

THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

THE PSALMS.

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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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THE PSALMS.

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PSALM LXXXIX.

VERS. 1-52. **I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever.**—*A majestic song*:—This psalm is one of the very choicest songs in the night. Midst a stream of troubled thoughts there stands a fair island of rescue and redemption, which supplies standing-room for wonder and worship; while the music of the words, like the murmuring of a river, sounds sweetly in our ears. The writer was bearing bitter reproach, and was almost broken-hearted by the grievous calamities of his nation. Yet his faith was strong in the faithfulness of God, and so he sang of the stability of the Divine covenant when the outlook of circumstances was dark and cheerless. Nor did he ever sing more sweetly than he sang in that night of his sorrow. **I. THE ETERNAL BUILDER, AND HIS WONDERFUL WORK** (ver. 2). I can see a vast mass of ruins. Heaps upon heaps they lie around me. A stately edifice has tottered to the ground. Some terrible disaster has occurred. There it lies—cornice, pillar, pinnacle, everything of ornament and of utility, broken, scattered, dislocated. The world is strewn with the *débris*. Journey where you will the desolation is before your eyes. Who has done this? Who has cast down this temple? What hand has ruined this magnificent structure? Manhood, manhood it is which has been destroyed, and sin was the agent that effected the fall. Alas for manhood that it should be thus fallen and destroyed! But what else do I see? I behold the great original Builder coming forth from the ivory palaces to undo this mischief; and He cometh not with implements of destruction, that He may cast down and destroy every vestige, but I see Him advancing with plummet and line, that He may rear, set up, and establish on a sure foundation a noble pile that shall not crumble with time, but endure throughout all ages. He cometh forth with mercy. So "I said" as I saw the vision, "Mercy shall be built up for ever." The psalmist has the idea of God's mercy being manifest in building, because a great breach has to be repaired, and the ruins of mankind are to be restored. As for building, it is a very substantial operation. A building is something which is palpable and tangible to our senses. We may have plans and schemes which are only visionary, but when it comes to building there is something real being done, something more than surveying the ground and drawing the model. And oh, what real work God has done for men! What real work in the gift of His dear Son! The product of His infinite purpose now becomes evident. He is working out His great designs after the counsel of His own will. A building is an orderly thing as well as a fixed thing. There is a scheme and design about it. Mercy shall be built. I see that it shall. This is no load of bricks shot out. It is polished stones builded one upon another. God's grace and goodness toward me have not come to me by chance, or as the blind distribution of a God who cared for all alike, and for none with any special purpose. No, but there has been as much a specialty of purpose to me as if I were the only one He loved, though, praised be His name, He has blessed and is blessing multitudes of others beside me. Now, think upon these words—"built up." It is not merely a long, low wall of mercy that is formed, to make an inclosure or to define a boundary, but it is a magnificent pile of mercy, whose lofty heights shall draw admiring

gaze, that is being built up. God puts mercy on the top of mercy, and He gives us one favour that we may be ready to receive another. Once again would I read this verse with very great emphasis, and ask you to notice how it rebukes the proud and the haughty, and how it encourages the meek and lowly in spirit. "I have said mercy shall be built up for ever." In the odification of the saints there is nothing else but mercy. I wish I had an imagination bold and clear, uncramped by all ideas of the masonry of men, free to expand, and still to cry, "Excelsior." Palaces, methinks, are paltry, and castles and cathedrals are only grand in comparison with the little cots that nestle on the plain. Even mountains, high as the Himalaya range or broad as the Andes, though their peaks be so lofty to our reckoning, are mere specks on the surface of the great globe itself, and our earth is small among the celestial orbs, a little sister of the larger planets. Figures fail me quite: my description must take another turn. I try, and try again, to realize the gradual rising of this temple of mercy which shall be built up for ever. Within the bounds of my feeble vision I can discern that it has risen above death, above sin, above fear, above all danger; it has risen above the terrors of the judgment day; it has outsoared the "wreck of matter and the crash of worlds"; it towers above all our thoughts. Our bliss ascends above an angel's enjoyments, and he has pleasures that were never checked by a pang; but he does not know the ineffable delight of free grace and dying love. The building-up will go on throughout eternity.

II. AN EVERLASTING SINGER (ver. 1). Here is a good and godly resolution: "I will sing." The singing of the heart is intended, and the singing of the voice is expressed, for he mentions his mouth; and equally true is it that the singing of his pen is implied, since the psalms that he wrote were for others to sing in generations that should follow. "I will sing." We cannot impart anything to the great temple which He is building; yet we can sit down and sing. This singing praise to God is a spiritual passion. The saved soul delights itself in the Lord, and sings on, and on, and on unwearily. "I will sing for ever," saith he. Not, "I will get others to perform, and then I will retire from the service"; but rather, "I will myself sing: my own tongue shall take the solo, whoever may refuse to join in the chorus. I will sing, and with my mouth will I make known Thy faithfulness." Now, note his subject. "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord." What, not of anything else? Are the mercies of the Lord his exclusive theme? "*Arma virumque cano*"—"Arms and the man, I sing," says the Latin poet. "Mercies and my God, I sing," says the Hebrew seer. "I will sing of mercies," says the devout Christian. This is the fount of mercy, whereof if a man doth drink he shall sing far better than he that drinketh of the Castalian fount, and on Parnassus begins to tune his harp. This singing of Ethan was intended to be instructive. How large a class did he want to teach? He intended to make known God's mercy to all generations. Modern thought does not adventure beyond the tithe of a century, and it gets tame and tasteless before half that tiny span of sensationalism has given it time to evaporate. But the echoes of truth are not so transient; they endure, and by means of the printing press we can teach generation after generation, leaving books behind us as this good man has bequeathed this psalm, which is teaching us to-night, perhaps more largely than it taught any generation nearer to him. Will you transmit blessed testimonies to your children's children? It should be your desire to do something in the present life that will live after you are gone. We instinctively long for a sort of immortality here. Let us strive to get it, not by carving our names on some stone, or writing our epitaphs upon a pillar, as Absalom did when he had nothing else by which to commemorate himself; but get to work to do something which shall be a testimony to the mercy of God, that others shall see when you are gone. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The uncovenanted mercies of God*:—Ethan was the author of this psalm. It belongs to the early reign of Rehoboam, and to the invasion of Shishak. As Ethan recalled and weighed the clauses of the covenant, and compared them with the political facts of this distressful year, his mind was tossed into an agitation and distress from which he could find no relief, save in the large adventure and conclusion of faith, that the calamities which had fallen on David's kingdom and seed were, after all, only the loving corrections by which God was chastening them for their transgressions; and that, therefore, so far from breaking, God was fulfilling His covenant with them. Even God's covenants with men are but particular instances of His general ways, of His dealings with humanity at large; so that, in the very fullest sense which the words can be made to bear, it is true that His mercy endures for ever, that His faithfulness

extends to all generations. There is a general impression abroad that a radical and vast difference obtains between what are called the covenanted and the uncovenanted mercies of God; that but for certain promises which He has made, and certain engagements into which He has entered, we should have little to hope for from Him. The doctrine of covenants plays, and must play, a large part in every system of theology. But every Divine promise is but a limited expression of a general principle. Every Divine covenant, even if it be made with a few, is nevertheless made for the benefit of the many, and can only be an instance of His ways, an illustration of a mercy as wide as the heavens, and of a faithfulness which extends to all generations of mankind. God can make no promise inconsistent with His character. Any momentary glimpse we can catch of God's attitude towards men reveals His constant and unchanging attitude. To every man who loves and trusts and serves Him He will be all that He was to David. . . . Who can deny the mercy of that high Will which made the law of retribution the law—or rather, one of the laws—of human life? As for the inexorable severity with which this law of retribution is administered, how can we but acknowledge that it needs to be administered with an invariable and constant severity? Take all the facts of human experience, then, and you will feel that there is mercy even in that law of retribution which seems most opposed to the rule of an Infinite Compassion and Love. If you believe in a work of redemption as well as in a law of retribution, there is absolutely no reason why you should not sing, with Ethan, of a mercy which is being built up for ever, and of a faithfulness which is establishing itself in the all-embracing heavens. (*Samuel Coz, D.D.*)

Ver. 2. **For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever.**—*The building up of a good government for the world*.—I. A good government for the world is a DESIRABLE THING. Human society would scarcely be possible without a government. II. A good government for the world is DESTINED TO BE ESTABLISHED (ver. 3). The Supreme here pledges in the most solemn way the establishing of a government in the world of which David's is a most imperfect type, viz. the moral reign of Christ. This reign will be the reign of truth and love, and will one day be commensurate with the race. III. A good government for the world will be REARED BY MERCY AND FAITHFULNESS. "Mercy" and "faithfulness" are to be the elements of which it is to be composed. As all the great mountains in nature are built up of certain elements, all grand and beneficent institutions in the world are built of mercy and faithfulness. (*Homilist.*) *The house of mercy* (to children):—Mercy is here compared to a building. I. THE BUILDER. Strangers when they visit this great metropolis, and see some of its remarkable buildings, such as St. Paul's Cathedral, for instance, very naturally ask, "Who was the builder of this beautiful edifice?" The answer would be, "Sir Christopher Wren." 1. A wise builder. 2. A mighty builder. II. THE NAME OF THE BUILDING. The house of mercy. 1. A very beautiful name. 2. A most just and proper name. Every little child who goes to the door of this House of Mercy, and asks admittance, is instantly received; and, when admitted, that child receives from Him who raised the building the choicest mercies—the mercy of pardon, the mercy of acceptance, the mercy of adoption, the mercy of holiness, and of a title to heaven. III. THE FOUNDATION OF THE BUILDING. Jesus Christ (1 Cor. iii. 11). IV. THE APARTMENTS OF THE BUILDING. 1. The storeroom, containing precious food. The bread of life, etc. Also medicine for the sick and diseased. The balm of Gilead, etc. 2. The wardrobe, containing the robe of righteousness, the garments of salvation, etc. 3. The armoury (Eph. vi. 13–17). 4. The library, containing books of history; books of doctrine; books of promises; books of threatening (these are all bound in black, and are very dreadful-looking books, though of great importance); books of precepts; books of songs, and oh, what beautiful songs! the songs of David, and other sweet singers of Israel; books of prophecy; and books of experience, such as the Psalms, Lamentations, and Joh. V. THE EXCELLENCIES OF THE BUILDING. It is—1. Ancient. 2. Large. 3. Commodious. 4. Beautiful. 5. High. 6. Durable. If you look at a building in this city which is ten years old you will see that it shows the effects of the elements upon it; it bears traces of the frost and smoke and rain. But there is no change in this beautiful building. It is very commodious. There is every comfort within these walls for every one without exception. It is filled with light. It is warm. There is no cold winter within that noble edifice. VI. THE INHABITANTS OF THE BUILDING. 1. All forgiven. 2. All sons and daughters of the living God. 3. All beautiful—no deformity there.

4. All happy. VII. THE ROAD TO THE BUILDING. Every one who enters is convinced of three things:—1. That he is a sinner. 2. That he is in danger of hell. 3. That he will never be saved till he enters this Building of Mercy. VIII. THE DOOR OF THE BUILDING. The righteousness of Christ—what He did, became, and suffered. IX. THE SERVANTS EMPLOYED TO INVITE SINNERS TO ENTER THE BUILDING. (A. Fletcher, D.D.) **Thy faithfulness shalt Thou establish in the very heavens.—The establishment of God's faithfulness:**—God draws us into the conscious knowledge and enjoyment of His faithfulness—I. BY KEEPING THE PROMISES OF HIS GRACE TO US. II. BY ENGAGING US IN SPECIAL WORK. Though we have omnipotence on our side, God will employ the last ounce of our strength. He will not spare us thought, anxiety, trouble, endurance, labour, no, nor even some measure of disappointment—nothing that can conduce to make us workmen that need not be ashamed, and soldiers who can endure hardness. (J. P. Gledstone.) **God's faithfulness:**—That is a Christmas psalm chosen for the day, and it is the psalm of dauntless courage, for it is a song that sings always the lovingkindness of the Lord; it goes up out of the darkness of desolation, it sees no cause for cheerfulness ringing it round as it sings. The singer stands, he tells us, in the heart of a great dismay. The cause of God is in ruin and contempt and impotence and misery. And yet, and yet he has but one song, and he must sing it out in defiance of his generation. No dishonour shall defeat it, no darkness shall choke it, no doubt or hesitation, no soreness or anger shall cloud his upward look or hold down the outpouring of his soul. The old words shall sing out from his lips which have never yet failed down all the long years. We would turn to this singer of long ago to ask him how it was that he retained his heroic confidence. What was his secret, in the thick of those old-world troubles, by force of which he still sang on this unswerving chant of victory? Can he pass the secret on to us who need it so sorely? 1. First, he relies absolutely on a word that God has once uttered, on a pledge that God has given to him (vers. 3, 4). God has said it, God has sworn it. That is what he relies on! This looks so simple, but to estimate it aright let us recall that we touch here on that elementary conception of God which differentiated the Jew's religion from all others. The Jew laid hold of God by this primary title, that He was a God who kept His word. A righteous God, so he called Him, and by righteousness he meant a God whose word can be trusted, and a God who never failed His pledge. This is the vital significance of the Jew that he was the first who took God seriously, the first to believe that God meant what He said, that what He spoke He spoke with a real and fixed purpose, and having spoken He held Himself bound by His own pronouncement. 2. Secondly, to justify his own confident assurance, he corroborates his belief in the verbal consistency of God by looking to that other handiwork of His, the vast fabric of ordered Nature. There it moves in its superb persistence, the immovable witness to the unchanging loyalty of God. Everywhere among the sequence of infinite changes God's original creative word holds on changeless and true (vers. 8–11). Surely if a Jew had been allowed to know what we know of all that science tells us of the uniformities of Nature, of the persistence and conservation of force, he would have seen in these disclosures, not as we so stupidly do, the terms of a godless mechanism, but exactly the phrase that would best report his assurance of an imminent God. Everything that told him of the immutable permanence of a natural law beneath and through all change spoke to him directly of God Himself. Uniformity, persistence, conservation, yes, that is what he desires to find with all his soul in the world that God has made. That is the evidence he clings to of a God who keepeth His promise, whose word never faileth, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. 3. Thirdly, he finds the like witness yielded by the solid securities of history. "Thou hast subdued Egypt"—God has done it, and if He has done it, surely not in vain, surely not without a fixed and final purpose! A historic act like that is a pledge put down by God: "Hath He begun and shall He not finish?" Here again it is the faithfulness of God to which the appeal is made. "He keepeth His promise for ever," the promise sealed by His deeds; He will prove Himself consistent; if He take one step He will follow it by another; if He gives a decision He will hold to it. That is the significance of the actual deeds done in history. They are stakes laid down which cannot be withdrawn. They lay the honour and the power under obligation, and He cannot afford to retract. And God is honourable; He has a reputation which He will keep clear at all hazards. And God has made His choice; He has laid down His stakes, He has taken His side, He has ventured His honour, He did

it when He brought up Israel out of Egypt. He has done it since throughout the long story of His people whom He had fathered and shepherded, on whom He set His name; He has consummated this by the further steps taken when He went to give Israel a king and chose David for the kingdom. "Thou spakest," our psalm goes on, "Thou spakest sometimes in visions and said, I have found David," etc. All this has been done—it is down in the pages recorded in history which cannot be blotted out. What is done cannot be undone, and what God has done binds God as it binds a man. His will has gone out of it, He will never gainsay. That is the Divine freedom, that He binds Himself by His own deeds and His own words. His truth once more is His troth, His righteousness is the assurance that He will never fail to justify Himself. No, even if the witness of Nature were to fail, yet the witness of God's own acts in history would abide. God is true, God keeps His word. We want nothing further wherewith to meet the year before us. There may be anxieties and the sense of social trouble and a cloudy outlook, but nothing shall rob us of our song. (*Canon Scott Holland.*) *Divine faithfulness*:—A learned minister, attending an aged Christian in humble life, when in his last illness, remarked that the passage in Heb. xiii. 5, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," was much more emphatic in the original language than in our translation, inasmuch as it contained no fewer than five negatives in proof of the validity of the Divine promise, and not merely two, as it appears in the English version; intending by this remark to convey to him that, in consequence of the number of negatives, the promise was expressed with much greater force in the original language than in the English. The man's reply was very simple and striking: "I have no doubt, sir, that you are quite right, but I can assure you that if God had only spoken once I should have believed Him just the same."

Ver. 3. **I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn unto David My servant.**—*The covenant of redemption*:—The psalmist is anticipating the time when the families of mankind should be raised from a condition of spiritual ruin, when the covenant should be given back to them, whereby they should be brought back to a state of reconciliation and friendship with God. This rising fabric which the psalmist here contemplated, therefore, instead of being an edifice of temporal prosperity, appears before us as a great spiritual temple, of which the plan is laid in the eternal ages, and of which the building up and the completion is to be effected by the eternal Son of God. I. **THE ORIGIN OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE.** It was devised and set on foot by God Himself. It was not to propitiate the Father that Christ came into the world. It was that God so loved the world that He sent His Son into the world. Here, therefore, is our security. It is the Judge Himself signing the prisoner's release. It is the infinite Creditor Himself forgiving us all our debt. It is the King whose laws we had broken, against whose throne we had conspired, and whose sceptre we had cast aside; He it is who out of love and mercy to us, and in the councils of infinite wisdom, originated that covenant whereby we may be restored to His friendship and reconciliation. II. **WITH WHOM THIS COVENANT WAS MADE.** "My chosen,"—the eternal Son of God. Both actively and passively Christ manages the whole business of our salvation. It is therefore—1. Everlasting. 2. Perfect. 3. Sure. III. **FOR WHOSE BENEFIT THIS COVENANT WAS INTENDED.** (1 Tim. ii. 4; John iii. 16; 1 John ii. 2.) (*D. Moore, M.A.*)

Ver. 5. **And the heavens shall praise Thy wonders, O Lord.**—*The wondrousness of God*:—I. His wonderfulness is **THE INSPIRATION OF UNIVERSAL WORSHIP.** Awe, reverence, amazement, enter into the highest worship, but these could not exist if the object were fully comprehended. II. His wonderfulness is **SEEN IN HIS FAITHFULNESS.** How wonderful that He has remained unaltered and unalterable amidst all the changes of nature, all the revolutions of millenniums! Faithful ever, to Himself and His word, no swerving from His promises, no deviations from His plans. III. His wonderfulness is manifest in His **ABSOLUTE INCOMPARABLENESS.** (Isa. xl. 18; Deut. xxxiii. 29; Ps. xxxv. 10; lxxi. 19.) (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 6. **For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord?**—*The greatness of God*:—The true God, Sovereign of heaven and earth, is incomparably great—I. **IN HIS BEING AND EXISTENCE.** 1. Eternal. 2. Perfect. 3. Independent. 4. Unchangeable. There are no tenses with God—past, present, and to come; but

one eternal Now. II. IN HIS ATTRIBUTES AND PERFECTIONS. 1. Holiness. 2. Wisdom and knowledge. 3. Power. 4. Justice. 5. Patience. 6. Love and goodness. III. IN HIS WORKS. 1. Creation. 2. Providence. 3. Redemption and human salvation. Concluding inferences. 1. Is God so great?—what a horrid nature sin is of, and rebellion against such a God!—yes, horrid the sin and folly that attempts to oppose God! 2. If God be so great, what love, reverence, worship, and obedience we owe to Him! 3. Is God so great?—what must be His condescension to notice such creatures as we are! 4. If God be so great, what must it be to be under His wrath for ever! 5. If God be so great, what will it be to enjoy His love, favour, and presence for ever. (T. Jones.)

Ver. 7. **God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints.**—*A model social gathering:*—Men meet in vast multitudes for pleasure, for counsel, and for worship. The text indicates a social gathering of the highest type. I. **THE CHARACTERS UNITED IN THIS GATHERING.** The word "saint" means a sanctified or godly person. II. **THE DIVINE PRESENCE IN THIS GATHERING.** God is in this "assembly." All the members "are about Him." 1. There is more of God seen in these assemblies than can be seen elsewhere on earth. There is more of God seen in the thoughts, emotions, and aspirations of the holy soul than the brilliant firmament can reveal. 2. There is more of God felt in these assemblies than can be felt elsewhere on earth. III. **THE HEAVENLY SPIRIT PERVADING THIS GATHERING.** God is great—great in kindness there, and they have reverent gratitude; He is great in glory there, and they have reverent adoration. (*Homilist.*) *On the fear of God:*—I. **THE REASONS WHICH RENDER A GREAT FEAR OF GOD, IN RELIGIOUS SERVICES, NECESSARY AND BECOMING.** 1. The mysteriousness and unsearchableness of God, and of all those things which employ our mind in worship. 2. The infinite fulness of peculiar glory, which resides in the Divine Being. 3. His Majesty, as the Creator, Law-giver, and Judge of mankind. 4. The sublime majesty which appears in the character and procedure of God in the work of redemption. (1) Its first projection in the sovereign counsels of God. (2) The terrible events that have come to pass in subserviency to this work, and, as it were, to make room for its glory. (3) How shall we think or speak of that unspeakable majesty, which beams forth from the Son of God, when we contemplate Him as descending into our low nature, and accomplishing the mysterious purchase of salvation! (4) The awful majesty which attends the Spirit's work in applying redemption to the souls of the elect. II. **THE QUALITY OF THIS HOLY FEAR.** 1. Our fear of God, in solemn approaches to Him, is not worthy to be called "great" fear until it begins almost to overwhelm the strength both of soul and body. 2. Those who fear God greatly are brought to a pressing sense of their need of shelter and support by a fresh and powerful application of Christ to their souls. 3. This great fear makes the soul exceedingly deliberate, cautious, and diligent in preparation for the more solemn seasons of communion with God. 4. This fear gives such an impulse to the soul as makes it break through all reluctance in the exercises of self-denial and the mortification of sin. 5. Where God is greatly feared there will be much regard to His sacred institutions, even in their minutest circumstances. 6. There will also be much coolness and indifference as to those outward circumstances in religious duties which engage the chief attention of carnal minds. 7. This great fear of God raises the soul above the cowardly fear of man, or of outward sufferings in the cause of Christ. 8. The greatness of this fear of God is manifested by an undaunted adherence to the people of God in the most hazardous times. 9. This great fear keeps a man at an awful distance from the pollutions of the world. Unhallowed pleasure, unjust gains, profane witticisms, are no better, in such a man's eyes, than a cup of sweetened poison. 10. The great degree of this holy fear is manifested by the vehement transports of joy, gratitude, and triumph which accompany a refreshing sense of the love of Christ. Application:—1. To those who are concerned and troubled in spirit, for their being destitute of the true fear of God. (1) Beware of stifling your convictions, or suffering them to be blown out by others. (2) Beware of resting in convictions, or of thinking yourselves safe, merely because you see the misery of your state. (3) Use your utmost endeavour to put yourselves in the hands of Christ, unreservedly, that He may powerfully draw you to Himself, and bring you to the true fear of God. (4) Do not conclude that your state is good till you find in yourselves a holy light, and a holy propensity of soul, leading you out to desire and to delight in the fear of God for its own sake (Neh. i. 11).

