of the highest rank hold to the existence of a pure or non-atomic fluid filling all space, in which the worlds swim, a sort of first thing to which atomic matter is a second thing. But while science thus acknowledges a non-atomic fluid filling the inter-stellar spaces as a basis upon which the universe is a cosmos, or a united whole, it cannot impugn the analogy of a non-atomic soul fluid, or ether, as the basis or body upholding the mind, if we care to claim it. As we can imagine all the worlds from “Blue-eyed Lyra’s topmost star” to the smallest asteroid, swept together into some far-off corner of space—a not improbable result—and leave it clear of atomic matter yet filled with ether ready to float and unite another universe, so the material atomic body may be swept away and gathered to its original dust, leaving the immaterial body intact, a basis for the mind and its action as it had been before. Science and Revelation here draw very near to each other, science demanding a non-atomic substance as the only possible basis of conscious identity, and Revelation asserting “there is a spiritual body,” and “God giveth it a body even as it pleased Him.” (T. T. Munger, D.D.)

Disturbances in nature an argument for holy living:—Nothing preaches to us such a sermon of the vanity of man, his works, his ambition, his art, his fashion, his pleasures, his proud over-weening science, as the instability of earth and of its final dissolution. But these extraordinary movements of Nature have for us a vastly higher argument than this. 1. In these terrific convulsions of the natural world there are found motives of unusual moment for highest, holy living. The force of this argument will perhaps be most felt when we consider, first, the vital relation which exists between this dissolution of nature and the sin of man. The fatal effects of sin were not limited to the boundaries of human nature, but they reach out into all the boundaries of creation, everywhere bringing blight and derangement. The imperfect and abnormal growths in tree and plant; the pains, diseases, death, which riot among these mute, inanimate things; the distempers and sorrows of the inferior animals; the drear waste of deserts, the lawless regions of ice, the fierce and fitful agitations in nature, the internal fires and ferments, ocean tempests and distractions, are palpable symptoms of organic difficulty and incurable sickness throughout the whole natural world. Ought we not to find in this exhibition of nature’s unrest and discord an irresistible argument for holiness of life? How can we delay to forsake that against which nature from the first rebels, against whose influence the very earth protests in her volcanic thunders and her profound shudderings. 2. Again we find an argument for holy living when we consider the vital relation which exists between this dissolution of nature and the restoration of man. Dissolution is not annihilation, it is simply transformation. These are not the death-pangs, but the birth-throes of nature. They clearly foretell a new creation, in which all that so terribly blights and mars the present one shall be absent. Does not the thought of all this come at last to press home upon us as with a tremendous argument to live in all godliness of life? No man of impure habits or misshapen character and deformed repulsive life shall range through that fair region, for there the river of life flows pure from the eternal throne, and instead of the thorn there is the fir tree, and instead of the brier there is the myrtle tree. (G. B. Spalding, LL.D.)

The dissolution of the world:—I. THE CERTAINTY OF THE DISSOLUTION OF THE WORLD. That all these things shall be dissolved is a doctrine expressly delivered in Scripture, and by many impressive allusions brought home to the human heart. The day no sooner dawns and gains its meridian splendour than it begins to decline and ends in night. Spring no sooner introduces the bloom of summer than autumn assumes its reign, and then the devastations of winter desolate all the beauties of the year. Around us all things continually change, and life itself is ever passing away; grey hair and the faded look soon remind us that old age is at hand. Nothing is stable on earth. Cities, states, and empires have their period set. The labours of men perish; the monuments of art moulder into dust; even the works of nature wax old and decay. The world was created for the pleasure of God; and, when its destined course is fulfilled, He commands its destruction. He saw it meet that when the probationary course of the generations of men was finished, their present habitation should pass away. Of the seasonableness of that period He alone can judge. But amidst this great revolution of nature our comfort is that it is a revolution conducted by Him, the measures of whose government are all founded on goodness. Over the shock

of the elements and the wreck of nature eternal wisdom presides. It is the day of the Lord, and from the terrors His faithful subjects shall have nothing to dread.

II. THE SUDDEN AND UNEXPECTED COMING OF THIS GREAT EVENT. How miserable they whom it shall overtake in the midst of dark conspiracies, criminal deeds, or profligate pleasures! III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DISSOLUTION OF THE WORLD TO MAN. IV. THE INFLUENCE WHICH THE DISSOLUTION OF ALL THINGS OUGHT TO PRODUCE UPON OUR LIVES. It ought to produce a seriousness of thought, at all times, upon the mind. (*D. Malcolm, LL.D.*) *The end of all things*:—We think it quite unnecessary to travel into the question whether these words mark an annihilation of matter, or only its purification preparatory to its re-appearance in some better form; it is sufficient for our purpose that the effect shall be the same as if the whole were taken down, and star after star and system after system departed from the vast fields of 'space.

I. There are two ways in which the assertion as to the dissolution of all material things may be considered and applied; we may speak of them as to be dissolved, either as they are in themselves, or as they are possessed by us. 1. And first as to the fact, literally taken, that "all these things shall be dissolved." We must pause to note the sublimity and augustness of the fact that the Almighty is to remain unchanged and unchangeable, whilst the very heavens and suns and stars are dim with age. We find His eternity before the series commenced, and we find it when the series shall have passed. Who amongst us does not feel rebuked by the truth now presented to his attention, if indeed he be living in the preference of the objects of sight? Man of 'pleasure! go on delighting thyself with things which gratify the senses; man of learning! continue to neglect "the wisdom which is from above"; man of avarice! persist in digging for gold, and consume thy days and nights in heaping up riches; man of ambition! still toil for distinction, and spare no sacrifice which may gain the honour of this world. But now, all ye worshippers of visible things, that immortal yourselves ye choose for your portion what is infinite and perishable. Appointed yourselves to an endless duration, ye place your happiness in objects that are to last for a time and then wholly disappear. "All," yea "all these things shall be dissolved." 2. But we observed to you that there was another sense in which this declaration might be taken—regard being had to the shortness of our own lives, rather than finite duration of all visible things. Even if there were never to come an appointed change over the visible universe, if the sun were never to be extinguished nor the earth consumed, ye cannot deny that so far as ye yourselves are concerned "all these things" would have to "be dissolved." We will not argue with the sensualist in the midst of the fascinating objects wherein he delights; we will not argue with the miser whilst the gold glitters and sparkles before him; we will not argue with the philosopher as the broad arch of the heavens fixes his study; but we will argue with them amidst the graves of a churchyard, and our reasoning shall be its inhabitants of all ages and all ranks. We need not continue our progress through the melancholy spot; but will any of you go away from the churchyard unimpressed with the feeling that all created good can be enjoyed but for a short time, and therefore that it is not the good which should engage the affections of creatures appointed for immortality? II. But let us endeavour to place before you this inference in a somewhat clearer point of view. The apostle argues that forasmuch as all visible things are to "be dissolved" they ought not to engage our affections; in other words, he argues from the transitoriness of all that earth can give to the folly of making it our chief good; and we wish to prove to you that the argument is in every way sound and logical. You must admit in the general that the worth or the value of a possession depends in great measure on the length of time for which it is to be enjoyed. The objects of human pursuit are for the most part precious in men's eyes in proportion to their probable duration, and you take the most effectual way of depreciating them by proving them transitory in respect to themselves, or transitory in respect to their possessor. And if this be true, there ought to be needed nothing but an actual consciousness of the shortness and uncertainty of life, in order to our estimating at their true worth the riches and honours and pleasures of the world. It would cause the gold that ye covet to look dim, and the honours that ye envy to fade in your estimation, and the knowledge for which ye toil to seem of little worth, and the pleasures which ye crave to appear to you insipid, were ye indeed in the habit of expecting your decease, and were ye really to count yourselves "strangers and pilgrims upon earth." It is only because there is no such feeling, and practically no such computation that ye are yet so fascinated and engrossed with what the world can bestow

on its votaries. III. If there be one effect which more than another this consideration of the dissolution of all visible things is adapted to produce, it is a willingness "to do good and to communicate." Shall we, if indeed it be only for a brief time that we can have possession of earthly things—shall we either selfishly hoard them or squander them on our own gratification, when we may "make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness," and secure, by our acting as stewards rather than proprietors, unfading riches in that day when the earth and heavens shall flee from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) **What manner of persons ought ye to be.**—*Things and persons, here and hereafter* :—

I. AN IMPORTANT CLASSIFICATION: "Things" and "persons." 1. Things. We call the visible universe the great system of things. We need sometimes to remember that they are things only. The uplifted mountains which awe us with their sublimity are simply things. The animal and vegetable creations belong to the same category. There are endless varieties of life, instinct, structure, and form; but all are things. The possessions on which men so much pride themselves, and which attract such consideration from their fellows, are things, and nothing more. Our very bodies, so closely related to ourselves—inseparably united with us for this life—are yet not ourselves. They are but things. Youthfulness, elasticity, and bloom; age, debility, and decay, are not ourselves, nor our friends; they are things only—frail and changing things. 2. Persons. Persons are endowed with intelligence and will; they discern both right and wrong; they love and loathe. What a tremendous prerogative, to be a person! What high fellowship! God is a Person. So are angels. Man is the image of his Maker. What a pinnacle of danger is this! What a fall is possible from hence! Things exist for persons, not persons for things. Creation is for God, not God for creation. Nature, like the Sabbath, is for man, not man for nature, not man for the Sabbath. The popular philosophy of our day reverses this order. Its practical teaching is, that persons exist for things. As long as you court men, not for what they are, but for what they have, you put things above persons. In the Divine intention things are subordinate to persons. Business, riches, competence, poverty, are tests of men. They are instruments of education and discipline. None of these things are for themselves; they are ordained for persons—for the development of the mind and conscience and heart of man. The solemn question about every one is—ought to be now—will be hereafter—not, What has the man made by business? but, What has business made the man? The world's creed is—Man exists for business, not business for man. The same perversion is visible in the misuse of the human body. One needs sometimes to ask, Which is the man, the body or the soul? The outer man is designed to be the hourly test of the inner man. The end of the thing is answered, when the intellectual, moral, and spiritual habits of the person inhabiting and using it are expanded and perfected. The husk is shed when stem and leaf appear. II. AN INSTRUCTIVE CONTRAST: "Things" shall be "dissolved"; "persons" must continue "to be." 1. "Things" shall be "dissolved." The globe is but our larger habitation, and, like the body which we occupy, it will not survive its uses. It is not "shall be dissolved." It is, "are being dissolved." Future events are close to the vision of the seer. There is something of the remotest future in every immediate present. "We all do fade as the leaf." The elements of death, to which we must succumb at the last, work in us through childhood, youth, and maturity. So, too, the seeds of the final ruin are sown in the world now, and grow from hour to hour. 2. "Persons" continue to be. "Persons" cannot "dissolve." The consciousness of existence and the sense of responsibility are indestructible. They may be bedimmed, but not extinguished. The intellectual and moral energies of the soul are a fire which may be buried, and, for a while, be constrained to smoulder; but, uncovered to the air, it will break forth once more into dazzling flame. Ah! what changes persons can pass through, and still remain the same! What differences there are between childhood and age, and yet the individual continues as before! A man may so alter his earthly condition that the past may become a dream, and will no more be realised in the present. He may modify and even cancel all the judgments which he ever held, and may reverse all his moral principles and religious hopes. But not even a suspicion will ever cross his mind to confuse the unquestioned conviction that, as a person, he is unaltered and the same. Life and death, the grave and judgment, heaven and hell, immortal activity and endless years will never bedim the individuality of a single soul. Personality in every deathless spirit shall stretch in a line of unwavering light to all eternity. III. A SOLEMN INFERENCE: "Seeing then

that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be." 1. Ye ought to live in the hallowed discharge of all duty towards God and man. (1) "In all holy conversation." The word is plural, "conversations." As usual in our version, conversation means conduct. The plural indicates no particular conduct, but all conduct without exception. (2) "And godliness." The plural occurs here also, "godlinesses." Godliness is all thought, feeling, and conduct which are possible to a man towards God. This is man's action towards heaven, as the former is man's action towards earth. Penitence for sin; faith in Christ, whose blood was shed; the eager pursuit of the Holy Spirit's grace, that godliness with you may be likeness to God; these and all emotions, resolutions, and actions which can cleanse the conscience, pacify the heart, and refine the character, are to distinguish men who recognise that "all things are dissolving," that "persons" are immortal, and may be for ever blessed. 2. In the holy fulfilment of all duty to man, and in the sacred enjoyment of all hallowed privilege from God, ye are to expect the grand consummation, and by the same conduct to hasten it on. (1) "Looking for the coming of the day of God." The word means watching and waiting. It is looking, not doubtfully, but in expectancy. This state of mind is the fruit of "all holy conversations and godlinesses." It cannot be projected by a wish. It can no more be extemporised in the Christian life than can an elaborate Corinthian capital or an ethereal group of sculpture be flung off and finished with a blow. Languishing piety and increasing worldliness will not attain it. If you would reap the harvest, you must sow the seed, and protect the rising growth from all blight and injury. (2) "And hastening the coming of the day of God." "All holy conversations and godlinesses," not only create the state of expectancy, but in the design of the Almighty they bring on the day. The great system of "things" is passing to dissolution, let holy "persons," who will mount above the ruin and live for ever, hasten the blissful hour. (*H. Batchelor.*) *What manner of persons Christian professors ought to be:*—I. ZEALOUS AND IN EARNEST AS TO THE CONCERNS OF RELIGION. "What shall it profit a man, if," &c. II. PENITENT AND BROKEN-HEARTED (*Psa. li. 17.*) III. BELIEVING ON CHRIST AS SET FORTH IN THE WORD (*John vi. 27-29.*) IV. PATIENT AND RESIGNED. Because—1. Their sufferings less than they deserve. 2. Christ suffered more for them. 3. They suffer for their profit. V. BENEVOLENT, CONDESCENDING, AND MERCIFUL. Because Christ has been so to them (*2 Cor. viii. 9; 1 John iii. 16, 17.*) VI. CIRCUMSPECT. Because their danger is great. VII. GRATEFUL. Because all their blessings are undeserved. VIII. HOPEFUL. Because what God has done for them ensures everything. IX. READY FOR THE DISSOLUTION OF THEIR PRESENT STATE, AND THE COMMENCEMENT OF THAT TO COME. Learning hence—1. Christianity, when reduced to practice, is beneficial to others as well as to ourselves. 2. Christianity at a low ebb amongst us. 3. God will help those who are seeking to be what they should be (*Phil. iv. 13.*) 4. The consideration of what we should be teaches us our need of Christ in everything (*Gal. ii. 19, 20.*) (*H. Foster, M.A.*) **Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God.**—*Desire for the day of God:*—I. THE PRIVILEGE AND DUTY ENJOINED. Christians should live and walk as on the borders of eternity, dying daily. This "looking for" the coming of Christ is similar to that of the watchman who waits with earnest solicitude for the dawn of day. It is the look of desire, not of regret; of hope, not of fear; and hence it is added, "hastening to" the coming of the day of God. The Christian ought to do this in two ways—1. In desire. As he approaches the heavenly country he ought to breathe more of its atmosphere; to become more and more engrossed with those foretastes which faith gives him of its blessedness. 2. In preparation. II. THE MEANS BY WHICH WE MAY ATTAIN TO THE EXERCISE OF THIS DUTY AND THE ENJOYMENT OF THIS PRIVILEGE. III. THE BLESSED CONSEQUENCES WHICH WOULD RESULT FROM OUR HABITUALLY LOOKING FOR AND HASTENING UNTO THE COMING OF THE DAY OF GOD. 1. It would make us watchful and circumspect. 2. It would support us under the trials of life. 3. It would make us bold in our Master's cause. 4. It would lead us to form proper notions of worldly things. 5. It would cause our light to shine brighter amongst men. (*W. C. Wilson, M.A.*) *Advancing the Second Advent:*—From the Bibles that have marginal readings it will appear that these words admit of a different construction—"Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God." Practically it comes to the same, whether we hasten to Christ or cause Christ to hasten to us. But the intention is that we should do both—"Hastening unto," and ourselves "hastening," "the coming of the day of God." But now the question presents itself—"Can anything which a man does really 'hasten,' by a single moment, the Second Coming of Christ?" It is

a question which, in fact, loses itself in a far greater one—"Can the acts of the Almighty, which are all pre-determined from all eternity, be affected by anything which His creatures do?" In every age Christians are to be praying and labouring for the extension of the gospel over the whole earth. And so labouring and so praying they may command results. The Church shall grow, souls shall be saved, God shall be glorified. But, nevertheless, all this is only the earnest of a better dispensation—the falling drops which tell that the shower is coming. "But can mortal wishes, or mortal feelings, accelerate that 'day of God'?" Assuredly. God has oftentimes, in His mercy, changed His times for His people's sake. Many things have gone back. Death has retired for fifteen years. The destruction of a city has been postponed indefinitely. Great calamities, threatening a king and his people, have been handed down to the third and fourth generations. But, has anything, with God, gone forward? "In those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except that the Lord had shortened those days." What does that "shortening" mean? That the day of deliverance was put forward "for the elect's sake." Then here is a great and happy event "hastening" on for man! What, then, must we do "to hasten the day of God"? 1. Pray for it. What is the promise, ought always to be, emphatically, the prayer of the dispensation. 2. Let the Church live in love and union, in order that a united Church may attract her Lord to "come." 3. Make great efforts for the evangelisation of the world. 4. Cultivate personal holiness. Will He "come" until His Bride has put on her jewels? And when she is decked, and when she is meet indeed, can He stay away? (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *The day of God*:—Can it be that God has left large tracts of present time to themselves; that He has retreated into some distant future, when He will exert a jurisdiction that does not now belong to Him? Certainly not. This were irreconcilable with any true idea of the Omnipresent and the Eternal. All days most assuredly are His, who is the Lord of time. Each hour, each minute, as it passes by, is passed beneath His eye, or rather within His encompassing presence. I. By "THE DAY OF GOD" IS MEANT A DAY WHICH WILL NOT MERELY BE HIS, AS ALL DAYS ARE HIS, BUT WHICH WILL BE FELT TO BE HIS—a day in which His true relation to time and life, which is, in the case of the majority of men, only dimly perceived, will be unreservedly acknowledged; a day which will belong to Him, because in the thoughts of every reasonable creature of His hand, whether it will be for weal or for woe, He will have no rival. II. "THE DAY OF GOD" MEANS, AGAIN, A TIME WHEN ALL HUMAN THINGS WILL BE RATED AT THEIR TRUE VALUE; when man's life, and all that belongs to it, will be seen in the light of the infinite and the eternal, and therefore in its relative insignificance. "The day of God" thus tacitly implies a contrast; it means that the days of man's earthly life and all that concerns it will have passed away (*Isa. ii. 12-17*). Most men who have lived until middle life have experienced something that will enable them in part to understand this. You have gone on for years without any shock to the even tenour of life. You may have fallen under the empire of nature and the empire of your bodily senses, and everything belonging to this world may have come to be seen in exaggerated proportions, because you have lost sight of a higher. Now, a state of mind like this is abruptly broken in upon by a great trouble, by a loss of income, by a loss of reputation, by the death of a dearly loved relative, by a break-up of your health. He finds that he has made too much of it, both in detail and as a whole, and he wakes up to see that there is another world beyond it, compared with which, at its very best, it is poor and worthless indeed. This is for him a true "day of the Lord"; and in the light of that day he learns this truth, that "all flesh is grass, and all the goodness of man as the flower of the field," and that while "the grass withereth, and the flower fadeth, the Word of our God shall abide for ever." And every such experience in life is a preparation for the awful day, when we shall learn, as never before, the insignificance of all that only belongs to time. III. "THE DAY OF GOD" MEANS THE DAY OF UNIVERSAL JUDGMENT. Certainly God is always judging us. Moment by moment we live beneath His all-seeing eye; He registers each act, each word, each thought, each movement of passion, each trunancy of the will, each struggle by His grace to live for Him, each victory over the craft and subtlety of the devil or man. Yes, He is always on His throne of judgment, but this does not prove that no time is coming when He will judge as never before. The predicted day of judgment will differ from the continuous judgment that always is exercised by the Divine Mind as it gazes upon a moral world in two respects—in its method and in its finality. It will be carried out, that last judgment, by the

Man Christ Jesus in person. And as the last judgment will be administered by a visible judge, by our dear Lord, who was crucified for us, and who rose from the grave, and who ascended into heaven, so it will be final. There will be no appeal, no rehearing, no reversal possible. Every grace responded to, or neglected, will be taken into account. Every thought, word, act, habit, all that has gone to make up our final self—and everything from the cradle to the dying hour, most assuredly, contributes something—all will be taken fully, unerringly into the reckoning. And thus, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is called an "Eternal Judgment," meaning a judgment from which there is no appeal, in the new and everlasting age. We cannot picture to ourselves this judgment; but that does not prove that it will not take place. (*Canon Liddon.*) *The influence of belief in the coming of the day of God.*—I. The expectation of a coming day of God affects Christian thought, in the first place, by REMINDING US OF WHAT HUMAN LIFE REALLY IS AND MEANS. Springing, as it does, out of the very idea of duty, being, as it is, the inseparable concomitant of a reasoned conception of right and wrong as the law planted within us by some moral being, who must have the will and the power to enforce it, the expectation of a coming judgment at once raises man into his true place as the first of created beings here below; and yet, withal, it keeps him there. In short, the knowledge that we have to be judged at once guarantees our dignity and defines our subordination. It is only as moral beings having free-will that we are capable of undergoing judgment at all; and, as having to undergo it, we are necessarily and infinitely below Him whose right and whose duty it is to judge us. II. A second way in which the expectation of the coming of the day of God powerfully affects Christian thought is THAT WHICH ILLUMINATES THE SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY. The sense of responsibility is as wide as the moral sense of man; that is to say, it is as wide as the human race. This primal idea, rooted in our first instinctive perceptions of moral truth, that we are responsible beings, necessarily implies that some one exists to whom this responsibility is due. Who is it? We look around us, and we see, most of us, some fellow-creatures to whom we have to answer for our conduct. The child knows that he must answer for it to his parents—to his mother in early, to his father in later years. The schoolboy thinks of his master, the clerk of his employer, the soldier of his commanding officer. As we get higher in the scale of society, it may seem at a distance that there are personages so exalted as to be subject to no human masters to whom their responsibility is due; but in reality it is quite otherwise. Those who govern us are answerable to what is called public opinion for their conduct of public affairs. That is to say, they have to give an account, not to one, but to many millions of their countrymen. But if conscience speaks to us at all with clearness and honesty, it tells every one of us one thing about such responsibilities we owe to our fellow-creatures, and that is that such responsibility covers only a very small part indeed of our actual conduct. A great deal goes on in every life which is either right or wrong, yet for which a man feels in no way accountable to any human critic or authority whatever. Is he, therefore, not accountable for such acts and words as do not fall within human jurisdiction? And this knowledge obliges us to look often and beyond this human world to One to whom our responsibility is really due. As He only can take account of that which is withdrawn from the eyes of our fellow-men, so He assuredly does take account of all in which others may have a right to do so. We are responsible to God—yes, all who seriously believe that He exists as the moral Governor of this world which He has made must admit this responsibility. But, then, the question arises: When is the account to be rendered? That God keeps His eye upon it day by day in the case of every one of us is as certain as that He exists. It is faith in a future judgment which makes the sense of responsibility living and operative, by making the prospect of a real reckoning definite and concrete. III. Belief in a coming day of God AFFECTS OUR WHOLE VIEW OF HUMAN HISTORY AND OF HUMAN LIFE. When we take up a volume of ancient history, or of the history of our own country, of what does it mainly consist? It describes royal and noble personages succeeding one another—their birth, their training, their coronations, their deaths. It describes the varying fortunes of multitudes of human beings associated together as what is called a nation, their privations, their conquests, their gradual improvement, the crimes for which they are collectively responsible. In short, we read history too often as though it told us all that was to be said about man, as though when man had done with this earthly life there was really an end. Ah! we forget the truth which makes history so inexpressibly pathetic, that all is not really over

with those whom it describes, that they have only ceased to be visible, that the most important part of their career yet awaits them, viz., the account they have to give of it. Our Saxon forefathers, and the Britons whom they so ruthlessly exterminated, and Alfred, and Edward the Confessor, and William the Conqueror, and Rufus, and Cœur de Lion, and John, and the great Plantagenets, the Edwards and the Henrys, and Elizabeth, and Mary Stuart, and Charles, and Cromwell, and the Georges, and the Pretenders, and the great statesmen who fill the canvas of the first half of this century, and the men of the first Revolution, and the Napoleons, down to those who left us but yesterday—depend upon it they are no mere names; they are still living beings; and this is the fact, the pathetic fact, common to all of them, that they are waiting for the final judgment, and they already know enough to know what it will mean to each one of themselves. This view of history, considered in the light of a coming day of judgment, extends itself at once and inevitably to human life in our own day and immediately around us. Our first and, so to call it, our natural view of human beings around us takes note of their positions in this world, and of the points wherein they differ from or resemble ourselves. We think of them as better or worse off, as more or less educated, as friendly or as distant acquaintances, as belonging to a past or to a younger generation, or to our own, as standing in this or in that relation to the public life of the country, as belonging to this or to that profession, as occupying this or that or a third position in the social scale; but once let us have steadily thought out the truth that, like ourselves, every human being is certainly on his trial and his judgment before Him, and how insignificant do all those considerations about our fellow-creatures appear in the light of this tremendous fact! Yes, those possessors of vast influence, which they use, if at all, for selfish ends; those owners of accumulated wealth, which they spend so largely, if not altogether, upon themselves; those men of cultivated minds, who regard cultivation as an end in itself, and without a thought of what it may be made to do for others or for the glory of God; yes, the consideration that all, all will be judged, and that every hour that passes brings them nearer to the judgment, makes us think of human life around us in quite a new light. (*Ibid.*) *The day of God*:—I. THE SOLEMN EVENT WE SHOULD ANTICIPATE. "The day of God, wherein," &c. 1. The day of His glory. 2. The day of His power. 3. The day of His wrath. II. THE PRACTICAL INFLUENCE IT SHOULD PRODUCE. "Looking for and hasting unto," &c. 1. It should duly interest our minds. 2. It should duly influence our conduct. "Looking for and hasting unto the day of God" comprehends earnest desire and diligent preparation. III. THE IMPORTANT REFLECTIONS IT SHOULD SUGGEST. 1. The awful nature and effects of sin. 2. The emptiness and vanity of the world. 3. The necessity of seeking an interest in Christ. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*)