2. To those who know experimentally what it is to fear God and to fear Him greatly. (1) Glorify the distinguishing mercy of God. You might have been hardened, as others are. (2) Beware of resting in your attainments and frames. Those are precious effects of grace; but they are not your righteousness before God. (3) Beware of losing what you have attained. "Hold fast that which thou hast," etc. (4) Press forward, after a higher perfection in the service of God. They who think themselves perfect are not yet sincere. (5) Strive for the conversion of others. Seek earnestly that the power and majesty of God may be more gloriously visible in His sanctuary and in the lives of professed Christians. (*John Love, D.D.*) *Reverence*:—Reverence is defined as that spiritual susceptibility of our nature by which we touch and realize the sacred in life. Comparing reverence with awe, there is the element of fear in both. Fear enters into reverence, and fear enters into awe. But there is this important difference: the fear in reverence is born of love. The child that reveres its father fears because it loves. But reverence has in it respect as well as fear. A lad respects his mother, but you cannot respect a mountain or the sun. You can admire these. So that in awe there is admiration, while in reverence there is respect; and respect can only be moral in its nature and personal in its object. Now, what are those objects which alone can inspire true reverence, objects in which the age has too truly lost faith, and in the going of faith there has been the going of reverence? 1. There is the highest of all objects—God. But what has been the teaching of the age? The answer is "Material Science." The age has produced vivisection (in the interests, of course, of science), and not only physical but literary vivisection, and this has made for irreverence. The most sacred things in life are cut up on the dissecting-tables of our literature, such as marriage, chastity, woman, truth, the Sabbath. The result of all this is that the age has lost real faith in God—I mean such a faith as Oliver Cromwell had. Much of the faith which remains is half-hearted, unreal, and semi-atheistic or semi-agnostic. 2. From the Divine Being—the highest possible object—we come to the revelation of this Infinite Being contained in the Holy Scriptures. The only fitting reverence, according to the notion of too many people, is to put the Holy Book on a shelf by itself, and never to commit the sacrilege of opening its pages with unholy hands; and when the dust gathers thick on its covers, not to commit the sacrilege of removing the dust with so secular a thing as a duster. That is the way too many people show their reverence for this holy Book. Besides, in this generation there has grown up a great Biblical literature—i. e. a literature on the Bible, books of exposition and commentary and theology on the different books of the Bible, and the result is that even the student of the Bible is face to face with a great temptation—a temptation peculiar to our times—viz. of reading those books on the Bible, and neglecting to read the Bible itself. Furthermore, we no longer believe—to put the matter extremely—that this Book dropped from the sky, as the Koran is said to have done. The spirit of the age has convinced us that it is the production of earth. Man, under Divine inspiration, was the penman; man as prophet, priest, psalmist, apostle; man in many places, at many times; man with his powers lifted to the highest—but still man, exhibiting everywhere the human hand; man, real man, and not a mere machine. We have the treasure in an earthen vessel. Our day has brought out into bold relief the earthenness or the earthiness of the vessel, that there is danger in us forgetting the treasure, or in making the treasure to be earthen too. 3. After the object of the Bible we come to the object of man. Man ought to inspire reverence in man. But our age is essentially democratic, and while we heartily believe in democracy, this spirit, nevertheless, has been making for irreverence. Democracy preaches the doctrine of the rights of man on the broad basis of manhood, irrespective of his place in society. And in transferring the emphasis from mere place, birth, station, belongings, rank to character, sterling worth, brains, service, wisdom, it has tended to destroy reverence based on the former things, and to create a reverence based on the latter things. But while the democratic spirit has been tending thus, teaching us that brain and heart, life and character, spirit and service, hitherto underrated perhaps, or even entirely neglected when not linked to social status, ought to be, wherever found, the object of our respect and homage, and that no man with a spark of self-respect should bemean himself to act the snob, and bow down to wealth and position for their sole sake, at the same time this democratic spirit has had an unhealthy tendency in many, unable to discriminate between man and man. You hear the phrase, "Jack is as good as his master," and "One man is as good as another." All

this tends to the destruction of faith in man, and therefore of reverence to man. When faith in man disappears, reverence to him cannot continue. How can I reverence man if every man is on my own level? To reverence man I must be able to look up to him, and neither down upon him nor at him on my own level. 4. The fourth object is human nature, and this comes after that of man; and I ask, Is not the temper of the times cynical? What faith is there in disinterestedness? The question of Satan is constantly repeated, "Does Job fear God for nought?" The pure and disinterested motivity of Christian service is questioned. The cynical spirit is fatal to any faith in human nature. We cannot reverence that in which we have no faith. But we ought to reverence human nature, and therefore we ought to have faith in it. Degraded human nature may become—as it often has become—redeemed, sanctified human nature. No man is so low in the pit that he cannot be dug out. The worst we need not despair of. Disinterested goodness is a grand possibility to every man, as it is a blessed actuality to some. When we think of the great souls of the earth like Francis or Elizabeth Fry or John Howard, who readily renounced ease and comfort and refinement and civilized life, and even life itself, because they had a passionate love for Christ and for men, we are filled with a new "respect for our nature, and a new hope for the world." 5. The last object I will mention as a legitimate source of reverence is the past. The mighty past ought to call forth in me the feeling of respect; not all the past, for much there was in the life of yesterday which we can only renounce and denounce in our life to-day. Still the roots of our life to-day are in the soil of yesterday. The present always has its roots in the past. Let us remember—(1) That our day is not perfect. There is very much to deplore all round; there are dangerous tendencies in the air. (2) What good there is in our life to-day has its roots in the life of yesterday. The knowledge that the life of our day is better than the life of yesterday ought not to rob us of respect for the day of our beginnings. But our real beginning is God. God is our source as well as our goal. Religion goes backward as well as forward. Behind us are the reformers, the fathers, the apostles, the prophets, the patriarchs, God. (P. McPhail.)

Ver. 9. **Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, Thou stillest them.**—*The Divine government of the tumultuous*.—I. He rules the MATERIAL SEA. How furious does the old ocean sometimes become, how its billows often rise like mountains, roar like lions, and battle like demons! But God rules them. He has set a boundary to them. "He holds the waters in the hollow of His hand." II. He rules the MENTAL SEA. The material ocean is but a faint emblem of the mental seas, which are a thousand times deeper, larger and more awful. 1. There is the sea of thought. In every individual mind, thoughts rise and break like billows on the shore, and frequently they are most tumultuous. On this globe there are no less than twelve hundred million such seas, and what is the population of this globe compared to the mental population of the universe? He rules all these seas, rules them all even in their most raging condition. 2. There is the sea of passion. How the passions of men often rage in individuals, communities, nations! How rage, too, the passions of hell. But God rules them all. (Homilist.) **God ruling the storm**.—I. None who saw the sea, and the destruction it caused, could fail to realize THE HELPLESSNESS OF MEN IN PRESENCE OF THOSE FORCES BY WHICH WE ARE SURROUNDED. The spectators could only wonder. Life was in jeopardy: it was saved at the risk of life. All honour to the men who applied their knowledge of the ways of the sea; that, with their own lives in their hands, they sought to save—and succeeded, too, in rescuing—their fellows from a watery grave. II. THE GOODNESS OF GOD IN RESTRAINING THOSE FORCES AGAINST WHICH WE ARE SO HELPLESS. There is a point beyond which they cannot go. True, there are controlling laws. If the sea, rising under the influence of the sun and moon, reaches a very high point, it is stayed by other forces from going farther. But whence do these forces derive their existence? Not in the material itself. It is the working of His power. "He rules the raging of the sea," etc. Thus we discover order and design in the whole range of God's works; if one force presses downwards, others press upward; if one force imperils the existence of men, another force controls it; if in one direction there is danger, in another direction the means of safety are found. III. THE UNCERTAIN TENURE ON WHICH MATERIAL GOOD IS SECURED TO US. In every combination there are seeds of destruction in the material itself. IV. GOD IS EVER PRESENT IN THE VARYING

CONDITIONS OF OUR LIFE. Can He be present in that storm? Did He see the danger of those who stood in peril of their life? No, He could not be there, is the hasty conclusion of most of us. When His waves overwhelm us can He be there? Did not the sea break loose from His hand? No; He rules the raging of the sea. There is a certain extent in which it can remove from its ordinary course, but then it is as much under control as when, with its smooth and glassy surface, it lies basking in the summer sun. And why? Because by His laws He is there. The force is His force, whether it be a storm or calm. Does He, then, destroy? No; the destruction is only to that which trespasses on the sea. His object is health, and the storm is the action of opposing forces restoring their equilibrium, working out purposes of sovereign skill. But God is there. What a consolation and strength! (*H. W. Butcher.*)

Ver. 11. The heavens are Thine, the earth also is Thine.—*The affluence of God:*—God owns the whole universe. I. He holds His vast property by **ABSOLUTE RIGHT**. He produced all. II. He holds His vast property in **PERPETUITY**. All that men fictitiously call their property must pass from their hands. But God holds on His property untransferred and untransferable. III. He holds His vast property for **BENEVOLENT ENDS**. Men hold what they call their property generally for selfish ends, for their own aggrandizement and gratification. But God for the good of all His creatures. 1. A lesson to human legislators. Their grand object should be to secure to the people, to the utmost of their power, the full use of the blessings of nature. 2. A lesson to all. Whatever we have is not ours but His. We hold it but in trust. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 13. Thou hast a mighty arm; strong is Thy hand, and high is Thy right hand.—*The mighty arm:*—When the soul is perfectly reconciled to God, and comes to delight in Him, it rejoices in all His attributes. At the first, perhaps, it dwells almost exclusively upon His love and His mercy, but it afterwards proceeds to find joy in the sterner attributes, and especially delights itself in His holiness and in His power. How clearly is His power beheld in creation; there, indeed, O Lord, "Thou hast a mighty arm." We injure ourselves and dishonour our Creator when we pass over His works as if they were beneath the notice of spiritual minds. The world is not left to itself, or to tyrants; the might is with the right after all, for power belongeth unto God. But our theme just now is power in alliance with grace. I. First, the mighty arm of God displayed in the way of grace, as **MANIFESTED IN OUR EXPERIENCE**. 1. First, remember the Divine longsuffering. What a mighty arm of grace it must have been which held back the anger of God while we were in a state of rebellion and impenitence. Glory be unto Thy lovingkindness and Thy longsuffering, O God, for in them we see Thy mighty self-restraining power. 2. But, next, we saw the power of God so as to recognize it when the Lord subdued us by His mighty grace. What omnipotence is displayed in the conquest of every rebellious sinner! He makes the lion to lie down with the lamb, so that a little child shall lead it. Thus the power of God is seen in the conquest of sinners. That power is equally seen in their transformation; for is it not a marvel that God should be able to make old and corrupt rebels into new creatures in Christ Jesus? Every conversion is a display of omnipotence. To turn the wilderness into springs of water and the desert into a flowing stream is nothing compared with turning the dead, cold, dry heart of man into a mighty wellspring of love springing up unto eternal life. Glory be to Thy power, O Thou infinitely mighty Jehovah, Thou hast a mighty arm. 3. That same power is seen in the various deliverances which the Lord gives to His people at the outset, when their enemies come against them so fiercely. And, since then, in the continual upholding of the saints, in their final perseverance which is guaranteed, how much of the power of God is seen. Is it not a marvel that though your faith has been as a bruised reed it has not been broken, and though your piety has been like smoking flax it has never been quenched? Kept alive with death so near, preserved when enemies have been so fierce, will you not say indeed, "Thou hast a mighty arm, strong is Thy right hand"? II. The mighty arm of God as specially displayed in the person of **CHRIST JESUS**. 1. In the choice of Him (ver. 19). Christ is the incarnation of the power of Divine grace, in Him dwells the power of God to save the sons of men; and yet in what weakness it dwelt. Strong is Thy right hand, O Saviour, for by weakness and suffering and death thou hast overthrown all Thy people's foes. 2. In our Lord's anointing (ver. 20). In His

preaching there went out of His mouth a sharp two-edged sword with which He smote sin, because the Spirit of God was upon Him. On the day of Pentecost the Spirit bore witness in the entire body of Christ, making all His servants speak with tongues of fire. The Spirit of God is with Christ on earth still in His Church, so that, feeble though the speech of His ministers may be, a secret power attends it, irresistibly subduing the forces of evil. 3. Because of the continuance of the empire of Christ in the world (vers. 21-23). 4. In His mighty intercession (ver. 26). III. How is THIS POWER TO BE PRACTICALLY RECOGNIZED? 1. Yield to it. Shall wax fight with the fire, or tow contend with the flame? 2. Trust Him to save you. All power lies with Him, He can forgive all sin, and He can also subdue all iniquity, change the most depraved heart, and implant every grace in the soul (Isa. xvi. 4). 3. Trust Him in everything. Bring your burdens, your troubles, your wants, your griefs, pour them out like water before Him, let them flow forth at the foot of the Almighty, and they shall pass away and you shall sing (Ex. xv. 2). 4. Shake off all fear of man. Trust in God and fear not, for the mighty God of Jacob is with us, and greater is He that is for us than all they that can be against us. 5. As to thy service, to which thou art called by the Lord. If He be so strong, do not think of thine own weakness any longer, except as being a platform for His strength. Art thou weak as water? Then rejoice this day, and glory in infirmity, because the power of God shall rest upon thee. Think not of what thou canst do—that is a very small affair, but consider what He can do by thee. He can strengthen the feeble against the strong. 6. With regard to all the future which lies before you—is God so strong? Then commit it to His hands. You have a great trouble to face to-morrow, you are expecting a greater trouble still at the end of the week. Now, be not afraid, for the Lord liveth to deliver thee. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The mighty arm*:—I. First, some few words about the **POWER** of God itself, having as my drift the stirring up of believers' minds to ask and to expect a great display of it. 1. God's power is like Himself, self-existent and self-sustained. Power in the creature is like water in the cistern; power in the Creator is like water in the fountain. The creature is the moon, which shines with reflected light; the Creator is the Sun whose light is undervived, springing from Himself within. Naturally and spiritually this statement holds good. 2. God's power is comprehensive, including within itself all the power which resides in all the creatures in the universe. 3. The power of God is immutable. Whatever He did of old, He is able to repeat now. We talk of changing ages, but we must not dream of a changing God. 4. God's power is in the fulness of it irresistible. When He puts forth His omnipotence proud hearts are humbled, hard hearts are broken, iron melts, and rock dissolves. 5. God's power is entirely independent—of place, time, instruments. 6. God's power is infinite. Ask of Him that He would give the heathen unto Christ for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession; for the sceptre of Jehovah shall go forth, and the monarchy of Christ shall be extended from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. 7. This Divine power is all our own, for we are told that this God is our God for ever and ever. II. **THE MANIFESTATIONS OF THIS POWER** are very varied in character and altogether innumerable in multitude. 1. In destruction (ver. 10). Here is a very strong argument for the people of God to stir them up to pray. The fearful nature of the sinner's doom should arouse us to earnestness, vehement and abiding. Must we not plead with God when we think of our fellow-creatures who are liable to prove the terror of the Almighty's arm? 2. In creation (vers. 11, 12). His word fashioned the creation of old, and His word can work marvels still. Spoken by whomsoever He pleases to send, His word shall be as potent now as in primeval days. There may be darkness and confusion in the sinner's soul; a word shall remove all, and swift and quick, requiring not even six days. 3. In sustentation (ver. 12). The mighty arm of God has been conspicuous in supporting His Church in years gone by. No voyage more dangerous than hers! She has tracked a narrow channel between threatening rocks and hidden quicksands. As for her crew, they have been a feeble folk, but little able to cope with boisterous elements and furious tempests. Oftentimes the good vessel of the Church has mounted up to heaven upon the crown of an outrageous billow, and anon has gone down again into the depths of a yawning sea, while her sailors have reeled like drunken men, staggering to and fro, being at their wits' end; but they have cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He who was strong to stir up the deep from its very bottom and make it boil like a pot, has been equally strong to speak the word and

still the raving of its waves. Let us be then of good comfort. Why should not God bless and succour His well-beloved Church now? 4. In redemption. That was no light labour which Jesus undertook. Hercules cleansed the Augean stable, saith the fable, but what an Augean stable was this world! Yet Christ will purge it; He is purging it, did purge it by His death. This Aceldama shall yet become an Elysium; the field of blood shall be transformed into a garden of delights. III. THE LESSONS FROM THE WHOLE. There have been vouchsafed in the past very wonderful manifestations of Divine favour. Churches have grown very lukewarm, ministers very dull, doctrines have become unsound, the hearts of God's people have failed, the faithful have almost died out; on a sudden God has raised up some one man, perhaps some half-dozen; and the face of the Church was changed from languor to energy. These men did but strike the spark, and the flame flew over all lands. The Reformation was a marvellous type of genuine revivals, God-given revivals, which have been frequent in all times. In England we have had them, in America they have been abundant. Ireland has not been without them. In the darkest day when every one said the cause of religion was growing hopeless, then the great lover of the Church has appeared. Have you never read the story of Livingstone preaching in a heavy shower of rain, outside the kirk of Shotts, to the multitude of people standing there, who would not stir from the hearing of the Word? Or have you not heard the story of Whitefield's mighty preaching, when the people moved to and fro, as the corn is moved by the wind in summer, and at last fell down beneath the Word as the sheaves fall before the reaper's scythe? Why may we not see all this again? Why not? And why not greater things than these? What hinders but our unbelief? O God, Thou hast a mighty arm. 1. God has proved the power of His arm in the persons whom He has saved. Saul of Tarsus. Lo, here is a great and hard rock; now wield Thy great hammer, and the sparks shall fly, and the flintstone shall be broken into pieces. Quarry Thine own stones, O God, and make them fit for Thy temple, for "Thou hast a mighty arm." 2. This is seen sometimes in the number converted. Three thousand, in one day, under Peter's sermon; why not three thousand again? Why not thirty thousand? Why not three hundred thousand in a day? There is nothing too great for us to ask for, or for God to grant. He could, if He willed, turn the hearts of men, as He turns the rivers by His foot. 3. This might have been manifested in the instruments which the Lord has employed. He has taken the base things and the despised, to make them the medium of His power, and we have then said, "Thou hast a mighty arm" to do such wonders by such puny things. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 14. **Justice and judgment are the habitation of Thy throne.**—*The throne of grace*:—I. A VIEW OF THE THRONE. 1. What it is, and why so called. It is God manifesting Himself in our own nature, and dealing with sinners through Christ according to the grace of the Gospel (2 Cor. v. 19, 20). Now, God's administration of grace toward guilty sinners through Christ may be called a throne, either—(1) With allusion unto the mercy-seat in the typical temple of Jerusalem; or—(2) Because of the glorious greatness and royal majesty of God that shines in this administration of grace through Christ. 2. What comfortable views of God are to be had by a guilty trembling sinner from this throne of grace. In general, every view of God here is inviting and encouraging. More particularly—(1) God upon a throne of grace is to be seen as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. i. 3). (2) From a throne of grace, God is to be seen as a God of love—yea, as love itself (1 John iv. 16). (3) From a throne of grace, a guilty sinner may view Him as a God of peace (Heb. xiii. 20). II. THE FOUNDATION OF THIS THRONE IS JUSTICE AND JUDGMENT. 1. It is an ancient foundation; for Christ was "set up from everlasting, or ever the earth was"; He is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." 2. It is a foundation of God's own laying, and He had pleasure in laying it (Isa. xxviii. 16). 3. It is a firm foundation (Matt. xvi. 18). 4. It is a tried foundation. Justice tried it, and found it firm and stable. The powers of hell tried to overturn this foundation; but their kingdom and power was broken in pieces in the enterprise. The saints have all tried this foundation, and proclaim it sufficient to bear their weight; yea, it is sufficient to bear the weight of all mankind—yea, of millions of worlds, if they existed, and would venture upon it (Heb. vii. 25). 5. It is a precious foundation (1 Pet. i. 19). 6. It is a most beautiful foundation. What God says of His Church (Isa. liv. 11) is much more true of the throne of grace. III. NOTICE

SOME PILLARS WHEREWITH THE THRONE IS SURROUNDED AND SUPPORTED. The foundation of this throne being laid in the satisfaction of justice, all the other perfections, or attributes, of the Divine nature, fall in for the support of the reign and administration of grace. IV. INQUIRE WHY GOD WILL HAVE JUSTICE AND JUDGMENT FOR THE FOUNDATION OF HIS THRONE OF GRACE. The answer is, "That grace might reign through righteousness"; that the glory of grace might be displayed in a consistency with the honour of Divine justice. Here a question offers, How does grace reign, or how is the glory of grace displayed in and by the righteousness of a surety? 1. Grace reigns and is displayed in the contrivance of this righteousness; for it is the device of infinite wisdom, animated and inspired by free grace. 2. Grace reigns and is displayed in the acceptance of this righteousness. What but infinite love and grace could prevail with inexorable justice, so far to dispense with the rigour of the law, as to admit of a surety's righteousness in the room of the sinner! 3. Grace reigns in the impetration of this righteousness; for "God (in His amazing grace) sent forth His Son made of a woman," etc. 4. Grace reigns in the revelation of this righteousness. Grace was not content to contrive and bring about this righteousness, but the news of it must be proclaimed to a lost world, as it were by sound of trumpet. 5. Grace reigns through righteousness, inasmuch as that it is by the revelation of this justice-satisfying righteousness that grace conquers and powerfully subdues sinners, brings them under its own government and dominion. V. APPLICATION. 1. Is it so that justice satisfied, and judgment executed upon the ever-blessed Surety, is the foundation of a throne of grace, then, hence we may see what an expensive piece of work a throne of grace is. Why, the foundation of it is laid in the death and blood of the Son of God. 2. See from this doctrine the glory of a Gospel-dispensation. 3. If it be so that justice satisfied, and judgment executed upon Christ, is the foundation of a throne of grace, then see hence, that the salvation of a lost sinner by grace is very consistent with the honour of Divine justice. 4. Has God erected a throne of grace at the expense of the death and satisfaction of His eternal Son? Then I would have you to try, whether you be courtiers about this throne. (*E. Erskine.*)

The necessity and foundations of a throne of grace for the behoof of poor sinners:—

I. THE NECESSITY THERE WAS OF A THRONE OF GRACE FOR THE BEHOOF OF POOR SINNERS. 1. Sin having entered, they could have no more benefit by the throne of law-goodness, which runs in that channel, "Do this and live" (Gen. iii. 22, 24). 2. They were bound over to answer at the throne of strict justice; for so was the law-treaty related and determined (Gen. ii. 17). (1) They could have no claim to law-goodness and bounty, but upon perfect obedience (Gal. iii. 12). (2) They were utterly unable to stand before the tribunal of justice (Ps. cxxx. 3; cxliii. 2). (3) The criminal once falling under the weight of the sentence a sacrifice to justice, there is no rising again (Ps. xciv. 23). (4) Justice had determined the execution-day to be the same with the sinning-day (Gen. ii. 17). II. THE NECESSITY OF THESE FOUNDATIONS AND STAYS OF JUSTICE AND JUDGMENT AGAINST SIN FOR THE THRONE OF GRACE TO STAND ON. 1. The justice of God could not suffer it to be erected but on these bases (Gen. xviii. 25; 1 Thess. i. 6). 2. The holiness of God and His hatred of sin would not suffer it (Ps. v. 5; Hab. i. 13). 3. The truth of God was a bar in the way of emanations of mercy and grace without satisfaction to justice (Gen. ii. 17). 4. The honour of the holy law, the eternal rule of righteousness, stood in the way of erecting a throne of grace but on these foundations; it behoved to be "magnified and made honourable" (Isa. xlii. 21). 5. If there had not been an absolute necessity of these foundations for a throne of grace to stand on, they had never been laid at the cost of the blood of the Son of God (Rom. iii. 25). III. THE LAYING OF THESE FOUNDATIONS AND THE ERECTING OF THE THRONE OF GRACE UPON THEM. 1. The general ends of this new erection. (1) The saving of sinners from the wrath of God due to them for their sins. (2) The making of sinners positively happy in the favour of God for evermore. 2. The necessary foundations of this throne. (1) Justice, as distinguished from judgment, whereby God gives good unto any, agreeably to the laws of righteousness, which the justice of His nature requires to be observed in His government of the world (Gen. xviii. 25). (2) Judgment, whereby vindictive justice is satisfied for sin, for the breaking of the holy law; vengeance is taken upon it in proportion to the offence, which in a sort is an infinite offence. 3. How these foundations were laid. There being no help among the creatures, God laid help on His own Son (Ps. lxxxix. 19). Thus He made provision—1. For the first foundation of the throne of grace, namely, justice, by His obeying the law completely in the sinner's

room, observing exactly and giving obedience to its commands. 2. He made provision for the other foundation, namely, judgment, by suffering in the sinner's stead (Gal. iii. 13). (T. Boston, D.D.) *Divine justice*:—Consider the justice of God—I. AS AN ELEMENT OF HIS GOVERNMENT. II. AS THE RULE OF HIS CONDUCT. (W. H. H. Murray.)

Vers. 15–18. **Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound.**—*The blessedness of knowing the Gospel*.—I. The Gospel is a **HAPPY MESSAGE**. "The joyful sound." It is good news. 1. Liberty to the captive. 2. Pardon to the condemned. 3. Salvation to the lost. 4. Immortality to the dying. It is a trumpet of jubilee. II. The Gospel **ACCEPTED SECURES HAPPY RESULTS**. "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound." Know it experimentally. 1. It secures the highest happiness in life. "Shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance." 2. It secures a personal joy in life. "In Thy name shall they rejoice all the day." The joy of a grateful heart, an approving conscience, of a glowing hope, of an adoring soul. 3. It secures a righteous exaltation in life. "In Thy righteousness shall they be exalted." There is no true exaltation in life that is not according to the righteousness of God. 4. It secures complete protection in life. "The Lord is our defence, and the Holy One of Israel is our King." Truly, then, "Blessed is the people" that experimentally "know the joyful sound" of the Gospel. (Homilist.) *The blessedness of God's real and devoted servants*.—I. **THEY KNOW THE JOYFUL SOUND**. This is not a mere common or ordinary knowledge; it is not earthly knowledge; for man, by his own powers, could never have discovered a way of reconciliation with God. It is not mere superficial knowledge; but the desires and the affections and the heart are interested in it. It is not mere intellectual knowledge; for although these subjects are the grandest upon which the mind of man may exercise itself, yet those who possess the knowledge here spoken of possess it not merely in their heads, but in their hearts; they are influenced by it; it is to them spiritual knowledge, experimental knowledge, practical knowledge, having an influence on their lives and conduct and conversation, their hopes, their desires, and their endeavours. II. **THEY WALK IN THE LIGHT OF GOD'S COUNTENANCE**. 1. They live under the constant recollection that God sees them, that they are under His constant and diligent inspection. 2. They enjoy the favour of God. III. **THEY REJOICE IN HIS NAME ALL THE DAY LONG**. What, then, is the character of this joy? It is pure; there is no admixture of unholy principle, or unholy desire, or unholy gratification: it is solid and steady, resting upon a sure and substantial foundation: it is animating; it inspires them amid the difficulties of life: it is satisfying; ah! and it is abiding. IV. **IN HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS THEY SHALL BE EXALTED**. (E. Tottenham, M.A.) *Four stages of Christian experience*.—I. **RECOGNIZING THE DIVINE VOICE**. "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound"—that is, blessed are they who know its meaning, who, hearing it break upon the morning air, know that the hour of their deliverance draweth nigh. II. **LIVING IN THE DIVINE LIGHT**. "They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance." The walking of which the Bible has so much to say is a sustained progression from sin to holiness. To hear and obey the joyful sound is to live in the Divine light, and to live in the Divine light is to live in the Divine favour. But we can only live thus as we set Him before us; regarding His honour as having the first claim, seeking first the kingdom of God. III. **REJOICING IN THE DIVINE NAME**. "In Thy name shall they rejoice all the day." Our joy need not depend upon our mood of the moment: for knowing that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, we may rejoice ever in the saving name of our God. IV. **BEING EXALTED IN THE DIVINE RIGHTEOUSNESS**. "In Thy righteousness shall they be exalted," or, "they are exalted." The people that know the joyful sound are lifted up, not by any power of their own, but by God's adherence to His own gracious covenant. In Adam we were abased, but in Christ we are exalted. What a paradox that the believer, lowly and poor, taking oftentimes a humble place among men, often cast down by the burdens of life, yet should be sitting with Christ in the heavenly places. (F. Burnett.) *The Christian walking in the blessedness of the Gospel*.—I. **THE JOYFUL SOUND IS THE GOSPEL**. 1. It comes from a world of joy, the happiest world in the universe. 2. It calls to a world of joy. II. **THE KNOWLEDGE OF THIS JOYFUL SOUND**. It is not so easy as we suppose to get the light of Divine truth into a sinner's darkened mind. It may shine down upon him from heaven so clear and bright that we may think it must penetrate his understanding at least; but

let God leave him alone, it will be found perhaps in the great majority of cases that it has scarcely entered even that; that the man's understanding has been almost as completely closed against God's truth as the man's heart. III. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THOSE WHO POSSESS THIS KNOWLEDGE. 1. An habitual enjoyment of the Divine favour. "They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance;" that is, as long as their knowledge of the Gospel is clear and their faith in it undisturbed, they shall go on their way with a consciousness within them that He is at peace with them, full of love to them. 2. A rejoicing in the Divine perfections. "In Thy name," etc. If we have learnt the Gospel aright, we have learnt that there is something in God which can meet our case under all circumstances; that let the day change as it will, there is always a refuge for us in Him. He is like a port ever near the soul when the storm comes; and such a port, that let the soul be in it, all the storms that can blow will do the soul no harm. It will be as safe and may be as happy as though all around it were a calm. 3. A conscious elevation in the Lord's righteousness. They are invested, as it were, with it. And this exalts the soul; exalts it in fact—lifts it up above the law's curses and penalties; gives it in Christ a right and title to the law's promises; places it on a level in Christ with those of God's creatures who have never sinned. And it exalts the soul within, in its own apprehensions and feelings. With a righteousness upon me wrought out by God's holy, everlasting Son, where are my fears, my shame, and my native vileness? And feeling thus, the believer's soul becomes morally exalted, exalted in character. With his Saviour's righteousness upon him, he longs increasingly to be righteous within, like that Saviour. He feels impelled to rise, to live above sin and self and the world, above the ordinary level of his fellow-men; and so through grace in some measure he does rise and does live. (C. Bradley, M.A.) *The privilege of knowing the joyful sound*:—I. THE DUTY TO WHICH THE JOYFUL SOUND, KNOWN AND BELIEVED, EFFECTUALLY EXCITES MEN. "They shall walk." 1. They shall not sit still, doing nothing to purpose for God and their immortal souls, like the rest of the world, dead in trespasses and sins. 2. They shall not go back to their former lusts in their ignorance. 3. They shall hold forward in their way in spite of all opposition. 4. They shall walk on in the sight of the Lord, as he who walketh in the light walks in the sight of the sun. II. THE PRIVILEGES WHICH THEY THAT KNOW AND BELIEVE THE JOYFUL SOUND SHALL THEREBY HAVE IN THEIR WALK HEAVENWARDS. "They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance." 1. They shall be ever in a state of favour, peace and reconciliation with God. 2. No cloud of revenging wrath shall ever gather above their heads any more, no curse of the law, no guilt of eternal wrath. 3. Whatever cloud may gather above their head in their way heavenward, it shall never be so thick but the light of the Lord's countenance shall shine through it (Ps. lxxxix. 31-34). 4. They shall be directed in their way (Ps. xxxii. 8). 5. They shall be strengthened in their way, for this light is the light of life. 6. They shall be cheered and comforted in their way. Hence we may learn—(1) Whence it is that many communicants are nothing bettered by Gospel ordinances, but even go away as they come, a prey to their lusts and an evil world. They sit down to the feast, but they rise not up to the journey. Why? Alas! they never get into the saving knowledge of the joyful sound. They hear it, but they do not believe it. They believe it not with application to themselves. Hence it hath no quickening, nor sanctifying influence on them. (2) Whence it is that many of the saints are so weak and comfortless in their way heavenward, walking so much in the dark. It is all owing to the small measure of their faith of the joyful sound. (3) That the faith of the Gospel is the sovereign remedy in all darkness and distresses in which a person can be. Believing is a duty that can never be out of season. This is the way to bring one out of darkness into the light. If then thou art in desertion, temptation, or affliction, go to the promise and embrace it by faith. Believers, bless God for what your ears do hear and for what your eyes do see. Seek for more of this blessedness. As ever ye would walk on your way heavenward, safely and comfortably, labour more and more to know the joyful sound; and to know it so as to believe it; and to believe it so as to apply it to your own souls, according to your several exigencies. (T. Boston, D.D.) *The joyful sound*:—I. THE GOSPEL IS A JOYFUL SOUND. 1. Because it is a proclamation of mercy and forgiveness to the guilty and rebellious. 2. Because it proclaims liberty to the enslaved. 3. Because it produces peace to them that are in trouble. II. WHAT IS MEANT BY KNOWING THE JOYFUL SOUND. III. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE PEOPLE THAT KNOW THE JOYFUL

SOUND. 1. They are blessed in their life. O what invaluable privileges are contained in this blessedness! 2. They are blessed in their death. (*J. Hay, D.D.*) *Knowledge of the joyful sound*.—I. THE BLESSEDNESS OF KNOWING THE GOSPEL. 1. The Gospel is intended to make us blessed, because He, in whose will it has originated, is full of compassion, and announces that here His compassion has had its richest and most determinate exercise. 2. It is fitted to make us blessed; for the same God, whose compassion prompted it, has also contrived all its arrangements and operations, and the infinite wisdom which belongs to Him must have so adapted the means to the end as effectually to secure whatsoever it designs. 3. It is sure to make us blessed; its machinery being moved, and its effects being produced, by the power to which all opposition is feeble, and before which all difficulties vanish away. 4. It is known to make us blessed; for we have only to appeal to the experience of the Church in every successive age, and in every variety of its features, in proof of the fact that the Gospel has done for its disciples what nothing else has been able to accomplish—has put a joy into their hearts, and shed a brightness over their prospects, beyond all that worldly minds have experienced or conceived. II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN KNOWING THE SOUND OF THE GOSPEL. 1. That the Gospel is communicated to us. And why is this annunciation requisite? Because the plan of saving mercy which it unfolds clearly embraces the character as well as the condition of the sinner; and this connection is so close, and of such a nature, that the condition of the sinner cannot become what his safety requires it to be, unless the character of the sinner is made to undergo a corresponding change. And this change cannot take place without the concurrence of his will, and that movement among all the affections and principles of his moral frame which presupposes him to be acquainted with what the Gospel demands of him, as well as with what the Gospel has effected for him. 2. That we attend to the Gospel and understand it. The blessedness flowing from the Gospel is to be received and enjoyed, not by chance or according to human fancy and caprice, but in a certain instituted way. There is a plan by which this blessedness is secured for the sinner, so far as to be brought within his reach: and there is a plan by which it is made over to him as an actual and personal attainment. If this plan be not studied and comprehended, how can any individual so betake himself to it, and so make use of its provisions, and so submit to its direction and influence, as that he may reasonably expect to derive the benefits by which it will contribute effectually to his safety and his happiness? 3. That we welcome, believe and obey the Gospel. (*A. Thomson, D.D.*) *The Gospel a joyful sound*.—I. THE CHARACTER OF THOSE WHO ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD. They "know the joyful sound"—the Gospel. 1. The trumpet in the year of Jubilee announced that all captives and slaves were to be set at liberty: and is not the Gospel's "joyful sound" a universal proclamation of "liberty to the captives"? But to what description of captives? To all sinners—to all mankind. 2. The debtors also heard with joy the cheering sound of the jubilee trumpet, for they, too, were set at liberty when it was heard. And who are the debtors to whom the "joyful sound" of the Gospel proclaims a like release? Which of us have not broken God's holy law, and failed to render to Him the debt of gratitude and obedience that is our rightful due and reasonable service? 3. The jubilee trumpet also announced that all who had forfeited or mortgaged their possessions were to be restored to their full right to them. Similar was our state; and similar also is the "joyful sound" of the Gospel. II. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THOSE WHO KNOW THIS JOYFUL SOUND, AND WHEREIN IT CONSISTS. (*J. L. F. Russell, M.A.*) *They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance*.—*Walking in light*.—The psalmist has been dwelling in magnificent language upon some of the attributes of God. The pillars of His throne are justice and judgment; "mercy and truth go before His face." He cannot say anything about that surpassing brightness that fell on the two heralds. The sunshine can only be spoken of as "the people's blessedness" that hear the "joyful sound," the sound of the great name; "they shall walk in the light." I. "WALKING," A SIMPLE METAPHOR OF PRACTICAL LIFE. Our knowledge of our Father's character should make common life radiant. We should have continual consciousness of that sunny presence in all occupations. God has done His part, we must do ours, and determine whether that knowledge shall lead us into habitual, happy fellowship with Him. Life with God, for God, in God, is "walking in the light of His face." We may choose the sunny or the shady side of the road. Does that name steal into our hearts like sweet, beguiling melody? Hard it is, but possible, to "set the Lord always before us." They

who walk in the light are surely blessed. II. Such a walk is a WALK IN GLADNESS. Light is the emblem of joy. Two landscapes:—Winter, black fortress, grey rocks, dreary moor, dismal black tarns among the heather. Summer changes it into a dream of beauty. Our lives may be either; in the dark, cloudy days the light will break through many a chink in the cloud; men may not see it, but the eye, purged by faith, can behold it. Tropical sky not half as beautiful as ours. Nobody knows what brightness is until they have seen the gilded thunder-cloud; nobody knows God's presence until in the hour of darkness. III. "WALKING IN THE LIGHT" IS GUIDANCE. No promise of infallible illumination, but those near God catch the wisdom that removes all clouds from our vision. If we dwelt nearer Him we should less often be in perplexity. "I am the light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness." IV. LIGHT PURIFIES—WE SHOULD LEARN OUR FAULTS (Ps. xc. 8). That flashing brightness may be a terror or a joy (Ps. cxxxix. 23). An advantage, that every sin He sees shall be manifested also to us. Secret faults do most harm. A little defect may be the leak through which all our gladness ebbs away. Be thankful if you find it; refer all actions and habits to Him, and the light will reveal the evil. Nothing foul can live in that presence. V. LIGHT BLEACHES; "walk in the light," and the blood will "cleanse from all sin." (A. Maclaren, D.D.) *Walking in the light*:—The out-and-out Christian is a joyful Christian. The half-and-half Christian is the kind of Christian that a great many of you are—little acquainted with the joy of the Lord. Why should we live half-way up the hill, and swathed in mists, when we might have an unclouded sky and a visible sun over our heads? If we would only climb higher, we should walk in the light of His face. (*Ibid.*) *Joyfulness aids character*:—An English manufacturer of colours could not produce the beautiful carmine tint for which a French competitor was famous, so he went to Lyons, in France, and agreed to pay the Frenchman a thousand pounds for his secret. He was shown through the factory, and everything was explained to him. But the Englishman saw nothing different from his own way of making colours, and thought he had been deceived, and that the secret had been kept from him. "Stay," said the Frenchman, "don't deceive yourself—what kind of weather is this?" "A bright, sunny day," replied the Englishman. "And such are the days," said the Frenchman, "on which I make my colours. Were I to attempt to manufacture it on a dark or cloudy day, my results would be the same as yours. Let me advise you to make carmine on bright, sunny days." And is it not thus with your own life and character? You cannot get the best results without the sunshine of God's smile and blessing. One of the principal things the Bible tells us to do is "to walk in the light." (A. H. Lee.)

Ver. 16. **In Thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in Thy righteousness shall they be exalted.**—*The believer exalted in imputed righteousness*:—I. A FEW PROPOSITIONS ANENT THIS RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR CLEARING ITS NATURE AND NECESSITY. II. A FEW PROPERTIES OF THIS RIGHTEOUSNESS IN WHICH BELIEVERS ARE EXALTED, FROM WHENCE ITS EXCELLENCY WILL APPEAR. 1. It is an every way perfect and spotless righteousness: and how can it be otherwise, seeing it is the righteousness of God? 2. It is a meritorious righteousness. 3. It is an incomparable righteousness (Phil. iii. 8). Compare it with Adam's righteousness in a state of innocence, or yet with the righteousness of the spotless angels, they are but like glowworms when compared with this sun: the one is but the righteousness of a creature, but here is the righteousness of God. 4. It is an everlasting righteousness (Dan. ix. 24). 5. It is a soul-dignifying and exalting righteousness. III. THE BELIEVER'S EXALTATION BY VIRTUE OF THIS RIGHTEOUSNESS. 1. What evils it exalts him above. (1) It exalts him above the law as a covenant of works; yea, above both the commanding and the condemning power of that covenant. (2) It exalts him above the world. (3) It exalts him above the power and malice of Satan. (4) It exalts him above death. (5) It exalts him above all accusations, from whatever air they may come (Rom. viii. 33). 2. What happiness or dignity the believer is exalted to by virtue of this righteousness. (1) A state of peace and reconciliation with God (Rom. v. 1). (2) A state of sonship (Gal. iv. 4, 5). (3) A state of fellowship and familiarity with God, and access to Him with holy confidence and boldness (Heb. x. 19–22). (4) A state of endless glory. (E. Erskine.)