Vers. 13, 14. **Look for new heavens and a new earth.**—*New heavens and new earth*:—A question here arises whether the new heavens and new earth will be created out of the ruins of the old. The idea of the annihilation of so many immense and glorious bodies, organised with inimitable skill, is gloomy and forbidding. It ought not to be believed without the most decisive proof. On the other hand, it is a most animated thought that this visible creation which sin has marred will be restored by our Jesus. 1. The words which are employed to express the destruction of the world do not necessarily imply annihilation. The figures taken from the wearing out of a garment and from the vanishing of smoke do neither of them import the destruction of substance. For the substance of a garment when it moulders away, and of smoke when it vanishes, is not annihilated; only the form is changed. Is it said that the world shall perish? The same word is used to express the ancient destruction of the world by the flood. Is it said that the world shall have an end and be no more? This may be understood only of the present organisation of the visible system. The natural power of fire is not to annihilate, but only to dissolve the composition and change the form of substances. 2. Our text and several similar passages compel me to believe that new material heavens and a new material earth will be raised up to supply the place of those which the conflagration shall have destroyed. This being allowed, it seems more natural to suppose that the old materials will be employed than that they will be annihilated and new ones created in their stead. We know that the glorified bodies of the saints will be formed of materials which now exist on the earth, and that even the glorious body of Christ is formed of no other. 3. The new heavens and new earth seem eminently represented as a part of the vast plan of

restoration which Christ undertook to accomplish. But it is not the part of Christ in this work to create out of nothing, but only to renew. 4. The time of Christ's advent to judgment is called "the times of restitution of all things." 5. But the passage on which the advocates for renovation chiefly rely remains yet to be produced (Romans viii.). If, then, by "the creature" is meant "every creature" or "the whole creation," how is the whole creation to "be delivered," in the resurrection, "from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God?" Not by annihilation, but by a glorious renovation. But why, if the heavenly bodies are to be continued in existence, should they be dissolved by fire, since they are not, as far as we know, defiled, as our earth is, by sin? One end of their dissolution may be that by a different composition of their materials they may be rendered more pure and glorious. Another end may be to make a memorable display of God's abhorrence of everything which has had the most distant connection with sin. They have ministered to apostate man and lighted him in his course of rebellion. Lift up your heads, ye people of God, and sing, for your redemption draweth nigh. What though you are poor in this world, the new heavens and new earth will be all your own. Ye who must now walk on the earth lame and halt, while the world rattle by you in their splendid equipages, shall shortly make easy excursions from star to star, and from world to world. (*E. Griffin, D.D.*)

*The new creation:—*I. REFLECT ON THE GREAT CREATION AND THE PURPOSE OF GOD IN MAKING THE INFINITY OF WORLDS. That there is no adequate purpose it would be absurd, indeed almost blasphemous, to suppose. The tornado may work blindly as it tears down the forest trees in its fury; but how unworthy would be such blind, aimless work on the part of the Infinite God! A giant may put forth his portentous strength in mere vain display; but could God exert such stupendous energy in order that some fraction of its wonder might dazzle the few beholders in one world? Surely a devout faith, as well as a reasoning intelligence, must conclude that the purpose which alone explains the creation and arrangement of our earth is that it should be the home of life, and of beings able to apprehend God's will, is the actuating purpose of all the rest of the creation. II. BUT IN THIS WORLD, AT LEAST, THERE HAS BEEN FAILURE. In man's inmost nature there has been a collapse. High faith and loyalty, integrity and pureness, persistent endeavour for the right—all this has broken down, and man's moral and spiritual nature is in ruins. But into the midst of the ruin of human hope there has come the all-renewing power of a great redemption. III. HOW BOUNDLESS IS THE PROSPECT OPENED OUT TO MAN BY THIS NEW HOPE! What infinite possibility and promise of the development and application of human faculty! what a future for the researches of science and the plastic skill of art! and what sacred joy in the perfected and permanent relationships of human society! IV. OUR ATTENTION IS DIRECTED TO THE REGNANT PRINCIPLE OF THE NEW UNIVERSE. Where vice reigns all is hell; where vice and virtue are in conflict life is mingled joy and pain; but where triumphant righteousness makes its abiding home there must be health without any lurking incipency of sickness, joy without threat of grief, love without peril of parting, and life without possibility of death. "Wherein dwelleth righteousness"—as the very coherence of the texture of the new world, and the pervasive and penetrating energy of the new life. And for this ultimate triumph of righteousness God is our guarantee. (*T. F. Lockyer, B.A.*)

*A new heaven and a new earth:—*I. THE EVENTS LOOKED FOR. 1. First, the destruction of the world that now is. Not only the heavens, but "the elements." Light, heat, air, moisture—all these are to come under the action of the final fire. Then "the earth," where God planted Eden of old, and whose virgin soil was trodden by sinless humanity; earth, where are Bethlehem, Gethsemane, and Calvary, with all their holy memories of suffering and of rejoicing and of triumph. Then not only earth, but the things that are on the earth; all that human art and human labour and human skill may have added to the earth or reconstructed out of material things. Then the means—fire. Fire is the mightiest force with which we are acquainted in the material world. Science has taught us that no material has been found as yet which fire cannot melt. And fire is not only the mightiest force, but it is the most universally diffused. We find it everywhere—in the vegetable, in the animal, and in the mineral. There is fire in the tree which grows, and hence the savage will take two sticks, and, rubbing them briskly together, he produces a spark and flame. Though there is much of moisture in the wood, nevertheless he can produce fire from it. There is fire in the very stone on which you tread. Hence the sparks that you see struck forth beneath the prancing steed, or

sometimes occasioned by your own sharp footsteps. There is fire in the water. If there were not it would all be frozen. Fire enters into the constitution of our own body. There is heat in the skin and in the flesh, in the blood and in the bone, and in the sinew; and it causes life to kindle from the sole of the foot to the very crown of the head. This earth of ours was once a sea of molten lava. It is now cooled at the surface, and this constitutes the crust of the globe; but if you were only to dig down seven miles through that crust, you would still come upon the ocean of liquid lava. And God has only to let loose this treasure of fire from its secret place, and then it will rush with destructive fury from world to world and from system to system. No wall can be constructed as a barrier to check its progress. Then you will observe another thing—the manner. “Pass away with a great noise.” The manifestations of God to man are sometimes calm and peaceful and assuring. At other times His manifestations are accompanied with things that awaken terror or create alarm. So it was in connection with Sinai. Then this great crisis is designated the day of the Lord—the day of the Lord Jesus. Why is it designated the day of Christ? (1) It will be the day of the Lord Jesus, because the transactions of the day will be all based upon the mediatorial work of Christ. (2) Because it will be the day for the vindication of Christ against all the falsehoods and the prejudices and the wrong judgments which men have entertained concerning Christ. (3) Then it is the day of the Lord as distinguished from man’s day. It is your day now; and I say to young men it is your day now to do as you please—to rebel against God. But it will be the Lord’s day when the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved. 2. Next, the reconstruction of a new earth out of the material of the old. The renewal of the earth and the heaven will be a something that will take place after the destruction of the old earth and the old heaven. Now we must bear in mind that in the material world nothing is annihilated. He will want all the gold to pave the highways of the New Jerusalem. He will want the diamonds and the precious stones to gem the battlements of the city of the saints. He will put them all into one seething cauldron and melt and purify and purge them, and make them fit material for the erection of the future home of the saints. “We look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.” The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just. They shall inherit the earth, and the wicked shall not have a part in it at all. But is this old earth to be cursed for ever? No. Jesus Christ’s work as Redeemer would not be complete. After He has saved man, He will have to effect the restitution of things as well as of men. He will have to extract the curse from the heart of the earth, and so silence the cry of a groaning creation. And let me say that this new heaven and new earth, in its purified form, will be far superior to our old home. What do we find here? Beasts of prey are prowling the deserts. In the new heavens and the new earth “no lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon.” In the old earth venomous vipers and poisonous reptiles are crawling, and sometimes they inflict pain, and even death, upon our fellow-men. But in the new heavens and the new earth nothing that hurts and destroys shall ever be seen in all God’s holy mountain. In this old earth what do I find? The air is laden with pestilence and desolation and death. But in the new heavens and the new earth the atmosphere shall be purged of all deleterious influences, and the inhabitants shall never say “I am sick.” Here time lays its destroying hand upon the mightiest monuments that man has ever reared. But in the new heavens and new earth “neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and thieves do not break through and steal.” Immortality is possessed by everything there. The inheritance is “incorruptible and undefiled, and it fadeth not away.” In the new heavens and in the new earth there shall be no more sea, no element of destruction there. And then I look at the heavens above me, so magnificent on a bright starry night; but I cannot help being reminded of the alternations of heat and cold, of the insufferable heat of summer and the greater heat endured in other portions of the world than ours, and of the insufferable cold of winter. But in the new heavens and the new earth there will be no such alternations. There is no need of the sun or of the moon, but the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the light thereof. In this old earth the hearts of righteous ones are wounded and pierced to the very quick by the wickedness of those around them. But in the new heavens and in the new earth there “dwelleth righteousness.” There will be no sorrow or suffering through the wickedness of men rebelling against the Lord most high. II. WHAT SHOULD BE OUR ATTITUDE WITH THESE THINGS BEFORE US? “Be diligent”—that is, “Do your best, that ye may be found of Him in peace.” Oh! is it possible to be at peace when the world

is in a blaze? Yes, thank God, it is possible to be at peace then. But how are we to be at peace under such conditions? "Found of Him without spot and blameless"—"without spot" inwardly; "blameless" outwardly. A pure heart and a pure life. There will be nothing to fear then. Suppose two men standing side by side at that day gazing upon the upheaving of all things. The one man has been a millionaire commanding his broad acres and his ample revenue, but has died without Christ. The other man has died in the poor-house, and gone to heaven by faith from his humble abode. The two stand side by side. Ah, which of the two would you prefer to be, then? The one loses all. The fire burns all he ever possessed. The other loses nothing. The flames cannot touch his possessions. He has a pure heart, a clear conscience, a spirit delivered from sin; and the fires cannot touch them. (*Richard Roberts.*) *The final heaven*:—There was but one word between chaos and creation—there need be but one between the sustentation and the dissolution of the universal frame. And we are looking for these things! To this promise we hope to come! It is the goal of consummated bliss! I. LET US ENDEAVOUR FROM THIS DESCRIPTION TO SUGGEST TO OUR MINDS THE TRUE NATURE OF THAT PERFECT FELICITY AND SATISFACTION WHICH ARE RESERVED FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD. 1. The scene we occupy was evidently intended for a great system of life. There is scarcely spot or element in which it may not be found. It is a great contrivance for all the forms and kinds of existence. It would be unmeaning, running to waste, but for this intention. Air, land, water are crowded with their several tribes. The happiness of every one is consulted, function and habitude agree most perfectly with the province and support provided for them, and none who survey and reason out the final causes of things can doubt the will of the great Master and Lord of all. Still he who was made the last of all earthly creatures is the greatest: to him they are all tributary and ministering, and God has given him dominion over them. Then, assuredly, when there shall be new heavens and a new earth, man, the capital figure of the present system, shall still be more prominently raised. He shall there need for help no inferior creatures. Their spirit has gone downward to that earth which is no more. But he is not alone. The ministering spirits which ministered to the heirs of salvation during this life shall be his companions amidst these fairer fields. 2. The world in which we dwell, with all its proper appendages of circumambient air and supernal light, is a material fabric. If, therefore, new heavens and a new earth shall be constituted, they must be material and related to space, or the figure does not hold. And everything concerning that abode would seem to confirm it. It has its entrances, its dimensions, its boundaries, that which can be "seen," that which may be "heard." The flesh of the risen saints is seen in those borders. The glorious body of the Eternal Son is the centre of all the beatific attractions and influences. 3. The visible works of God are the means by which intelligent creatures rise in their thoughts to Him and judge of Him. These are the monuments of His existence and natural perfections. Heaven and earth but vary and multiply the perfect demonstration of a First Cause, His skill, His might, and His bounty. When we read, consequently, of "the new heavens and the new earth," we cannot fail to infer that they shall be impressed with the same designations. How shall the depths of those heavens, how shall the ever-spreading horizons of that earth, be "sought out" and interpreted for the praises of Him whose glorious majesty shines forth from their incomparable frame! 4. The community of the saints is now a most pleasing fact: they are one. A new heaven and a new earth shall now embrace their whole multitude. God hath prepared a habitation for them. They are all brought home. 5. While the present state of our sojourn abounds in multitudinous life, while it is chiefly administrative to the life of man, we cannot but be amazed at the contrivance and the fulness of those provisions which give general life, and peculiarly that of man, its greatest possible happiness and freest possible exercise. We, however, boast a life of higher functions and aims. To be spiritually-minded is life and peace. The spirit of life breathes it into our soul. Though the sky and earth cannot affect this new mode of being, this life of faith, yet the passions and concerns of the present do war perpetually with it. But "the new heavens and the new earth" shall as much favour the inward life, the life of the spirit, as these mundane conveniences and laws now sustain our inferior life. 6. If the future condition of happiness and glory which shall be prepared for the redeemed may be thus expressed, we may expect that, notwithstanding the difference between it and "this visible, diurnal sphere," there shall be certain points of resemblance. What are now the marks of

our dwelling? Heavens—earth. How is our eternal abode described? New heavens—new earth. Is not there in the former an analogue to the latter? Is not the second the reflex of the first? Was there not a shadowing out of ideas which shall seem familiar to the saints in that glory? That which is inferior in appetite and instinct is done away. But is there no beauty in form and colour which the eye may behold? Are there no ravishing harmonies for the ear? Everything here may be but rudiment and cypher to be evolved and interpreted in far distant seats of the universe. By a graduated scale we may now rise through an ascending series of progressive changes until we reach the climax of all. 7. But this supposed parallelism, however unequal, between these different scenes of existence, comprehends an exercise of distinct and perfect memory. The “terrible crystal” of the new heavens, the fair paradise of the new earth, must recall the old. 8. The manner in which the present heavens and earth are supplanted by the new declares that a measure of happiness is ensured by the exchange which perfectly corresponds to the solemn revolution. Joy is the invariable fruit of a rightly appreciated Christianity. 9. Nothing more distinctly marks the evil of sin than the variance which is often supposed in Scripture between man and the scenes of his habitation. These are bid to rise up and declare against him. He is represented as alone “coming short of the glory of God.” They are true to their purpose, while he has turned aside from the end for which he was created and endowed. Hence those awful apostrophes with which inanimate objects are invoked, as if even they could but condemn him. They are summoned, like so many witnesses and justices, to denounce his crimes. But “the new heavens and earth” shall environ nothing which can offend. They shall correspond with whatever they embrace. Their pure elements shall only encompass the pure. 10. Since heaven and earth combine all our ideas of the fair and grand, since these complete our present sphere of life and action, the continuance of such machinery in a future state must intimate to us the diversity of its good. Herein is every constituent of our pleasure, whether sensual or intellectual. From above or beneath we derive all our gratifications. There is endless variety. 11. We have no such images of permanence as those works of God concerning which we speak. “For ever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven.” “They shall fear Thee as long as the sun and moon endure.” “The earth abideth for ever.” God suspends the proof of his faithfulness upon these ordinances, upon the covenant of day and night. Yet are we forewarned of their wreck. If, then, these monuments of whatever is durable are themselves to be destroyed, if the azure fade and the globe decay, how certainly may we regard in the new heavens and earth the voucher of a proper immortality! Their sun shall no more go down. Their refulgent tissues shall not decay. They are the perfect signals of a duration which admits no intervals and wants no monitors—which cannot be broken into ages nor counted out by stars! 12. The power of God to protect and bless is not infrequently rested upon His creative achievements. “My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.” “The Lord that made heaven and earth, bless thee out of Zion.” “Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, which made heaven and earth.” The mourner, the oppressed, the persecuted have sought unto Him who had done all these things—His aid and benediction they could not henceforth distrust nor slight. The meek of the earth were safe beneath the care of Him who made it. The new heavens and earth are fashioned by the same omnipotent artificer, the God of truth and of salvation, and in the same manner does He design that they should support the quietness and assurance of His people for ever! He who reared them shall be their God so long as they endure. They are the standard evidence and voucher of what He can and will work on their behalf. II. LET US EXAMINE THE EVIDENCE ON WHICH THIS FIRM EXPECTATION RESTS. To Abraham a covenant was given in which were contained many promises of a more than earthly kind. He had the seal of righteousness by faith. From him was to descend a spiritual seed. We believe in the Lord, and He counteth it to us for righteousness! We take this ancient warrant, which no time can impair nor cancel—a warrant distinct, successive, cumulative—and “according to His promise we look for new heavens and a new earth in which dwelleth righteousness.” Christianity, which brings life and incorruption to light, which is the promise of eternal life, exhibits the true and alone hope of this surpassing condition. We have everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. We depend upon the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began. Promise is a form of Scriptural revelation and encouragement with which we are

familiar. It is an infinite condescension in God thus to bind Himself, and to speak to His servants, "for a great while to come." (*R. W. Hamilton, D.D.*) *New heavens and new earth*:—1. We know historically that earth, that a solid, material earth, may form the dwelling of sinless creatures in full converse and friendship with the Being who made them. Man, at the first, had for his place this world, and at the same time, for his privilege, an unclouded fellowship with God, and for his prospect an immortality which death was neither to intercept nor put an end to. He was terrestrial in respect of condition, and yet celestial in respect both of character and enjoyment. This may serve to rectify an imagination, of which we think that all must be conscious—as if the grossness of materialism was only for those who had degenerated into the grossness of sin. Were our place of everlasting blessedness so purely spiritual as it is commonly imagined, then the soul of man, after, at death, having quitted his body, would quit it conclusively. That mass of materialism with which it is associated upon earth, and which many regard as an incumbrance, would have leave to putrefy in the grave, without being revisited by supernatural power, or raised again out of the inanimate dust into which it had resolved. There will, it is true, be a change of personal constitution between a good man before his death and a good man after his resurrection—not, however, that he will be set free from his body, but that he will be set free from the corrupt principle which is in his body—not that the materialism by which he is now surrounded will be done away, but that the taint of evil by which this materialism is now pervaded will be done away. And this will be his heaven, that he will serve God without a struggle and in a full gale of spiritual delight—because with the full concurrence of all the feelings and all the faculties of his regenerated nature. The great constitutional plague of his nature will no longer trouble him; and there will be the charm of a general affinity between the purity of his heart and the purity of the element he breathes in. But the highest homage that we know of to materialism is that which God manifest in the flesh has rendered to it. That He, the Divinity, should have wrapt His unfathomable essence in one of its coverings; that He should now be throned in universal supremacy, that substantial and embodied humanity should be thus exalted, does this look like the abolition of materialism, after the present system of it is destroyed; or does it not rather prove that, transplanted into another system, it will be preferred to celestial honours, and prolonged in immortality throughout all ages? 2. But though a paradise of sense, it will not be a paradise of sensuality. There will both be heavens and earth, it would appear, in the next great administration—and with this specialty to mark it from the present one, that it will be a heavens and an earth "wherein dwelleth righteousness." Were it the great characteristic of that spirituality which is to obtain in a future heaven, that it was a spirituality of essence then occupying and pervading the place from which materialism had been swept away, we could not, by any possible method, approximate the condition we are in at present to the condition we are to hold everlastingly. But when we are told that materialism is to be kept up, and that the spirituality of our future state lies not in the kind of substance which is to compose its framework, but in the character of those who people it—this puts, if not the fulness of heaven, at least a foretaste of heaven, within our reach. We have not to strain at a thing so impracticable as that of diluting the material economy which is without us—we have only to reform the moral economy that is within us. This will make plain to you how it is that it could be said in the New Testament that the "kingdom of heaven was at hand"—and how, in that book, its place is marked out, not by locally pointing to any quarter, and saying, Lo here, or lo there, but by the simple affirmation that the kingdom of heaven is within you. And hence one great purpose of the incarnation of our Saviour. He came down amongst us in the full perfection of heaven's character, and has made us see that it is a character which may be embodied. We learn from Christ that the heavenly graces are all of them compatible with the wear of an earthly body and the circumstances of an earthly habitation. And had we only the character of heaven, we should not be long of feeling what that is which essentially makes the comfort of heaven. Let us but love the righteousness which He loves, and hate the iniquity which He hateth, and this, of itself, would so soften and attune the mechanism of our moral nature, that in all the movements of it there should be joy. Let the will of God be done here as it is done there, and not only will character and conduct be the same here as there, but they will also resemble each other in the style though not in the degree of their blessedness. And here we may remark that the only possible