Ver. 19. **I have laid help upon One that is mighty.**—*Our helper*:—I. WE NEED HELP. Christianity does three things for us, which Deism does not. 1. It tells us

that this was not our original state; that God made man upright, but he sought out many inventions. 2. It checks much of the evil now: by its direct influence in many cases, and by its indirect influence in many more; in humanizing war, in abolishing slavery, in taming the human passions; it has been the harbinger of peace, and has done more for man than all human institutions in the aggregate beside. 3. It tells us of a remedy for all this, and this is placed within our reach, if we would avail ourselves of it; and therefore if we perish in this state, the blame will be our own.—II. GOD HAS PROVIDED HELP FOR US. 1. This help includes redemption. "With the Lord there is plenteous redemption." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Thus the burden too heavy to be borne is rolled off the conscience, and we now "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have received the Atonement." 2. It includes justification. We must have a title to heaven before we can obtain it; and from whence is this to be derived but from the righteousness of Christ by faith, "which is unto all and upon all them that believe"? 3. It takes in renovation. Man is not only guilty but depraved. Therefore he cannot be happy while in his natural state and under the dominion and love of sin. 4. It takes in strength. His duties are arduous; they are numerous and various; and he is inadequate to any one; but says the Saviour, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." "As thy day so shall thy strength be." Here is the blessed spirit of promise also enjoyed, and now the man lives in the Spirit, and walks in the Spirit, and prays in the Holy Ghost, and the Spirit helpeth his infirmities. 5. It takes in persevering grace, for "he only that endureth to the end shall be saved." III. GOD LAYS THIS HELP UPON ANOTHER. We may observe two principles upon which this dispensation is founded, and by which it is justified. 1. It is an honour to Christ, it being a part of the reward for His doings and sufferings. 2. It is for our encouragement and comfort. The grandeur of the Supreme Being so terrified the Jews that they desired Moses to be their mediator, and said, "Speak thou with us; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." So we are encouraged to go to God through Christ, and "we have boldness and access with confidence through the faith of Him." IV. HE ON WHOM HELP IS LAID IS EQUAL TO THE ENGAGEMENT. He is not only human, but Divine—"able to save to the uttermost." He can by His influences, so mighty is He, penetrate and enlighten the darkest understanding; He can subdue the most rebellious will; He can take away the stony heart and give you a heart of flesh. Conclusion:—1. See the importance of knowing your spiritual state. Without this knowledge it would be impossible for you ever to see the beauty of the Gospel, ever to appreciate the evil of sin, or the excellence of purity, or to relish the privileges of the righteous. 2. See the folly of every other dependence but upon that rock which God has laid in Zion. Christ is the only ark in which you can be preserved; if you enter into this, you may be safe. (*W. Jay.*) *The mighty man*:—This refers to David, whom God had raised as a stripling out of the people, raised to be the leader and the ruler of the Jewish nation. I. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD AMONGST MEN. Why was David selected—a shepherd youth—from the millions of Israel to this high position? Because it was according to the counsel of the Eternal will. The positions of all mankind are determined by His will. Some high and some low, etc. II. THE DIVINE METHOD OF HELPING MAN. The Jewish people wanted help, and David is raised up to help them. God helps man by man. Thus—1. He honours human nature. 2. He links men together by the bonds of interdependence. III. THE SUPERIORITY OF ONE MAN OVER MANY. David was made the greatest man of his age, greater, perhaps, than any thousand ordinary men. Whilst all men have the same common nature and responsibilities, all men are not alike valuable. There is often one man in a generation, a Plato, a Luther, a Bacon, a Cromwell, of more worth than ten millions of others—one whom God has made "mighty to help," mighty in intellect, in genius, in power, in philanthropy, in force of character, in consecration to truth. (*Homilist.*) I have exalted one chosen out of the people. *The people's Christ*:—I. OUR SAVIOUR'S EXTRACTION. 1. Christ, by His very birth, was one of the people. True, he was born of a royal ancestry. Mary and Joseph were both of them descendants of a kingly race, but the glory had departed; a stranger sat on the throne of Judah; while the lawful heir grasped the hammer and the adze. 2. His education, too, demands our attention. He was not taken, as Moses was, from his mother's breast, to be educated in the halls of a monarch. He was not brought up as the lordling, to look with disdain on every one; but His father being a carpenter, doubtless He toiled in His father's workshop. 3.

When our Lord entered into public life, still He was the same. What was His rank? He was a poor man—"one of the people." II. HIS ELECTION. God chooses sovereignty, but He always chooses wisely. 1. First, we see that justice is thereby fully satisfied by the choice of one out of the people. 2. Thereby the whole race receives honour. He made us, originally, a little lower than the angels, and now, despite our fall in Adam, He hath crowned us with glory and honour. 3. But let us take a sweeter view than that. Why was He chosen out of the people? Here, Christian: what dost thou think is the sweet reason for the election of thy Lord, He being one of the people? Was it not this—that He might be able to be thy brother, in the blest tie of kindred blood? 4. Christ was chosen out of the people that He might know our wants and sympathize with us. III. HIS EXALTATION. 1. It was exaltation for the body of Christ to be exalted into union with the Divinity. That was honour which none of us can ever receive. Of no other man shall it be said that the Deity tabernacled in him, and that God was manifest in His flesh, seen of angels, justified of the spirit, and carried up to glory. 2. Christ was exalted by His resurrection. Out He came, and the watchmen fled away. Startling with glory, radiant with light, effulgent with divinity, He stood before them. Christ was then exalted in His resurrection. 3. But how exalted was He in His ascension! Up He climbs to that high throne, side by side with the Paternal Deity. "I have exalted one chosen out of the people." 4. The last exaltation of Christ which I shall mention is that which is to come, when He shall sit upon the throne of His Father David, and shall judge all nations. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 25. **I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers.**—*The mediatorial glory and dominion of Jesus Christ under the Gospel-dispensation*:—I. THE MEANS AND THE AGENCY BY WHICH THE KINGDOM, AUTHORITY, AND GRACE OF THE MEDIATOR ARE EXTENDED AMONG THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD, AND THIS PROMISE OF JEHOVAH IS FULFILLED TO HIS SON. 1. In general, let it be observed, that the whole Word of God, as displayed and applied in the ministry of the Gospel, is the great comprehensive instrument whereby the spiritual dominion of Jesus Christ is established and spread abroad in the earth. 2. The powerful energy of the Divine Spirit is an indispensable requisite to give them force and impression on the souls of men. II. A FEW OF THE MOST EMINENT PERIODS WHEN THE REDEEMER'S HAND IS SET IN THE SEA AND HIS RIGHT HAND IN THE RIVERS; TOGETHER WITH SOME OF THE CONCURRENCE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH, UNDER THE DIRECTION OF PROVIDENCE, CONTRIBUTE TO THE ESTABLISHMENT AND ENLARGEMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF GRACE. 1. The first period commenced at the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and includes the ministry of the apostles and of the first preachers of Christianity, when the glorious Gospel was attended with the most wonderful success, and, in a short time, spread its triumphs far and wide. 2. The Reformation. 3. The millennium. The former periods were glorious, but this will far exceed them in glory. They presented the first fruits, this will bring forward the full harvest. III. IMPROVEMENT. 1. The subject suggests to our consideration one great cause of the increase of irreligion and infidelity in the present age, viz. a mournful deviation from the system of Divine truth. 2. The missionary scheme, if prosecuted with prudence, zeal, perseverance, and a humble dependence on God for success, promises fair to be a blessing to the world, to this nation, and to the Church of God in it. 3. The promises of God afford the greatest encouragement to strenuous and persevering endeavours to propagate the knowledge of salvation among the heathen. 4. As the success of all our endeavours to promote the cause of religion must depend on the Spirits and providence of God, let us be frequent and fervent in prayer. (P. Hutchinson.)

Vers. 30–33. **If his children forsake My law, and walk not in My judgments.**—*God's displeasure at His people's sins*:—I. THE CONDUCT DESCRIBED. 1. Far from uncommon. 2. Exceedingly heinous. 3. Very ungrateful. 4. Highly inconsistent. How unlike Him whose name they bear! 5. Truly lamentable. (1) In itself. (2) In its influence upon others. II. THE PUNISHMENT THREATENED. 1. Most righteous. 2. Absolutely certain. (1) His character requires it. He is a holy God. (2) His Word declares it (2 Chron. vii. 19–22). (3) The whole of His conduct confirms it. The history of the Jews is full of instances, written for our admonition. 3. The ways in which He corrects His children are characterized by great diversity (1) As to the means He employs. (2) As to the measure in

which they are inflicted. (8) The period to which they extend. III. THE MERCY PROCLAIMED. "Nevertheless, My loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him," etc. Two reasons are assigned. 1. His regard for the Son of His love. There is a change of person in this verse; it is not said "them," but "him." The claims of His Son, on the one hand, and the pleadings of His Son on the other, are the grounds why we are not altogether consumed. 2. His regard for the word of His truth. "Nor suffer My faithfulness to fail." Everything else may fail—the labour of the olive, the fruit of the vines, the herd in the stalls; but for His faithfulness to fail is impossible. (*Expository Outlines*.) *The Lord's jealousy against backsliders consistent with His unchanging love*:—It is taken for granted that the seed of Messiah shall go astray; but their sins, it is added, do not break the covenant, which stands fast for evermore; for it was not made with us, but with the Son for us. I. THE SEED OF THE MESSIAH STAND IN HIS RELATION TO THE FATHER, SONS BY GRACE BECAUSE HE IS THE SON BY NATURE. 1. They are more precious in God's sight than all the universe, and He loves them with a real father's love. It is not different love the Father bears to Christ's people from what He bears to Him (John xvii. 23). Our capacity, indeed, is limited, but if we are Christ's we are loved with the very same love in kind—yea, taken within the bond of that very love that from eternal ages has knit the Father to His only Son. 2. As they have borne the image of the earthy, they shall also bear the image of the heavenly; and at last they shall be like Him, when they see Him as He is. Yet a little while and the reviled sons of God shall shine brighter than the sun in a glory that will make kings and great men wonder. II. THE LORD NARROWLY OBSERVES THE NEW OBEDIENCE OF HIS CHILDREN, AND WHETHER THEY WILL GO ASTRAY. Allusion is made to that declension as proceeding step by step. We have begun this departure if our thoughts turn not naturally and habitually unto God as the needle to the pole. Let us labour that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him, and count it all joy to meet the trials which strengthen faith. III. GOD, JEALOUS OF HIS HONOUR, CANNOT PASS OVER THE TRANSGRESSIONS OF HIS CHILDREN WITHOUT CHASTISEMENT (ver. 32). What He can bear with for the present in the children of the wicked one, He cannot bear in those who are a people near Him. Judgment begins at the house of God on those who bear His image; for more heinous in God's account, and more ruinous to souls around them, is sin in God's people than in others. IV. OUR DECLENSIONS DO NOT UTTERLY REMOVE GOD'S LOVING-KINDNESS, BECAUSE IT IS NOT FOUNDED ON OURSELVES, BUT ON ANOTHER. The Father's love to the Son is the very foundation of the Gospel. The great triumph of the Cross is that He who hung there was more pleasing in the Father's sight than even sin was hateful—that the sin could be consumed, and yet the love remain entire. These words, "My loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him," show us the proper motive to be brought to bear on backsliders and the Lord's way of restoring them. If any presume on such words of tenderness—halt! they are not spoken unto you, but to the down-cast child of God, at a loss to know how God can love him with so little that is pure and lovely—ready to doubt how a worm, a rebel, an enemy, can be endeared to God. (*G. Smeaton*.)

Ver. 36. *As the sun.*—*The sun as an emblem of God*:—The sun has always been an object so full of mystery and amazing quality that in a large part of history it was worshipped as a deity, and it is destined in all the remainder of history to be the greatest emblem of God. It leaves behind it the seven wonders of the old earth and any seven wonders of the new, and makes of itself alone the one matchless object of all physical things and forms. It deals only in the great. Vast in all particulars, it easily became the early god of mankind, and very slowly and with difficulty became disengaged from the Hebrew and classic religions. At last the Christianized multitude has reached the ability to distinguish between the universe and the Maker of the universe; and, stupendous as the bounds of space may be, and sublime as their occupants may be, the modern mind says they are not God. Our sun could not be God, for there are millions of such suns. But, though as a deity our sun is dethroned, it is wonderful in its dethronement. In the spring months, when winter is being daily conquered by the arrows of heat, the mind will not easily escape the feeling that the sun is a vast expression of Divine love. Our sun has called into being a group of worlds. To him must earth, and Mars, and Jupiter, and Saturn, and their companions, give the credit of their very being as well as of their rich decoration, for the central orb is master of the whole

scene. He holds all the planets in an orbit, and thus makes years and seasons possible; and thus detaining them as a mother lends her children by the hand, he makes their surfaces into gardens, and compels each globe to be a marvel of beauty. God as a pure spirit being invisible, we are constrained to feel that the universe is only God passing outward from thought into material, and that all these millions of suns with their planets around them are so many incarnations of the Love Infinite. As man came as an image of God, and as Christ came as an image, still closer, of the Father, so the countless suns are shining forth all glorious images of Him whose soul alone is invisible. Should the sun decline in warmth, all the life on our globe would cease. Should the sun increase his warmth all life of animal and plant would be burned up. What love is that which regulates this gigantic fire and makes it flame for ever as the fireside of our Father's house? If there is such a tremendous scheme for lighting and warming worlds through uncounted ages, may there not be also vast designs of human existence and progress equal, indeed, to all those outlined in religion? If all these physical wonders are for the final happiness of souls, if planets are thus made into the blessed homes of mind, what is to be the destiny of that mind for which such sublime preparations have been made? (*D. Swing.*)

Ver. 37. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven.—*The character of the Church of Christ upon earth as symbolized by the moon in our solar system:*—In the history of the creation it is written (Gen. i. 14). How the sun and the moon in our solar system come to be "for seasons and for days and years," the astronomer is able to inform us; but why, and of what they were intended to be the signs, revelation alone can explain. Accordingly, if we look into the Word of God, we find that the heavenly bodies are held forth as emblems of certain things, and of certain principles bearing upon the Church and people of God. Thus Jesus Christ is represented by the sun (Mal. iv. 2; Luke i. 78), and we are permitted to trace certain points in their analogy (John xiv. 6; xi. 25; v. 24; Gal. ii. 20; 1 John v. 11). The ministers of Christ are symbolized by the stars of heaven (Rev. i. 20). In like manner, the moon in our solar system is more than once introduced as representing the Church of God in the world. In the Book of the Revelation (xii. 1), this luminary represents the Church of God under the law elected for the especial guardianship of the original revelation, which declared the one true God. In the Song of Solomon (vi. 10) the same symbol is applied to the Church of God under the Gospel elected for the especial guardianship of the second revelation which declares the one true Mediator. It is in this latter sense—as representing the Church of God under the Gospel—that the words of the text are to be understood. 1. It will be my endeavour to sketch **THE CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH OF GOD UNDER THE GOSPEL**, by cautiously tracing certain points of analogy between her and the moon in our solar system. 1. The moon was ordained to "rule the night"—to furnish us with light in the absence of the sun. Visible she may be at times after the morning dawn, but if visible she gives no light—she wanes beneath the light of the superior orb. Were the sun always to shine upon our shores, there would be no night here: the moon would have no place in our firmament; or, if she appeared at all, she would shed no light. And so it is with the Church of Christ in this lower world: the absence of her Divine Head in the heavens, whither He has gone to perform an essential part of that work of redemption which He covenanted with God the Father to perfect for the salvation of mankind—renders necessary the existence of a Church in the world, which is ordained to exist and to be visible until His coming again. He is the Sun, she is the moon. 2. The moon has no light of her own. The purpose for which the moon was at first, and still is, set in the heavens is to reflect upon us and for our benefit the light of the sun during his absence from the part of the world we inhabit—or, to speak more correctly, during our absence from him. In this peculiarity the moon is cited in Scripture to symbolize the Church of Christ upon earth. The latter was ordained to reflect upon the world the light of the "Sun of righteousness" during his absence in the heavens. In herself she has no light at all; without her Sun she has virtually no existence; severed from Him she is nothing worth. The Church has nothing whatever in herself whence can radiate those beams of light and life and love, without which all is darkness within—yea, a darkness that may be felt. No doctrine will fully enlighten the mind but the doctrine of Christ (Heb. vi. 1; John ii. 9). No truth will dissipate the error of fallen nature's teaching but the truth as it is in Jesus (Eph. iv. 21).

3. As the moon has no light, so neither has she any heat of her own. Did not the sun arise upon the land, and daily cheer us with his rays, as well as benefit us by his light, in vain should we seek a substitute in the transparent brightness of the moon. She is set in the heavens simply and solely to reflect his light. In this respect also does the moon symbolize the Church of God upon earth. It is not from the Church herself, separated from her Divine Head, that we are to look for that quickening power, that holy enthusiasm, that heavenly glow of joy and peace in believing which cheers the heart of every child of God. The ordained purpose of God is that the Church upon earth should not dispense the heat of her absent Sun, but continually and extensively reflect His light. For this, and this alone, was the Church ordained to exist in the world. II. I close with a REMARK OF A PRACTICAL CHARACTER. From what has now been said, we infer the necessity of an outward witness for Christ to satisfy the candid inquirer, and to silence a gainsaying world. Let me add, there must also be an inward witness for Christ (1 John v. 10), for the satisfaction and the comfort and the security of the believer himself. If grafted into the body of Christ's Church, by the Lord's own ordinance of baptism "rightly received," we are doubtless to be numbered with those symbolized by the moon. But beyond this, for the comfort of the believer, and to discriminate between a dead profession and a living faith (Rom. viii. 13; 1 Cor. vii. 19; Gal. v. 6; vi. 15; Acts viii. 37; Mark xvi. 16; Acts ii. 38; Jas. ii. 17-26), there is another and an inward witness to be superadded to the visible testimony. When the soul becomes quickened (John v. 25; Eph. ii. 1) into spiritual action; when the mind (Eph. i. 17, 18) becomes enlightened, the heart cheered, the affections warmed, the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, affected and moved by the constraining love of Christ (2 Cor. v. 14), the blessed experience of that peace of God which passeth all understanding (Phil. iv. 7); this is the inward witness, not seen by those that are without, but more convincing far to the individual soul, because he inherits thereby a well-grounded hope of an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of Christ (2 Pet. i. 11)—if he do but retain and exhibit the evidences of his renewed life (John xv. 8). (W. J. Kidd).

Vers. 47, 48. **Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast Thou made all men in vain?**—*The sense of life's brevity*.—I. THAT IT IS A RIGHT FEELING, BECAUSE IT ACCORDS WITH FACT. Human life is short, if you consider—1. That an end must come to it here. 2. Its re-beginning after its earthly close. It is short in view of the new life. What is it to eternity? Nothing. II. THAT IT ARGUES THE UNDERLYING SENTIMENT OF IMMORTALITY. A man could have no feeling of the length or brevity of time, with all its changes, unless he had within him a settled sentiment of permanence. III. THAT IT IMPLIES A DEEP INTEREST IN SOME PURPOSE IN LIFE. He is anxious to see the work done; and he is so impressed with the brevity of life, that he works and labours with all diligence. IV. THAT IT INVOLVES AN UNDERLYING BELIEF THAT LIFE ON THE WHOLE IS A BLESSING. Of all the million sufferers in the world, there are but few of the number who would have their life shortened even by one day. V. THAT IT SERVES TO STIMULATE US TO MAKE THE BEST USE OF IT. One who feels that he is in the world only for a little time, will strike out for the best things. (*Homilist*.) *A homily for the closing year*.—God makes no man "in vain," but he may choose to live in vain. He may turn his existence in this world to utter vanity and waste. 1. The true value of our life lies in its spiritual significance; and we save it from being vain and worthless only as we connect it with the spiritual and the eternal. We are accustomed to say that life is long or short, according as it is crowded with incidents and experiences, or is deficient in them. An eventful life is a long life. Some men live more in one year than others do in many. But then, what is the quality of the experience? Your life outwardly may be eventful enough, but inwardly it may be strangely destitute of all that is fitted to give it a distinctive and a noble character. 2. The value of our life lies in the nature of the work that has been given us to do in it; and we save it from being "vain" only by earnest and diligent attention to that work. It demands the cultivation in ourselves of the affections and energies of the life of God, and the diffusion of such an influence and the doing of such deeds as shall be for the enduring benefit and blessing of the world in which He has placed us. (*Joseph Waite, M.A.*) *Unfulfilled lives*.—That men's lives are vain is the universal complaint. Men are perplexed and overwhelmed by the mystery of life and the world's misery. The Bible is full of it. Isaiah tells how "we all do fade as a leaf," and that plaintive thought was the same felt so keenly by Homer, too—

"like leaves on trees the race of man is found." It is the solemn teaching and experience of the human heart, and of the sages and poets of all ages. "Sadness," said Savonarola, "besieges me day and night. Whatever I see, or hear, bears the standard of sadness. The memory of my friends saddens me, the meditation of my studies afflicts me, the thought of my sins sinks me down, and, as in a fever, the sweetest things taste as sadness in my mouth." It has been ever so; and apostles and prophets, however inspired, weep out the same sad notes. Christ alone, though he was "the man of sorrows," indulges no morbid note on man, for he saw too clearly the destiny of man to utter any words that could sound like a dirge over his being. I. Yet, I think, I may first attempt to collect and press upon you THE EVIDENCE UPON THIS COMMON THOUGHT—THE TEMPTATION TO BELIEVE THAT MAN IS MADE IN VAIN. Everything rebukes vanity in man, since he himself, as well as the world, is vain. The idea often thrills through us that man is made in vain. Experiences are different, but the feeling is universal. All men feel it of all men. Job speaks of his being like a "hidden, untimely birth." Yes, and what a mockery there is, apparently, in the birth and death of little children. But I do not think that these are the most startling views of the vanity of life. I would rather fix the argument upon the utter disproportion between the powers and the position of man. It is then, I say and see, that man is made in vain. Nothing has more perplexed me than the sight in life of angels—I must call them so—who have lost their way; their lives seem to have been altogether in vain; a gifted sensibility, perhaps, in a hard, coarse family; a soul sensitive to every impression of gentleness and beauty, with a body unable to second the designs and desires of the soul—the soul soaring, the body limping. Our thoughts crush us—man was made to mourn, and man was made in vain. Unsatisfactory and miserable world, may we well exclaim, where nothing is real, and nothing is realized; when I consider how our lives are passed in the struggle for existence; when I consider the worry of life; when I consider how the millions pass their time in a mere toil for sensual objects; when I consider the millions of distorted existences; and the many millions!—the greater number of the world by far—who wander Christless, loveless, hopeless, over the broad highway of it; when I consider life in many of the awakened as a restless dream; when I consider this, and much else, I can almost exclaim with our unhappy poet—

"Count all the joys thine hours have seen,
Count all thy days from anguish free,
And know, whatever thou hast been,
'Twere something better not to be."

I can conceive many a soul, and not an irreverent one, saying, "O God! what is my life? What am I? What have I done? I am a failure. Why have I had given me unoccupied affections; they have never met their response, their realization, their fulfilment. How I could have loved, how I could have wrought; I feel these things in me." Now, it is the fashion of infidelity to believe that God has no details, no specialities, and this thought sometimes drives in with a panic on the spirit; for we are caught up by the huge engine of the machine-god, and torn amidst the wheels of what does not care more for hearts than it does for oaks. Our lives seem spent in vain. I know the reply to all this with many is a cold and icy sneer of contempt at the egotism and conceit of it all. "The universe has done very well for you hitherto; trust the universe, let these inquisitive questions alone." To which I reply, Alas! they will not let me alone; moreover, if my fault is egotism and individuality, what is yours? Indifference, inhumanity, coldness, in a word—brutality. I do not desire to sink to the unconsciousness of "beasts that perish." II. Notice THE STRUCTURE OF THE QUESTION, Is it possible to reconcile the vanity of man with the greatness of God? This vanity of man, is it consistent with thee, and with what thou art? 1. I believe that thou hast not a chief regard to thine own power. God is not a mere power. What should we think of him who, able to stamp upon the canvas the forms of Murillo, the colours of Tintoretto, able to hew his marbles to the shape of Flaxman, or to mould his pottery to Etruscan loveliness, yet treated all as a freak, and destroyed remorselessly as readily as he created? But what is the artist of the canvas to the artist of flowers, to the artist of the human eye, the artist of the bird's wing? The artist says, I made them, but I cannot preserve them; but the author of eternal beauty Thou art, and why hast Thou made not only things, but man

himself in vain? The mother, indeed, goes to her little cot where the lamb of her bosom lies stretched out in its little shroud. She says, "Yea, my darling, I bare thee, and nursed thee, but I could not keep thee;" but God, "Why hast Thou made men in vain?" 2. God is not mere law. "I believe Thou art not heedless of Thy creatures' desire, though they seem to be mocked." We are not like children at play, blowing bubbles which break in non-existence even while they soar. This cannot be enjoyment to Thee. 3. Thou art pure being, Thou canst not, therefore, be pleased only to contemplate evanescence and decay. It is not consistent with Thy glory that "the whole creation should groan and travail in pain together." Dost Thou not "rejoice in Thy works"? and canst Thou rejoice in these? Is not Thy world one huge stone coffin, where every piece of limestone is but the record of death, and the fairest things float loathsomely out of existence into corruption and decay. And now these are, as you well know, the soliloquies and cries of our nature; and the appropriate answer to all is, Man is not made in vain. Unless I have mistaken myself, I believe that some of the topics I have suggested will convey a reply to this question, and show that the absolute vanity of man is incompatible with the glory and with the promise of God. There is something in him which God does not regard as vanity. "The sure mercies of David" are not vanity; "the covenant ordered in all things and sure" is not vanity; "the exceeding great and precious promises, by which we become partakers of the Divine nature," are not vanity. Mutation and change, indeed, surround us everywhere. But there are "two immutable," unchangeable "things"—the will of God, and the Word of God, as the expression of His will. There is an image, over which change never passes. It can suffer no defacement; nothing can mar it. And as we are conformed to this, a growing joy steals over us, and steepens us in its blessedness as we become "new creatures in Christ Jesus"; as the "old things pass away," as "the Word" which "gives light" enters and sows itself in the heart, we gradually learn what it is for man not to be made in vain. III. Hence I have conjoined with this poor human word; this elegy over unfulfilled lives; this other word; this WORD OF REPOSE ON DIVINE INTENTION AND COMPLETED BEING—"My times are in Thy hand." Nothing is more certain, nothing are men more indisposed to perceive than this—we have to

"Wait for some transcendent life,
Reserved by God to follow this."

To this end God's real way is made up of all the ways of our life. His hand holds all our times. "My times are in Thy hand"—the hand of my Saviour. He regulates our life clock. Christ for and Christ in us. My times are in His hand. My life can be no more in vain, than was my Saviour's life in vain. IV. AND THIS TRUTH RIGHTLY GRASPED AND HELD, WE SHALL NEVER THINK IT POSSIBLE THAT ANY LIFE CAN BE UNFULFILLED WHICH DOES NOT, BY ITS OWN VOLUNTARY PERVERSITY, FLING ITSELF AWAY. No doubt, men may be suicides to their own souls. Did not our Lord say, "Better were it for that man that he had never been born"? and there are beings for whom that would be the only appropriate epitaph. All in vain! O my soul, anything to escape that. Let life here seem increasingly vain; only save me from the vanity of eternity, and the horrors of that fearful looking for where nothing is realized but woe. Oh to reach "the fulness of joy," so that I and mine may say as we gaze upon our Redeemer in light, "No, through Thee and Thy merits, we have not been made in vain." But you solitary, suffering, disappointed hearts, take some comfort. "The best is yet to be." (E. Paxton Hood.) *Suggestions of life's vanity*:—There are many circumstances in life that tend to impress us with the vanity of our mortal existence on the assumption that there is no future. I. The disproportion between the LENGTH OF OUR EXISTENCE AND OUR LONGINGS. II. The disproportion between our FACULTIES and our ACHIEVEMENTS. All feel they can do vastly more than they can accomplish here. III. The disproportion between our ASPIRATIONS and our ATTAINMENT. How much knowledge, power, influence we aspire to, but how little do we gain! (Homilist.) *Vanity of man, if not immortal*:—I. SOME DIRECT PROOFS OF THE VANITY OF HUMAN LIFE. 1. The brevity of our mortal existence. 2. The positive evils that are in the world. (1) Sickness and pain. (2) Wars and fightings. (3) Famine. (4) Earthquakes, volcanoes, floods, etc. II. THE REAL VALUE OF THOSE THINGS WHICH SEEM TO RENDER OUR EXISTENCE OF MOST WORTH. 1. After all the failure, and fiction, and insincerity, and envy, that attend worldly possessions, we cannot

surely suppose them of much real value. If we had only what they afford, we should be compelled to confess we were made in vain. 2. Knowledge is not necessarily happiness. We are not going to say, that increase of knowledge is always increase of sorrow (Eccl. i. 18); but we believe most of the happiness that we find in knowledge, in exercising intellect, in discovering truth, springs from the hope we entertain of making our knowledge subserve our happiness in other respects. If our only felicity consisted in knowing, we believe it would be extremely small. And how little even men called learned succeed in making their acquisitions advance human felicity, the whole history of cultured intellect too sadly tells. 3. Some one might say to us, the joys of friendly attachment are neither few nor small; they are pure; they are peaceful; they are noble. But let us remember there are regions where the husband and the father is the tyrant; where the mother murders her offspring; where the wife is the slave; and where the widow burns on the funeral pile of her husband! Let us remember, too, how often friendships give place to enmity. When half the world is dressed in mourning, its friendships can scarcely convince us that, apart from another world, all men have not been made in vain. 4. Religion is vain, if the world is all. Its votaries are miserably deluded. They have renounced the world, but gained nothing. III. CONCLUSIONS. 1. The amazing difficulties of that species of infidelity which denies a future state. 2. That the doctrine of immortality, and the truths of religion, are very needful to us, in order to make us happy even here. Remove immortality—and what is man? a distressful dream! a throb—a wish—a sigh—then, nothing! But, blessed be God, life and immortality are brought to light. Yes—3. That the true Christian is the happiest man. He is not perplexed with a thousand doubts and difficulties that trouble the unbeliever. (*I. S. Spencer, D.D.*) *The vanity and value of human life*.—I. If we consider LIFE as IT IS IN ITSELF, and form our estimate of its value only by the degree of temporal enjoyment it is capable of affording, it will appear to be very vain indeed; and man will almost seem to be made for nothing. 1. Consider how short life is! 2. Consider its uncertainty. Who can say of any project that he has formed, that he shall accomplish it? 3. Survey also the sufferings to which life is exposed in this short existence.—Take notice of the natural calamities which belong to man. Look at the history of man, and see what he suffers from his own species. 4. Look also at the business of life, the very end for which most men live, and the same reflection will forcibly recur. What is the end for which so much toil is endured, so many cares and anxieties suffered? Simply this; to go on suffering the same anxieties and cares, and enduring the same toil. II. Let us look at life in ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW, and we shall see that God has not made man in vain. 1. We live not to eat, and drink, and labour; but we eat, drink, and labour, in order to live; that is, to fulfil the will of our great Creator and to glorify His name. Now, this is done when His will is made the chief rule of our lives, and His glory the end of our actions; when we exercise dispositions proper to our stations in life and agreeable to the duties we owe to Him. In this light the events of life are comparatively of little consequence, the duties they call forth are what are of importance. In this view, life is not to be regarded as given in vain. 2. When we carry our view forward to that eternal state of which this life is but the beginning, and in comparison of which it is but a moment; when we consider that this eternal life will be either miserable or happy according to the manner in which we spend our short existence here; surely this life is not in vain: it becomes of infinite importance—an importance proportioned to that infinite happiness or woe with which it is necessarily connected. 3. What a value is stamped upon life; what dignity upon the world, when we behold the only Son of God taking upon Him that life, and coming into that world! Are men made in vain, when the only begotten of the Father gave His life as a ransom for theirs? 4. Is life of such unspeakable moment, and yet is it so short in its duration? What an additional value does it derive even from this circumstance, which may seem, at first sight, to detract from its worth! If life be so uncertain; if almost the only thing certain in life is that we shall die, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness! (*John Venn, M.A.*)

Ver. 48. **What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?**—*The certainty of death*.—Death is the beaten road of all mankind: it is the way of all flesh. I. ILLUSTRATE THE POINT. 1. Both good and bad are promiscuously taken away by death. The reason is

plain, because both the righteous and wicked are by death to pass into another state, the one into the overlasting life of glory, the other into eternal misery. Thence it is that they are equally liable to the laws and decrees of mortality. The corn and the tares standing and growing on the same ground are mowed down together at the harvest. 2. Death spares no rank, no condition of men. Kings as well as subjects are liable to this fatal stroke. The lofty cedars and low shrubs, palaces and cottages are alike here. 3. Death spares no calling or profession. The mathematic brain, amidst all its contrivances, hath found none to exempt the students of that art from the force of that which by Horace is called "*ultima linea rerum*." Yea, Archimedes, whilst he was drawing of lines and circles, lost his life. His brains were dashed out whilst he was beating them about demonstrations. The philosophers talk of immortality, but acknowledge death to be the way to it. The warriors, who are brisk in despatching others, fall a victim themselves to the common foe of mankind. 4. Death is favourable to no age. Sometimes the infant is no sooner set free from his dark prison, but presently he is sent to a darker confinement, the grave. Thus both old and young submit to the edict of mortality. The former may be said to go to death, but death comes to the latter, and comes as frequently as to the other. For the lamp of life is as often blown out as it goes out of itself, being spent and exhausted. 5. Death makes no difference between sexes. Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Rachel, Elkanah and Hannah equally submit to the laws of fate. 6. There is no place where death does not and cannot enter. Some have been seized at the plough, some in the streets, others in their shops, some in the market, others in retirements. It appears, then, that there is no privileged place where this officer cannot arrest us, and consequently we are everywhere at his disposal. There is no time, or any other circumstance of our life which is not obnoxious to death, winter and summer, spring and autumn; seed-time and harvest, the cold seasons and the hot ones, and those which are more moderate, are made use of by this destroyer. In the day and in the night, in the morning and in the evening, in times set for devotion, or for worldly business; in time of work or recreation, in times of calamity and prosperity this enemy invade us. II. REASONS. 1. Death is universal, because the Divine decrees have so ordained it (Job xxx. 23). 2. Sin brought death into the world, and thence it is that all mankind are subject to it. "The wages of sin is death"—it is become as due to a sinner as wages to a workman. 3. By sin's entering into the world, a curse came along with it on man's body, and thence frailty and weakness ensued, and thereby a constant liability to mortality. (1) Strange accidents and unexpected events attend the life of man, and it is not in his power to prevent or avoid them. The fanciful poets tell us that Achilles was dipped in the Stygian Lake, that he might thereby be kept for the future from receiving any wounds in the wars: but it seems his heel was untouched by the water, whence it was, they say, that he was wounded in that place. So we see men have thought themselves to be as it were invulnerable in all parts; they have escaped the dangers that others fell under, nothing hath been able to hurt them: but at last they find their error, some sudden calamity attacks them, some mischief befalls them which never came within the verge of their thoughts. Julius Cæsar, who had been victorious in fifty set battles, and never received a dangerous stroke; after all perils so happily escaped abroad, at home in the Senate-house received twenty-three wounds, all of them deadly. (2) A further account may be given of death's universal sway, from the consideration of the variety of infirmities and maladies which infect human nature, the multiplicity of diseases and sicknesses which our bodies are subject to. Many bring these into the world with them, for they are either entailed upon them by their parents, and so are hereditary: or else, without any infection or depravation from them, the parts are so prepared and framed by nature that they may be said to contain in them the seeds of such and such diseases. III. INFERENCES. 1. Meditate constantly on death. Philip King of Macedon had a remembrancer on purpose to come daily to him, and to sound these words in his ears, "Remember, sir, that you are a mortal man." And we read that the very same words used to be cried aloud to the victors at their triumphs. The religious Jews (such as Joseph of Arimathea, of whom we particularly read in the Gospel) had their tombs and sepulchres in their gardens, that they might often see them, and walk to them, and converse with them in the midst of their delights and entertainments which those places afforded. St. Jerome, that religious and pious father of the primitive Church, that he might continually have the remembrance of death and

judgment in his mind, used to fix this impression on his thoughts and imaginations, that he heard always the sound of the last trumpet. This is, as Seneca saith, to go to death: and judge you (saith he) which is best, that death should come to us, or that we should go to that. If we go to it in our forethoughts and meditations, then we shall not be surprised, then we shall not be seized on by death of a sudden, but we shall be provided for it, which is an unspeakable advantage.

2. This doctrine of mortality teaches us humility. Some of the favourites of Alexander the Great had flattered him with the notion of being a kind of god, and nearly related to Jupiter; which begot in him high thoughts of himself. But it happened that he was wounded with a dart in the wars, and seeing his blood issue from the orifice, he was heard to say to the bystanders, "They tell me I am the son of Jupiter, but this wound proclaims with open mouth that I am but a man." The sense of which corrected in some measure the false opinion he had before, and made him entertain not so high thoughts of himself.

3. As this doctrine teaches humility, so it dictates peace and love. This was the design of the Egyptians placing a skeleton before their guests at their feasts; it was to stir up one another to mutual love and friendship, and spend the short time (of which that spectacle reminded them) in so good an employment. You must die, you must leave this world, you must take your lodging in the dust: this consideration should be effectual to cool your heats and animosities, to stop you in your furious encounters with one another. If you seriously think of dying, you will not dare to pass into the other world with your dissensions and antipathies.

4. You must all die, therefore make thence this rational inference, that you ought not to set your hearts on the things of this transitory life. What understanding traveller will load himself when he is on his journey? That rich miser showed his folly in building his barns up so high, when he was to lie low in so short a time. The thoughts of death should damp our covetousness and ambition.

5. Seeing death is the allotment of all mankind, and it is impossible to avoid it, let us stock ourselves with consolatory principles against that time, that when it arrives we may receive it joyfully. Men have alleviated their grief, and overcome their fear, by urging this upon their minds, that death is the common lot of all, and therefore it is unreasonable to repine and murmur at it. We must travel the highway, say they, which all before us have passed. They that are dead do but lead the way, and we must all follow them. Again, some of the great moralists endeavoured to antidote themselves against the fearful apprehensions of death by suggesting that, as it is an end of our lives, so it is of all our miseries, and therefore ought to be embraced with patience and contentment. But, alas! these are poor and sorry consolations against death, and such as cannot be satisfactory to rational and deliberate minds. For what comfort can it be to a passenger to travel in the road, though it be common, when he knows he shall be knocked on the head, or have his throat cut in it? And as for death's putting a period to all misery, if we speak of bad men, it rather begins then, for the evils of this life are nothing in comparison of those which they shall feel in another world. Death, which is so terrible in itself, is rendered pleasant and welcome by the death of Jesus, who shed His blood on the Cross to take away our sins. And thus death, which was a curse, is turned into the greatest and most desirable blessing. Live as those who know and profess this common truth; that all must die. The epicure's argument was, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." But the wise man's argument and holy logic is quite different, "Whatsoever thou findest to do, do it with all thy might, for there is no wisdom nor operation in the place whither thou goest." (*J. Edwards, D.D.*) *Concerning death*.—It is reported to have been the practice of the nobles of Greece, in the day whereon their emperor was crowned, that they presented a marble stone unto him; and he was asked, after what fashion he would have his tomb-stone made?—which practice speaks forth this unto us, that although these were most destitute of the light of the Scripture, they were very mindful of death. Death will surprise some, as it did Abel in the open field (*Gen. iv. 8*); some, as Eglon in his parlour (*Judges iii. 21*); some, as Saul and Jonathan in the fight (*1 Sam. xxxi.*).

I. ADVANTAGES WHICH ATTEND THOSE THAT LIVE WITHIN CONTINUAL SIGHT OF DEATH. 1. The faith of approaching death will make a soul exceedingly diligent in duty (*John ix. 4*). 2. The faith of approaching death will make a Christian exceedingly serious, and zealous in the exercise of his duty (*Eccles. ix. 10*). 3. The faith of this truth, that we must all die, will help a Christian to be exceedingly mortified to the things of a present world (*2 Cor. iv. 18*; *v. 1, 2*; *1 Cor. vii. 31, 32*; *Phil. iv. 5*). 4. When a Christian

believeth this truth, that he must die, it will be an exceeding great restraint to keep him from sinning (Job xxxi. 13, 14). 5. When a Christian liveth within the sight of this truth, that he shall once see death, it will make him exceedingly patient under every cross wherewith he meeteth. Such a Christian will hardly meet with a cross, but he will quiet himself with this:—death will put me beyond this cross—this is but a cloud that will quickly pass away (Ps. xxxix. 4). 6. The faith of approaching death will teach the person that hath it to study saving wisdom (Ps. xc. 12). 7. The faith of approaching death will make a Christian very careful in preparing for death. 8. Death will not be so terrible to him as it is unto many when it cometh. I know not a more dreadful dispensation than death and a guilty conscience meeting together. II. SOME CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRESSING YOU TO PREPARE FOR DEATH. 1. To die well and in the Lord is a most difficult work; therefore I intreat you to prepare for death. It is a difficult work to communicate aright; it is a difficult work to pray aright; but, I must tell you, it is a still more difficult work to die aright than any of these. 2. You are to die but once; and if you die not aright, there is no mending of it. 3. They are pronounced blessed who die in the Lord (Rev. xiv. 13). 4. That though thou put all thy works by thy hand before death, yet shalt thou find that death shall have work enough for itself—yea, as much as thou shalt get done. It will then be much for thee to win to patience; it will be much for thee to win to the sight of thy justification; and then it will be much more for thee to win to assurance. O! then is it not needful for thee to put all thy work by hand before thy latter end come? 5. Your labours shall end, but your works shall not be forgotten; and is not that a glorious advantage? 6. Death may come upon you ere ye be aware; ye know not but death may surprise you this night before ye go home to your houses; and therefore let that press you to study a constant preparation for death. 7. As death leaveth you, so will judgment find you. If death shall leave you strangers to Christ, ye shall appear before Him strangers to Him: therefore I intreat you all to prepare for it. III. SOME DIRECTIONS FOR HELPING YOU TO PREPARE FOR DEATH. 1. Be much in preparation for death every day, for it is even a preparation for heaven, to be taking a sight of your grave and latter end every day. 2. Be much in these duties—(1) Self-examination. (2) Repentance. (3) Faith. (4) Mortification. 3. Be much in minding the excellent things of heaven. 4. Labour always to keep a good conscience, void of offence towards God and man. 5. Slight not any known duty; do not crucify any conviction, neither break any resolution. (A. Gray.)