conveyance for this new principle into the heart is the gospel of Jesus Christ. (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*) *Man's external universe as assuming a real form*:—I. THAT THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH WILL EMERGE FROM THE RUINS OF THE PRESENT. This is far the most probable for the following reasons—1. Our planet has already undergone changes somewhat analogous. Geology would give us to understand that this globe has passed through numerous changes. 2. The apparent indestructibility of matter. 3. The moral events that have transpired on this earth. 4. The context makes it evident. Lest the reader should fancy that the fire should entirely destroy this beautiful world, it was natural for St. Peter to intimate that a new heaven and a new earth would grow out of it. II. THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH WILL BE THE ABODE OF "RIGHTEOUSNESS." "Wherein dwelleth righteousness." This is its moral glory, this it is that marks it off in glorious contrast from its present character. This world at present is like the house of the old leper, every part defiled. But "righteousness" will dwell in its future state. 1. It will dwell universally. 2. It will dwell supremely. Now, wherever found, it is in a servile state. Right is under the foot of might. 3. It will dwell exclusively. There will be nothing of an opposite character. 4. It will dwell permanently. Its regions will never be invaded, its authority will never be shaken, its glory will never be overshadowed by evil. This indwelling righteousness is its glory. The most bright and majestic objects of nature looked at through a corrupt heart are uninteresting. No one can see God's beauty in the external world who has not moral beauty within; no one can catch the sweet harmonies without who has not the moral harmonies within. The soul is the measure and mirror of man's universe. III. THAT THE NEW HEAVENS AND EARTH ARE OBJECTS OF PROSPECTIVE INTERESTS TO THE GOOD. "We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth." This looking implies two things—1. Sufficient evidence to believe that these new heavens and earth will appear. Looking means expecting—expecting implies reason. 2. A conviction that some advantages will accrue from the appearance. Looking implies desire—desire implies the desirable. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The qualities of the new earth*:—I. THIS EARTH IS PERISHING. All the productions of nature, all the works of art, all the arrangements of policy that regard it, perish; man, its lord and master, is short-lived and perishing. II. THE NATURE OF THE EARTH WHICH IS TO SUCCEED THE PRESENT. 1. The earth beyond the grave is new; by which we are to understand that it is as perfect in its structure and as attractive in its appearance as if it had just come from the hands of its Creator. No inundations have deluged it; no torrents have disfigured it. No lapse of years impairs its beauty, or introduces among its objects anything like ruin. 2. In the earth beyond the grave "dwelleth righteousness"; by which we may understand that it is the habitation of the righteous, and the place where their work of righteousness is rewarded. Conclusion: 1. The illustration of the text shows the value of righteousness. Revolutions shake the thrones of princes; but righteousness is raised on everlasting foundations, and they who have taken their seat there cannot be moved. 2. The doctrine of the text enforces heavenly mindedness. Set thy affections on that world which is lasting as thyself, and which only is capable of yielding thee perfect bliss. 3. The doctrine of the text enforces trust in God. He whose word made and will unmake the world is the only stay for you. 4. The doctrine of the text should awaken devout gratitude to Christ. (*W. Thorburn.*) **Seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent.**—*Wonders in man's future history*:—I. THAT THE WONDERS IN MAN'S FUTURE ARE TRANSCENDENTLY GREAT. "Such things." II. THAT THESE WONDERS ARE ANTICIPATED BY SOME. "Ye look for such things." 1. They are expected for very good reasons. (1) They are certain. (2) We have an interest in them. These are good reasons. 2. They are expected with very different feelings. By some with indifference, by some with dread, by some with rapturous joy. III. THAT THESE WONDERS DEMAND PERSONAL PREPAREDNESS. How shall I become prepared to meet them? The text suggests two things as an answer. 1. Reconciliation with God. "Found of him in peace." 2. Sanctification. "Without spot and blameless." IV. THAT THESE WONDERS DEMAND CHRISTIAN EARNESTNESS. "Be diligent." 1. Think of the greatness of your work. 2. The brevity of your probationary period. (*F. F. Thomas.*) *Christian diligence, with its motives and end*:—I. PERSONS ADDRESSED. "Wherefore, beloved," &c. 1. Beloved of God. That the people of God are beloved by Him, we infer from the titles by which He distinguishes them (*Deut. xxxiii. 12; Neh. xiii. 26; Dan. ix. 23; Mal. iii. 17; Rom. ix. 25*). 2. Beloved of each other. II. EVENTS ANTICIPATED. "Ye look for such things." III. A CHARGE GIVEN. "Be diligent." Diligence is opposed to idleness,

slowness, or inattention. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) "Be diligent"—I. THE CLEAR HOPE WHICH SHOULD FILL OUR FUTURE. "Seeing that ye look for such things." What things? Peter has been drawing a very vivid picture of the end, in two parts, one destructive, the other constructive. Opticians make glasses with three ranges, and write upon a little bar which shifts their eye-pieces, "Theatre," "Field," "Marine." Which of the three is your glass set to? The turn of a button determines its range. You can either look at the things close at hand, or, if you set the eye-piece right, and use the strongest, you can see the stars. Which is it to be? The shorter range shows you possibilities; the longer will show you certainties. The shorter range shows you trifles; the longer, all that you can desire. How many hopes we have outgrown, whether they were fulfilled or disappointed. But we may have one which will ever move before us, and ever draw our desires. The greater vision, if we were only wise enough to bring our lives habitually under its influence, would at once dim and enoble all the near future. II. THE DEFINITE AIM WHICH THIS CLEAR HOPE SHOULD IMPRESS UPON LIFE. If you knew that you were going to emigrate soon, and spend all your life on the other side of the world, in circumstances the outlines of which you knew, you would be a fool if you did not set yourself to get ready for them. The more clearly we see, and the more deeply we feel, that future hope, which is disclosed for us in the words of my text, the more it will prescribe a dominant purpose which will give unity, strength, buoyancy, and blessedness to any life. "Seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent." For what? "That ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless." Every word is weighty here. 1. "That ye may be found." That implies, if not search, at least investigation. It suggests the idea of the discovery of the true condition, character, or standing of a man which may have been hidden or partially obscured before—and now, at last, is brought out clearly. 2. Then, note, "Found in Him," or, "in His sight." Then Christ is the Investigator, and it is before "those pure eyes and perfect judgment" that they have to pass, who shall be admitted into the new heavens and the new earth, "wherein dwelleth righteousness." 3. Then mark what is the character which, discovered on investigation by Jesus Christ, admits there: "without spot and blameless." There must be the entire absence of every blemish, stain, or speck of impurity. "Blameless" is the consequence of "spotless." That which in itself is pure attracts no censure, whether from the Judge or from the assessors and onlookers in His court. In Peter's other letter Christ Himself is described as a Lamb "without blemish and without spot." And thus the character that qualifies for the new heavens is the copy in us of Jesus Christ. Still further, only those who thus have attained to the condition of absolute, speckless purity and conformity to Jesus Christ, will meet His searching eye in calm tranquillity and be "found of Him in peace." The steward brings his books to his master. If he knows that there has been trickery with the figures, and embezzlement, how the wretch shakes in his shoes, though he may stand apparently calm, as the master's keen eye goes down the columns! If he knows that it is all right, how calmly he waits the master's signature at the end, to pass the account! If we are to meet Jesus Christ with quiet hearts, and we certainly shall meet Him, we must meet Him "without spot and blameless." III. THE EARNEST DILIGENCE WITH WHICH THAT AIM SHOULD BE PURSUED, IN THE LIGHT OF THAT HOPE. Peter is fond of using the word which is here translated "be diligent." Hard work, honest effort, continuous and persevering, is his simple recipe for all nobleness. The word includes in its meaning earnestness, and it very frequently includes that which is the ordinary consequence of earnestness—viz., haste and economy of time. 1. Be in earnest in cultivating a Christian character. 2. Make it your business to cultivate a character like that of Jesus Christ. 3. Make haste about cultivating a Christlike character. The harvest is great, the toil is heavy, the sun is drawing to the west, the reckoning is at hand. There is no time to lose; set about it as you have never done before, and say, "This one thing I do." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Christian diligence*.—I. THE STUPENDOUS EVENTS WHICH ARE EXPECTED. II. THE IMPORTANT DUTY WHICH IS REQUIRED. 1. The opposite of that moral stupidity which prevails among men. 2. The reverse of that indolence of soul, with which so many engage in the affairs of salvation. 3. The opposite of a worldly spirit. III. THE HAPPY END TO BE ACCOMPLISHED. 1. "That ye may be found of Him in peace"—not in affluence, honour, ease or indulgence; but in peace—(1) With all mankind; (2) With your own heart; (3) With God, your reconciled Father. 2. "Without spot" (1 John i. 7). Let us plunge with confidence into this fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. Let us also be diligent, not only that we may be made, but also

that we may be preserved pure. 3. "Blameless"; your holy love so manifest, your justification and acceptance so clear, that bad men and devils dare not, good men and angels cannot, and God will not, lay anything to your charge. (*Jas. Bromley.*) **That ye may be found of Him in peace.**—*Peace with God*:—1. Observe, that whatever be our state or character, we shall all be found of God. If we are sinners, and die such, our sins will find us out. 2. As all will be found of God at last, so there are some who will be "found of Him in peace." Such as have had the enmity of their hearts slain by Divine grace. This it is that heightens every other blessing, alleviates every affliction, and supports in the agonies of death. 3. In order to be found in peace at last, it is needful that we seek it here with diligence. Let us carefully examine into the state of our souls. Occupy till He come, and then His coming will be neither a terror nor surprise. 4. Let us now inquire who they are that will be found of God in peace. (1) Those only whom God finds in this world, and brings into a state of grace. (2) Those shall be found of God in peace who here have found Him. Some seek and find Him in the closet, some in the public assembly, and some on a sick and dying bed. Some in their youth, and others in more advanced years. If we do not find Him as a friend and a father, He will find us as a judge and avenger. (3) Those only will be found of God in peace who are found in Christ. This is what Paul so earnestly desired: "That I may win Christ, and be found in Him." (4) Those only will be found of Him in peace in whom some good thing is found towards the Lord God of Israel. Our nature must be renewed. (5) Those only will be found of God in peace whom He finds walking in the paths of peace. Religion does not so much consist in talking of God as in acting for Him; not in theory but in practice. Improvement: 1. The subject administers reproof to the careless, who content themselves with some sluggish attempts, but who are never in earnest about salvation. 2. We may hence learn that it is possible for persons to be satisfied about themselves, and to have a kind of peace in their own minds, and yet not be found of God in peace. 3. We see the suitableness and importance of the advice given us in the text: "Be diligent, that ye may be found of Him in peace." (*B. Beddome, M.A.*)

Vers. 15, 16. The longsuffering of our Lord is salvation.—*The longsuffering of God*:—I. THE FACT OF THE LONGSUFFERING OF GOD. Sentence of condemnation is not speedily executed. The blessings of health and prosperity often accompany the sinner all through his course of rebellion. The patience of God appears inexhaustible. II. THE GENEROUS OBJECT OF GOD'S LONGSUFFERING. 1. God bears with transgressors not because He is ignorant of their actions. 2. Not because He is indifferent to their actions. 3. Not because He wants the power "to avenge Him of His adversaries." 4. God bears with sinners because His name and His nature is love. (1) It is the actual design of God by this longsuffering to bring men to salvation. (2) The tendency of this longsuffering, as well as God's design, is to salvation. (3) The actual effect of this longsuffering on the part of God is salvation. But though the longsuffering of God be thus designed to be salvation, yet "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." There is a period to the Divine patience. (*G. T. Noel, M.A.*) *The forbearance of God, ending in the salvation of men*:—I. THE LONGSUFFERING OF THE LORD. 1. It may be defined as the suffering of opposition, injuries, and insults, for a long time without punishing them. 2. The instances and displays of the longsuffering of God are amply recorded in the Bible. 3. And the world, through all the ages of its being, has presented the same picture. What has been the history of every nation? of every city? of every village? of every family? of every person? A record of Divine patience. 4. Let us suggest a few considerations calculated to put the longsuffering of God in a clear, strong light. (1) The pointedness of our offences. It is this which gives to sin its evil. It is pointed against God. It is a thrust at His throne. (2) That entireness which belongs to the sin of man. No counterbalancing conduct. There is no mixture in the conduct of unconverted men towards God. There may be some things well towards man. But towards God all is wrong. (3) The inexcusableness also of offences against God tends to enhance our views of His longsuffering. Has God ever given you any reason to treat Him as you have treated Him? (4) The ingratitude of our offences must also be remembered. (5) The implacableness of offenders against God renders His longsuffering the more remarkable. II. IN WHAT SENSE THE LONGSUFFERING OF THE LORD IS SAID TO BE SALVATION. 1. It is only by a reference to the great purpose of salvation that we can satisfactorily account for the longsuffering of the Lord. 2. Consequently the longsuffering of the Lord is to afford adequate occasion and room for carrying the plan of salvation

into execution. 3. It is therefore a standing indication to men of the willingness of God to save. 4. It is then a motive to induce men to be saved. It is part of that goodness which leadeth men to repentance. 5. But salvation is often the blessed result of Divine forbearance. This is its grand issue. The longsuffering of the Lord is salvation in actual effect and eternal consequences. It ends in this. III. ENFORCE THE INJUNCTION TO ESTIMATE RIGHTLY THE LONGSUFFERING OF THE LORD. "Account that the longsuffering of the Lord is salvation." See that you put this interpretation upon Divine forbearance, esteem it as salvation. 1. Do not then make it the food of scepticism. This was the wretched mistake of those ungodly persons of whom the apostle had spoken. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; what a man soweth that shall he also reap," whether it be early or late. 2. Neither regard the longsuffering of the Lord as connivance. Do not think that because He does not smite, He therefore smiles. 3. Nor must you account that the longsuffering of the Lord is security. Whilst you are saying peace and safety, sudden destruction may come upon you. Account that the longsuffering of the Lord is salvation. Regard this as the end. Believe that you are allowed and encouraged to seek that end. Let the longsuffering of God be your introduction to His mercy. You may turn this stream of life into poison and death. (*Essex Remembrancer.*) *God's longsuffering: an appeal to the conscience*.—I. ADMIRE THE LONGSUFFERING OF GOD. 1. Admire the longsuffering of God as to peculiar sins. Look, they make images of wood or stone, and they say "These are God," and they set up these things in the place of Him that made the heavens and the earth. How does He bear it—He that sitteth in the heavens, in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways? Others, even in this country, blaspheme God. And oh, how is it that God bears it when they dare imprecate His curse upon their bodies and their souls? Besides, there are those who use fair speech, and yet blaspheme most intolerably. How is it that the Thrice-holy One bears with them? And then there are others who wallow in unmentionable impurity and uncleanness. The moon sees a world of foulness, fornication, and adultery: and yet, O God, thou bearest it! And then, when I turn my thoughts another way, to the oppression of the poor, to the grinding down of those who, with the hardest labour, can scarcely earn bread enough to keep body and soul together, how does the just God permit it? 2. Especially notice that this longsuffering of God is seen in peculiar persons. In certain persons sins are greater than the same sins would be in other people. They have been favoured with a tender conscience, and with good instruction, so that when they sin they sin with a vengeance. 3. It is wonderful that God should have such longsuffering when we look at the peculiar circumstances under which some men sin. (1) Some men sin against God wilfully, when they have no temptation to it, and can plead no necessity. (2) Some manifest the longsuffering of God very wonderfully in the length of time in which they have been spared to sin. Remember that it would be easy on God's part to be rid of you. One wish, and the sinner will never provoke Him any more, nor refuse His mercy again. He will be gone out of the land of hope. II. TAKE THE RIGHT ACCOUNT OF THE LONGSUFFERING OF GOD. "Account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation." What does this mean? 1. Does it mean, first, as to the saving of the many? The Lord Jesus Christ is, as I believe, to have the pre-eminence. Christ came not to destroy the world, but that the world through Him might be saved; and so, as every year rolls by, let us account it salvation, and spend and be spent in the hope that by any means we may save some. 2. The next meaning of this is to any of you who are unconverted. I want you to account that the longsuffering of God in sparing you means to you salvation. Why are you here to-night? Surely it is salvation. I met years ago a soldier who had ridden in the charge of Balaclava. He was one of the few that came back when the saddles were emptied right and left of him. I could not help getting into a corner, and saying to him, "Dear sir, do you not think that God has some design of love to you in sparing you when so many fell? Have you given your heart to Him?" I felt that I had a right to say that. Perhaps I speak to some of you who were picked off a wreck years ago. Why was that? I hope it was that you might be saved. You have had a fever lately, and have hardly been out before. Why were you saved from that fever when others were cut down? Surely it must mean salvation. When Master Bunyan was a lad, he was so foolhardy that, when an adder rose against him, he took it in his hand, and plucked the sting out of its mouth, but he was not harmed. It was his turn to stand sentinel at the siege of Nottingham, and as he was going forth, another man offered to take his place.

This man was shot, and Master Bunyan thus escaped. We should have had no "Pilgrim's Progress" if it had not been for that. Did not God preserve him on purpose that he might be saved? 3. This text seems to me to have a bearing upon the people of God. "Account that the longsuffering of God is salvation." I must turn the text to give you really what lies in it. It is salvation to a man to be put side by side with Christ. If you have to bear the jests of the ungodly—if God spares them, and permits them to persecute you, be glad of it, and reckon it as salvation, for now you are made partaker of Christ's sufferings. What more salvation do you desire? Remember, too, that when the ungodly persecute the righteous, they give them the mark of salvation, for of old it was so. He that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit. Once more: reckon the longsuffering of God, when it permits the ungodly to slander and injure you, as salvation, because it tends to your salvation by driving you nearer to the Lord. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

The longsuffering of God.—God bears long with sinful men, to give them further opportunities of securing salvation. 1. It is remarkable, however, that the longsuffering of God has, in many instances, just the contrary effect. "Because sentence is not speedily executed against an evil work, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set within them to do evil." When the prophet Isaiah denounced the judgments of God, he was met with the reply, "The vision that he seeth is afar off;" and when his prophecy was not immediately fulfilled they said, "The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth." Myriads have been ruined for ever by abusing the longsuffering of God. They never intended to brave His wrath, but they saw so little cause for immediate alarm that they ventured a little further, until they had gone too far to retrace their steps. Have you ever noticed that our Saviour seldom warns us against a deliberate rejection of the gospel offers? He knew that such guilt would be rare. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" And how often does the Saviour call upon us "to watch," and warn us that His coming will be "as a thief in the night"! 2. And it is astonishing with what ingenuity men can encourage this presumptive confidence in the longsuffering of God. Listen, for instance, to their remarks at funerals. If it be an aged person that has deceased, they say, Ah! he had lived to a good old age, and it was a matter of course that he should die. If it be an infant that is cut off, they say, There are so many diseases to which little ones are subject. In another case the remark concerning the deceased will be, He has been very imprudent, and brought his death upon himself. Or, in yet another case, This person has long been declining, and had the seeds of death within him; but I have no such symptoms of decay or dissolution. All this is to keep off the idea of dying, and to encourage the hope that the longsuffering of God will wait yet longer. 3. Indeed it is an easy matter to encourage a vain trust in the longsuffering God if we are so disposed. How many things there are to help on presumption if we are inclined to indulge it! Time flies silently. Sickness and death do their work very silently. Men do not fall like the leaves in a cold climate, where a single night's frost can strip every tree of its verdure; but the process is rather like the falling of the foliage in a tropical region, where leaf drops after leaf, and is succeeded by another springing forth in its place, so that the eye scarce notices the change. See how noiselessly even our religious opportunities slip away from us! Many have spent the greatest part of their earthly Sabbaths, and scarce reflected that they are gone. God does not, in general, deal with us by startling methods; He uses these as rarely as the thunders and earthquakes of the natural world, but speaks to us for the most part in gentle and persuasive tones. 4. It may be asked, perhaps, why did God adopt such a method of dealing with us? If He had struck the offender dead by a visible interposition; if He had called from heaven, as He did to Saul of Tarsus, to persuade us to repentance, we should have been awed into obedience. But it would have made but little difference if God had dealt with us by startling methods. One who will slumber may be startled out of it a few times, but by and by he would sleep as the sailor does amid the rocking billows on the mast-head. Now, let me ask, what better mode God could have adopted of saving souls than that which for years He has been using without success? Do you say that the reason and understanding must be convinced before one can become a Christian? And has not God done enough to satisfy your reason? Do you say that the heart must be moved by love and mercy, and not by terrors? Have there not been mercy and love in God's dealings with you? If the compassion of our God was not infinite, these protracted sins against His longsuffering would a great while ago have drawn down His wrath. 5. And it is because that righteous anger may finally be incurred that I would urge

you to sin no more against the longsuffering of God. These days are passing off with so little to excite your fears; these seasons, when you have little concern for your souls, are most of all to be dreaded. They are sealing your destiny, as the whirlpool draws in the boat without a single ripple for some time to betray its influence, until at last destruction roars around, too late for retreat. These fair days of seeming peace which God is giving you, are the working days for laying up the eternal harvest. (*W. H. Lewis, D.D.*) *The longsuffering of God to be accounted salvation*:—Our own existence here is a proof of the longsuffering of God. By our apostasy we have forfeited all title to His favour and protection. That sentence, however, is not yet executed. I. THE STATEMENT OF THE TEXT IS TO BE CONSIDERED GENERALLY AS A LAW, OR RULE, OR PRINCIPLE, OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT. The longsuffering of God is salvation, not directly in itself, but indirectly in subordination to a fixed plan and purpose of salvation. It is not the longsuffering of God that saves a single sinner, but the love of God in Christ; and His longsuffering contributes to the sinner's salvation in no other way than by placing within his reach, and pressing upon his acceptance, the gospel overtures of mercy. God has but one method of saving sinners. It is not His longsuffering that saves them, but that grace for the exercise of which, on their behalf, His longsuffering affords scope and space. On this point be not deceived. Consider not God as acting merely from the impulse, so to speak, of personal feelings of compassion, when He spares. Regard Him as sustaining a public, an official character, in which He has high authority to vindicate, and good government to maintain. True, He is full of tenderest feelings of pity to you personally; but, then, as a judge may not gratify his personal feelings as a man, without reference to his state and duty as a judge upholding law and order, so God, in His compassionate regard to you, lays not aside His regard to the claims of His own sovereignty, and the sanctity of His own administration. The very giving up of His Son to be sin for you is the proof also of His concern for the honour and the majesty of that justice which was to be preserved untarnished at such a cost. It is in the character of a just God and a Saviour that He is longsuffering; not in relenting pity, reversing His sentence of judgment. This great salvation He now offers to you. Be not so infatuated as to think you may dispense with it. II. THIS LAW OR PRINCIPLE OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT, THAT THE LONGSUFFERING OF GOD IS TO BE ACCOUNTED THE SALVATION OF MAN, MAY BE APPLIED TO THE CASE OF TEMPORAL JUDGMENTS, AND MAY EXPLAIN THE LORD'S METHOD OF DEALING WITH US IN REGARD TO THOSE EVILS TO WHICH, EVEN IN THIS LIFE, AS SINNERS WE ARE EXPOSED. 1. God, in sending temporal judgments, often gives previous warning, and interposes delay, that by timely precautions they may be averted; and in this sense His longsuffering is to be accounted salvation. Do your part to render harsher measures needless, by taking warning in time. 2. There is another way in which the longsuffering of God is manifested in the sending of temporal judgments. He gives us time, not perhaps to avert them altogether, but yet so to prepare for their coming, that, when they do come, they shall come as fatherly chastisements, not as judgments in fact at all, but as mercies. And, in this sense—a far higher and more important sense than is implied in the removal of any temporal calamity—the longsuffering of God is to be accounted salvation. III. But the most important view for us to take of the maxim of our text is in its APPLICATION TO THAT JUDGMENT OF ETERNAL WRATH IN THE LIFE TO COME, TO WHICH WE STAND EXPOSED. Here it is especially that the longsuffering of our Lord is to be accounted salvation. In this view of it, our text suggests the true explanation of that most perplexing of all enigmas—the present state of sinners on the earth seeming to be tolerated by a holy and righteous God. It is a state, we now see, in which God is longsuffering that man may be saved. Be it remembered, however, it is only a respite, and a respite which does not by any means or of necessity imply an ultimate reprieve. You are spared for a little, but you are spared for a particular purpose; and if that purpose be not attained, there is no other resource—the sentence must take effect. (*R. S. Candlish, D.D.*)

Vers. 15, 16. Our beloved brother Paul . . . in all his epistles.—*St. Paul and his writings*:—This passage proves that, at the time Peter wrote, some epistles of Paul existed, and intimates that they were written according to a kind of wisdom which he had supernaturally received. It proves, also, that they were considered of much authority. This passage declares, also, that, from some cause, either in the writer or the subject, there were some things in these epistles hard to be understood, and likely to be perverted. It is my present design to give you, in the first place,

the history and character of St. Paul, and then to consider the causes of that obscurity in his writings of which Peter complains. I. THOSE PORTIONS OF HIS LIFE WHICH TEND MOST TO ILLUSTRATE HIS CHARACTER ARE HIS CONDUCT BEFORE HIS CONVERSION, AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF THAT REMARKABLE EVENT. In the history of Paul we have two different men to describe, the persecutor and the apostle. Nothing can be imagined more complete than the change of views in this apostle, yet he preserves through the whole of his life what may be called the original stamina of his character. There is nothing which impeaches his integrity, or which ought to render us suspicious of his moral character. He was only actuated by a species of mistaken zeal, which has been common enough in every age. But God had marked out this young man for the most eminent apostle of that faith which he was now intent upon exterminating. If we suppose Paul's character such as I have represented it to be, there wanted nothing but to show to this young man, by the irresistible evidence of his senses, that this very Jesus, whom he regarded as a crucified, detestable malefactor, was really alive in power to turn the whole current of his conduct, sentiments, and character. This mercy God granted him. In summing up the traits of Paul's character, you will observe how singularly he was qualified for that office to which he was especially destined, the apostleship of the Gentiles throughout the Roman Empire. He was the only one of the apostles who appears to have had what may be called a liberal education, or, at least, who had any tincture of the literature and philosophy of the Greeks. The mission which was given him demanded not only a strength of genius like his, but an ardour which no discouragement should quench. I will close this division of my subject with two reflections. 1. In the first place, notwithstanding the extreme ardour of this apostle's imagination, nothing which he has left us discovers anything of fanatical delusion. 2. How important must that cause be which such a man as Paul could maintain with such amazing exertions, such unwearied zeal, through a long life of such discouragements, privations, persecutions and indignities, even to the hour of his martyrdom! He saw the happiness of the world suspended on the reception of Christianity. He found that the dearest interests of the souls of men were entrusted to him. II. I proceed to STATE, AND, IF POSSIBLE, TO ILLUSTRATE, THE SOURCES OF THE OBSCURITY WHICH PARTICULARLY ATTENDS THE APOSTOLICAL PARTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. 1. The first source of obscurity is, that they are private letters, addressed to particular societies, or individuals, upon particular occasions. 2. Another cause of the obscurity of Paul's epistles is, the peculiar genius of the man. His imagination was easily inflamed with the subject on which he was writing. The motions of his mind were exceedingly rapid. 3. The education and peculiar circumstances of Paul contribute, also, to the obscurity of his epistles. Paul was a man whose head was filled with the Jewish learning of his age; and he, no doubt, writes often like one whose early notions were formed in the school of Gamaliel. Hence he uses many words in a signification which is now extremely difficult to settle. The word "justification" is a remarkable instance of this. It is doubtful, in some instances, whether he means by it a benefit relating only to this life, or extending to our eternal condition. The term "law" is another of similar ambiguity; and it is only by careful attention that we can determine, in particular passages, whether the apostle means by it the whole Jewish dispensation or the ceremonial part of it, or that moral law which is equally obligatory on every rational creature. 4. A fourth source of obscurities in the epistles is to be found in a maxim of interpretation which has too much prevailed without reason: "that we must expect to find in the present circumstances of Christianity a meaning for, or something answering to, every appellation and expression which occurs in Scripture; or, in other words, the applying to the personal condition of Christians at this day, those titles, phrases, propositions, and arguments which belong solely to the situation of Christianity at its first institution." (*J. S. Buckminster.*) *The authority of Church guides*:—I. And that which first entitles the governors of the Church to a superiority over their subjects is that special ORDINATION and COMMISSION which they have received from Christ to instruct the world in all necessary truths, and that charge which He hath laid upon others to obey them. II. The reasonableness of this submission will appear from those PROMISES OF ASSISTANCE which Christ hath made to them. And those are illumination, direction, and power. Illumination in things obscure; direction in things difficult; power to encounter and overcome all opposition. III. The reasonableness of this submission will appear from their STUDY AND LEARNING in Divine matters, and from the far less knowledge and ordinary capacity in others. IV. The necessity of this sub-

mission appears as it is THE ONLY MEANS TO RESTORE PEACE AND UNITY TO THE CHURCH; HAPPINESS AND TRANQUILLITY TO THE STATE. (*Miles Barne, D.D.*) **In which are some things hard to be understood.**—*Why Scripture is hard to be understood*:—The mysteries of salvation are hard but to our understanding; the difficulty is not in their own nature but in our capacity. As some rural inhabitant being admitted into a royal palace admires the building, and is transported with the rareness and magnificence of it; and much of it he understands; when he comes into the hall he knows that that is a place for feeding; when into the gallery, he knows that to be a place for walking; when into the bed-chamber, he knows that to be a place for sleeping; but into some rooms he is brought, no whit inferior to the former for state and pleasure, the use whereof he knows not; will he now censure the architect for making of such unnecessary and superfluous places? or not rather lay the blame, where it is, upon his own ignorance? The Scripture is a goodly edifice, the Almighty King's palace; whereof Paul was one of the master builders. When we read his epistles we are surveying the rooms and receptacles; some whereof we easily apprehend, as 1 Tim. i. 15, Rom. viii. 1, Phil. iv. 8, 1 Thess. v. 17; but searching further, we light upon some curious rooms, bearing as much art and majesty in them as the rest, but more obscure and mystical, and veiled with the curtain of awful secrecy; such are certain doctrines of St Paul; we are not forbidden to view them, and review them, to study and meditate on them; but if we cannot perfectly understand them, far be it from us to tax St. Paul of obscurity; no, let us impute the fault to our own simplicity. (*Thos. Adams.*) **Biblical difficulties**:—I. AS ACKNOWLEDGED by the INSPIRED. 1. To those who reject the Bible on account of its difficulties. The Bible does not profess to be a book easily understood. Its difficulties are—(1) Consistent with its character. It is a revelation of the Infinite directed to the finite. (2) Consistent with its intention. The Bible is an educational book. The school book which the student has mastered ceases to be educational. 2. To those who arrogate a thorough comprehension of the Bible. II. AS PERVERTED by the UNGODLY. 1. The perverters are here described. "Which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction." 2. The perversion is here indicated. "They wrest"—pervert. The word here used occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is derived from a word meaning a windlass, winch, instrument of torture (*σπρεβλή*), and means to roll or wind on a windlass; then to wrench or turn away as by the force of a windlass; and then to wrest or pervert. It implies a turning out of the way by the application of force. Here the meaning is, that they apply those portions of the Bible to a purpose for which they were never intended." 3. Their destiny is here stated. "Their own destruction." What is spiritual destruction? The destruction of all the blessings that can make existence worth having—life, peace, hope, &c. Such is the perversion of those difficulties, but what is the proper use of them? (1) They should superinduce humility. Before their majesty the intellect should fall prostrate. (2) They should stimulate intellectual inquiry. They challenge thought—their oceans ask you to navigate them, their hills to climb their summit, their mines to dig and be made rich. (3) They should point to a future life. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **The mysterious doctrines of Christianity**:—I. We must observe, THAT IN A DIVINE REVELATION MYSTERIOUS DOCTRINES COULD NOT HAVE BEEN AVOIDED. No man hath seen God at any time—clouds and darkness are round about Him—His judgments are unsearchable; and His ways past finding out. II. THAT FROM THE LIMITATION OF OUR FACULTIES OUR INFORMATION MUST, OF NECESSITY, HAVE ITS LIMITS. In sciences merely human, one discovery does little else than produce the desire of more. Our utmost attainments are still unsatisfactory and incomplete. Were the mysteries which at present perplex us fully explained, others would be brought within our view. How far soever we might be permitted to advance, we must at last reach the point where our faculties would fail us. III. These mysteries in religion ARE SUCH ONLY WITH REFERENCE TO OUR UNDERSTANDINGS. To us that is difficult which we cannot perform; that is mysterious which we cannot comprehend. But the difficulty and the mystery depend less upon the objects themselves than upon the narrowness of our capacities. In our future state of existence we shall probably be allowed to acquire much higher degrees of information than we at present possess. IV. IT WILL TEND STILL FURTHER TO RECONCILE US TO THE MYSTERIOUS DOCTRINES OF OUR FAITH, IF WE SERIOUSLY REFLECT THAT THERE ARE MYSTERIES EQUALLY UNSEARCHABLE IN ALMOST EVERYTHING AROUND US. Not a subject can be named which the human mind can be said fully to understand. Lessons: 1. The difficulty and obscurity inseparable

from some of the articles of our faith is an obvious reason that, whenever they are discussed at all, they should be discussed with caution and diffidence. 2. The doctrines, however, which we cannot comprehend, it is still incumbent upon us to believe. We pursue, not what we know, but what we think, will promote our own good. And the same principle prevails in the religion that we profess. 3. Finally, while we admit that the Christian revelation has its mysteries, like every other work of its Divine Author, and like that Author Himself, we maintain that it teaches plainly all that is necessary for us to know or to practise. (*W. Sparrow, D.D.*) *The difficulties of Scripture*:—The writings of St. Paul, occupying as they do a large portion of the New Testament, treat much of the sublimer and more difficult articles of Christianity. There is a great deal made known to us by the Epistles, which could only imperfectly, if at all, be derived from the Gospels. It was to be expected that the New Testament would be a progressive book; the communications of intelligence growing with the fuller opening out of the dispensation. And it is a natural consequence on the greater abstruseness of the topics handled, that the apostle's writings should present greater difficulties to the Biblical student. With this admission of difficulty we must join the likelihood of misconception. If a man have error to maintain he will turn for support to passages of Scripture of which, the real sense being doubtful, a plausible may be advanced on the side of his falsehood. But you will observe that, whilst St. Peter confesses both the difficulty and the attendant danger, he gives not the slightest intimation that the Epistles of St. Paul were unsuited to general perusal. Had St. Peter intended to infer that, because obscurity and abuse existed, there ought to be prohibition, it is altogether unaccountable that he did not lay down the inference. A fairer opportunity could never be presented for the announcement of such a rule as the Roman Catholic advocates. After all, it is not so much the difficulty which makes the danger as the temper in which the Bible is perused. We desire to bring before you what we count important considerations, suggested by the announcement that there are difficulties in Scripture. There "are some things hard to be understood." We lay great stress on the fact that it is an inspired writer who gives this decision. The Bible attests the difficulties of the Bible. If we knew the Bible to be difficult only as finding it difficult, we might be inclined to suppose it luminous to others though obscure to ourselves. We should not so thoroughly understand that the difficulties which one man meets with in the study of Scripture are not simply produced by his intellectual inferiority to another—no, nor by his moral or spiritual inferiority—but are, in a great degree, inherent in the subject examined, so that no equipment of learning and prayer will altogether secure their removal. We take into our hands the Bible, and receive it as a communication of God's will, made, in past ages, to His creatures. And we know that, occupying, as all men do, the same level of helplessness and destitution, so that the adventitious circumstances of rank and education bring with them no differences in moral position, it cannot be the design of the Almighty that superior talent, or superior learning, should be essential to the obtaining due acquaintance with revelation. There can be no fairer expectation than that the Bible will be intelligible to every capacity, and that it will not, either in matter or manner, adapt itself to one class in preference to another. And when, with all this antecedent idea that revelation will condescend to the very meanest understanding, we find, as it were on the covers of a book, the description that there are in it "things hard to be understood," we may, at first, feel something of surprise that difficulty should occur when we had looked for simplicity. And undoubtedly, however fair the expectation just mentioned, the Bible is, in some senses, a harder book for the uneducated man than for the educated. So far as human instrumentality is concerned, the great mass of a population must be indebted to a few learned men for any acquaintance whatsoever with the Scriptures. Never let learning be of small account in reference to religion. But after all, when St. Peter speaks of "things hard to be understood," he cannot be considered as referring to obscurities which human learning will dissipate. He certainly mentions the "unlearned" as wrestling these difficulties, implying that the want of one kind of learning produced the perversion. But, of course, he intends by "unlearned" those who were not fully taught of the Spirit, and not those who were deficient in the acquirements of the academy. The "unlearned," in short, are also "the unstable": it is not the want of earthly scholarship which makes the difficulties, it is the want of moral steadfastness which occasions the wrestling. We have nothing, therefore, to do in commenting on the words of St. Peter with difficulties which may be caused by a defective, and removed

by a liberal, education. The difficulties must be difficulties of subject. It were a waste of time to adduce instances of the difficulties. I. WE WOULD SHOW YOU THAT IT WAS TO BE EXPECTED THAT THE BIBLE WOULD CONTAIN "SOME THINGS HARD TO BE UNDERSTOOD." We should like to be told what stamp of inspiration there would be upon a Bible containing nothing "hard to be understood." Is it not almost a self-evident proposition that a revelation without difficulty could not be a revelation of divinity? You ask a Bible which shall, in every part, be simple and intelligible. But could such a Bible discourse to us of God, that Being who must remain necessarily and for ever a mystery to the very highest of created intelligences? Could such a Bible treat of purposes which extend themselves over unlimited ages? Could such a Bible put forward any account of spiritual operations, seeing that, whilst confined by the trammels of matter, the soul cannot fathom herself, but withdraws herself, as it were, and shrinks from her own scrutiny? Could such a Bible, in short, tell us anything of our condition whether by nature or grace? But it is not the manner in which they are handled which makes them "hard to be understood." The subject itself gives the difficulty. If you will not have the difficulty you cannot have the subject. You must have a revelation which shall not only tell you that such and such things are, but which shall also explain to you how they are: their mode, their constitution, their essence. And if this were the character of revelation it would undoubtedly be so constructed as never to overtask reason; but it would just as clearly be kept within this boundary only by being stripped of all on which we mainly need a revelation. A revelation in which there shall be nothing "hard to be understood" must limit itself by the powers of reason, and therefore exclude those very topics on which, reason being insufficient, revelation is required. There is no want of simplicity of language when God is described to us. But who understands this? Can language make this intelligible? We might argue in like manner with regard to every Scriptural difficulty. We account for the existence of these difficulties mainly by the fact that we are men, and, because men, finite in our capacities. Let there be only the same amount of revelation, and the angel may know more than the man because gifted with a keener and more vigorous understanding. And it is evident, therefore, that few things could have less warranty than the supposition that revelation might have been so enlarged that the knowledge of man would have reached to the measure of the knowledge of angels. We again say that there is no deficiency of revelation, and that the difficulties which occur in the perusal of Scripture result from the majesty of the introduced subjects and the weakness of the faculties turned on their study. And we are well persuaded that, however disposed men may be to make the difficulties an objection to the Bible, the absence of those difficulties would have been eagerly seized on as a proof of imposture. There would have been fairness in the objection. It can only be viewed as a necessary consequence on the grandeur of the subjects which form the matter of revelation that, with every endeavour at simplicity of style and aptitude of illustration, the document contains statements which overmatch all but the faith of mankind. And, therefore, we are bold to say that we glory in the difficulties of Scripture. We can feel the quick pulse of an eager wish to scale the mountain or fathom the abyss. But at the same time we know, and we feel, that a Bible without difficulties were a firmament without stars. We know, and we feel, that the vast business of our redemption, arranged in the councils of the far-back eternity, and acted out amid the wondering and throbbings of the universe, could not have been that stupendous transaction which gave God glory by giving sinners safety, if the inspired account brought its dimensions within the compass of a human arithmetic, or defined its issues by the lines of a human demarcation. And, therefore, do we also know and feel that it is a witness to the inspiration of the Bible that, when this Bible would furnish us with notices of the unseen world hereafter to be traversed, or when it would turn thought on the Omnipotent, or when it would open up the scheme of the restoration of the fallen; then, with much that is beautifully simple, there are mingled dark intimations, and pregnant hints, and undeveloped statements before which the weak and the masterful must alike do the homage of a reverent and uncalculating submission. We do not indeed say—for the saying would carry absurdity on its forefront—that we believe a document inspired because in part incomprehensible. But if a document profess to be inspired, and if it treat of subjects which we can prove beforehand to be above and beyond the stretchings of our intellect, then we do say that the finding nothing in such a document to baffle the understanding would be a proof the most conclusive that what alleges itself divine deserves rejection as forgery. II. THE ADVANTAGES WHICH FOLLOW, AND THE

DISPOSITIONS WHICH SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED BY, THE FACT WHICH HAS PASSED UNDER REVIEW. We see at once from the statement of St. Peter that effects, to all appearance disastrous, are produced by the difficulties of Scripture. The "unlearned and unstable" wrest these difficulties to "their own destruction," and, therefore, by what process of reasoning can they be proved advantageous? We have shown you that the absence of difficulties would go far towards proving the Scriptures uninspired; and we need not remark that there must be a use for difficulties if essential to the complete witness for the truth of Christianity. But there are other advantages which must on no account be overlooked. We only wish it premised, that though the difficulties of Scripture—as, for example, those parts which involve predestination—are wrested by many "to their own destruction," the "unlearned and unstable" would have equally perished had no difficulties whatsoever existed. They would have stumbled on the plain ground as well as on the rough: there being no more certain truth in theology than that the cause of stumbling is the internal feebleness and not the external impediment. A man may perish ostensibly through abuse of the doctrine of election. But would he not have perished had he found no such doctrine to wrest? Ay, that he would; as fatally and as finally. It is the love of sin, the determination to live in sin, which destroys him. This being premised, we may enlarge on the advantages resulting from the fact that Scripture contains "some things hard to be understood."

1. And first, if there were nothing in Scripture which overpowered our reason, who sees not that intellectual pride would be fostered by its study? You can make no way with the disclosures of Holy Writ until prepared to receive, on the authority of God, a vast deal which, of yourself, you cannot prove, and still more which you cannot explain. A Bible without difficulties would be a censer full of incense to man's reason. And if the fallen require to be kept humble, if we can advance in spiritual attainment only in proportion as we feel our insignificance, would not this conversion of the Bible into the very nurse and encourager of intellectual pride, abstract its best worth from revelation; and who, therefore, will deny that we are advantaged by the fact that there are in Scripture "things hard to be understood"?

2. We remark again, that though controversy has its evils, it has also its uses. It is not the stagnant water which is generally the purest. We hold that heresies have been of vast service to the Church, in that they have caused truth to be more thoroughly scanned, and all its bearings and boundaries explored with a most painstaking industry. It is astonishing how apt men are to rest in general and ill-defined notions. If never called to defend the truth the Church would comparatively lose sight of what truth is. 3. When I read the Bible and meet with passages which, after the most patient exercises of thought and research, remain dark and impenetrable, then, in the most especial degree, I feel myself immortal. The finding a thing "hard to be understood" ministers to my consciousness that I am no perishable creature destined to a finite existence, but a child of eternity, appointed to survive the dissolutions of matter, and to enter on another and an untried being. If the Bible be God's revelation of Himself to mankind, it is a most fair expectation that, at one time or another, the whole of this revelation will be clear and accessible. We can never think that God would tell man things for the understanding of which he is to be always incapacitated. Such are certain of the advantages which we propose to investigate.

III. It yet remains that we BRIEFLY STATE, AND CALL UPON YOU TO CULTIVATE, THE DISPOSITIONS WHICH SHOULD BE BROUGHT TO THE STUDY OF A BIBLE THUS "HARD TO BE UNDERSTOOD." We would have it therefore remembered, that the docility and submissiveness of a child alone befit the student of the Bible; and that, if we would not have the whole volume darkened, its simplest truths eluding the grasp of our understanding, or gaining at least no hold on our affections, we must lay aside the feelings which we carry into the domains of science and philosophy, not arming ourselves with a chivalrous resolve to conquer, but with one which it is a thousand-fold harder either to form or execute, to yield. The Holy Spirit alone can make us feel the things which are easy to be understood, and prevent our wrestling those which are hard. Never, then, should the Bible be opened except with prayer for the teachings of the Spirit. You will read without profit as long as you read without prayer. (*H. Melville, B.D.*)

Hard things:—1. We believe the hard things were left in the Bible for a lofty purpose. God wished us to think and reason. God had a great purpose to fulfil in the training of the race. Hence both in nature and in the Bible He allows perplexing questions. He can only discipline man's thinking by allowing him to be subject to perplexity. We believe, then, that God purposely left certain difficulties in the Bible to create diversity, to foster the thinking power, and to lead to the

exercise of that charity that never faileth. Instead of codification and finality, there is always something to cause fresh thought, to interest by its newer suggestions—something to quicken mind and lead the soul to listen to the whispers of the Holy Spirit. 2. We have to recognise that danger arises from the presence of the “hard things” in the Book. Peter saw that, and said that the “unlearned and unstable” would “wrest them to their own destruction.” Such, by a twist of an obscure text, would bolster up unbelief or find countenance for a pet idea. They will find even excuse for sin by twisting some word. The ill-tempered will quote, “Be ye angry,” and leave out the words “sin not.” The covetous man will defend greed by “Be diligent in business,” and leave out “serving the Lord.” The neglecter of worship will quote “The Sabbath was made for man,” and go off to indulge in that which will not help him to keep holy the Sabbath day. 3. Some things in life as well as in the Book are “hard to understand.” (*F. Hastings.*)

Obscure passages in the Bible:—“What would you think of a very hungry man, who had not eaten a morsel of food for the last twenty-four hours, and was asked by a charitable man to come in and sit down at a richly covered table, on which were large dishes of choice meat, and also covered ones, the contents of which the hungry man did not know, instead of satisfying his exhausted body with the former, he raises one cover after another and insists on finding out what these unknown dishes are composed of? In spite of all the advice of the charitable man to partake first of the more substantial dishes, he dwells with obstinate inquiry on nicer compounds, until overcome with exhaustion he drops down. What do you think of such a man?” “He is a fool.” (*Dr. Leiber.*) They that are unlearned and unstable wrest.—*Wresting Scripture:*—I. THE MEN WHOSE EVIL HANDLING OF THE SCRIPTURE I AM GOING TO POINT OUT ARE DESCRIBED GENERALLY IN OUR TEXT AS “unlearned and unstable.” Those meant by “unlearned” are men who, whatever be their human knowledge, have either never “learned of the Father,” or who are at best, “unskilful in the Word of righteousness” (Heb. v. 13); and, he adds, “unstable men”—men who, if in some degree enlightened, yet are not established in the faith; but are like “children driven to and fro and tossed about with every wind of doctrine” (Eph. iv. 14). II. Now let us see WHAT ARE THE VARIOUS WAYS IN WHICH THIS OFFENCE AGAINST GOD’S BOOK MAY BE COMMITTED. 1. One of the most awful ways of wresting Holy Scripture is where men try to draw out of its pages a justification of their sins. David, they say, was once guilty of adultery—Jacob, of deceit—and Peter of a lying oath; and yet they were good men. And this, they think, is either a warrant or excuse for the sins in which they live themselves. Oh! when men read a portion of God’s Word which describes some evil deed, and are tempted from His silence to suppose He disregarded it, let them look at other portions. Let them think of His most holy laws; let them mark His terrible threatenings “against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Rom. i. 18). 2. Another grievous way of wresting Scripture is where men try to draw out of its doctrines a justification of their doing nothing for their souls. 3. A third way in which Holy Scripture may be “wrested,” and often, I fear, is so, is as follows. Men adopt a certain set of doctrines as their own, these doctrines may seem to be the language of certain texts of Scripture, but are evidently contrary to others. What, then, do they do when they are pressed with all those passages which make against them? Why, they try to give these passages another meaning. They find out some ingenious method of explaining them away, or of adapting them to their own peculiar views. 4. I will speak of one instance more of the “wresting” of the Scriptures. It is where men quote Scripture, as Satan did (Matt. iv. 6), by halves, so as to make it seem to speak the thing they wish. How awful is that threatening which is addressed in the Book of Revelation to all such triflers with the Bible! (Rev. xxii. 18, 19). III. HOW, THEN, ARE WE TO ESCAPE THE GUILT AND DANGER OF WRESTING HOLY SCRIPTURE? 1. The chief means, most assuredly, of avoiding such a guilt as this, is to pray for the Spirit as our Guide and Interpreter in reading His own Book. 2. Let me recommend to you, again, some frames of mind in which we must ever pray and strive to open the Lord’s Book. (1) One is a sense of our own ignorance, with a desire, a most unfeigned desire, to be led and taught of Holy Scripture. (2) Again, it is a great point to study Holy Scripture in simplicity of mind without any prejudice or bias. (3) He who would shun the sin of wresting Holy Scripture must study it with diligence. He must take all the pains he can to ascertain its real meaning. (4) So as not to wrest it to your own destruction—study it as a sinner searching for a Saviour. (*A. Roberts, M.A.*)