Ver. 49. **Lord, where are Thy former lovingkindnesses, which Thou swarest unto David in Thy truth!**—*Ethan's psalm*:—Of Ethan the Ezrahite we may form a much more complete conception than of Heman, his colleague and friend. Like Heman, he was born in the age of David, but moulded chiefly by the influences, literary and religious, which characterized the time of Solomon. Like Heman, he was one of the four pages who were deemed so wise that it was held a compliment to pay of Solomon himself that he was even wiser than they (1 Kings iv. 31). Like Heman, too, he was one of the three singers set over the service of song in the house of the Lord (1 Chron. vi. 44), one of the leaders, or conductors, of the Temple orchestra, who marked time for the singers and players on instruments, not with a bâton, but, as the fashion then was, by the clash of his brazen cymbals (1 Chron. xv. 19). He must have been, therefore, a man of high culture, of large and varied experience, of trained and practised wisdom, as well as a poet, and a musician of the most approved skill. In his psalm he gives us the last results of a long life of observation and experience. This psalm could not have been written until the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign. The occasion which prompted it was, probably, that memorable invasion of Palestine by Shishak, the reigning Pharaoh of Egypt, which is recorded in 2 Chron. xii., and to the result of which allusion has been found in the sculptures of Karnac. If you read the psalm with the facts of this invasion, and its effect on Rehoboam, full in mind, it will become wholly new to you. The King of Judah, the Lord's anointed, the psalmist wails (vers. 38-45), has been dishonoured, his crown has been hurled to the ground and defiled in the dust; his frontier-fortresses have been broken down; all his strongholds reduced; his glory has passed away; a haggard old age has come upon him in early manhood; he is covered with shame. Ethan meditates on these facts; he sets himself to understand them, to get at their inmost meaning, their Divine intention, and to learn the lesson with which they are fraught. He raises this

problem—the apparent opposition between faith and fact, between the events of human life and the declarations of Divine will. He remembers the assurance given to David, “Thy seed will I establish for ever,” and yet David’s grandson lost ten of the tribes—lost, indeed, his own kingdom, and became a vassal of Egypt. What ground was left for faith and hope? He asks himself, Is not God able, is He not strong enough to keep His word, and to carry out the purposes of His love and compassion? And then he asks, Is He not good enough, is He not true and faithful to the word He has spoken, to the purpose He has framed and announced? His answer is untinged by doubt or hesitation (ver. 8). Obviously Ethan is a man of more robust temperament than Heman. As meditative, as experienced, as wise, but not fretted into pessimistic misgivings by doubt, he can face the facts of life unalarmed, and the contradictions of thought which those facts are apt to breed in those who reflect on them. On what ground did he take his stand? One refuge, in which many take shelter, was closed against him. He could not admit, with Mill, that God was limited in goodness or in power. Nor could he admit that men have no claim on the God who made them. Ethan found ground for trust and hope by cherishing the conviction that God had sent these calamities in mercy, for correction, for discipline, and not in anger, for destruction. He cherished the belief and hope that God was keeping His covenant with the seed of David, not breaking it. Hence he could plead with God: “How long, O Lord? Wilt Thou hide Thyself for ever?” It is this indomitable trust in the power and goodness of God; it is this resolute and unyielding conviction that all the apparent contradictions between the facts of experience and the declared will of God are only discords which will make the ultimate harmony more profound and sweet. This conviction we, too, need. We have to face the problem which pressed on the mind of the Hebrew sage. God has declared His will to us; He has entered into covenant with us. And yet is the world saved? The wise and much-experienced Ethan steps in to our help. Without in any manner seeking to abate our sense of sin, or our shame for sin, he teaches us that all our sorrow and shame, so far from proving that God has forgotten to be gracious to us, is a proof that He is correcting us for our transgressions and purging us from our iniquity. He affirms that by this discipline God is once more drawing us to Himself. (*Samuel Cox, D.D.*) *The lovingkindnesses of God*:—“Where are Thy old lovingkindnesses?” As he sings Ethan looks around him, and his eye rests on a scene of degradation and ruin. He suffers as a patriot; he suffers as a religious man; he suffers as the descendants of the old Roman families suffered when they beheld Alaric and his hosts sacking the eternal city; as the countrymen of Frederick the Great suffered when the French entered Berlin after Jena; as in their turn the conquerors of Jena and Austerlitz suffered when the Allies entered Paris. These are the tragical incidents of history, and the house of David and its adherents were, it might have seemed, experiencing one of those great reverses by which the compensating justice that rules the world so often balances an overwhelming pre-eminence. But, then, in the case of the house of David, much more was at stake than the civil fortunes of the country. Bound up with, and behind the patriotic feeling was the religious and the theocratic one. Ethan’s pain is in its kind, though not in its degree, that of Jeremiah in the greater catastrophe of a later century; it is that of the sorrowing Christians, who, as an Arab chronicler describes, saw their religion sink into ruins before the hosts of Islam; it is that of the Romanized Britons, who beheld in our own Saxon forefathers, yet pagan, the implacable enemies, not merely of their civilization, but of their faith. The throne of David was in the dust; David’s grandson was a subject of the Egyptian king; the military defences of the country had been stormed by Egyptian forces; unprotected populations were pillaged by hordes of Suakims and Ethiopians who wandered at will over the sacred soil, carrying wherever they went desolation and ruin. The edge of the king’s sword was turned; no resistance to the foes attempted in the open field; the unhappy monarch himself had been subjected to treatment which degraded him, and the psalmist apprehends that the days of his youth would be shortened by the ruin and dishonour which had thus overtaken the man who five short years before had ascended the mightiest throne in Western Asia, and who in his day impersonated the best hopes not merely of the children of Abraham, but of the human race. Here, then, was the psalmist’s difficulty. What had become of the lovingkindness of God? what of His faithfulness? what of His power? Ethan, in his report of the promise, has, in fact, answered his own difficulty. The covenant with David was not an absolute covenant. It depended upon

conditions—conditions which were summed up in fidelity to Him who had done so much for it. Ethan himself states this supreme condition in the words of the Divine Author of the covenant (vers. 80-82). The promise, however, continued thus (vers. 83-85). The lovingkindness of God, overclouded for the moment, was not withdrawn, the punishment of the race of David was not its final extinction. Among Rehoboam's descendants were good and powerful kings not unworthy of their high and sacred ancestry, and when at last continued disobedience to the terms of the covenant led to the destruction of the monarchy in Zedekiah and to the ruin of the sacred city, the covenant still remained. Of the race of David one at last was born who should reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of whose kingdom there should be no end. Ethan's cry has often been raised by pious men in bad days of Christendom. Over and over again Rehoboam has appeared in Christendom. The foolish lover of spiritual absolutism, the divisions which its pretensions render well nigh inevitable, and then the triumphs of the world over a weakened and divided Church—all these have been repeated once and again, and then goes up the cry, "Lord, where are Thy old lovingkindnesses?" and the answer is, "They are where they were." "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Now, as always, the promises of God to His people are largely conditioned. If the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church, much short of this may happen as a consequence of the unfaithfulness of her members or her ministers. God makes His work dependent for its complete success on the loyal co-operation of human wills. He accepts the semblance of defeat and failure rather than suspend the terms on which His gifts are given. But His promise all the while is sure; it is we who forget the conditions on which it is made, and Ethan's question is often answered in another connection. Every child, as you know, is taught in the Catechism to say that "In my baptism I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." Now, this statement appeals to a mass of Scriptural testimony which is summarized by the statement of St. Paul that as many that have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. The covenant which God makes at its baptism with every Christian soul, is, indeed, a bountiful and magnificent gift, too great to be believed in if it were not the consequence and application of a gift which is still greater; for "God so loved the world," etc. But here comes in the sad contrast between this account of baptism and the actual lives of thousands, nay of millions, of the baptized. "Look," men exclaim, "at baptized Christendom. Look at the millions whom you have taught to say that they are made members of Christ in their baptism." Certainly Christendom is at first sight a libel on and an apparent contradiction to the highest gifts and promises of Christ, and yet in saying that do we not forget that those gifts and promises like the covenant with David are always conditioned? The grace of God whether given in baptism or at any other time, though it is promised for ever to the collective Church, is not a gift which is bestowed on any one of us irrespective of our method of receiving and treasuring it. The promises that none shall pluck those whom the Father has given to His Christ out of His hand, and that the predestined are called, and the called justified, and the justified glorified, are all of them accompanied by tacit conditions expressed elsewhere that these receivers of grace must correspond to the grace which they received. "God," says St. Augustine, "will not save us through ourselves, but He will not save us without ourselves." The grace of regeneration is not a talisman which wins heaven, be the baptized what they may; it is a conditioned gift which, like the crown of David, will be retained or forfeited by the monarch that wears it as men are careful or not to recognize its obligations. Of this let us be most sure, that if God's promises seem to any to have failed, the fault lies not with Him but with ourselves; it is we who have changed, not He. All we have to do if our lot is cast amid discouraging circumstances, or if we seem to be coming short of what He has promised us, is to lift up our hearts to Him in repentance and faith, and all will be well. (*Canon Liddon.*) *Former mercies*.—It is probable that the psalmist here refers to some special manifestation of God's mercy vouchsafed him in a season of past dangers and troubles, which being brought to his recollection in this his present calamity, he is encouraged to pray for a like deliverance. The recollection of former deliverances is a great help in praying for a rescue from present evils. Or, it may be that he was inquiring for those mercies which God had promised him, and this was a still greater source of confidence: "Which Thou swarest unto David in Thy truth." I. THE CONTENTS OF THE INQUIRY. 1. The fact of an inquiry

being made argues an acquaintance, either personal or by report, between the inquirer and the one sought for. 2. It implies an imagined temporary cessation of intercourse. 3. It exhibits an ardent desire for a renewal of the intercourse. 4. It breathes a spirit of sincerity. II. **THE CHEERING REPLIES TO THE INQUIRY.** 1. Mercy still exists. Many of her former gifts are now no more; many of the instruments by whose means, in former days, she performed mighty deeds have been laid aside; many of her former messengers to you have become silent in death (Zech. i. 5). No; a race that some of you still remember have passed away. But Mercy is still alive. 2. She is with the Lord, and is always to be found at home. 3. She is still in possession of all her faculties. She has sufficient strength of arm for the hardest undertaking, while she retains a firmness of hand and delicacy of touch for the most intricate work. 4. She is still equally well disposed toward you. III. **THE PROBABLE RESULTS OF SUCH INQUIRY MADE IN A PROPER SPIRIT.** 1. It will gain the Divine approbation. 2. Every probability of a renewal of the intercourse. (*D. Roberts.*)

PSALM XC.

VERS. 1-17. Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.—The prayer of Moses:—The propriety of the title is confirmed by the psalm's unique simplicity and grandeur; its appropriateness to his times and circumstances at the close of the error in the wilderness; its resemblance to the law in urging the connection between sin and death; its similarity of diction to the poetical portions of the Pentateuch (Ex. xv.; Deut. xxxii. xxxiii), without the slightest trace of imitation or quotation; its marked unlikeness to the psalms of David, and still more to those of later date; and finally the proved impossibility of plausibly assigning it to any other age or author. I. **THE GREAT CONTRAST** (vers. 1-6). The poet says what God has been, but he implies what He still was, and would continue to be. His Divine being reaches from an unlimited past to an unlimited future. Far otherwise is it with man's days. He has no independent existence. The Being who made him turns him back to the dust from which he came (Gen. iii. 19), and when He say, Return, there is none to refuse obedience. He whose existence is timeless endures, but men soon perish. He sweeps them away as with a driving storm which carries everything before it. Their life consequently is as unsubstantial as a dream. II. **DEATH IS THE WAGES OF SIN** (vers. 7-12). The psalmist is a stranger to the fond notion that man is the victim of circumstances; that he deserves compassion rather than penalty. His brief life and swift death may seem mysterious, but they are not an accident. Like the flower he does not simply fade away, but is cut down. Various instrumental agencies may be employed to terminate man's existence, but the real cause is God's wrath against sin. How must iniquity take on a dreadful hue when contrasted with the unsullied purity of heaven, the resplendent glory of the Holy One of Israel? This dark shadow extends over the whole of life, and not only its close. "All our days" bear the same stamp, and even when they stretch out into years, still they fly away "as a thought," a comparison used by Homer and Theognis, yet without the underlying thought of Moses that the flight is retributive (ver. 10). The best comment on this sad confession is the statement of Goethe made near the close of his long life. "Men have always regarded me as one especially favoured by fortune. . . . Yet after all it has been nothing but pains and toil." But besides this there is no permanence. An end does come, must come, even to the longest term of years. As the man of God looks over the record of the forty years' error, he cries out, "who knoweth," who regards and feels "the force of Thine anger"? Who has such a conception of it as befits a becoming reverence for God? The implication is that there is none. Hence the devout entreaty, "So teach us," etc. Such is the power of sin, the seductive influence of a worldly mind, that we shall not know the link between God's wrath and our own mortality unless we get instruction from above. III. **PRAYER FOR THE RETURN OF GOD'S FAVOUR** (vers. 13-17). Here Moses returns to the starting point of the psalm. Whither should the contemplation of mortality as related to sin, and of Divine wrath against sin, cause

us to turn but to God, our eternal home? The loss of His favour is, as usual, represented as His absence, and hence the entreaty for His return. The fervour of this request is well set forth by the abbreviated question, "How long?" i. e. How long wilt Thou retain Thine anger? Calvin's letters show that this "Domine quousque" was his favourite ejaculation in his times of suffering and anxiety. The literal version of the other member of the couplet is, "Let it repent thee concerning," i. e. so change Thy dealing with them as if Thou didst repent of afflicting them—a bold form of speech used by Moses elsewhere (Ex. xxxii. 12; Deut. xxxii. 36). The next verse asks to be sated, abundantly supplied, with the lovingkindness of Jehovah in the morning, i. e. early, speedily; and the object of this prayer is stated to be that the offerers may have reason to sing for joy and be glad during the whole remainder of their lives. But if this be true of the Old Testament, that an early experience of grace gladdens all one's subsequent course, much more must it be of the New Testament with its fuller light, better covenant and larger promises. The next couplet is an affecting reminder of past trials, which are here made to be the measure of future blessings. The desire is that former sorrows may be compensated by proportionate enjoyments in time to come. The weary sojourn in the desert, where each halting-place was a graveyard and their march was marked by the tombs they left behind them, they desire to forget in the enjoyment of a permanent home in a land flowing with milk and honey. The same request is renewed in asking for the manifestation of God's work, that is, His gracious care for His chosen, the course of His providential dealings on their behalf. A beautiful and suggestive variation of this wish is given in the next clause where the term "work" is exchanged for "majesty," intimating (Rom. ix. 23) that the glory of God shines conspicuously in His grace. This display of the sum of the Divine perfections is asked on behalf of the children of generations yet unborn, God being the God not only of His people, but of their seed and their seed's seed (Isa. lix. 2). The closing verse of the psalm comprehends both the Divine and the human side of the work given to God's people. First, the psalmist prays for the beauty of Jehovah, that is, all that which renders Him an object of affection, His wondrous graciousness, to be revealed to them in the way of experience. But this, so far from superseding rather implies their own activity. Hence the next petition mentions "the work of our hands," a favourite Mosaic phrase for all that we do or undertake, which God is requested to establish, i. e. to confirm and bring to a favourable issue. The repetition of the words is not merely a rhetorical beauty, but an expression of the importance, the necessity of such Divine aid. (T. W. Chambers, D.D.) *The psalm of the wanderings*.—Throughout this psalm two threads are twisted, the one sombre with gloom, the other bright with golden light. We will not dwell on the former. There is plenty of that already in the lives of most of us. Suffice it to say that to Moses the plaintive chords of sorrow appears to have been composed of three notes—the rapid flight of the ages, the anger of God incurred by sin, and the afflictions which beset human life. But opposite to these the aged lawgiver gives three thoughts, on which he rested his soul. I. GOD. What great thoughts Moses had of God. 1. As Creator. To God he ascribes the birth of the mountains, which in their grandest aspects and in magnificent confusion were heaped in that Sinaitic peninsula. To God also he ascribes the moulding touch which shaped the universe of matter, and gave form to the earth. What though seas and rivers, glacier action and earthquake, were his graving tools, yet the maker and former of all things was God. 2. As eternal. He is not only God, El, the strong. He is Lord, Jehovah, the I AM. And he labours hard to give us some true conception of His everlastingness. He speaks of the eighty years of human life as being, in comparison with it, short and soon; much in the same way as we should describe the duration of an insect's life, which passes through all the stages of existence from youth to age, between dawn and sunset in comparison with the life of man. He recites the generations of mankind, and describes their passing in to God like guests into a hostelry, their life to His being brief and transitory as a night-sojourn when compared with the permanence of the building in which it is spent. He goes back through the long process of creation, and says that God comprehends it in the extent of his being as a very little thing. 3. But the thought that helps us most is the conception of God as the dwelling-place, the asylum, the home of the soul. Moses needed it, if ever a man did. II. GLADNESS-MAKING MERCY. As Moses reviewed the desert pilgrimage it seemed one long line of transgression, each halting-place marked by its special graves,

the monuments of some sad outbreak. He pined for gladness; he knew that there was gladness in the heart of the blessed God, enough to make him glad, and not him alone but all who were weary and heavy laden throughout the precincts of the camp; and having confessed their sins he now turned to God his exceeding joy and said, "Make us glad." And his demand for gladness was not a small one. He asked that it might be according to the days in which they had been afflicted and the years in which they had seen evil. It was a great request, but not unreasonable, for days and years of sorrow often give us capacity for receiving blessing. Let us, too, ask Him to put gladness into our hearts. Let us believe that it will honour and please Him if we dare to lay claim to blessedness, such as He alone can give, and when He gives does so with full measure, pressed down, and running over. The plea must be made to His mercy. We have no claim on any other attribute of God. And beyond that we must ask Him to satisfy us. We have sought satisfaction in all beside: in health and flow of spirits, in success and friendship, in books and affairs; but we have found it nowhere, and we shall never find it unless in Himself. III. WORK, OR CO-OPERATION BETWEEN GOD AND MAN. Moses' complaint about the shortness of life indicates that he was no idler. The days were not long enough for all he had to do, and therefore life seemed to pass so quickly through his hands. Amid all that made him sad, he found solace in the thought that what he did would last. The leaves fall, but each, ere it finds a grave in the damp autumn soil, has done something to the tree that bore it, which will be a permanent gain for summers yet unborn. The preacher dies, but his words have furnished impulses to souls which have become part of their texture and will be part for ever. The workman finds a nameless grave beneath the shadow of the great unfinished minster, but the fabric rises still and will rise; his work will be part of it for ever, a joy and beauty for coming generations. But after all our work in itself is not sufficient to resist the disintegrating forces of time, which, more than all else, tries and tests its quality. And, therefore, we need to ask that God's work may become manifest through ours. In my work let Thine appear; through my weak endeavours may that hand achieve which made the worlds and built cosmos out of chaos. "Let Thy work appear." And in asking that God's work may appear, we make a request which involves His glory. The one cannot appear without the other, so that in all coming time children and children's children may behold it, and as that glory shines upon their faces it must transform and transfigure them so that the beauty of the Lord our God will be upon them. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *God our home:*—There was a tradition among the Jews, although these traditions are not altogether trustworthy, that Moses, the man of God, wrote this psalm or prayer. And it has always been felt that the psalm seemed to have some special connection with, or reference to, the experience and the impressions of the children of Israel in the days that they were doomed to wander up and down in the wilderness without being allowed to enter into the promised land. And there is much in the psalm that corroborates that view. It is the psalm of a generation of men who felt themselves to be wasting away under God's wrath, consumed by His anger. They are spending their years as a tale that is told. The vanity and emptiness of life are pressed home upon them with great severity. At the same time, it is not a psalm of mere wailing and lamentation. There is the exercise of faith in it, not only in the first verse, but in the appeal to God to come and dwell with them as their case requires, and make them experience His mercy. Now, if we are to take this idea, and see how far it will carry us through this psalm, we must remember this, that when the children of Israel were leaving Egypt they were very much exercised about the hope of a habitation. They were leaving one habitation—the land of Egypt. It was a house of bondage; still, a house is a house, even if it be a house of bondage, and it is wonderful how men often shrink from breaking up some accustomed state of things, not discerning well what is to replace it. But the objections of the Egyptian rulers and the hesitations of the people were mightily overcome, and by and by they found themselves on that famous march through the wilderness towards the land which God had sworn to give them for an inheritance. It was to be their habitation, and it was not only to be their habitation, but also God's habitation. The value of it was that He was to dwell in it with them, watching over them; and accordingly at the Red Sea they sang: "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in." Many thoughts about this wonderful habitation, many expectations about

what it should prove to be, must have been in their minds. By and by there fell out that rebellion upon the report of the spies, which carried away the people as with a flood. One or two stood out against it, but the general cry of the people was to go back to Egypt. They despaired of that promised land, of that goodly inheritance. I think it would be a mistake for us to take it for granted that all those who had joined in this defection, all those who were involved in this unbelieving revolt from God, were even then mere carnal and unbelieving men. It may have been the case that some of them were men and women who had some good thing in them towards the Lord God of Israel. It is not such a rare thing, unfortunately, it is not such a surprising thing, to find persons who have the root of the matter in them and are believers, carried away by a stream of defection and by a sentiment of unbelief, as if they could not stand against it. And certainly we may suppose, when we look to the ends that God has in chastening, which is not for our destruction but for our salvation, that among those who were visited by this great disappointment some were brought to faith by the very chastening which was inflicted upon them. That agrees with the ends which God has in chastening. We are told that the people mourned greatly. They strove, as it were, to reverse the sentence which could not be reversed; but I should be disposed to believe that there might be among them persons who either were or came to be men of desire and men of faith towards the Lord God of their fathers. But if we are to open our minds to an idea of that kind, then what a tremendous disappointment fell upon those who belonged to this class, and how difficult it must have been for them to know what to say or do. As to the mere unbelievers, they were disappointed, of course; but they would perhaps turn to the ordinary avocations of the camp in the wilderness, prepared to make the best of it until the end of their pilgrimage had come. But those who had any trust in God and any longing for the experience of God's favour, how must it have been with them? All hope was over now of that habitation to which they had set out to go. No more dwelling with God in the land of which their fathers told them. Their children should go in; the very bones of Joseph should go in; but they were to be shut out. Indeed, one would say that they would turn to the duties that fell upon them in connection with daily life, unable to speak to any man the thoughts that were in them. It was so hard the feeling that all was over; and yet the deep longing in the heart protesting against its being all over. Yes, and yet, when we come to think of it, we may see how such souls were visited, and how they found their way to God through that experience. We may see how God brought good out of evil and light out of darkness. For still they were under God's care; still the manna was supplied to them and still the waters ran to satisfy their thirst. Still in the midst of their tents one tent arose which was God's tent, who was dwelling in the midst of them. He was providing for them, caring for them, and they could go to Him in His tabernacle with their vows and their free-will offerings; and no doubt in the month Abib they would draw together and remember that they were God's firstborn whom He had brought out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and with a stretched-out arm. To those who had no care about God, all that would be nothing, but it might be a great deal to those who were ready to say with Jonah, "I am cast out of Thy sight, yet I will look again towards Thy holy temple." For what did it come to, after all? That God was their dwelling-place even now. In His shadow they dwelt, His food they ate, His protection was extended to them, and if He chastened them, might they not remember that as a man chasteneth his own son, so the Lord God chasteneth them? And if they were enabled to get so far, if they were enabled to look upward out of that desolate condition of theirs and to claim a relation to God in which He was their dwelling-place, then they would not only be able to look upward, but to look forward too. I dare say it was one of the thoughts in their hearts, when they set their faces to go out of Egypt to that promised land, that when they came to die, as die they must, their tombs would be in that land on which God looked from the one year's end to the other. That was over now; there was nothing for them now but to leave their bones lying anywhere, wherever they might drop in the wilderness. Yet even so, they might believe that God's promise would hold and that God's goodness would not fail, and that when the great days of the fulfilling should come, they also, wherever their nameless grave might be, should not be altogether forgotten or left out of the blessedness of His people. And if God was their dwelling-place, how natural that their prayer should take this