Vers. 17, 18. Beware lest ye also . . . fall.—*Seducers of faith*:—1. Let us shun the society of idolatrous seducers, and hate the very air they breathe. We shall hardly win them to goodness; their familiarity will easily possess us of their wickedness. 2. The greater show of sanctity that error puts on, the more suspicious let us be of the intended mischief. 3. Let us consider that these seducers help to overthrow us, but what help is there in them to raise us up? (*Thos. Adams.*) *Christian perseverance*:—I. THE NATURE OF THAT DUTY WHICH IS HERE RECOMMENDED. The apostle does not address himself here to such as were unacquainted with the ways of godliness, but those who had been initiated in the Christian profession. It is not enough for us to begin well, and to set out hopefully in the exercises of religion, but we must run till we have reached the goal. II. ARGUMENTS WHICH MAY REASONABLY INCLINE US TO THE PRACTICE OF THIS DUTY. 1. The easiness of proceeding in a virtuous course when once we are made familiar with it, should powerfully persuade us to persevere in goodness, and not to fall from our own stedfastness. 2. The great advantages which will redound to us from the performance of this duty should powerfully persuade us to persevere in godliness and not to fall from our own stedfastness. 3. The dangers and inconveniences of a contrary proceeding should powerfully persuade us to persevere in goodness and not to fall from our own stedfastness. III. SUCH RULES AND INSTRUCTIONS AS MAY DULY QUALIFY US FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF THIS DUTY. 1. Let us endeavour to strengthen our good resolutions. 2. Let us be perpetually upon our guard, and keep a vigilant eye over all our actions. 3. Let us be frequent in the exercises of religious duties, especially in such as are more solemn and public. 4. Let us be fervent in private prayer to Almighty God; that He will assist us with His Holy Spirit, and give us grace to proceed without danger of falling. (*N. Brady.*) *Young Christians*:—Your little child hangs over the taffrail of the steamboat and says, "Father, what is that black thing in the water?" You say, "That is a buoy, showing there is a rock underneath, and danger there." So the Apostle Peter in the text points out the perils of the Christian voyage. It would be a strange thing if all our anxiety about men ceased the moment they were converted. You would almost doubt the sanity of that farmer who, having planted the corn and seen it just sprout above ground, should say, "My work is all done. I have no more anxiety for the crop." You have only just been launched; the voyage is to be made. Earth, and heaven, and hell are watching to see how fast you will sail, how well you will weather the tempest, and whether at last, amid the shouting of angels, you shall come into the right harbour. I. HOLD BEFORE YOUR SOUL A VERY HIGH MODEL. Do not say, "I wish I could pray like that man, or speak or have the consecration of this one." Say, "Here is the Lord Jesus Christ a perfect pattern. By Him, with God's grace, I mean to shape all my life." You have a right to aspire to the very highest style of Christian character. I admit that a man cannot become a Christian like that without a struggle; but what do you get without fighting for it? In the strength of Christ go forward. God is for you, and if God be for you, who can be against you? Remember that God never puts you in battle but He gives you weapons with which to fight. II. ABSTAIN FROM ALL PERNICIOUS ASSOCIATIONS, AND TAKE ONLY THOSE THAT ARE USEFUL AND BENEFICENT. I know young people who have meant well enough, but they have floated off into evil influences, and they have associated day by day with those who hated God and despised His commandments, and their characters are all depleted. I can see they are changed for the worse, but they are not aware of it. Oh, young man, come out of that bad association. Stand back from that furnace in which so many young Christians have been destroyed. III. BE ACTIVELY EMPLOYED. Who are the happy people in the Church to-day? The busy people. The very first prescription that I give to a man when I find him full of doubts and fears about his eternal interest is to go to work for God. Here is a wood full of summer insects. An axeman goes into the wood to cut firewood. The insects do not bother him very much, and every stroke of the axe makes them fly about. But let a man go and lie down there and he is bitten, and thinks it is a horrible thing to stay in that wood. So there are thousands of Christians now in the Church who go out amid great annoyances in life—they are not perplexed, they are all the time busy; while there are others who do nothing, and they are stung, and covered from head to foot with the blotches of indolence, and inactivity, and spiritual death. IV. BE FAITHFUL IN PRAYER. You might as well, business man, start out in the morning without food and expect to be strong all that day—you might as well abstain from food all the week and expect to be strong physically, as to be strong without prayer. And the only difference between this Christian who is getting along very fast in the

holy life, and this one who is only getting along tolerably, is that the first prays more than the last. V. BE FAITHFUL IN BIBLE RESEARCH. A great many good books are now coming out. Glorious books they are. But I have thought that perhaps the followers of Christ sometimes allow this religious literature to take their attention from God's Word, and that there may not be as much Bible reading as there ought to be. You go to the drug store and you get the mineral waters; but you have noticed that the waters are not so fresh or sparkling or healthful as when you get these very waters at Saratoga and Sharon—getting them right where they bubble from the rock. And I have noticed the same thing in regard to the truth of the gospel. While there is a good deal of the refreshment and health of the gospel of God as it comes through good books, I find it is better when I come to the eternal rock of God's Word, and drink from that fountain that bubbles up fresh and pure to the life, the refreshment, the health of the soul. (*T. de Witt Talmage.*)

Spiritual steadfastness.—I. A SPIRITUAL STEADFASTNESS MAY BE OBTAINED. The Prophet David commands it, prays for it, and confesseth that some did obtain it, possess it. And doth not the apostle also persuade to the same, crying, Be steadfast, immovable? Who, then, hath cause to question the truth of this doctrine? If any shall, reason may relieve him. For, is not a man a subject capable of it, may he not be fitted to receive it? Is not the faculty of his understanding, in respect of its essence, sound? His will of power, strongly, since his fall, bent to action? And hath he not affections, violent, passionate? Again, shall we think anything impossible with God? And if this were not thus, for what end was preaching appointed, sacraments ordained, and prayer commanded? Are these given in vain? Finally, let me ask thee a question, Shall not Christ be of ability to recover what Adam of imbecility lost? The Holy Ghost to build what the unclean spirit did destroy? Spiritual steadfastness is a firm retention of the degree of grace received. Observe further that this steadfastness is habitual, practical. Again, habitual steadfastness is in the understanding, will, and affections. As for practical steadfastness, that is external, internal. II. THE CAUSE OF THESE DECLININGS. And they be within us, without us. First, melancholy, for it is a true axiom that the soul follows the disposition and temperature of the body. Secondly, some raging lust, unmortified affection. When such a passenger is in the ship of man's soul, like another Jonah it will unsettle all. If the reins hang under his feet, the strongest, readiest footed beast may stumble. Cut all the feet equal the table stands steadfast, else not. Thirdly, unbelief, what mists will this raise in our understandings. How subtly will this sophister argue, dispute, what? Where is the promise of Christ's coming? Fourthly, carnal confidence, that is, whatsoever we trust in except Christ Jesus. Fifthly, weakness of grace, to speak properly this is not a real or positive cause of declining, yet by occasion may have a finger in the business. Sixthly, want of knowledge experimental. Now the contrary of all these we have mentioned will be excellent helps for the firm retention of grace received. Wherefore keep thy body in good plight, feed on choice meats, walk in pure air, use moderate labour, recreation. Mortify also fleshly lusts, crucify the whole body of sin, for in so doing thou shalt remove rubs out of the way, curb the old man, and bind him to good behaviour. See in like sort thou increase thy faith, and that will expel infidelity—consume it as fire doth stubble. And shall not hope in Christ make the new man lusty, arm him against fear, foil despair, and in all assaults cheer up his spirits? Be sure to grow in grace, for is not a feeble person subject to trip, to stumble when able bodies hold out, march valiantly, win the field? And thus much of the inward causes of declining; the other, from without us, follow. First, wavering minded companions. He who walks with such will in time walk as such. Secondly, the fierce trial of affliction. Thirdly, personal wrongs, undeserved injuries. Fourthly, public scandal. Fifthly, example of supposed great ones. For some are like a strong poison that dispatcheth its patient quickly, others a lingering disease which killeth certainly though not suddenly. These things being inserted let us proceed. First, when we have not so clear an apprehension of the worth of grace, and the means to procure it, increase it, as in former time. If the glory thereof be darkened, and we account faith, love, hope, but as common favours, in some degree we are declined. Secondly, if we want an eager appetite after the doctrine of sound words, the bread and water of life, feed on them more for fear and fashion than love and affection, we have just cause to suspect ourselves. Thirdly, a neglect of our particular calling. For a diligent hand maketh rich, as well in spiritual as corporal things. Unthrifths and loiterers always die beggars. Fourthly, when we feebly perform holy actions, or fearfully omit them. Fifthly, a fifth symptom is a quiet concoction of what hereto-

fore we have distasted, spued out, holding the same, as then, for loathsome meats. A soul in her best plight, as she abhors the greatest so hates the least known evil. Sixthly, finally, when men offend, and will not endure reproof. And may a spiritual steadfastness be fallen from? Then try thyself if thou be or not revolted. Tradesmen keep a register of all their proceedings, cast up their accounts yearly, take a strict view how they have decreased or increased their substance; and should not Christians be as wise in their generation? First, we must call to remembrance what truths in the understanding, or in our conversation, we have fallen from, and so return unto them. Secondly, we are to consider what sin we have embraced, whether it be an error in judgment or practice, and if we clearly discern any, then to cease from it. First, cast in thy mind what an uncomfortable condition thou art fallen into, compare it often with the times of old. Do not slavish fears upon the least occasion arise in thy soul? Secondly, consider that greater evils than these may attend thee. This may suffice to have spoken of the last branch of our text, the other succeedeth. "Lest ye also being led away with the error of the wicked." Error leadeth from steadfastness. He who is led with error is always unsettled. For error leads from God. And is not He the best stay, and very centre whereupon all the creatures are settled, established. Again, whither leads error to any constant object? Is it to the world? Doth not the fashion of it pass away? Think it not strange, then, if they who err from the doctrine of godliness be unstable in all their ways. What marvel is it that men walking on craggy rocks, steep mountains, and unequal ways, trip, stumble, and catch a fall? Whereas the apostle calls it the error of the wicked, we may collect, that the way of error, by a peculiar prerogative, is the way of the wicked. True it is that error is called a way, but a crooked, wandering, and evil one. For as the commandments of God are styled ways, so are the doctrines of men. Thus far we are agreed; but what may be the reasons hereof? 1. Because the wicked invent them, are the prime authors of them. For what a man effecteth is properly said to be his own. 2. Again, in regard they conserve and support them. 3. This way is not from God; He disclaims it. For all His paths are holy, and good, and true. "Beware lest ye also," &c. The note which issueth out of this phrase is this, that by one error many may be seduced. As first, from the quality of error, for it is of a spreading nature. Besides, error is easy, pleasant; and what is agreeable to the flesh of multitudes is followed. The way of truth is straight, narrow. Moreover men are wonderfully prone to follow examples, the worst, not the best. And by one error may many be seduced; then get a good eye, a sound judgment; exercise thy wits, that thou mayest discern between truth and falsehood. Error being discovered is to be avoided. (*John Barlow, D.D.*) "*Beware*":—It is a word for trespassers, and God puts it up in all the by-ways of temptation. (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*) *Salutary warnings*:—There are evils which give warning of their coming. Drunkenness does not seize upon a man suddenly. It gives warnings often and many. Avarice, and a number of other vices, can be detected long before we are within their reach. There are infallible indications by which we may be warned. The approach of vice is like the approach of the rattlesnake. This horrible reptile, one of the most venomous of serpents, warns man involuntarily against its formidable presence. At the end of its tail there is placed a rattle, which consists of a string of hollow, dry, and semi-transparent bones, which constantly clatter against each other as the reptile moves, with a hoarse, dull, echoing sound. The bony rings increase in number with the reptile's age, and it gains an additional one, it is said, at each casting of the skin. The warning which it is thus compelled to give of its approach enables those who hear to escape an awful death. Happy are those men whose ears are open to the warnings which social monsters, far more horrid than even the rattlesnake, in like manner invariably give of their presence and movements, and, profiting thereby, manage to escape. (*Scientific Illustrations.*) *Stop the beginnings of sin*:—I have seen the little pearls of a spring sweat through the bottom of a bank, and penetrate the stubborn pavement, till it hath made it fit for the impression of a child's foot, and it was dispersed like the descending dews of a misty morning, till it had opened its way and made a stream large enough to carry away the ruins of the undermined strand, and to invade the neighbouring gardens; but then the despised drops were grown into an artificial river, and an intolerable mischief. So are the first entrances of sin stopped with the antidotes of a hearty prayer, and checked into sobriety by the eye of a reverent man, or the counsel of a single sermon; but when such beginnings are neglected, and our religion hath not in it so much philosophy as to think anything evil so long as we can endure it, they grow up to ulcers and pestilential

evils; they destroy the soul by their abode which, at the first entry, might have been killed by the pressure of a little finger. (*Jeremy Taylor.*)

Ver. 18. But grow in grace.—*Religious growth.*—Almost every created thing seems to have within it the principle of growth. The tree grows from a seed. The bird, fish, beast of field, all come to maturity by growth. The human body grows from feeblest infancy into the strength of manhood. And mind grows as well as matter. The reasoning faculty, the imagination, the memory, expand and strengthen. So, too, the moral and spiritual affections of the soul. Hence religion, which consists of love to God and man, may grow also. I. **GRACE**, in its strict sense, is the free favour of God to the unworthy. The grace of God toward men produces piety; grace is the cause, piety the effect. 1. To grow in grace is to grow in virtue, faith, meekness, gentleness, patience, a spirit of forgiveness, usefulness. 2. In this growth of all right principles there will be going on at the same time in the soul the weakening and decay of all wrong principles. II. We may overlook too much **THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS GROWTH**. We may be in danger of feeling that when one is introduced into the kingdom by conversion and the joining of the Church, the great work is done. Not so our Saviour. How much He laboured to train His disciples. III. Having life by union with the Saviour, we grow in grace **BY USING THE MEANS OF GRACE**. There is a law of spiritual growth just as fixed as the law of natural growth. The means of grace, suited to advance us in the Divine life, are daily provided, not only in the house of God, but in every engagement of the world. Every human being you meet may offer you a means of grace, for there is a Christian feeling to be cherished toward all, and a Christian way of treating all. IV. That we may grow in grace, we need to use **THE MEANS OF GRACE IN THEIR DUE PROPORTION**. Meditation is good, but where it becomes exclusive it is evil. So outward activity, in labouring for the salvation of men, is of the highest importance; but let this absorb the Christian, and the most fruitful piety will wither and die. V. Nor are we to despise **OUTWARD FORMS AND SYMBOLS AS HELPS IN RELIGIOUS GROWTH**. It may be asked, What matters the form if I have the spirit? But will you have the spirit as fully without the aid of the form? We are not purely spiritual beings; we are body as well as spirit. And there is an action of the body that harmonises with and helps the spirit. Nor can devotion prosper well without set seasons; we need the aid of habit to assist in the formation of spiritual character. VI. He who will grow in grace must be **READY TO SUFFER**. The natural life in us dies not without some species of internal agony. For one Christian God has one form of trial; for another, another form. VII. **GROWTH DEMANDS EARNESTNESS**. No one grows who does not mean to grow. VIII. **GROWTH DEMANDS EXERCISE**. As fast as we learn duty, we must apply it. "To him that hath shall be given." Every act of faith increases the principle of faith; as every battle Washington fought for his country only increased his patriotism. (*John MacLeod.*) *Growth in grace.*—I. **THE MEANING OF THE EXPRESSION ITSELF**, "Grow in grace." The Christian is not a lifeless machine. He is not to satisfy himself with going through a cold round of duties. Wherein are you improved? II. **THE MEANS OF GROWING IN GRACE**. 1. Faith, to be strong, must be exercised. Commit your ways to God. Trust Him. Your faith will increase. 2. Another means which may be suggested is prayer. If you will only wrestle with God in prayer as Jacob did, you will succeed. 3. I may specify Scriptural reading. 4. A further and most important means for advancing in our heavenward journey is meditation upon the promises of God. 5. I will only mention one other means of growth in grace, **self-examination**. Prevention is better than cure; when you know your deficiencies, then you may guard against them; thus mischief may be kept away. III. **WE ARE NOT TO SUPPOSE, HOWEVER, THAT OUR COURSE IS TO BE ONE OF CONTINUED SUCCESS**. There are many hindrances. 1. I may name, as the chief hindrance, the corruption of our hearts. 2. Connected with this hindrance is that which I may term the weakness of the flesh. 3. I pass on to that indifference to the truth of religious doctrines now so common amongst men. It leads men away from the contemplation of Christ. It makes them afraid to maintain their cause boldly before their fellows. Their minds become less affected with the sense of the preciousness of Jesus. IV. I will not add any lengthened detail of **THE ENCOURAGEMENTS** to seek this growth in grace. The certainty of success. Your Father which is in heaven will help you. (*H. M. Villiers, M.A.*) *Signs of growth in grace and motives inviting to it.*—I. By the grace of God we understand the favour or love of God; but in the Christian Scriptures it means **THAT ESPECIAL**

EXERTION OF HIS LOVE, WHICH IS APPLIED TO MANKIND AS SINNERS, AND TO THE RECOVERY AND FINAL SALVATION OF A GUILTY WORLD. II. WHAT THAT IS IN WHICH OUR GROWTH IN SUCH GRACE MAY BE DISCERNED. 1. It may be in an especial manner discerned in humility. The virtue required of us is no abjectness of spirit. It is that heart which feels its own infirmities and sins. 2. An abjuration of our favourite sin. 3. A genuine love of virtue for the love of God, and a uniform preparation of heart against the various temptations which may assail us. "If the first sparks of evil were quenched, how should they ever break forth into a flame? How shall he kill, who dare not be angry? Be adulterous in act, who does not transgress in desire? III. Permit me to remind you of THE SOLEMNITY AND GRANDEUR OF THE DOCTRINES WHICH YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST COMPRISES. Say, therefore, whether this knowledge of your Lord and Saviour lead you not to those virtues which we have now been discussing, as adapted to your state of grace. Say whether under such a God anything can be so indispensably requisite as humility; whether under such a Saviour anything can be so required as abjuration of sin; whether under such a Comforter anything can be so becoming as firmness of heart; whether under such promise of forgiveness and of glory anything can come so directly from the soul as sorrow for our sin. (*G. Mathew, M.A.*) *The Christian's improvement*:—I. THE SEVERAL STEPS AND STAGES OF THE CHRISTIAN'S PROGRESS. II. THE NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGE OF THIS GROWTH AND IMPROVEMENT. 1. That our sincerity in religion can no otherwise be well approved. 2. Our perseverance cannot be ensured whilst we are at a stand. 3. As grace is the seed of glory, that seed must rise by gradual advances to its full maturity. III. SOME OF THE MEANS WHEREBY WE ALL MAY BE THUS BUILT UP. 1. Since those habits of virtue which are essential to our improvement are contracted by a frequent repetition of single acts, let us by all means cherish the opportunities of exerting those acts. 2. Therefore we should work up our minds to a full persuasion that religion is the most important business of our lives. (*N. Marshall, D.D.*) *Growth in grace*:—I. IT WILL APPEAR TO BE HIGHLY REASONABLE, YEA NECESSARY, THAT YOU GROW IN GRACE, AND THAT BOTH IN RESPECT OF YOURSELVES AND IN RESPECT OF GOD. First, in respect of yourselves, and that upon this fivefold account. 1. Because your present condition which you are now in requireth it. It is true in the first creation of the world all creatures and species of things were made perfect. Trees and plants sprung up to their height at the first. But it is not so since either in nature or grace. Thus our state being imperfect here, and we coming not to a height at once, it is requisite that we increase our strength gradually; that is, that we be every day growing, and that we constantly make accessions to our feeble virtues and graces. 2. A continual growth in grace is very reasonable and necessary, because our duty is so large and comprehensive. "The commandments of God are exceeding broad." Christianity especially is a vast work. 3. We cannot show the truth of grace in us unless we daily increase; for this is one great sign of it, and that an inseparable one. The true sons of Sion go from strength to strength (*Psa. lxxxiv. 7.*) It is a sign of insincerity and unsoundness to sit down and rest satisfied with a mean degree of holiness. "He was never good indeed," saith St. Bernard, "who endeavoureth not to be better." 4. Growth in grace is necessary in order to joy and comfort. But as growth and increase in grace are requisite in respect of ourselves, so, secondly, in respect of God, and that upon this fourfold account. 1. Because growth in grace is answerable to God's expectation from us. 2. This is answerable to Christ's design, as you read in *John xv. 5.* 3. This is answerable to the means appointed by God and Christ, as praying, the Word read and preached, the blessed sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the gifts and graces of others, holy conference, meditation, and the like. 4. By our growth in grace God is most signally glorified. II. HOW YOU MAY EXAMINE YOURSELVES AS TO THIS weighty matter, that you may know you are of the number of those persons who really grow in grace. 1. He that truly grows in grace hath a greater sense of his defects and failings than ever he had before. First, a greater sense of the shallowness of his understanding. Secondly, of the sinfulness of his life. In the first place, he daily grows more apprehensive of the defect of his knowledge. Again, if we grow in grace, we shall have every day a greater sight and sense of our sins. 2. Profound humility is an undeniable mark of a man that increaseth with the increase of God. 3. If your desires of grace increase, it is an argument that your graces themselves do so. The sharpness of the appetite is some indication of bodily growth and nourishment. If you experience these fervent longings, you may conclude that the graces of the Holy Spirit grow in you.

4. The true growth of a Christian is proportionable and uniform; by which I mean that he is one who grows in all his parts. The new man is not monstrous in its accretion. 5. You may know your growth in grace by the easiness you find in religion. You will certainly perform all duties with facility and dexterity. 6. There will be uneasiness and pain as long as you are hindered from religious exercises and holy duties. Lastly, if your conversation be in heaven, if your thoughts, desires, and longings tend thither, if you ardently wish to depart and to be with Christ, this is a good evidence of your growing in grace and goodness. But yet here great caution is to be used, lest you be mistaken in this important point which I have been treating of. You must therefore remember these four things—

1. When I say that every true believer grows in grace, it is not meant that he doth so every moment or every hour of his life. As it is in the natural body, there may be some disease or malady that will retard the growth for a time. 2. All Christians have not a like growth. 3. All graces grow not alike in the same person. 4. Remember this also, that grace may grow insensibly sometimes; it may increase, but you may not perceive it.

III. TO DIRECT YOU TO THE USE OF THOSE MEANS WHEREBY YOU MAY MOST EFFECTUALLY GROW IN VIRTUE AND GODLINESS. You will certainly make great progress in religion by an uninterrupted exercise of your graces and by a constant performing of your duties. Think not highly of yourselves by reason of any progress you have made. For this may stop you, but it will never promote your farther proceeding. Set before you the examples of the eminent saints and servants of God. It will not be amiss to observe the practices and examples of the wicked. They stand not still, they increase in vice; like crocodiles, they grow as long as they live. Every day adds to their hatred of God and goodness, to their love of sin and vice, and to their dextrous practice of it. Lastly, observe how in all other things men strive who shall make the greatest proficiency, and let this be one help to further your growth in grace. You will find that Christians are compared in the gospel to merchants, bankers, stewards, who are persons that are busy to increase their own or others estates. This may teach the professors of Christianity what they are to do, viz., to improve what they have. Add to your attainments, be they never so great.

IV. TO PRESS THIS DUTY UPON YOU BY SOME COGENT MOTIVES. (*J. Edwards, D.D.*) *Soul education*:—I. Soul education is GROWTH. This implies—1. That the soul is a vital existent. That soul education is a growth, implies—2. That the soul is a vital existent possessing developable powers. There are living things that have not the power of growth. Some, perhaps, have been created with their nature fully developed. There is no power in them of coming to any higher point. And others have passed through all the stages of development, and are exhausted. It is not so with the soul. Its potentialities are unbounded. Omniscience only knows what greatness of intellect, grandeur of character, splendour of achievements, come within the power of every mind, however humble. That soul education is a growth, implies—3. That the soul is a vital existent, possessing developable powers, requiring developable conditions. The seed may contain a germinant power capable of covering continents with fields of golden grain; yet if it remains shut up in the granary, or buried under a rock, it will never be anything more than dry dust. It is so with the soul. Soul education, then, is growth. Not the growth of anything imparted to it, but the growth of itself; not the growth of any of its particular faculties, but the growth of its entire self, simultaneously and symmetrically.

II. Soul education is growth in CHRIST. "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." These two words represent the two great elements by which alone the human soul can be educated. "Love and truth." 1. Christ is the ideal after which the soul is to grow. 2. Christ's character is the element in which alone the soul can grow. His "grace" and His "knowledge" furnish the only atmosphere in which the human soul can healthfully live, thrive, and grow. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Growth in grace*:—I. WHAT IS MEANT BY GROWING IN GRACE? To grow in grace is to increase in a spirit of conformity to the will of God, and to govern our conduct more and more by the same principles that God does. II. SOME THINGS THAT ARE NOT EVIDENCES OF GROWTH IN GRACE ALTHOUGH THEY ARE SOMETIMES SUPPOSED TO BE SUCH. 1. It is not certain evidence that an individual grows in grace because he grows in gifts. We naturally increase in that in which we exercise ourselves. We may pray ever so engagedly, and increase in fluency and apparent pathos, and yet have no grace. 2. Growing in knowledge is not evidence of a growth in grace. In hell no doubt they grow in knowledge, but never in grace. 3. It is not evidence that a person grows in grace because he thinks he is doing so. A person may be

favourably impressed with regard to his progress in religion, when it is evident to others that he is in fact declining. III. SOME THINGS THAT ARE EVIDENCES OF A GROWTH IN GRACE. 1. When an individual finds he has more singleness of heart, and more purity of motive in his conduct, it is evidence that he is growing in grace. 2. An individual who grows in grace is more and more actuated by principle, and less and less by emotion or feeling. By principle, in contradistinction from feeling or emotion, I mean a controlling determination in the mind to do right. 3. Another important evidence of growth in grace is more love to God. By this I do not mean that there will be in all cases a conscious increase of emotions of love to God, but that there will be a strengthening of real attachment to God's character and government. And this increased attachment will evince itself in a growing veneration for all the institutions of religion, and for all the commands of God. 4. Another evidence of growth in grace is when a person increases in love to men as well as love to God. 5. Those who grow in grace feel more and more self-loathing. This is the natural result of having a clear view of God. It makes a person sink down in self-abasement. 6. An increased abhorrence of sin is another mark of growth in grace. When a person feels, day by day, less and less disposed to compromise with any sin, in himself, or in others, it is a sign that he is growing in grace. 7. He who grows in grace has less relish for the world. He has less and less desire for its wealth, its honours, its pleasures. 8. Increasing delight in the fellowship of the saints is another evidence of growth in grace. 9. He who grows in grace finds it more and more easy to exercise a forgiving spirit, and to pray for his enemies. 10. Growing more charitable is an evidence of growth in grace. But he is more ready to ascribe a person's apparently wrong conduct to mistake, or misapprehension, or some other cause, than to direct evil intention. 11. Having less and less anxiety about worldly things is an evidence of growth in grace. 12. Becoming more ready to bestow property is a sign of growth in grace. 13. He feels less and less as if he had any separate interest. It is a great thing, in regard to growth in grace, to feel that all you have is Christ's, and that you have absolutely no separate interest in living, or in dying, or in holding property, or children, or character. 14. It is an evidence of growth in grace when a person becomes more willing to confess faults to men. 15. Growing in grace raises a person more and more above the world. The growing saint regards less and less either the good or ill opinions of men. He feels that it is of little importance, only as it may affect his usefulness. IV. HOW TO GROW IN GRACE. 1. Watch against besetting sins. (1) Levity. (2) Censoriousness. (3) Anger. (4) Pride. (5) Selfishness, in all its forms. Here is the great root of all the difficulty. This is the foundation, the fountain, the substance, and sum total, of all the iniquity under heaven. Watch here; look out constantly; see where self comes out in your conduct, and there set a guard. (6) Sloth. (7) Envy. If you see others going ahead of you in prosperity, in influence, or in talents, examine your feelings, and see whether you are pleased at it. If the sight give you pain, beware! (8) Ambition. By this sin angels fell, and it is impossible to grow in grace without suppressing it. (9) Impure thoughts. It is necessary to make a covenant with our eyes, and with our ears too, and all our senses, or they will prove the inlet of temptation and sin. If you find yourself in danger, turn your thoughts away instantly. 2. Another direction for growing in grace is, take care to exercise all the Christian graces. Exercise yourself especially in those things where you find yourself most deficient. If you are exposed to a particular sin, guard there. If you are deficient in a particular grace, exercise that. (1) Suppose you are naturally worldly-minded, and in danger of being carried away by the love of the world. Shut down the gate, and determine that you will on no account add to your wealth, or lay field to field. (2) Suppose you are in danger of being flattered and lifted up with pride. As a reasonable being you are bound to know this, and be on your guard. (3) If you find that you are reluctant to confess your faults, break right over it, and confess to everybody that you have injured. Practise it on all occasions, till you get the victory. 3. Exercise decision of character. To walk with God a man must walk contrary to the course of this world. He must face public sentiment. 4. To grow in grace, a man must possess great meekness. If a man suffer himself to be fretted by opposition, and thrown into a passion by obstacles that are thrown in his way, he may rest assured that Satan will manage to keep him in such a state of mind that he will by no means grow in grace. V. SOME THINGS THAT ARE EVIDENCES OF DECLENSION. 1. The person who grows weary of being asked to give for promoting the kingdom of Christ is evidently declining. 2. Becoming backward to converse

on the subject of religion, and particularly to converse on spiritual, and experimental, and heart-searching points, is evidence of declension. 3. When a person is less disposed to engage in the duties of devotion, public, social, or private, it is a sign of declension. 4. Taking more delight in public meetings than in private duties and secret communion with God, is another evidence of a declining state. 5. Feeling less delight in revivals of religion is a sad token of declension. 6. A person that becomes captious about measures used in promoting revivals is in a declining state. VI. HOW TO ESCAPE FROM A STATE OF DECLENSION. 1. You must admit the conviction that you are in a state of declension. 2. Apply to yourself all that God says to backsliders, just as if you were the only individual in the world in that condition. 3. Find out the point where you began to decline. See what was the first cause of your backsliding, and give that up. You will often find this first cause where you did not expect it, in something which you called a little matter, or that you tried to make yourself believe was not a sin. 4. Give up your idols. If it be an article of property, dispose of it in some way; give it away, sell it, burn it, away with it, rather than have it stand between you and God. 5. Be careful to apply afresh to the Lord Jesus Christ for pardon and peace with God. Remarks: 1. There is no such thing as standing still in religion. 2. The idea that persons grow in grace during seasons of declension is abominable. Their whole progress is the other way. 3. There are but few persons that do grow in grace. How many, instead of setting themselves resolutely to obey God, and setting their faces as a flint against all sin, passively commit themselves to the stream, and expect to be wafted home to glory in this lazy way, without the trouble of a conflict. 4. We see the great fault of ministers. How little pains they take to train up young converts. 5. Unless ministers grow in grace it is impossible for the Church to grow. "Like priest like people" is a maxim founded on principles of correct philosophy. 6. Great pains should be taken by young ministers to grow in grace. 7. It is just as indispensable in the promotion of a revival, to preach to the Church, and make them grow in grace, as it is to preach to sinners, and make them submit to God. (C. G. Finney.) *Soul culture*:—The words are suggestive of two thoughts: that growth implies life, and that life requires culture. I. Life is characterised by RECEIVING. There are four things indispensably requisite to the growth of plants. The elements essential to the growth of spiritual life are analogous. 1. There must be light. The Word of God is to the growth of a soul as necessary as light to vegetation. 2. There must be also heat. Knowledge without life—truth without love—resembles a frosty moonlight. Flowers open to the sun, and hearts open to Christ, when the constraining power of His love is felt as a burning heat. The soul must build its conservatory on the south side of the temple of truth. This will make the soul of the Christian a Divine sunflower. 3. Moisture is essential to the growth of plants. In rain and dew the tree receives those influences without which neither beauty nor fruitfulness can exist. What moisture is to vegetation the Spirit of God is to soul-growth. 4. To the growth and healthiness of vegetation there must be air. "Of all common things, air is the most common. No space or place is accessible to us that is not filled with it. It is, of all material wants, that which is most indispensable to our existence. The character of a tree, plant, or flower will be determined by the air of the neighbourhood where it is planted. Impure air will affect the vitality of a plant as truly as it does the lungs of an animal. "The life of God in the soul of man" cannot thrive save in an atmosphere somewhat congenial with its heavenly character. It must move in an air higher and purer than that of earth. We must know what it is to have "fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ," and with His saints. To "grow in grace" we must surround ourselves with the elements of a Divine life. The character and complexion of our daily life will be the natural result and outgrowth of the company we keep, the society in which we move, the religious atmosphere we breathe. II. The second property of life is that of GIVING. The flower gives its fragrance and loveliness; the plant its nourishment and healing; the tree its shadow and fruit. The animal gives its strength of sinew, bone, and muscle. Man does the same, with the additional contribution of intellectual strength. Without this giving forth there would be no true or perfect development of life. The man that lives for self is a man of stunted growth. A Christian that lives for self is a spiritual dwarf. (A London Suburban Minister.) A psalm for the New Year:—I. A DIVINE INJUNCTION WITH A SPECIAL DIRECTION: "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." "Grow in grace." What is this? It must

be in the outset implied that we have been quickened by grace. Dead things cannot grow. Growth shall prove your life. Grow in that root-grace, faith. Seek to believe the promises better than ye have done. Let your faith increase in extent, believing more truth; let it increase in firmness, getting a tighter grip of every truth; let it increase in constancy, not being feeble or wavering, nor always tossed about with every wind; let your faith daily increase in simplicity, resting more fully and more completely upon the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ. See to it that your love also grows. If ye have loved with a spark, pray that the spark may become an all-consuming flame. Ask that your love may become more extended—that ye may have love unto all the saints; more practical, that it may move your every thought, your every word and deed; more intense, that ye may become as burning and shining lights whose flame is to love God and man. Pray that ye may grow in hope, that the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints; that ye may by hope enter into the joys of heaven while ye are on earth; that hope may give you immortality while you are yet mortal—may give you resurrection before you die. Ask that you may grow in humility, till you can say, “I am less than the least of all the saints”; that ye may grow in consecration, till ye can cry, “For me to live is Christ; to die is gain”; that ye may grow in contentment till ye can feel, “In whatsoever state I am, I have learned therewith to be content.” Advance in likeness to the Lord Jesus, that your very enemies may take knowledge of you that ye have been with Jesus and have learned of Him. Pray that ye may grow downward; that ye may know more of your own vileness, more of your own nothingness; and so be rooted in humility. As ye root downward, seek to grow upward. Send out the topshoot of your love towards heaven. Then pray to grow on either side. Stretch out your branches; let the shadow of your holy influence extend as far as God has given you opportunities. But see to it also that ye grow in fruitfulness, for to increase the bough without adding to the fruit is to diminish the beauty of the tree. We are not compared to trees, but to children. Let us grow as babes do, nourished by unadulterated milk. Steadily, slowly, but surely and certainly. Little each day, but much in years. But do ye inquire why and wherefore we should thus grow in grace? Let us say that if we do not advance in grace it is a sorrowful sign. It is a mark of unhealthiness. It is an unhealthy child that grows not, a cankered tree that sends forth no fresh shoots. More; it may be not only a sign of unhealthiness, but of deformity. If a man's shoulders have come to a certain breadth, and his lower limbs refuse to lift him aloft, we call him a dwarf, and we look upon him with some degree of pity. Now to grow may be, moreover, the sign of death. It may say to us, Inasmuch as thou growest not, thou livest not; inasmuch as thou dost not increase in faith, and love, and grace; and inasmuch as thou dost not ripen towards the harvest, fear and tremble lest thou shouldst only have a name to live and be destitute of life, lest thou shouldst be the painted counterfeit; a lovely flower-picture drawn by the painter's skilful hand, but without reality, because without the life-power which should make it bud and germinate and blossom and bring forth fruit. Grow in grace, because to increase in grace is the only pathway to enduring nobility. Oh! would ye not wish to stand with that noble host who have served their Master well, and have entered into their eternal rest? But to grow is not only to be noble—it is to be happy. That man who stays growing refuses to be blessed. Forward is the sunlight! forward is victory! forward is heaven! But here, to stand still is danger; nay, it is death. O Lord, for our happiness' sake, bid Thou us advance; and, for our usefulness' sake, let us ascend. I have thus explained the Divine exhortation; but you perceive it contains a special injunction, “And in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” We must see to it that we ripen in the knowledge of Him—of Him in His Divine nature, and in His human relationship to us; in His finished work, in His death, in His resurrection, in His present glorious intercession, and in His future royal advent. We must study to know more of Christ also in His character—in that Divine compound of every perfection, faith, zeal, deference to His Father's will, courage, meekness, and love. Above all, let us long to know Christ in His person. This year endeavour to get better acquaintance with the Crucified One. Grow in the knowledge of Christ, then. And do ye ask me why? Oh! if ye have ever known Him you will not ask that question. He that longs not to know more of Christ, knows nothing of Him yet. II. A GRATEFUL THANKSGIVING, WITH A MOST SUGGESTIVE TERMINATION; “To Him be glory both now

and for ever. Amen." The apostles very frequently suspended their writing in order to lift up their hearts in praise. Praise is never out of season, and it is no interruption to interrupt any engagement in order to laud and magnify our God. "To Him be glory." Yes, to Him, ye atheists, who deny Him; to Him, ye Socinians, who doubt His Deity; to Him, ye kings, who vaunt your splendour, and will not have this man to reign over you; to Him, ye people, who against Him stand up, and ye rulers who against Him take counsel; to Him, the King whom God hath set up upon His holy hill of Zion; to Him be glory. To Him be glory as the Lord: King of kings and Lord of lords; "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." To Him be glory as Saviour. He alone hath redeemed us unto God by His blood; He alone hath "trodden the wine-press," and "cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength." "To Him be glory." Church of God respond! Let every pious heart say, "To Him be glory." But the apostle adds "now"—"to Him be glory now." Oh, postpone not the day of His triumph; put not off the hour of His coronation. Now, now; for now, to-day, He hath raised us up together, and made us sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus. "And for ever." Never shall we cease our praise. Time! thou shalt grow old and die. Eternity! thine unnumbered years shall speed their everlasting course; but for ever, for ever, for ever, "to Him be glory." But, now, there is a conclusion to this of the most suggestive kind—"Amen." 1. First, it is the desire of the heart, "Behold, I come quickly; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." We say "Amen" at the end of the prayer to signify, "Lord, let it be so"—it is our heart's desire. 2. But it signifies more than this; it means the affirmation of our faith. We only say amen to that which we really believe to be true. We add our affidavit, as it were, to God's promise, that we believe Him to be faithful and true. 3. But there is yet a third meaning to this amen. It often expresses the joy of the heart. As you see King Jesus sitting upon Mount Zion with death and hell beneath His feet, as to-day you anticipate the glory of His Advent, as to-day you are expecting the time when you shall reign with Him for ever and ever, does not your heart say "Amen"? 4. But, lastly, amen is sometimes used in Scripture as an amen of resolution. It means, "I, in the name of God, solemnly pledge myself that, in His strength, I will seek to make it so; to Him be glory both now and for ever." (C. H. Spurgeon.)

*Of growth in grace:—*I. How MANY WAYS MAY A CHRISTIAN BE SAID TO GROW IN GRACE? 1. He grows in the exercise of grace; his lamp is burning and shining. 2. He grows in the degree of grace (Psa. lxxxiv. 7). II. WHAT IS THE RIGHT MANNER OF A CHRISTIAN'S GROWTH? 1. To grow less in one's own eyes. 2. To grow proportionably—in one grace as well as another. 3. When a Christian has grace suitable to his several employments and occasions. III. WHENCE IS IT THAT TRUE GRACE CANNOT BUT GROW? 1. It is proper for grace to grow; it is the seed of God. 2. Grace cannot but grow from the sweetness and excellency of it; he that hath grace is never weary of it, but still would have more. 3. Grace cannot but grow from a believer's ingrafting into Christ; he who is a scion, ingrafted into this noble, generous stock, cannot but grow. IV. WHAT MOTIVES OR INCENTIVES ARE THERE TO MAKE US GROW IN GRACE? 1. Growth is the end of the ordinances. 2. The growth of grace is the best evidence of the truth of it. 3. Growth in grace is the beauty of a Christian. 4. The more we grow in grace, the more glory we bring to God. 5. The more we grow in grace, the more will God love us. 6. What need have we to grow in grace? There is still something lacking in our faith. Grace is but in its infancy and minority, and we must still be adding a cubit to our spiritual stature. 7. The growth of grace will hinder the growth of corruption. As some plants have an antipathy, and will not thrive if they grow near together, as the vine and the bay tree: so, where grace grows, sin will not thrive so fast. 8. We cannot grow too much in grace; there is no excess there. The body may grow too great, as in the dropsy; but faith cannot grow too great: "your faith groweth exceedingly"; here was exceeding, yet not excess. As a man cannot have too much health, so not too much grace. 9. Such as do not grow in grace, decay in grace. "Not to advance in the path of life is to return." 10. The more we grow in grace, the more we shall flourish in glory. V. HOW SHALL WE KNOW WHETHER WE GROW IN GRACE? 1. The signs of our not growing in grace, but rather falling into a spiritual consumption. (1) When we have lost our spiritual appetite. (2) When we grow more worldly. (3) When we are less troubled about sin. 2. The signs of our growing in grace. (1) When we are got beyond our former measures of grace.

(2) When we are more firmly rooted in religion, rooted in Him, and established: the spreading of the root shows the growth of the tree. (3) When we have a more spiritual frame of heart. More spiritual in our principles, affections, and performance of duty. (4) When grace gets ground by opposition. The fire, by an antiperistasis, burns hottest in the coldest season. The martyrs' zeal was increased by persecution. Here was grace of the first magnitude. VI. WHAT SHALL WE DO TO GROW IN GRACE? 1. Take heed of that which will hinder its growth—the love of any sin. 2. Use all means for growth in grace. It is better to grow in grace than gifts; gifts are for ornament; grace is for nourishment, to edify others, to save ourselves. VII. HOW MAY WE COMFORT SUCH AS COMPLAIN THEY DO NOT GROW IN GRACE? They may mistake; they may grow when they think they do not. The sight Christians have of their defects in grace, and their thirst after greater measures of grace, makes them think they do not grow when they do. Let Christians be thankful for the least growth. If you do not grow so much in assurance, bless God if you grow in sincerity; if you do not grow so much in knowledge, bless God if you grow in humility. If a tree grows in the root, it is a true growth; if you grow in the root grace of humility, it is as needful for you as any other growth. (*T. Watson.*) *Christian growth*:—The command is that we enlarge ourselves; that we pass up by graduation from one class to another class in the great school of life, of action, of understanding. The injunction presupposes that we are capable, that we have faculties susceptible of being disciplined and trained. It presupposes that we are intelligent and ambitious after good, and desirous of higher attainment. The germ idea contained in the word "education" is that of leading forth the natural capacity of the man. An educated person is a person who has been led forth, or brought out, or developed from what he was into something larger, and fuller, and more complete. Moral education is, therefore, the leading forth of the moral capacity of man. Human nature is a nature of capacity; it is susceptible of great development in any direction and toward any state of being. It can be led out toward the good or toward the bad; can be made to seek its affinities among the high or the low. It can be influenced toward heaven or it can be influenced toward hell. As far as we can see, there is no limit to this development of man's capacity. The whole human machinery impresses one in its every part with the idea of motion, and the assertion that the mind and soul will ever come to a dead standstill, whether here or in the hereafter, is one repugnant to the very genius of their construction. The endless activity of God, according to its capacity to receive it, seems to have been imparted to His last and finest creation, man. Now, this marvellous being, whose capacity of growth is endless, is located in the midst of a thousand incentives of growth. Regard him simply as an animal, and what that he needs does the earth and the air refuse him for food? Look at him, as a student, as an embodiment of mental faculties, and behold how multitudinous are the objects that elicit his inquisition. The earth on which he walks swells with problems that challenge solution; the air he breathes is charged with forces and combinations of elements which provoke him to analysis. Contemplate him as a social being, and see in the midst of what quickening and vital associations he lives. Love, sympathy, tenderness, mercy, pity—each through its own channel sends down its crystal stream to swell the tide of his ever-widening life. Or examine him in his spiritual connections. What capacity of moral discernment do we not find in him? What magnificent equipment of sensibilities is his; what profound depth of life he has; what energy to aspire, what power to feel, what force to execute, what ability to acquire impressions distinguish him? The education of such a being must be, to every thoughtful mind, one of the gravest subjects within the whole range of human inquiry. The worst thing that any man can do is to think of himself as a creature of little value. I care not how ordinary you may be in your own eyes; I care not how little gifted you may be as others might judge, still I beg you to remember that you are of the highest dignity in the eye of your Maker. It is safe to say that there is not a creation of God, there is not a combination permitted by Him, the object of which is not man's education. You are to look upon the whole world in all its growths, in all its ever-revolving changes, as ordained for your instruction and assistance. There is not a tree, there is not a spire of grass, there is not even a daisy-head that you passed this summer in the fields, that was not created and put in growth and bloom for you. Wisdom as to these is wisdom as to God, and he is wisest as regards the Creator who comprehends most clearly all the use and relation of created things. Now, bearing these things which we have

suggested in mind, we submit to you, if the appliances for the leading forth of your nature, in all manner of admirable ways, is not a matter of wonder and gratitude. If you will put yourself in connection with all these helps, so bounteously given; if you will only co-operate with the agents and agencies devised in your behalf, how can your natures fail to be daily enlarged by what is about you? Who can say what knowledge a babe gets out of its mother by feeling with its little hands about the mother's face? This we must remember also, that we are not educated along one line or by a single contact with men, but along many lines and by means of association with many. Hence God groups us. Like stars, men are clustered in constellations, and move on in systems, mutually attracting, mutually repelling each other. There is no education equal to that which a man or woman can get in the sweet school of family life. It is the school in which love should be master and mistress. In it the only law known should be that of affection; the highest privilege, that of serving. This family life may be lived in humble circumstances, as men count surroundings; but its influence on your soul may be as precious, and the results as happy, as if you had lived within the sentinel-guarded doors of a palace. As Christianity enlarges the domain of its sovereignty over men, this family principle gets wider and wider application. The ties of blood cease to bound the limits of affectionate regard, and a spiritual brotherhood unites you to a larger circle. Ultimately the whole race will be kin to each member of it. In order that this education of human nature may go forward unto its complete triumph, it is necessary that every organisation, every form of government, and the entire social structure, should be of a proper kind. There is no pressure that can be brought to bear upon a man more potent than that of organisation. If the organisation of the family be wrong in its spirit, in its tone and temper, then will each member of the family be wrong in his or her tone and temper. A family whose government rests on the principle of force, of authority that speaks only by the infliction of punishment, will make children in it cowardly, hypocritical, and brutal. A Church whose organisation rests on a bigoted foundation will make its members bigoted. The influence of its pulpit, and even of its prayers, will educate men and women into narrowness of thought and harshness of opinion. You cannot base a Church of Christ on anything less wide, less liberal, less sympathetic, than the heart of Christ. Education is thus for ever progressive, and the human mind at the dawn of each generation goes in search of the undiscovered as birds go forth from their groves with the coming of every morning to canvass the fields for their food, and feel in the movement of their flight the joy of a fresh experience. Thus you see that education includes the idea of growth. The educated man is the grown man. He has grown out of old forms of thought into new ones. He has left one plane of feeling and been lifted to a higher plane. That which was difficult for him to understand has become plain. He walks as those who walk in the light. Christianity, as measured by its effect on humanity, if properly interpreted and understood, is movement. It builds no permanent encampment for its followers. Its army is for ever on the march, and every night finds them in a new camp-ground. We must remember that we are all school-children in spiritual education. We are not far advanced—we are on the lower benches, and are sitting at the feet of the Master. We are not studying the high sciences of God. We are not able to fathom the "deep things" of His will. We are only being instructed in the first lessons of good manners. We are only being taught, here and now, how to behave. By and by, when we have learned how to behave, when we have become obedient, cheerful, patient, and good; by and by, when our spiritual senses have become organically so developed as to create a hunger for finer knowledge, and have begun to long to see the things that eye hath not seen, and to hear the things that ears have never heard, God will lift us and honour us with higher seats where the older scholars sit, and we shall begin to be wise as well as good. For this education of which I am talking, this leading out of man's moral faculties, is a thing not of to-day, nor a movement of time as men count time; it is a thing of the ages. It is a movement which rolls itself on into eternity. As to extent, there is no end to it. I close with this word of cheer. The theme suggests it. Whatever your state spiritually may be, you need not remain in it. You can grow out of that state into a better one. You who have failed can grow out of your failure into success. You who are despondent can grow up into the condition of hopefulness. You who are sad God will lift into joy. You who are in the midst of sin can be redeemed out of that sin, and become upright. You who are weak in the structure of your virtue can be braced with the

bands of everlasting power. The heavens are full of attractions, and by their sweet might you can be lifted until you stand higher than the stars. (*W. H. Murray.*)

Growth in grace.—I. WHAT IS IT TO GROW IN GRACE. 1. The Christian should be ambitious to increase in the number of his graces. 2. We should grow in the measure of our graces. 3. We should grow in the use of our graces. II. WHY GROWTH IN GRACE SHOULD BE SOUGHT. 1. Because God has afforded a variety of helps to promote it. 2. As we are otherwise in continual danger of losing what we have already obtained. 3. Our advancement in glory will be in proportion to our present improvement in grace. III. HOW GROWTH IN GRACE IS TO BE ATTAINED. 1. Ascertain that the good work is really begun. 2. Cherish a lively sense of your imperfections. 3. Carefully avoid whatever would hinder your growing in grace. 4. As you must be diligent in the use of the means of grace, so you must take care not to place any confidence in them. (*S. Lavington.*)

Growth in grace.—I. A SENSE OF INSUFFICIENCY IS AN INDISPENSABLE PREREQUISITE TO GROWTH IN GRACE. II. BUT A SELF-RENOUNCING DEPENDENCE ON DIVINE HELP MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO SUPERSEDE OR TO SLACKEN YOUR OWN ENDEAVOURS. III. GROWTH IN GRACE IS A PROCESS WHICH CANNOT GO ON WITHOUT SOONER OR LATER MANIFESTING ITSELF BY ITS FRUITS.