course of appealing to God to make them feel their interest in Him, to make them feel God's interest in them. The pledges that they had once looked to see fulfilled had been swept away, and they stood face to face with God, and if they were to live a life of faith in God they required help. "O satisfy us early with Thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children." How that sentence on their lives expressed the vanity of their lives, they could make nothing of them; they would lead to no result. "And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it." We also are passing through our pilgrimage to the land which God has set before us, and in the case of many of us our experiences are very different from those of which we have been thinking in connection with this psalm. But there are others of us whose experience prepares them to join in some of the reflections and especially in some of the prayers of this psalm. Perhaps there are some who cannot see the use of their lives. Their expectations in life have been crossed; sorrows have come where they hoped to have prosperous and progressive times. They have difficulty in understanding any Divine purpose in their lives, or any human purpose that a person could follow out with cheerfulness, with a sense of accomplishment and success. And they are apt to feel that God is not thinking about them. Such persons deserve the sympathy of all those who have not been so tried as they have been. Perhaps there have been circumstances in their lives, temptations and failures that lead them to feel that this failure of their lives, this want of an outlook and an upward prospect before them, has been due to their own sin, and their own foolishness, which has perplexed their heart, and which has brought upon them the experiences which often do follow sin and folly—and it may be so. But it is true that you need a dwelling-place, and so also it is true that through these many experiences of yours you may be enabled to find your way to the faith that God is your dwelling-place; that He has not been forsaking you, but has been sweeping away treasures that were too lightly contemplated, and too lightly held, to make room for His coming in Himself into your lives, with a new manifestation of His grace, with a new sense of your own sin and unworthiness, and at the same time a new experience of His goodness. We have all homes, or have had homes, and what idea do we associate with the home, the dwelling-place to which we naturally belong? First of all the idea is of protection. A little child feels sure of protection in its own home, and it is right; there are people there who would die rather than let it come to harm. Then there is provision—wants met; forethought exercised that we may be provided for. Then there is a sense of peace, a sense of familiar surroundings, of being at home, at peace with all that is around you. There is also a sense of enjoyment, a sense of love and gladness that make a cheerful and happy place. We need this, and in a measure it comes to us in our own homes, but they may pass away. They are to teach us that we need the true home, and the Lord must be our dwelling-place, in whom is protection—"He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep"; in whom there is provision, "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." And then there is gladness. Some of us, perhaps, cannot realize true, simple, childlike gladness in connection with religious faith or experience, but that is not because there is any doubt about the gladness, but because we are not far enough on. And, therefore, if I speak to any who find a difficulty in the experiences of their life is recognizing the Divine care and goodness, I would say to you, Is your case worse than the case of those men and women of whom I have been speaking? And if this was the very way in which God taught them what He was and what He could be to them, and enable them to say, "Lord, Thou art our dwelling-place," then should we not learn the same lesson; learn it when sorrows and perplexities and troubles come to us, to go to God for deliverance, and for a knowledge of what it is to yield ourselves to God, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God. It is a sad business to think of those who are living in happy homes, in homes which have much happiness, and many elements of good about them, and yet have no outlook further; as if when by and by the materials of that earthly home fall away, they will pass out into eternity houseless and homeless. That will not do; we are very clearly told that if we are to find that blessedness we must seek it now. (*H. Rainy, D.D.*)

Man and his Maker:—I. IN THE SAFE GUARDIANSHIP OF GOD (ver. 1). 1. In other

places God is represented as the dwelling-place of human souls (Isa. iv. 6; Deut. xxxiii. 27; Ps. xci. 9). Human souls want a home, a place where they can rest in confidence, sheltered from the storm, protected from the burning rays, and shielded from every danger and every foe. 2. What a dwelling-place is God! (1) How safe! The combined armies of hell cannot enter it; the strongest storm in the universe cannot affect it. (2) How happy! In it there is everything to charm the imagination, gratify the love, delight the conscience, transport the whole soul in raptures of joy. (3) How accessible. Its doors are open to all. Untold millions have entered it, and yet there is room. (4) How enduring! The strongest castles rumble before the breath of time, and the material universe may be dissolved, but this "dwelling-place" will stand for ever. II. IN PHYSICAL CONTRAST TO GOD (vers. 2-8). Here is the Eternal in antithesis with man the evanescent, the absolute in contrast with man the dependent. 1. Man is mortal. Dust we are and to dust we must return. But this event occurs not by accident, or disease, or fate. No. "Thou turnest man to destruction." There are no accidental deaths in the world. 2. Emblems of the brevity of human life. (1) A "watch." This, according to Hebrew chronology, was only one-third of the nocturnal season. Life is spoken of, not as a year or a month, but as a third part of a night, so brief it is. (2) "Sleep." "Sleep ceases," says Luther, "ere we can perceive it or mark it; before we are aware we have slept, sleep is gone." When the oldest man, as he is about passing away, looks back on his past life, the whole seems only as a vision of the night. (3) "Grass." What are men? Merchants, warriors, emperors, armies? Grass, nothing more. The wind passeth over them and they are gone. Oh, what is man to God? (*Homilist.*) *The gate to God's acre*:—It is the oldest of stories, sung in this oldest of psalms; of human weakness, turning in dismay from the change and decay about it, to find refuge in the eternity of God. We are not suffered to waste time in the attempt to comprehend the abstract truth of God's eternity. We are lifted for the moment, in order that we may descend; suffered to grasp a few of the treasures of the Divine glory, that we may carry them back to glorify our earthly life. 1. This splendid thought of the Divine eternity is made to touch the shifting and inconstant character of our earthly state, by the single word "dwelling-place." I am a wanderer on earth, there is an eternal home for me; I am sick of confusion and change, there is eternal abiding in Him who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," and only a change "into the same image from glory to glory." 2. But a correct view of the eternity of God conveys warning as well as comfort. The more it is studied, the stronger is the contrast into which it throws the brevity and uncertainty of human life. (1) The eternal power of God convicts us of helplessness. Notice the sharp contrast. "From everlasting to everlasting, O God," Thy life is self-sustained—in Thine own power: man's life, that gift in which he so exults and on which he presumes to play "such fantastic tricks before high heaven,"—that which flowers out in his pride and high endeavour, in his ambitions, plans, and grand enterprises, is a thing so little in his power, that Thou turnest him even unto the finest dust with a word; and, with another word,— "Return, ye children of men"—callest others into being to fill his place. (2) The eternal being of God is used to convict us of delusion. We measure life by false standards. The psalm brings us back to the true rule of measurement (vers. 4, 12). 3. These suggestions are enforced by the figures which follow. Each of them sets forth a truth of its own. (1) There is, first, the fact that man passes swiftly from life. "Thou carriest them away as with a flood." "Thou carriest men away from life, as a mountain torrent, rising in an hour, sweeps away the frail hut that man has built." (2) Take the next figure: and to the same thought of the swift passage of life, we have added that of its unsubstantial, unreal character, and of man's unconsciousness of its passage. "They are as a sleep in the morning." (3) Again, look at the third image: the grass which flourisheth in the morning and is cut down at evening. Here still is the old key-note—the quick passing of the life; but with a new thought, namely, how the beauty and strength and aspiration of life are disregarded in the swift flight of time. It is cut down. Why this strong expression, as if it were not left to wither of itself, but were destroyed by violence? 4. The question marks the transition to the next portion of the psalm, embraced in the next four verses. This matter of brief life and swift death is a mystery, is it also an accident? Then, as now, men were prone to say, "Man is to be pitied: man is the victim of circumstances: man is not guilty, but unfortunate: man is not depraved, but fettered: man deserves not

punishment, but compassion: sin is no ground for wrath, but for tolerance." True it is that the Bible is an evangel of love, and pardon, and compassion; true that "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him"; but also true that the Bible, from beginning to end, blazes like Sinai with God's hatred of sin, resounds with warnings of man's danger from sin, and sets forth as in letters of fire that man is responsible for sin, and liable to its penalties; true that history, and prophecy, and psalm, and gospel, and epistle are grouped round one definite purpose, to save him from the power, dominion, and consequences of sin. In view of these terrible facts, and of men's persistent blindness to the power of God's anger then, as now, is it strange that Moses prayed, is there not good cause for us to pray, "Teach us to number our days"? Whither shall a sinful, short-lived man flee, but to a holy and eternal God? Thither turns the prayer of these last five verses, and turns with hope and confidence. Man is the subject of God's wrath, but there is mercy with Him to satisfy him who flees from the wrath to come. Man is a pilgrim and a stranger, with no continuing city, but there is gladness and rejoicing in God for all his brief days. Man's beauty consumes as the moth, but "the beauty of the Lord our God" shall be upon him, and that beauty is immortal, untouched by time and change. Man's work is fragmentary, his plans often disconcerted, his grandest enterprises nipped in the bud by death, but God's touch upon human work imparts to it the fixedness of eternity; and if He establish the work of our hands, it shall abide though the world pass away and the lust thereof. He will make good the sufferings of sin by the joys of Holiness. (*M. R. Vincent, D.D.*) *God a dwelling-place*.—I. THE ETERNITY OF GOD. 1. The existence of God never had a beginning. 2. The existence of God will never have an end; it stretches into futurity further than our minds can follow it or angels trace it; it is an everlasting life, a deep and mysterious stream which never began, and will never cease, to flow. II. IN WHAT RELATION THIS EVERLASTING BEING STANDS TO OURSELVES. We are reminded of the power by which He formed the earth and the worlds; we are reminded of the eternity in which He dwelt before there was a creature to know and adore Him; and for what end?—that a world of destitute sinners may be encouraged to consign themselves to His care and to trust in His love. He is "our dwelling-place," our refuge, our habitation, our home. 1. A refuge from dangers. 2. The seat of our comforts. 3. The place of our abode. III. WHAT FEELINGS THE CONTEMPLATION OF GOD IN THIS LIGHT OUGHT TO EXCITE. 1. Grateful acknowledgment. 2. Satisfaction. 3. Humility. 4. Confidence. 5. To the careless and ungodly—terror. Other enemies may be incensed against us, but while they are preparing to execute their purposes of wrath, "their breath goeth forth"; they die; and there is an end of their terror. But an avenging God never dies. The weapons of His indignation are as lasting as they are strong. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *The glorious habitation*.—I. EXPLANATION. 1. The dwelling-place of man is the place where he can unbend himself, and feel himself at home, and speak familiarly. With God you can be always at home; you need be under no restraint. The Christian at once gives God the key of his heart, and lets Him turn everything over. The more God lives in the Christian, the better the Christian loves Him; the oftener God comes to see him, the better he loves his God. And God loves His people all the more when they are familiar with Him. 2. Man's home is the place where his affections are centred. Christian man, is God your habitation in that sense? Have you given your whole soul to God? 3. My next remark is concerning the lease of this dwelling-place. Sometimes, you know, people get turned out of their houses, or their houses tumble down about their ears. It is never so with ours; God is our dwelling-place throughout all generations. Christian, your house is indeed a venerable house, and you have long dwelt there. You dwelt there in the person of Christ long before you were brought into this sinful world; and it is to be your dwelling-place throughout all generations. You are never to ask for another house; you will always be contented with that one you have, you will never wish to change your habitation. II. IMPROVEMENT. 1. Self-examination. It is remarkable that almost the only scriptural writer who speaks of God as a dwelling-place is that most loving apostle, John. He gives us (1 John iv. 12) one means of knowing whether we are living in God: "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." And again, further on, he says, "And we have known and believed the love that God is to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." You may then tell whether you are a tenant of this great spiritual house by the love you have

towards others. In the 13th verse is another sign: "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit." Have you actually the Spirit of God within you? If so, you dwell in God. But the apostle gives another sign in the 16th verse: "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." The confession of our faith in the Saviour is another sign that we live in God. But there is one more sign whereby we ought to examine ourselves, in the third chapter 24th verse: "He that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him." Obedience to the commandments of God is a blessed sign of a dwelling in God. Some of you have a deal of religious talk, but not much religious walk; a large stock of outside piety, but not much real inward piety, which develops itself in your actions.

2. Congratulation to those who dwell in God. I congratulate you, Christians, first, that you have such a magnificent house to dwell in. You have not a palace that shall be as gorgeous as Solomon's,—a mighty place as immense as the dwellings of the kings of Assyria, or Babylon; but you have a God that is more than mortal creatures can behold, you dwell in an immortal fabric, you dwell in the Godhead—something which is beyond all human skill. I congratulate you, moreover, that ye live in such a perfect house. There ne'er was a house on earth that could not be made a little better; but in God you have all you require. I congratulate you, moreover, that you live in a house that shall last for ever, a dwelling-place that shall not pass away; when all this universe shall have died out like a spark from an expiring brand, your house shall live and stand more imperishable than marble, self-existent as God, for it is God! Be happy then.

3. One word by way of warning. Do you know, poor soul, that you have not a house to live in? You have a house for your body but no house for your soul. Have you ever seen a poor girl at midnight sitting down on a doorstep crying? Somebody passes by, and says, "Why do you sit here?" "I have no house, sir. I have no home." "Where is your father?" "My father's dead, sir." "Where is your mother?" "I have no mother, sir." "Have you no friends?" "No friends at all." "Have you no house?" "No; I have none. I am houseless." And she shivers in the chill air, and gathers her poor ragged shawl around her, and cries again, "I have no house—I have no home." Would you not pity her? Would you blame her for her tears? Ah! there are some of you that have houseless souls here this morning. It is something to have a houseless body; but to think of a houseless soul! (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *God our home:*—There is pathos in the fact that the author of this psalm never had an earthly home in the truest sense. For the first fifty years of his life he was the foster son of an alien; for the next, a fugitive; and for the last, a wanderer in the wilderness. But God is the best home, after all. How one feels the blessing of a pleasant home after long travel. What should a home be? I. A PLACE OF SHELTER. And God is that, from wrath, sin, sorrow. II. A PLACE OF SUPPLY. There we go for "our daily bread." And it is God who gives us that. III. OF ENJOYMENT. Those do not know God who have never found delight in Him. IV. REST. V. LOVE. (*M. B. Riddle, D.D.*) *Jehovah our home:*—I. MAN NEEDS A HOME. Like the climbing plant, without the strongest stem to support it, the sensibilities of our frail but wonderful nature trail in the dust. II. GOD REVEALS HIMSELF AS HUMANITY'S HOME. The perfection of our home in God is seen in three particulars. 1. Physical adaptation. This world is fitted up for man's accommodation; fitted to engage energy and repay toil. It is not for the idler's comfort. 2. Intellect finds a home in God. Never talk of religious dullness. Our Father spreads out for the education of His children the grandly-illustrated page of nature, and the letter of His love. 3. Heart and soul—our moral being—find a home in God. "In all generations." Religion, under every different form, and with every varied accompaniment: patriarchal simplicity, Mosaic picture, Christian manhood—has ever been the same, ever fitted to man's heart. III. OUR HOME IN GOD IS INVIOLEABLE. Out of God, there is no resting-place for the jaded spirits of men. IV. GOD OUR HOME: THEN IT IS ETERNAL. V. THIS HOME IS TO BE REACHED THROUGH CHRIST. (*Homilist.*) *The abiding-place:*—I. HOW DID MOSES COME TO WIN THIS FOIL AGAINST HIS SENSE OF THE BREVITY OF LIFE? He sought to purge his vision of every film, and he trained his mind to detect a presence of God underneath the veils of nature and behind the masks of history, till the very earth around him was haunted ground. God was quite as invisible to him as to you or me, and yet, according to the apostle, he lived as seeing Him. God had become a dwelling-place to Moses, because thought and desire had made a well-worn path toward Him, and He was

a refuge to which he continually resorted. Such realization of God cannot be extemporized. A solid and substantial fabric which shall afford thought and feeling, all the repose and solace of a home, can be ours only as we acquaint ourselves with God, and enter into such familiarity with Him that He shall grow to be as definite and real to us as any of the daily facts of our common world.

II. WHAT IT MEANT TO MOSES THAT GOD SHOULD APPEAR AS A "DWELLING-PLACE." Through all the years of his earthly career he had never had a permanent home. He had been a pilgrim and sojourner on the earth, and learned the full meaning of the word "homelessness." But, as one weary with long marches behold afar some stately mansion where love and welcome wait to greet him, so on the thought of Moses dawned the great vision of a quiet and enduring home, where his tired limbs and aching spirit should find balm and ease. His life had been driven hither and thither at the caprice of circumstances; in no sunny nook or sequestered vale of peace could he stay; goaded on, he had to leave behind him whatever engaged his interest, and where he fain would tarry. But from that gleaming dwelling-place yonder he should go out no more for ever. Instead of change there would be permanency; instead of the vicissitudes and fluctuations of fickle fortune there would be the constancy of unharassed tranquillity. You say, such a faith is an experience to be coveted. You sigh, and wish that it might be yours. But note that he had no monopoly of such a dwelling-place. He says that it is just as available, just as accessible, to us as to him. God is a Dwelling-place for His people in all generations. And, in spite of the murky vapours which hide our heavens, many a one since has found it true that it is possible to have in God all the security and rest of a dwelling-place. "In all generations" the great fact stands; it has never been annulled; its wide doors are sealed against the approach of none. We may conceive of the glorious attributes of our God as so many various chambers or retiring-rooms, places of security, of gratification, or of repose, to which it is our present privilege to resort. When disconcerted with the mysteries of life, we will rest in the omniscience of God, and remember that the all-knowing One cannot err. When our desires seem to fail, we will rest in His fidelity who will never break His word of promise. When life grows bitter, we will resort to Him, like the sobbing child that pillows its head on a mother's bosom, because He has sent us this message: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort thee." As I close, I want to ask whether or not you, any of you, feel "at home" with God. I have read of some "who remembered God and were troubled." If it is thus with you, He cannot be your Dwelling-place. You may have paid Him occasional visits at distant intervals, but "he that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High abides under the shadow of the Almighty." (*J. G. Van Slyke, D.D.*) *House and home* (with Isa. lvii. 15):—Here are two homes. In the one case, God is a home for the human heart. In the other, the heart becomes a home for God. This double doctrine has in it the very soul and marrow of real religion. The most complete description of man the sinner is that he is "without God." The most complete description of man the saved is that he is "in God," "he dwells in God and God in him." I once heard a negro bid "good-bye" to the missionary who had found a way into his heart for Jesus and himself too. "You lib here," said he, putting his hand upon his heart. "You lib right in my heart. You came to me, an' you say, 'I love you, John,' I open the door and you come right in, an' I say, you'se welcome to all I'se got. You say, 'John, do this;' 'John, don't do that;' an' you love poor John; till my heart warm through and through. Massa, good-bye; but you lib here all same till I die." Verily the man of God was in John's heart. Jesus wants to come into the contrite heart! To you He says, "Come down; for to-day I must abide in thy house!" But when God dwells in us by His Spirit, and "makes our heart His home," He becomes our dwelling-place and our home. It is not possible to retain in perpetuity any earthly home, but this home, the heart of God, can never fail through all the years. These walls can never crumble; this roof-tree can never decay; these foundations can never fail. From everlasting to everlasting He is God. Neither is there any eviction possible; nor any room for alarm at the approach of hostile foot or invading arm. The Lord is my fortress, my strong tower. "A safe stronghold our God is still!" That was the thunderous victor-song of Luther and his fellows, and all the armies of Pope and devil could not dislodge them. The Christian's dwelling-place is a safe home! For the eternal God is his refuge, and around him are the everlasting arms. Only cross the threshold, and you shall go out no more for ever. The Lord our dwelling-

place. That speaks to us of shelter. When the cold winds blow, and the tempest beats, and the storm of rain or snow goes driving through the streets, how sweet to cross the threshold and gain the shelter of our home. We can hear the hurly-burly outside—the noise of the rain against the window-pane; the moaning of the blast; but none of these things move us—we are safe at home. “Our dwelling-place.” How the word tells us of comfort; of content; of rest and home delights. By the ingle and the hearth we are able to forget the tedious toil and toil of the day. The toil-worn limb, the tired hand, the weary foot, the aching head, the jaded brain find at home a welcome quiet, a refreshing rest, a comforting repose. To dwell in God is to win that refreshment and obtain that rest. And does not the word speak to us also of supplies? Our dwelling-place, God. Food lies on His table; the finest of bread; honey in the combs; wines well refined, fatlings of the flock; all this and more tells the story of the bountiful provision, the sumptuous fare provided for every one who dwells in God, housed and homed in the loving heart of Jesus Christ. (*J. J. Wray.*) *God as a dwelling-place*.—Perhaps the noblest form of dwelling-place, and the one most akin to Moses’ meaning, is that of human friendship. As little children, when taken among strangers, we looked all around for mother, and if only she were there we rushed to her, and hid in her; covering our face, but feeling safe, and able presently to look out on the guests as from a window in a house on a crowd. Or, in later life, it has been our lot to be misrepresented and misunderstood by all except by one man of noblest fashion. And it has seemed as if we were almost indifferent to all beside, so long as He is pleased and satisfied. “Let the cruel winds of slander come,” we have cried, “and reproach, and hate; He understands and appreciates me; judged by His standard, I am true; tested by His opinion, I am right against a world in arms, I am content to abide in His approval and be at peace.” Or, in other circumstances still, you have learnt to love, with all your heart and soul, so that your existence seems almost to have passed into that of another, and to be safe, restful, almost careless of all else, so long as that house stands unsmitten by the tempest which whirls around. All these are dwelling-places to which souls betake themselves, destined, alas! all of them, to perish, except that human love which, in so far as it is threaded with the Divine, partakes of the nature of God Himself, and is eternal. But none of them can give to the soul such blessed rest as to be able to say to God, “Thou, O Lord, art my rock, and my fortress, my shield, and my high tower.” It was thus that the apostles made their dwelling-place in the nature of their Lord. Their life was hid with Christ in God. So our blessed Lord lived in God His Father. Just as a child looks out on a mob in the streets from the security of the strong castellated dwelling, where it sits on its father’s knee, so did Jesus look out on the malice and hatred of men from His rest in the very heart of God. This is the true life, which, thank God! is within the reach of us all. Put God between yourself and men with their strife, or sorrow with its fret and care, chafing like the perpetual wash of the wave which retreats only to return. Ask what God says of you. Measure yourself only by His standards. Seek only His well-done. Dwell deep in God. And because thou shalt have made the Lord, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. As the cathedral of Cologne rears itself in incomparable majesty beyond the frailer houses around, offering a permanence which storms and time cannot impair, so does God rear Himself as our all-sufficient dwelling-place amid the passage of creation, of generations, and of centuries. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *God—the Home of the soul of man*.—Heinrich Heine, a Jew by birth, not by conviction, professed Christianity in 1825. This profession, however, was merely formal, a necessary preliminary to his practising as a lawyer in Germany. Compelled to leave Germany, he lived in Paris, where he was one of the most brilliant figures in the brilliant society of his day. During many years his wittiest gibes were directed against religion; irreverence was rife in the world around him, and he never hesitated to give it sparkling utterance. But towards the end of his life came a change. A few years before death he wrote, “Yes! I have returned to God like the prodigal son, after my long swineherdship. . . . Is it misery that sends me home? Perhaps a less miserable reason. A heavenly homesickness overtook me.” Still later: “I die believing in God one and eternal, Creator of the world. I implore His mercy upon my immortal soul.”