1. A growing reliance on Christ. 2. Increasing power over temptation. 3. The increasing influence of conscience. 4. Increasing disinterestedness of religious feeling. 5. Increased complacency in thinking of death and eternity. (*J. M. McCulloch, D.D.*) *Grow in grace*.—1. In growing better, the first thing is to become good; or rather this is preliminary to all improvement. The foundation must be laid before the building can rise. No digging about and enriching, no ever so auspicious alternation of sun and shower can bring forward a plant which has no life in it. Yet in morals this is what some are endeavouring to do; they would feed death and cultivate sterility. The sinner must pass from the state of nature to that of grace before he can grow in grace. 2. Then the soul being born again, the principle of spiritual life being communicated to it, it must have nourishment in order to grow; the principle of spiritual life is not independent of aliment any more than that of animal life. Now truth is the nutriment of the soul, and it must be taken, or the soul will not grow, and in a little while will cease to live. They say it is no matter what a man believes, or whether he believes anything, so he but practises aright, which is as if one would say, it is immaterial what a man eats or whether he eat at all, so he but lives. Can he live without eating, and eating wholesome food? If error is not injurious, poison is not; and if ignorance is not hurtful, starvation is harmless. The man who is indifferent to the interests of truth is also to those of virtue. It is impossible to love the one without loving the other. Truth is the principle and pabulum of virtue. The Word of God must be understood, believed and meditated on, and especially its testimony concerning Christ, otherwise there can be no growth in grace. 3. The exercise of the moral powers and gracious dispositions in you is essentially necessary to their growth and expansion. How can one grow in benevolence or in compassion unless he obeys its dictates? in temperance unless he habitually practises temperance? how increase in humility unless he frequently humble himself? And as they cannot be exercised without trials and afflictions, hence the necessity of these to the growth of those virtues and the perfection of the human character. God is the author, upholder, and finisher of good in us. No use of means, and no making of exertion are of any avail without His secret, spiritual efficiency; hence a spirit of dependence on God must be cultivated and exercised, and hence is prayer an indispensable means of growth in grace. The Holy Spirit is promised only to them who ask Him. 5. Watchfulness is another important means of growth in grace. The plant of grace requires the most anxious attention and the most constant care. It has many enemies—some that grub the earth, and some that infest the air—and it is exposed to many evil influences. It must be assiduously watched. 6. Christians are members of a mystical body of which Christ is the head, and from Him, in consequence of this connection, they derive strength, grace, nourishment, and every needed good. Now faith is the bond of this union, and the stronger the faith, the closer the bond, and the more free the communication. Hence, if one would grow in grace, he must habitually exercise faith in Christ, and increase in faith. 7. Striving against sin is all-important to growth in grace and holiness. 8. Sensual indulgence is a formidable foe to growth-in grace; and, when carried far, is incompatible with its existence. Hence the necessity of abstinence and self-denial. 9. The love of the world is another enemy to holiness. There is a wonderful moral efficiency in the

Cross of Christ to destroy this inordinate affection. 10. Finally, the promises exert a sanctifying influence when contemplated and applied (2 Pet. i. 4). (*W. Nevins, D.D.*) *Growth*.—I. THERE IS SUCH A THING AS GROWTH IN GRACE. I do not for a moment mean that a believer's interest in Christ can grow. I do not mean that he can grow in safety, acceptance with God, or security. I only mean increase in the degree, size, strength, vigour, and power of the graces which the Holy Spirit plants in a believer's heart. I hold that every one of those graces admits of growth, progress, and increase. I hold that repentance, faith, hope, love, humility, zeal, courage, and the like, may be little or great, strong or weak, vigorous or feeble, and may vary greatly in the same man at different periods of his life. One principal ground on which I build this doctrine of "growth in grace," is the plain language of Scripture. "Your faith groweth exceedingly" (2 Thess. i. 3). "We beseech you that ye increase more and more" (1 Thess. iv. 10). "Increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. i. 10). "Having hope, when your faith is increased" (2 Cor. x. 15). "The Lord make you to increase in love" (1 Thess. iii. 12). "That ye may grow up into Him in all things" (Eph. iv. 15). "I pray that your love may abound more and more" (Phil. i. 9). "We beseech you, as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more" (1 Thess. iv. 1). "Desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. ii. 2). "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. iii. 18). The other ground on which I build the doctrine of "growth in grace," is the ground of fact and experience. What true Christian would not confess that there is as much difference between the degree of his own faith and knowledge when he was first converted and his present attainments, as there is between a sapling and a full-grown tree? His graces are the same in principle; but they have grown. Let us turn away to a more practical view of the subject before us. I want men to look at "growth in grace" as a thing of infinite importance to the soul. 1. "Growth in grace" is the best evidence of spiritual health and prosperity. In a child, or a flower, or a tree, we are all aware that when there is no growth there is something wrong. 2. "Growth in grace" is one way to be happy in our religion. God has linked together our comfort and our increase in holiness. He has graciously made it our interest to press on and aim high in our Christianity. 3. "Growth in grace" is one secret of usefulness to others. Our influence on others for good depends greatly on what they see in us. 4. "Growth in grace" pleases God. The husbandman loves to see the plants on which he has bestowed labour flourishing and bearing fruit. It cannot but disappoint and grieve him to see them stunted and standing still (John xv. 1, 8). The Lord takes pleasure in all His people, but especially in those that grow. 5. "Growth in grace" is not only a thing possible, but a thing for which believers are accountable. II. THERE ARE MARKS BY WHICH GROWTH IN GRACE MAY BE KNOWN. 1. One mark is increased humility. 2. Another mark is increased faith and love towards our Lord Jesus Christ. 3. Another mark is increased holiness of life and conversation. 4. Another mark is increased spirituality of taste and mind. 5. Another mark is increase of charity. 6. One more mark is increased zeal and diligence in trying to do good to souls. III. THE MEANS THAT MUST BE USED BY THOSE WHO DESIRE TO GROW IN GRACE. 1. One thing essential to growth in grace is diligence in the use of private means of grace. 2. Another essential is carefulness in the use of public means of grace. 3. Another essential is watchfulness over our conduct in the little matters of every-day life. 4. Another essential is caution about the company we keep and the friendships we form. 5. There is one more thing which is absolutely essential to growth in grace, and that is regular and habitual communion with the Lord Jesus. (*Bishop Ryle.*) *Christian life a growth*.—I. THE HEART MUST BECOME ROOTED IN LIVING, CHRIST-LIKE PRINCIPLES. II. THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION IS TO BE CULTIVATED. III. DUE ATTENTION MUST BE GIVEN TO THE LAW OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT. IV. THE LAW OF GROWTH WORKS ITS PURPOSE THROUGH CHANGING SEASONS. V. THE GROWING LIFE WILL MANIFEST ITSELF. (*W. Currie.*) *Growth the test of Christian life*.—The want of growth is the want, generally speaking, of organisation. Rocks do not grow, soil does not grow. Growth belongs to the higher stages of development, and as things grow, not by accretion, but by definite formation, by their growth we judge of their vitality. When anything ceases to grow its end is near. Any man that has ceased to grow is waiting for his undertaker, and the longer he has to wait the greater is the pity for everybody about him. There are, of course, in so compound a creature as man, several concentric circles of growth. There is bodily growth, but that usually takes care of

itself, and needs no exertion. Then there is physical culture, a growth not in dimensions alone, but in other ways. One may develop strength; it may be increased by his purpose. One may develop activity; one may develop skill of hand or alertness and quickness of foot. This is the lowest form of growth, and yet the lowest growth even of the body is a worthy one, and justifies our endeavour. A healthy and well-developed body is a chariot fit to carry a hero's soul. To grow up in good sound health, without violation of the great canons of morality, and with the law of moderation fixed upon every appetite and passion, is itself no insignificant ideal for a young man or woman. But, then, we are familiar, in this land where education is almost an atmosphere and a byword, with growth in intelligence and knowledge. These two things are very different. Intelligence implies a certain condition of the knowing faculties. Knowledge is the fruit of intelligence. There is just as much difference between them as there is between skill and the product of skill, or between husbandry and the harvests that husbandry can produce. A man may have intelligence and scarcely any knowledge. A man may have a good deal of knowledge and hardly any intelligence. But where one has both intelligence and knowledge, and is growing in them both, that is a transcendently noble thing. It is the direct tendency of intelligence and knowledge to produce morality. I declare that education, or the development of the knowing parts of a man, gives him so large a view of the field of life that he is more likely to see that morality is safety than if he were ignorant; and that the general fact stands proved that intelligence and knowledge tend, on the whole, by immense measure, toward goodness, respectability, virtue, and morality. So if we grow in aptitude for intelligence and knowledge we shall make a long stride away from animalism, and from the dangers that beset the passions and appetites of human life. Now, while bodily growth, intellectual growth, and growth in knowledge are to be esteemed, and are not to be thrown into the shade by any misconception of the value of grace and religion, I affirm that the highest growth, because it is the one that carries all these others with it more or less, or blesses them, is growth in grace. Self-sacrifice, that is one element of it. Meekness and humility are other elements of it. Good nature, which is called kindness in the text of Scripture, is another element of it. Easiness to be entreated is one of the elements of growth. In regard to that manhood which springs from the activity of our highest spiritual and moral functions, in regard to this eminent spiritual-mindedness, I must say that it does not belong to the cave nor to the cloister. The serene wisdom of love, and the guidance of God's presence with a man, will prosper him more, in the long run, in every relation of life, than the turbulent wisdom that springs from vanity, from pride, from avarice, from passion. Men adopt a lower form of power when they undertake to carry out the ends of life by the selfishness that prevails in human society. It requires more skill in the beginning to wield this higher power—to learn the trade, that is, of piety in its application to life. It also requires more time for reaping the fruit. Some harvests are sown in autumn, and the sun leaves them; but they come to ripeness next summer. Some things can be sown in spring and reaped before midsummer. In regard to moral and spiritual elements, it takes more time to develop them and procure their final results in secular wisdom than it does to take the lower and superficial forms and achieve success, but when once they are established they do not go back. A man that fears and loves God, and therefore stands intact under the temptations of life, men will give large premiums to get. It is ripening growth that is demanded. In other words, it is not enough for our religion that we have revivals of it; it is not enough that we have flashes of any or all of these spiritual feelings and experiences. What is wanted is, that they shall become steadily a part of us and abide in us, so that they constitute our character. Then growth in grace amounts indeed to a sure victory. The piety that comes and goes is better than nothing—scarcely more than that; but the higher spiritual qualities of a man's nature that abide with him, and grow stronger, and throw their roots deeper, and take hold on life with more multiplied hands, are the qualities that constitute the true man. When such things shall have been thoroughly developed, the stability and habitualness of the highest Christian experiences will work spontaneity. The mind's action in this channel will become automatic. Then, too, there will be harmony. It will not be simply a few feelings that will run in this line, but the whole soul. Like an orchestra well trained, it will be harmonious, and will increase in force from year to year. For while prophecy and teaching and knowledge do not abide, while we are in the childhood of the human race, and know everything only in fragments and parts,

there are some things that death itself does not change. We are told that they are faith, hope, and love. These go on ineradicable and unchangeable. Such men walk with God. If you liken human life and development to a dwelling, the lower story is on the ground, and made of clay. How roomy and how full of men that live next to the dirt! Above that, however, is a story of iron. There are men of energy, and of a ruling purpose irresistible, seeking and gaining their ends at all hazards, and this story is populous too. The next story is dressed in velvet and carved wood, and here are they that dwell in their affections, and are brought together by the sympathy of a common gentleness and kindness, but on the lower levels of life. Above that is a room of crystal and of diamonds, and there are but few that dwell in it. From its transparent walls one may behold the heavens and the earth. Out of it men may see the night as well as the day—men who live a life so high, so pure, and so serene that they may be said to dwell at the very threshold of the gate of heaven itself. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Growing in grace*:—It is implied that we are not perfect in grace, that there is wide room for growth. Another thing implied is that we may and can grow if we will. God knows our abilities and our inabilities, our dispositions and indispositions, the moral outflow and the moral recoil, and, knowing all, He says, "Grow in grace." I. DIRECTIONS. How to grow in grace? We cannot but remember that growth, to be real and healthy, must be free. It may seem, therefore, an impertinent thing to interpose directions at all. But in truth we do not interpose them with any authority. We shall bring them, such as they are, within sight. Use them if they are suitable. If not, find other modes more akin with your spirit's life. Only grow. 1. Might not one try this among other things, at least for a little while—say for one week—that one shall take a strong morning thought concerning it. 2. Then, in the next place, let there be an actual arrangement of things, in so far as he has the power—of the employments and circumstances of the day—with express view to the accomplishment of this the supreme purpose. 3. If in the general review and arrangement of the life some things are found, perhaps in the very structure of it, or hanging closely to the structure, which are seen to be hindrances, then let them be laid aside without reserve, without delay. A thing may not be a sin, and yet it may serve the sinful cause as effectually as if it were. If you planted apple trees in your orchard in the hope of feasting your eyes in a while with their wealth of blossom and heaping your baskets with the sweet-smelling fruit, would you hang weights on the branches to see how much they would bear and still grow? Would you gather up the withered branches and hook them on to the fresh green ones? If you did they might not kill them, but would they not mar the beauty, would they not hinder the growth? It may seem to be hardly necessary to say anything regarding the renunciation of sin as such. We have spoken of hindrances both slight and serious. Now let me say that a man should hold himself ready to take all gracious helps for gracious growing. These helps are manifold and very near. It is therefore exceedingly important that the soul should be in a receptive state. Everything about the kingdom of grace is in such a state of readiness that in a moment God can give help if the soul is prepared to take it. Now to be ready does not mean having an assemblage of great thoughts in the mind. It does not mean having the feelings or the frame of the heart in a theological or so-called evangelical state. It means being humble and looking up with desire to God. One more hint. It is this. That we should maintain a constant connection with the fountain-head of grace in God by everything which constitutes prayer. God's windows are open. God's fountains are flowing. God's lights are streaming, and His vital airs are breathing forth, and every prayerful spirit will catch a double measure of those heavenly gifts and treasures as they come. II. INDUCEMENTS. 1. The first is the ease with which this growing can be accomplished when we heartily incline to it. If we would but hold ourselves in simplicity in the garden of God, and abide where we are planted, by His rivers of water, the fruit would be in season and the leaf would never wither. 2. Another inducement is found in the principle of necessary growth which belongs to every rational soul. We must grow in something, and if not in grace, you know in what the growth will be. "Ye therefore, beloved, beware, lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness." And now, when you see the danger, how are you to act to avoid it? "Grow in grace." That will keep you safe and well—in the right faith, in the right practice. If we do not believe the truth and grow in that we shall soon be heretics, holding fallacies, believing lies. If we do not love the Lord Jesus Christ, and grow by that pure and infinite affection, the longing, unportioned heart

will soon have another in His place. It will wind itself, like the ivy, around anything that comes, be it no better than mouldering wall or rotting tree, rather than live in vacuity or sink into utter negation. We must grow; then let our growing be in lily-like beauty, in cedar strength, in "smell as Lebanon." Every other kind of growth is uncertain, limited, transient. But growth in grace is for ever; there is nothing in grace which indicates, far less necessitates, decay. It is for every place; for land and sea, for earth and heaven. It is for all time, now and evermore. It is for the whole nature of man—body, soul, and spirit. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *The growth of grace* :—I. WHAT IS MEANT BY THEIR GROWING IN GRACE.

1. They must exercise grace more constantly. 2. Uniformity as well as constancy is implied. Some shine in one grace and some in another, while very few shine in all the beauties of holiness. II. WHY GROWTH IN KNOWLEDGE IS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO THE GROWTH IN GRACE. 1. Knowledge tends to increase their obligations to grow in grace. The knowledge of duty always increases an obligation to do it. 2. Divine knowledge not only increases the obligations of Christians to grow in grace, but actually increases the holiness of all their holy affections. The degree of holiness in every exercise of love to God is always in proportion to the light or knowledge which the person has at the time of exercising that particular grace. A Christian has a much clearer and more extensive view of God at one time than at another, and his love is always virtuous in exact proportion to the degrees of his present knowledge. One exercise of faith is more virtuous than another, because the believer may have much greater knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ at one time than he has at another. The same holds true of submission, joy, gratitude, and every other Christian grace. The celebrated Howard, who spent his property and his life in relieving the objects of charity in Britain and in various other parts of Europe, was a man of benevolence, and his benevolence was in proportion to his knowledge. As he had a far more extensive view of the miseries of mankind than Christians in general, so his exercises of kindness and compassion were much more virtuous than theirs towards similar objects. III. THE IMPORTANCE OF THEIR GROWING IN BOTH THESE RESPECTS. 1. The honour of religion requires Christians to grow in knowledge and grace. Though the men of the world are disposed to despise religion, yet they are constrained to respect it in those professors who appear to be both knowing and growing Christians. 2. It is of great importance that Christians should grow both in knowledge and in grace, not only on the account of others, but on their own account. (1) For, in the first place, their growth in these respects will be the most effectual security against the gross and dangerous errors to which they are continually exposed in their present imperfect state. (2) Growth in knowledge and grace will happily tend to remove darkness and doubts from the minds of Christians. (3) Furthermore, growth in knowledge and grace will prepare Christians for the delightful and acceptable performance of every duty. (4) It is, finally, of great importance that Christians should make continual advances in knowledge and grace to prepare them for the closing scene of life. If they neglect to improve their minds in knowledge and their hearts in holiness they may expect to live in bondage and die in darkness, for Christians commonly die very much as they live. IMPROVEMENT. 1. If knowledge be necessary to promote the growth of grace, then the most instructive preaching must be the most profitable. 2. If religious knowledge be conducive to the growth of religious affections, then that religious conversation among Christians is the most useful which is the most instructive. 3. If Divine knowledge has a tendency to promote all the Christian graces and virtues, then growing Christians have an increasing evidence of their good estate. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*)

Growth :—I. I ask, first, INTO WHAT WE ARE TO GROW? Now, the Revised Version throws some light upon the connection of the two things specified in my text by a very slight but significant alteration. It reads, "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour." Both are connected with Him; He is the source of the grace; He is the object of the knowledge. Thus we get the thought that all our Christian progress, in its deepest meaning, consists in penetrating more deeply into Christ, and what He has and is. We hear a great deal about "progress" in these days; and very much of it consists in departure from Jesus Christ. Those of us who know and possess most of Him have but a drop from the great ocean; one sparkle from the star; a pittance from the storehouse. We have an infinite treasure, and our growing wealth consists in our pressing further into its rooms filled with bullion, and taking more and more of Him into ourselves. For, again, the true notion of Christian progress consists in the growing reception of a gift. We

advance, not by our own unaided efforts. Reception is growth; and the more we open our hearts to receive, the more we advance in the Christian life. Instead of toilsomely trying to struggle up the steep mountain, we are borne up on wings as eagles. Hence the blessed distinctive mark of Christian progress is that, in the midst of the most strenuous efforts, there may be perpetual calm. To have more of Christ—that is growth. But if we look at the two points which the apostle separates here, a word may be said about each of them. Our reception of Jesus Christ is a growing reception of His grace. Now, “grace” here seems to mean, not so much His undeserved love to inferiors, as the consequences of that love in His gifts to us. Or, to put it into other words, what is meant by “the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” in this connection is the bestowing upon us, in our spirits, that we may work them out and manifest them in our lives, all the excellences and virtues of a Christlike character. And I lay this on your hearts, that growth in grace is not so much the blessedness of private, personal experience, or the welling up of certain emotions in heart and mind, as conduct in the life, aspiring after, and showing in exercise “whatsoever things are lovely and of good report.” If these things be in you, and grow in you, you are growing in grace. Then consider the other side of this exhortation—grow in the “knowledge of Christ.” That probably concerns mainly what we call intellectual processes, and yet not altogether. For if it is a Person that is known, then the process of knowing cannot be altogether a mere matter of dry brain-work. It may be enough to begin the Christian life that a man should have but a little acquaintance with Jesus Christ, but there is not enough to keep it up unless that acquaintance is ever growing, becomes tenderer, deeper, quieter, more assured, more impossible to be ever altered. There is no fear of exhausting Christ. But we may look at this exhortation in a slightly different way. “Grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ” means not only grow in personal acquaintance with Him, but grow in the perception of the truths which are embodied in His person and work. Now, there is a great deal of so-called progress in Christian knowledge which largely consists in getting away from the initial truths and going out into other regions. That is not growth; that is decay. For the initial truths are the most important truths, and when a man has learned that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” he has learned what only needs to be pondered upon and followed out, and above all lived by, in order that it shall open into a boundless universe of truth and wisdom. Progress into Christ is like that of the bee that buries itself more deeply into the flower, and draws honey from its innermost recesses. First Christ may be seen as but a speck, then He is a disc of brightness in the dark, and then he is a flaming sun that lightens all the sky.

II. **How ARE WE TO GROW?** My text is a commandment; therefore growth comes through our own efforts. Now, there are many metaphors in the New Testament for this conception of Christian progress. One set of them represents it as being spontaneous, automatic, effortless. As, for instance, when our Lord says, “First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear”; there is no effort there. But that is only one side of the truth. Another side to the answer to the question, *How we are to grow?* is involved, as I have just said, in the fact that we are commanded to do so. So, very characteristically, when the Apostle Paul speaks of this same subject he rarely uses the metaphor of growth. And what are the figures which he prefers? The race, which implies strenuous strain of the muscles, and is not to be won without effort, dust, and sweat. The fight, for there is resistance to be faced and overcome. With these figures my text falls in, and suggests that there can be no growth in the Christian life without strenuous endeavour. No doubt the progress of the Christian life consists mainly in reception, but reception is not passive. If you do not hold the cup out, it will not be filled. What, then, have we to do? First, and mainly, to keep very near to our Lord. Communion with Jesus Christ is the secret of all growth. If we are close by Him, He will pour Himself into our hearts. Food is needed for growth. If a Christian starves his soul by neglecting to feed on the bread which came down from heaven, no wonder that he is stunted. Exercise is essential for growth. Unused muscles atrophy, like the fakir’s arm that has been held up for twenty years in one position, and now is stiff and rigid as a bar of iron. Use the grace that you have, and practise the truth that you are sure of, and the grace will grow and other truths will be made clear. III. **What HAPPENS TO US IF WE DO NOT GROW?** My text begins with a “but,” and that throws us back to what goes before. The connection which is thus established is very noteworthy and monitory. “Beware lest ye also . . . fall from your own steadfastness; but

grow." So, then, the only way to prevent falling is growth; and if you are not growing, you are certainly falling. No weight will stand at rest on an inclined plane. If it is not being hauled up it will be hurtling down. The student who is not advancing in his science will forget what he has learned. Water that stagnates gathers a scum. The talent that is wrapped in a napkin rusts; and the oxidising diminishes its weight and also dims its brightness. I feel that all our churches are full of cases of arrested development. Let me put a plain question: Are we more like Jesus Christ than we were a year ago? Let us remember that the process of growth begun here will go on for ever. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Growth:—I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GROWTH. 1. The first characteristic of growth that we would notice is its silence. It is of all things the most calm, the most quiet, the most dignified. Whatever else may give rise to agitation and commotion and excitement, it is not spiritual growth. To this the analogy of nature clearly points. This the Great Teacher Himself flatly affirms. "The Kingdom of God," He says, "cometh not with observation." Silently the Spirit of Truth makes use of the instrumentality of the truth in communicating to our nature that life without which we know not what it is to live. Silently the same Spirit helps us to draw from the storehouse of the truth the nourishment that is needful to sustain and strengthen the life that has been given. Thus it is that the process of spiritual growth begins, and thus it is that it is carried onward and forward toward a higher and fuller development. 2. A second characteristic of growth is, that it is a gradual process. People sometimes feel discouraged by the littleness of their attainments in the Christian life and the tardiness of their spiritual growth, and too often there is cause for humiliation on this score; but, for my part, I would prefer the slowest rate of progress that is compatible with growth to that unnatural rapidity of development that is sure to fall into rapid consumption. If the progress of the cornstalk which comes to maturity in a few months be scarcely measurable at the interval of a week, and if the progress of the oak tree which comes to maturity in a century or more be barely observable in a year, what are we to say of that spiritual growth which shall not be consummated and completed until all the cycles and the æons of eternity have run their course, and become buried in the bosom of the infinite past? If the interval at which progress may be measured and ascertained is to be lengthened in proportion to the period of growth, how long must that interval be in the case of the Christian's advancement in the life divine? 3. There are many other characteristics of growth, but of these we shall mention only one, and that is the tendency of growth whenever found to develop in a definite direction. Nature has a certain model or type to which the growth of the seed must conform. And she keeps that before her, and to the best of her ability she builds up blade and stalk and ear after the fashion of this particular model. So it is with the acorn. It grows after a long lapse of years into an oak. This is the type toward which nature was working all the time. To the filling up of this model the growth of the tree always tended. So it is with everything else in nature. So it is with the Christian. Spiritual growth is in a definite direction. It tends to a perfect type. It advances in the direction of Christ. II. This brings us naturally to consider in the next place the CONDITIONS OF GROWTH. 1. There is first the condition of previous life. As well expect a corn seed to grow into an oak as expect the man who is destitute of spiritual life to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." How does that life become ours? It is not ours by nature. It is ours only in union with Christ. 2. The other condition of growth to which we would refer is the presence of favourable surroundings, or to put it in the language of modern science, the existence of an appropriate "environment." Spiritual life is what you might call a hardy plant. It will grow in almost any situation, in castle and cottage, under peasant's roof-tree, under monarch's dome, in the shop and the counting-house and the study, in the factory and the market, and the farm. But when all this has been allowed, it must still be admitted that neither soil nor atmosphere in this world is such as to ensure a perfect growth. The perfect type cannot be cultivated in this unsuitable soil and in this unfavourable climate. It needs to be transplanted to another sphere, to a more kindly soil and to a more congenial clime before the perfect ideal can be approached or approximated. Meantime it is our duty and our privilege, by Divine grace, to make the most of the circumstances in which we find ourselves here. But further, we are to grow in the knowledge of Christ. And how do you grow in the knowledge of a person? By associating with him. By attending carefully to the different ways in which he reveals himself. If you would know Christ you must make Him

your constant companion and counsellor, you must speak with Him, and above all you must hear Him speak with you. (*W. J. Lowe, M.A.*) *The means of growth in grace*.—I. THE ORDINANCES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT ARE MEANS OF IMPROVEMENT IN RELIGION. 1. Divine revelation, by its influence on the understanding, the heart, the will, and the conscience of man, in every condition of life, promotes the Christian's growth in holiness, in comfort, and in usefulness. 2. The sacraments are means of improvement in religion. 3. Conversation among private Christians is one of the means of growth in knowledge, in holiness, and in usefulness. It is itself a part of our religious enjoyments; and the means of increasing both the desire and the capacity for more enjoyment. 4. Prayer. II. JUDICIOUS REFLECTIONS UPON OUR PERSONAL CONCERNS, IN THE LIGHT OF DIVINE REVELATION, HAVE A GREAT INFLUENCE UPON OUR RELIGIOUS IMPROVEMENT. 1. Let us consider the sinfulness of our disposition and deportment. 2. A due consideration of God's providence respecting us tends to our personal progress in true religion. 3. Meditations on the love of God are conducive to the improvement of the Christian character. 4. Judicious reflections upon our own mortality, and the future state which we are daily approaching, have a tendency to prepare us for both. III. DIVINE INFLUENCES ARE REQUIRED AND EMPLOYED IN THE PROGRESSIVE IMPROVEMENT OF THE SAINTS. 1. The Spirit presents to the saints the proper objects of pursuit. 2. The Spirit directs the affections of the heart to spiritual objects. 3. Divine influence strengthens the saints for every duty. Conclusion: 1. I observe that there are different degrees of gracious attainments, and I urge upon all ranks the duty of further progress—"Grow in grace." 2. Be not discouraged although your progress in religion is neither as uniform nor as rapid as you first expected it should actually prove. (*A. McLeod, D.D.*) *Growth in the grace of Christ*.—1. Have we not need to grow in the lowliness of Christ? 2. The unselfishness of Christ is brought out by the evangelists in a striking manner. 3. An uncompromising enemy of Pharisaism and all hypocrisy, there was not the slightest taint of cynicism or misanthropy in Christ. 4. Notice one more outstanding feature in the character of Christ—His beautiful enthusiasm in the cause—that is, our cause—which He has espoused. Such an example of joyful self-sacrifice the world never witnessed before, and never will do again. "Grow in the grace of Christ," that is, if true Christians, we have the grace of Christ in some germinal measure: but that is not enough, there must be growth in it, and continual growth in it. To a sincere follower of Christ there can be no contentment with partial growth. (*W. Skinner.*) *Growth in grace by ordinary means*.—This higher life is attained and maintained chiefly by the diligent and right use of ordinary means—prayer, praise, worship, reading the Word, &c. Extra means may stimulate, but they do not largely feed; hence, those who principally depend on the irregular, the sensational means, are always spiritually poor and feeble. The stimulant is in excess of the nutriment, and is followed by reaction and exhaustion. All God's highest and best works are accomplished by ordinary means, by light, and heat, and moisture; by regular and orderly growth. The thunder, whirlwind, and flood, though useful at the time, yet contribute but a small share in effecting the grand result of Nature's processes. It is so in the spiritual world. The thing most needed is not extra means, but extra diligence in the use of ordinary means. (*R. Chew.*) *And in the knowledge of our Lord . . . Jesus Christ.*—*Growth in grace and knowledge*.—The best persons have need of improvement. The possibility of growing in grace will be readily admitted by the true Christian. But what is meant by growing in the knowledge of Christ? 1. By the knowledge spoken of, first, we may understand the evidences of the Christian religion. 2. But that knowledge in which Christians should grow may be taken to include, or even to consist of, a familiar acquaintance with the contents of the Bible, both historical and prophetic, doctrinal and practical. 3. There is a species of knowledge in its very nature progressive, and which above all other knowledge it concerns us to acquire; I mean self-knowledge. Our growth in this will also cause us to grow in the knowledge of Christ, and show us the need we have of a Redeemer. But there is another branch of self-knowledge equally proper for man to study; I mean not the weakness of his nature, but the strength. As none ever pushed his capacity for intellectual improvement as far as it was able to extend, so in matters of morality, few or none ever exerted their strength as far as it would have carried them in the pursuit of virtue. (*A. Gilson, M.A.*) *Growing in the knowledge of Christ*.—I. WHAT IT IS TO GROW IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST. 1. The knowledge of Christ is of the greatest excellency. Other kind of knowledge is like light from the stars; this like beams

from the sun. To know Christ assimilates and makes us like Him. 2. The knowledge of Christ is of absolute necessity. 3. The knowledge of Christ is by supernatural revelation. 4. The knowledge of Christ was communicated in a degree under the Old Testament. 5. The revelation of Christ under the New Testament is more clear. Therefore to be ignorant of Him is the more without apology. 6. All true believers in Christ have some knowledge of Him (Rom. x. 14). 7. Those who know most of Christ know Him but in part. Therefore are they to be urged to grow in knowledge. (1) Growing in the knowledge of Christ implies a fuller apprehension of His Godhead. (2) A clearer sight of His humanity. (3) A more plain discerning and full persuasion that He was foreordained to be a Redeemer. (4) A greater insight into His sufferings. (5) A more fruitful eyeing of His resurrection and going to His Father. (6) Greater satisfaction about His imputed righteousness. (7) A more constant and fiducial eyeing of His intercession, and the pity and compassions of Him that intercedes. (8) Being better acquainted with His great power, and continual presence with His Church which is so nearly related to Him. (9) A better understanding of Him as "Mediator of the New Covenant." (10) A more earnest looking for His appearing. II. WHAT PROPERTIES ARE REQUIRED IN THIS KNOWLEDGE. 1. This knowledge of Christ should grow more and more certain. 2. It should more and more humble the Christian. 3. It should grow more spiritual. 4. It should encourage to a more settled reliance upon Him. 5. It should raise Him higher and higher in Christians' estimation. 6. It should have a great aspect upon whatever else is revealed in the Word of God. 7. It should be operative still in a greater measure. 8. It should cause great glorying and joy. III. How to INCREASE AND GROW IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. 1. Be sensible of your remaining ignorance. 2. Compare all other knowledge with this, and see the vast difference in point of excellency. 3. You must not lean to your own parts and understandings. 4. Heedfully attend to the word of the truth of the gospel. 5. Look unto Jesus Himself (Col. ii. 3). 6. Cry for more knowledge, and eye the promise of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. 7. Take heed of seducing spirits. 8. Abstain from worldly and fleshly lusts. 9. Associate yourselves with those who have a great measure of the knowledge of Christ. 10. Let your end in desiring a greater degree of the knowledge of Christ be right. Not that you may be puffed up in your own minds, or admired of men; but that Christ may be more admired and esteemed by you. IMPROVEMENT. 1. To unbelievers. (1) Christ is willing to receive the very worst of you, upon you returning and believing. (2) Christ is willing to give Himself to you. 2. To saints. (1) Improve the knowledge of Christ with reference to God Himself. (2) To the law of God. (3) To sin. (4) To angels both good and bad. (5) To this present world. (6) To duties, grace, and perseverance. (7) To comfort. (*N. Vincent, M.A.*) *Growth in the knowledge of God*:—To increase in the knowledge of God is distinctly commanded, not in this passage alone, but in very many. The progress of the mind in the knowledge of physical truth, scientific truth, depends very much upon the exercise of the senses upon matter; but the growth of knowledge in moral truth depends upon the exercise of moral feelings. While sense is the source of physical or scientific knowledge, disposition is the source of the knowledge of moral truth. Growth in the knowledge of a Divine Being unites both of these. 1. The earliest knowledge which we have of Divine existence is derived, undoubtedly, from teachers and parents. It differs, therefore, in children, according to the instruction which they receive. It is ampler or scantier, it is more wisely or less wisely imparted, according to circumstances. If the notion entertained by children could be analysed, I think it would be found to consist largely of the social and moral qualities which exist in the family, framed and bordered with their imaginations, in which physical qualities largely inhere. 2. I suspect that the next stage of growth consists in clothing these abstract notions, which we gain very early, and which are taught out of catechisms, with the facts of the history of the Lord Jesus Christ as they are narrated by the evangelists. So that it may be said of hundreds of people, that their God is literally, yet entombed in the Bible. They do not use these records as building materials out of which to develop an ever-increasing conception of heavenly excellence. 3. But if one be of a devout nature, and he be earnestly alive to moral growth, then his reading and his childhood instruction, after being subject to reflection, to mental digestion, will carry him forward one step further in the growth in the knowledge of God. His conception of the Divine nature will begin to enlarge and fill out in every direction if only there is a real, active, earnest moral life going on within him. In this work the imagination will

be the architect, reason will be the master-builder, and the materials will come largely from experience. Men's minds are magnets. One man going into the Bible, or into the realm of experience, his mind seeks that which shall feed his strongest faculties—his ideality, his self-esteem, his conscience, and his reason; and he draws those elements out, and leaves all the others. He sees those, and feels those, and he is astonished if anybody can resist the evidence which is so irresistible to him. He has a Calvinistic conception of God which is overwhelming to him, and to every other man who is organised just as he is. But here is another man that stands near him whose magnet draws another kind of filings, and who is just as true to himself. He has an inward want of a conception that is all beaming, and genial, and sweet, and tender. He does not disbelieve in righteousness, nor in conscience, nor in law, nor in government; but he is relatively insensitive to these as he is sensitive to those other elements. This man's constitutional endowment draws to him all that goes to make up this partialism, and he is amazed to hear one talk so like a fool as his brother does. He has read the Bible, and he has seen no such evidence as that which his brother professes to have seen. Why, to him it is as clear as noonday that God is all summer. A third man, standing and looking upon these disputants, says, "They are fools, both of them. I do not think God cares much about government, or much about this benevolence. It seems to me that God is a lover of things in order, full of taste, full of proportion, and full of harmony. He is all music, and all blossom, and all beauty as I conceive Him." That part of this man's mind which craves these things being most sensitive, he takes just that class of materials. His magnet draws those things and no others. 4. There is a powerful influence at work in the formation and growth of the knowledge of God as derived from experience. If a person lies sick, to him all the world is cut off, all hopes are ended, all life seems sad. He does not turn to the jubilant side of God. He turns to those sides on which God declares that He comforts the sorrowing as a mother comforts her children. Another person is put in circumstances by God's providence where he needs perpetual nerve and perpetual enterprise. The sterner, the more active elements of the Divine nature, are congenial to his want and to his experience. And so he ponders these most, and comes to these most. Is one discouraged? He looks for something in his God that shall encourage him. Is one sad from remorse and repentance? He looks to the forgiving side of God. Is one set to defend the truth in a period of backsliding and persecution? He instinctively goes after the prophet's God. 5. One of the most powerful influences, aside from those which I have mentioned, for the shaping of our conceptions and the development of our knowledge of God, is the necessity or the attempt to employ the Divine nature in the rescue and education of our fellow-men. To bring the Divine nature home to all the phases of character which surround us, to all the conditions of life, and to the subjugation of the strong attributes of the mind; to find men just where they are in all their infinite variations of condition; to find that which arrests their attention; to find that which shall inspire in them some moral reaction; to find that which shall feed them—this is one of the most potential of all influences for developing in you the growth of the Divine idea. For there is no material like human nature, and there is no dignity like working in it, and there is no grandeur like success in thus working. It is declared that he who saves a soul from death shall shine like the stars of the firmament in the future kingdom of God. These are the principal ways that suggest themselves to me in which we grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And if we be living Christians, true men, we are growing. Our conception of the Divine nature never remains at the same stage for any considerable length of time. It is enlarging itself by experience; it is enriching itself by the position and circumstances in which we are placed, so that no man can compass in words what he believes of God. If he believes all things that come through his intensified affections, through his various wants, and through the wants of those round about him, these, methodised by reflection, and vitalised by imagination, constitute an air-filling notion of God, so vast and so continually changing that anybody would say, "It is impossible for a man to write what he thinks or to say what he thinks"—as we should suppose it would be if God is infinite and is overflowing according to the conception which the thought of infinity inspires. And so every creative mind, every active mind, that is really in union with God, by prayer and affinity, and is working like Him, as well as with Him, and day by day is still augmenting in these various ways his realisations of God, having the Divine spirit in him, and growing evermore up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Jesus Christ—every such man has a growth of which he

himself is not conscious, and which he never can and never could represent to others. This view should lead persons to study and consider what their condition is—whether they have any living influential conception of God. You have been taught that He is the Ruler, that He is the Governor. Is He your Guide? Is He your Master? Is He your Friend? Is He your Companion? Does He smile on you? Does He converse with you? Is He the Toiler with our toil? Does He rest when you rest, and travel when you travel? Do you live and move and have your being in Him? If so, you have a God, and you have reason for endless congratulation and joy. One evidence that we have a true conception of God is, that it is growing. Why, the whip that stood before my door has become a bush; and the bush has become a large shrub, and the shrub is mounting up into a tree, and the tree shall yet spread its branches wide abroad. And that little germ which first came up, and that vast tree, are the same, although they have differed every year more and more by development and growth. And so does our conception of God grow abroad, multiplying its branches, and sub-dividing them into infinite twigs, but they all cohere in the unity of the original idea of conception. Growth does not imply the abandonment of our former notions, then. It is simply the unfolding, in a line or direction, more, not less, and differing, not by rejecting one element and inserting another, but by making each element that was true yesterday more true to-day by fulness, variety, and application in all directions. And this variety, renewing multiplicity and intensity of conception, is of more benefit to man than are selectness and definiteness of statement. That which you see most in God I am not bound to beat down because I see another quality more than you see it, and do not see the one that you see as much as you see it. Men are the complements of each other. Some men interpret God through beauty. They are my brothers, though I may be deficient in interpreting the Divine nature through this quality. I am your brother, though I may not gain the same conception of God that you do. One stands in Milan Cathedral, under the nave, and looks up into those mysterious depths until he seems as though he would exhale and fly into space. There, in the brooding darkness, the feeling of reverence weighs upon his very soul. And the Milan Cathedral to him is that which it seems to be when the low-lying sun has shot through the window and kindled the whole interior. At the very same moment there stands upon the roof another man, and about him are those three thousand statues carved and standing in their several niches and pinnacles; and everything looks like the bristling frost-work in a forest of icicles; and far above and far on every side swell the lines of beauty. How different is his conception from that of the man who stands in the nave below! But, at the same time, a man stands outside looking at the cathedral's fretted front and its wondrous beauty and diversity; while a fellow-companion and traveller is on the other side looking also at the exterior. Here are four men—one before the structure, one behind it, one on the roof, and one in the interior! and each of them, as he gives his account of the Milan Cathedral, speaks of that which made the strongest impression upon his mind, and that most carried him away. But it takes the concurrent report of these four men to represent that vast work of architecture. Is it so with a man-built cathedral? and shall it not be so with the mighty God who is from eternity to eternity? Is there any man that can take the reed of his understanding and lay it along the line of God's latitude and longitude as if he were measurable as a city? Is there any man that can cast his plummet into the depths of the Infinite and say, "I have sounded God to the bottom"? Each man has that conception of God which he is capable of receiving. This is added to the common stock. And it is these concurrent differences, these harmonious separations, that make the symphony of knowledge. We do not want unison: we want harmony. Harmony is made by different parts, and not by the repetition of the same sounds and tones. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Growth in the knowledge of Christ:*—At first sight it would appear as if Peter had inverted the natural order of things when he puts growth in the "knowledge" of Christ, after and not before, growth in the "grace" of Christ. How can we grow in the grace of Christ if we do not first possess a knowledge of Him? To know Christ, in the highest sense of that word, we must first seek to grow in the grace which distinguished Him so signally among the children of men. I stand with a great artist before a famous picture. I make bold in my ignorance of art to confess that I can see nothing extraordinary in it at all. "What," exclaims my companion, somewhat indignantly but with great enthusiasm, "don't you observe the splendid manipulation?" and forth he launches into a glowing analysis of the picture before us. While he is explaining I can discern more clearly

than I did before what made the picture famous in the eyes of others, but yet at the close I had to exclaim, "Well, my friend, I have no doubt I would speak as you have done if I had your eyes, but I confess I don't see what makes you so enthusiastic. I should much like, however, to possess your knowledge and enthusiasm, and shall be glad if you will only show me how." "There is only one way of possessing the knowledge," replies my companion; "you must begin to learn the first elements of drawing and colouring, and as you progress in the acquisition of the art of painting you will know." Without striving to grow in the graces of the painter's pencil, you will never understand the feelings of the painter himself. Turning now to moral qualities we are not infrequently surprised by the strength and the beauty of character which some of our fellow-creatures display. Here is one with a spirit which nothing can ruffle or disturb. To us, so easily provoked, so hasty to resent, so strong in speech "not seasoned with salt," that person is a mystery. "There is but one way to a knowledge or understanding of this man. We must begin where he began, by curbing the hasty passions of the heart, by continuous efforts to return good for evil, and then, by striving, to grow in his grace, we will be in a position to grow in knowledge of him. So it is with regard to the knowledge of Christ. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." Before we can be said to know the spirit, the life, of our Master, or enter upon the full possession of the truths He came to reveal, we must first strive to grow in the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. By knowledge of Christ it will be seen that we mean such an entering into sympathy with the springs and motive forces of His life as shall, by its gradual increase, lead us into the perfection of spiritual life.

1. Those who have had much to do with newly-quickenened souls, or those who can recall the first experiences of the Divine life within their own hearts, will bear me out in this, that love to Christ is, at such a time, the one absorbing passion of the soul. The mind seems able only to grasp one truth—and it is a grand one—"Jesus so loved me that He gladly endured the shame and agony of the Cross in order to save me." Love is the first beautiful impulse of the heart. It is the root of all the virtues. It may be blind in the first stages of its existence, but it soon attains, at least, to partial vision—vision which will grow from more to more if rightly used. We often love each other impulsively, but there is little harm done if the impulse will but lead up to reason. But the test of growth in the knowledge of Christ is when we love Him for what He is in Himself, and not so much for what He has done. The latter is not free from a taint of selfishness. Applying this test to Christ, do I love Him most because He is the incarnation of virtue and goodness? Then is my love not altogether worthy of Him. It has, at any rate, lost the alloy of impulse and selfishness, so apt to spoil the most precious ore of the heart.

2. The soul does not long remain under the genuine influence of Christ when it learns that to live like Him is better than simply to love Him, however ardently. It is necessary that the Saviour should be first revealed to the sinner in the first act of salvation, but once this is accomplished the Teacher sent from God leads the soul up from himself, so to speak, to a knowledge of the Holy Ghost and God the Father. When adopted into the family of God, we have many graces lying dormant, and not a few faculties impaired or withered by courses of sin. We need the Holy Ghost to quicken those graces in life, and to put new life into those withered faculties. This fact we will come to recognise only when comparing our lives with that of Christ: we then see our barrenness and emptiness. Love for Him will lead us in that case to desire to be like Him. But to live the life of Christ we need a nature balanced and sustained like His. How shall we reach this most desirable state of life? By the influence of the Holy Spirit alone. "He will take the things of Christ and show them unto us." But to live this life, what is it? Simply this. I recognise that God has given me powers and virtues as well as the opportunity to exercise them, and that, therefore, He means me to use them for some purpose. Now, what is that purpose? The answer is found in Christ. Here is a Divinely inspired and quickened life; how is it spent? In making sorrow less, in making joy more to abound. That is the simple philosophy of the life of Christ. This then is to be my life—a continual expenditure of vital forces in order to complete the work which Christ began—the redemption of the whole world from the blight of sin. Can any grander conception of life enter your imagination? Did we but possess more of the spirit of our Master we would gladly suffer a daily crucifixion if thereby we could bless the race. Yes, a true-hearted heroic man will always consider that good service is infinitely better than joy which is selfish, and will therefore look upon life as the vantage ground of Divine service and not of selfish pleasure. This we learn; up to

this state we may hope to climb by growing in the knowledge of Christ. 3. Life, then, to us should not, and in fact does not pass like a dream of bliss. No one who has eyes to see can ignore the cruel wrongs, the sickening spectacles of lust and crime with which the world is full. No one with ears to hear can deny that the air is full of discords, and the ear is often stretched and strained in vain to catch the undertone of harmony which some hope and some allege may be heard underneath. The penalty of growth in true life is growth in care, mental perplexity, and pain. The more we know, the more of mystery there is to us, the more Christ-like we are, the more sensitive we become to the desolation which sin has wrought in this beautiful world of ours. Hence we come to recognise the need of another truth which most likely has not hitherto come prominently in view—that for our life to be vigorous and well sustained under all circumstances we must have our faith firmly grounded in the Fatherhood of God. Resting by a firm faith on the omnipotence, the unerring wisdom, the infinite love of God, the heart will bravely face the blinding storm of life, heroically grapple with its mysteries, and hush its doubts and fears with the inspiring whisper, “The Father reigneth.” (*W. Skinner.*)

*On growth in the knowledge of Christ:—*I. To GIVE SOME ACCOUNT OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST. 1. The knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ is necessary to salvation. 2. The knowledge of Christ is attained by the study of the Holy Scriptures. 3. The saving knowledge of Christ is effectually obtained by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. 4. The knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ is desirable and delightful. II. What is implied in growing in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; or WHAT OF CHRIST HIS DISCIPLES should grow in the knowledge of. 1. They should grow in the knowledge of the Person of Christ. 2. Believers should grow in the knowledge of the love of Christ. 3. They should grow in the knowledge of the perfection of the righteousness of Christ. 4. They should grow in the knowledge of the word and way of Christ. III. To SPECIFY SOME OF THE EVIDENCES THAT THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST ARE GROWING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM. 1. He will be rising higher and higher in the estimation of your souls. 2. You will be growing in a filial dependence on Him. 3. The more you grow in the knowledge of Christ the more you will be assimilated to His glorious image. 4. The more you grow in the knowledge of Christ you will the more cheerfully worship, honour, and obey Him. (*John Jardine.*)

*Increase in the knowledge of Christ:—*When the Pilgrim Fathers first came to America they did not discover all—the iron, the coal, the natural gas. So with Christ. There are many needs in us of which the young convert dreams not. (*D. Watson.*)

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