Ver. 2. *Even from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God.—The eternity of God*.—I. IN WHAT RESPECTS GOD IS ETERNAL. 1. Without beginning. 2. With-

out end. 3. Without succession or change. Of a creature it may be said, he was, or he is, or he shall be. As it may be said of the flame of a candle, it is flame, but it is not the same individual flame as was before, nor is it the same that will be presently after; there is a continual dissolution of it into air, and a continual supply for the generation of more; while it continues it may be said there is a flame, yet not entirely one, but in a succession of parts: so of a man it may be said, he is in a succession of parts; but he is not the same that he was, and will not be the same that he is. But God is the same without any succession of parts, and of time; of Him it may be said, He is; He is no more now than He was, and He shall be no more hereafter than He is. II. GOD IS ETERNAL, AND MUST NEEDS BE so. 1. This is evident by the name God gives Himself (Ex. iii. 14). The eternity of God is opposed to the volubility of time, which is extended into past, present, and to come. Our time is but a small drop, as sand to all the atoms and small particles of which the world is made; but God is an unbounded sea of Being,—"I am that I am," i. e. an infinite life. 2. God hath life in Himself (John v. 26). He hath life by His essence, not by participation. He is a sun to give light and life to all creatures, but receives not light or life from anything, and therefore He hath an unlimited life; not a drop of life, but a fountain; not a spark of a limited life, but a life transcending all bounds. He hath life in Himself; all creatures have their life in Him, and from Him. He that hath life in himself doth necessarily exist, and could never be made to exist, for then he had not life in himself, but in that which made him to exist, and gave him life. What doth necessarily exist, therefore, exists from eternity; what hath being of itself could never be produced in time, could not want being one moment, because it hath being from its essence, without influence of any efficient cause. 3. If God were not eternal, He were not—(1) Immutable in His nature; (2) An infinitely perfect being; (3) Omnipotent; (4) The first cause of all. III. ETERNITY IS ONLY PROPER TO GOD, AND NOT COMMUNICABLE (1 Tim. vi. 16). All other things receive their being from Him, and can be deprived of their being by Him. All things depend on Him, He of none. All other things are like clothes, which would consume if God preserved them not. Whatsoever is not God, is temporary; whatsoever is eternal, is God. IV. USES—1. Of information. (1) If God be of an eternal duration, then Christ is God (Col. i. 16, 17; Heb. xiii. 8; Rev. i. 8; John xvi. 28, xvii. 5). As the eternity of God is the ground of all religion, so the eternity of Christ is the ground of the Christian religion. Could our sins be perfectly expiated had He not an eternal divinity to answer for the offences committed against an eternal God? Temporary sufferings had been of little validity, without an infiniteness and eternity in His person to add weight to His passion. (2) If God be eternal, He knows all things as present. (3) How bold and foolish is it for a mortal creature to censure the counsels and actions of an eternal God, or be too curious in his inquisitions! (4) What a folly and boldness is there in sin, since an eternal God is offended thereby! (5) How dreadful is it to lie under the stroke of an eternal God! 2. Of comfort. (1) If God be eternal, His covenant will be so. (2) If God be eternal, He being our God in covenant is an eternal good and possession. (3) The enjoyment of God will be as fresh and glorious after many ages as it was at first. (4) If God be eternal, here is a strong ground of comfort against all the distresses of the Church, and the threats of the Church's enemies. God's abiding for ever is the plea Jeremiah makes for his return to his forsaken Church (Lam. v. 19). (5) Since God is eternal, He hath as much power as will to be as good as His word. His promises are established upon His eternity, and this perfection is a main ground of trust (Isa. xxvi. 4). 3. For exhortation. (1) Let us be deeply affected with our sins long since committed. Though they are past with us, they are in regard of God's eternity present with Him; there is no succession in eternity as there is in time. (2) Let the consideration of God's eternity abate our pride. (3) Let the consideration of God's eternity take off our love and confidence from the world, and the things thereof. The eternity of God reproaches a pursuit of the world, as preferring a momentary pleasure before an everlasting God; as though a temporal world could be a better supply than a God whose years never fail. (S. Charnock.) *The eternity of God*.—I. EXPLICATION. Eternity is a duration without bounds or limits; now there are two limits of duration, beginning and ending; that which hath always been, is without beginning; that which always shall be, is without ending. But eternity, absolutely taken, comprehends both these, and signifies an infinite duration, which had no beginning, nor shall have any end: so that when we say God is eternal, we mean that He always was,

and shall be for ever; that He had no beginning of life, nor shall have any end of days; but that He is "from everlasting to everlasting." II. PROOF. 1. From the dictates of natural reason. This attribute of God is of all others least disputed among the philosophers; all agree that God is eternal, and are agreed what eternity is; viz. a boundless duration; and however they did attribute a beginning to their heroes and demons, whence come the genealogies of their gods, yet the Supreme God they looked upon as without beginning; and it is a good evidence that this perfection doth clearly belong to God, that Epicurus, who had the lowest and meanest conceptions of God, yet is forced to attribute this to Him: Tully (de Nat. Deor. lib. I.) saith to the Epicureans, "Where, then, is your happy and eternal Being, by which two epithets you express God?" And Lucretius gives this account of the Divine nature, "It is absolutely necessary to the nature of the gods to pass an eternity in profound peace and quiet." 2. From Scripture and Divine revelation. St. Peter's conversion of the words, "One day is as a thousand years," etc. only signifies this, that the longest duration of time is so inconsiderable to God, that it is as the shortest; that is, bears no proportion to the eternity of God. But directly, the Scripture frequently mentions this attribute (Gen. xxi. 33; Deut. xxxiii. 27; Isa. lvii. 15); and this, as it is attributed to Him in respect of His being, so in respect of all His other perfections (Ps. ciii. 17; Rom. i. 20; 1 Tim. i. 17; Gal. i. 5). III. DOCTRINAL COROLLARIES. 1. From the eternity of God, we may infer, that He is of Himself. That which always is can have nothing before it to be a cause of its being. 2. We may infer the necessity of His being. It is necessary everything should be, when it is; now, that which is always is absolutely necessary, because always so. 3. The immutability of the Divine nature; for being always, He is necessarily; and being necessarily, He cannot but be what He is; a change of His being is as impossible as a cessation. IV. PRACTICAL INFERENCES. The consideration of God's eternity may serve—1. For the support of our faith. There are two attributes which are the proper objects of our faith and confidence—God's goodness, and His power; both these are eternal. 2. For the encouragement of our obedience. We serve the God who can give us an everlasting reward. 3. For the terror of wicked men. (*J. Tillotson.*) *The eternity of God:*—"Time and space are not God; but creations of God: with Him it is universal here; so it is an everlasting now." (*T. Carlyle.*)

Ver. 3. *Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.—Man's thoughts of man:*—I wish to point out our duty to the world of humanity; to the communities to which we belong; to the generation in which we live; to the great family of mankind, of which God has made us members. 1. What have been, what are men's thoughts respecting the race of man? We know not for how many thousands of years our race may have lived on this little planet, rolling and spinning "like an angry midge" amid the immensities of space; but, over a space of forty centuries at least, in the pages of many literatures, in the accents of many tongues, we find the opinions of men respecting man. They have been uttered, as freely as to-day, by the bards and prophets of races long since vanished, in language long since dead. Man has ever been a mystery to himself. "Who are you?" indignantly asked an irascible person, who had been delayed in his hurried progress by running against a modern philosopher in the streets. "Ah," replied the philosopher, "if you could tell me that—if you could tell me what I am—I would give you all I possess in the world." To-day, however, we do not want to enter into any transcendent mysteries; we only want to learn what men have thought of man in his moral, his spiritual, his religious aspect. And here, strange to say, we are confronted at once with a perfect chaos of conflicting judgments. According to some, man is a being so small, so intolerably contemptible, so radically unjust, mean, and selfish, that he is not worth working for; he is not only "a shadow less than shade, a nothing less than nothing"; not only "fading as a loaf" and "crushed before the moth"; not only like the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; but also, as far as moral dignity is concerned, he is the mere insect of an hour; a creature essentially allied to the animal; a being who combines the instincts of the tiger and the ape; a blot on God's fair creation; a jar in the sweet untroubled silence; a discord amid the infinite harmony; "a flutter in the eternal calm." It is remarkable how cynics and sceptics in all ages have coincided in this view. Think of Diogenes, searching in daylight with a lantern to find a man in the streets of Athens; think of Phocion, whenever a passage in his speech was applauded, turn-

ing round and asking, "Have I said anything wrong, then?" think of Pyrrho the atheist, describing men as a herd of swine, rioting on board a rudderless vessel in a storm; think of La Rochefoucauld reducing man's virtues into mere selfish vices in thin disguise; think of Voltaire describing the multitude as a compound of bears and monkeys; think of Schopenhauer, condemning this as the worst of all possible worlds, and arguing that man is a radical mistake; think of the more serious voice which says, "However we brazen it out, we men are a little breed." But then turn to the other side, the grand and exalted opinions which man has entertained of man. Think of Shakespeare's, "What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving, how express and admirable! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god!" Think of Henry Smith's, "When we turn our eyes upon the soul it will soon tell us its own royal pedigree and noble extraction by those sacred hieroglyphics which it bears upon itself." Or take Novalis, "Man is the true Shekinah, the glory-cloud of God. We touch heaven when we lay our hands on that high form." 2. Which, then, are we to follow of these diverse judgments? By which are we to be guided in our own dealings with our fellow-men? I answer with all my heart, take the nobler and better view of mankind. Adopt it, not as a voluntary illusion, but as a sacred fact, as a living faith. Good and evil without end may be said of man; and both be amply borne out by history and by experience. That is due to the fact that man is a composite being; that he partakes of two natures—the animal and the spiritual; that he is swayed by two impulses—the evil and the good; that he has in him two beings—the Adam and the Christ; that "the Angel has him by the hand, and the serpent by the heart"; that our little lives are kept in equipoise by balance of two opposite desires—the struggle of the impulse that enjoys, and the more noble impulse that aspires. Hence we may say of man, in the same breath, "How poor, how rich, how abject, how august, how wonderful, how complicated is man." "Glory and scandal of the universal," says Pascal, "the judge of angels, a worm of earth; if he exalts himself I smite him down, if he humbles himself I lift him up." But is there no practical reconciliation of these antitheses? Yes, there is: not in the world, not in nature, not in philosophy; but there is in religion, there is in Christ. 3. I would urge you, then, not to give up faith in God or in man, or in God's doctrines for man, nor sweetness, nor charity, nor invincible hopefulness. To lose faith in man is to lose faith in God who made him; to lose faith in man's nature is to lose faith in your own. Depend upon it, that the man who begins by saying, "Mankind is a rascal," will soon add the words, "The world lives by its scoundrelism, and so will I." It makes all the difference in the world whether you judge man from Thersites or from Achilles, from a Nero or from a Marcus Aurelius, from a Marat or from St. Louis; from living men like one or two whom one could name, or from the depraved, wife-beating sots and brutal burglars who are the festering curse of the lowest dregs of the population; from living women like some whom one could name, or from those unmotherly mothers and unwomanly women who nigh turn the motherhood to shame and womanliness to loathing. Oh, judge mankind from its highest and its best! (1) Let us try to believe that there is a good side in every man. Man, it has been said, is like a piece of Labrador opal. It has no lustre as you turn it in your hand till you come to a particular angle, and then it shows deep and beautiful colours. We sometimes read with amazement how some one, who seemed to be past all remedy in abandoned villainess, suddenly, touched by the glory of heroism, will rise to a great act of self-sacrifice. Look at the battle of Waterloo; look at the trenches of Sebastopol; look at the charge at Balaclava; look at the burning of the "Goliath"; look at the wreck of the "Birkenhead"; to see how the commonest and coarsest of men can recognize the invincible claim and sovereignty of duty, even at the cost of life. Man's nature may often look like the dull chill blank of the Alpine mountain side, darkened only by the shadows of its black and stubborn pines, but let the dawn blush in the vernal sky, and the south wind breathe, and the sun fire to the high tops of those mountain pines, and the snow will melt and vanish under their soft and golden touches, till at last it rushes down in avalanche, and then where yesterday was snow, to-day shall be green grass and purple flower. (2) And as another way to help us in retaining our faith in human nature, let us sometimes turn away from the thought of bad men altogether, to that galaxy of heaven, wherein shine the clustered constellations of saintly lives. The saints in the long ages have not been few. To these have been due the progress, to these the ennoblement, to these

the preservation of the world. Among all the bad passions, among all the disordered lives of men—amid all their meanness, and littleness, and emptiness, and egotism—it is as water in the desert to come in life and more often among the records of the dead on these natures “pure as crystal, active as fire, unselfish as the ministering spirits, strong, generous, and enduring as the hearts of martyrs.” Look on these; think of these; do not think of the heartless and aimless crowds that vegetate without living, but read the lives and actions of these fine children of the light. (8) But above all, as the best of all rules, think constantly of Christ; and fix your eyes on Him. “Of what account after all are the saints compared to Christ? They are,” said Luther, “no more than sparkling dewdrops of the nightdew upon the head of the bridegroom scattered among His hair.” The only measure of a perfect man is the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. 4. And oh, lastly, the most sure way to justify our faith and hope in human nature is to justify it in ourselves. If you would raise others, live yourself as on a mountain; live yourself as on a promontory. Say with the good emperor of old, “Whatever happens I must be good”; even as though the emerald and the purple should say, “Whatever happens I must be emerald, and keep my colour.” That is how men widen the skirts of light, and make the struggle with darkness narrower. To do this is a worthy object; it is the only worthy object of our lives. (Dean Farrar.)

Ver. 4. **For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.**—*God's estimate of time*:—1. Let us set this truth before our minds: that which seems a long season to man seems a very brief season to God. (1) God has lived for ever. Farther back than our strongest thought can travel, farther back than our swiftest wing or fancy can fly, and there our God was. As a drop in the boundless ocean, so is a cycle of a thousand years in the view of Him who is alike without beginning of days and end of years. (2) If God estimates the years by the magnitude of His empire, by the multiplicity of His cares, by the wide sweep of His eternal purposes, then no wonder that with God a “thousand years are but as yesterday when it is past.” (3) Our Father in Heaven has an unspeakable blessedness. He is infinitely wise, holy, and good. He is love. “His tender mercies are over all His works.” He tastes for ever the perfect joy of creating bliss, and conferring it upon others. 2. I proceed to point out the practical uses of this truth. (1) It helps our deep awe and holy reverence. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, as surely as love to God is the very summit of perfection. (2) One way of keeping the world in its proper subordinate place is to more frequently fasten our attention on these subjects,—the power and grandeur of God, the eternity of His being, the perfection of His character, the boundlessness of His empire. These things have power to lift our minds on high. (3) Lastly and chiefly: the practical use of this text is to strengthen our patience, and to cherish in us the assurance that, however long delayed, the purposes of God will be accomplished, the promises of God will be fulfilled. (C. Vince.) *The long day of God*:—With the Deity, such a vast existence indicates only vast events. And these events must necessarily assume the form of a progress in which the present shall become the cause of the morrow, for any other method would either make eternity a monotone, or else a reckless succession like the results of chance, the throwing of dice, or the forms assumed in the kaleidoscope. In ages and centuries where the mind has become aroused into that action which is called civilization, it is utterly impossible to believe in God except as being the Supreme Activity. Assuming, then, this Divine activity, we may the more readily assert that the endless events of this God will assume the form of a progress. This assumption of a universal law is justified by the fact proclaimed in many special laws. The acorn passes to leaf, to twig, to bush, to sapling, to tree, to the great monarch of the forest. In its long life each year is a progress, each day being the cause in part of the next day. Its second year so multiplies the leaves that they breathe in a double quantity of air in behalf of the third year, and the roots of the second year so redouble the nutriment on hand that they also order an advance of the whole plant for the next springtime. All that we see around us in the organic form is acting under a law of progress, hence it does not seem hasty if we conclude that all the events coming from the Divine activity are occurring in the form of a progression, the present being a result of the past and a cause of the future. If, as we all believe, man is an image of the Creator, we may read in the human mind a confirmation of the idea that God is

expressing Himself in a continuous series of events, for in such a career only does man, God's image, find happiness. The idea that God once noted should be crowded out by the idea that He is now acting. The world is a chain in which all the links are equally valuable, because each one is an inseparable part—a part without which there is no value in the chain. Hence you stand as much in the presence of God to-day as stood the earth when God was planting the Garden of Eden for the first sons of man. It may be that the external world, with all its forms and laws, is nothing else than the spiritual God, expressing Himself in visible and audible and tangible forms, in order that our souls may possess some outward revelation of the Deity. The light that makes myriads of colours, the sound that is divided up into music, the height and depth that are emblems to us of infinity, the grandeur of the "star depths," and the millions of years consumed in their orbits, may be the only ladders upon which our humble feet can climb to any belief in a God. The laws of the universe, instead of concealing a God, do reveal Him, for they are the footprints of One whose form cannot otherwise be traced. As the delicate wire of Franklin revealed an agency of which he had only dreamed—as it became a Jacob's ladder upon which the invisible angels came down from the clouds—so the whole material world must be concluded as the path where God bursts from His invisible spirit-life out upon the sight of His children. Hence the laws of Nature are not indications that there is no God, or that there once was, but they are the places and the times when and where this Creator continually confesses His presence. The "thousand-year" day of God seems to argue that His children will not be limited to the earthly mornings and evenings, but will rise to where they can, like their Heavenly Father, see the past and the present, rise to where the love and memory dimmed by a few years have many returns to the souls torn asunder in this vale. If in God's sight the children of earth stand near together, so that Paul and Wesley mingle their eloquence, and Magdalen and Guyon mingle their love, and Lovejoy and Lincoln their liberty and blood, then this "thousand-year" day which so mingles things separated on earth should be man's day also beyond the tomb, that there, in blest companionship, souls may meet which toiled here for one end, but who never saw the faces about to follow them, nor saw the golden harvest destined to spring from their blood and tears. If to God the graves of Paul and Fénelon, of Magdalen and the Dairyman's Daughter, of Lovejoy and Wilberforce, are all close together, under the same flowers and same Divine presence, there should be a realm beyond where those sleeping souls should wake to consciousness of their blended lives. (*D. Swing.*)

Ver. 5. Thou carriest them away as with a flood.—*The devastating ravages of death.*—The Israelites had not yet witnessed the swellings of Jordan, through which, by their Maker's presence and power, they were to pass dry-shod; but they had witnessed—and never could they forget—the watery ramparts of the Red Sea, where, rejoicing in their God, they walked through the flood on foot, which the Egyptians essaying to do, were drowned. And while standing safe and victorious on the opposite shore, full of recollections of the country which they had left, they can contrast the regular, pacific, fertilizing flood of Egypt's river with the sudden and overwhelming inundation their eyes now behold, that awful flood which carries away their foes, when Pharaoh and his chosen captains, and their chariots and horsemen, and all their multitude are, in a moment, covered by the depths, and sink into the bottom like a stone; yea, the flood covers them, they sink as lead in the mighty waters. 1. The general idea intended to be conveyed by the phraseology before us is—destruction, fell, certain destruction, for such is the invariable consequence of a flood like that which is here supposed. 2. Such is the general idea intended by the phraseology before us; but connected with this, there are several special and subordinate ideas, which seem descriptive of some of the accompaniments of that visitation of Providence which is here referred to. (1) The destruction caused by a flood is sudden. And this is a circumstance which adds, in no small degree, to the terrors of such a scene. (2) The destruction which is caused by a flood is as indiscriminate as it is sudden. Wherever the flood spreads, it leaves some traces of its ravages. Like death, it has no respect of persons or property. It will enter kings' palaces as readily as the hovels of the poor; it will assail the crowded streets and densely-peopled lanes of a city equally with the lonely tenants of the sequestered vale. And it is no less indiscriminating as to the victims whom it engulphs. On it rushes with undistinguishing and resistless speed, passing by none upon its course, pitying none, sparing none.

(3) There is this other peculiarity in the ravages of a flood, like that which is here supposed, viz. that in its progress it is irresistibly powerful. So long as the fury of the torrent lasts, human skill and human prudence are altogether futile. 3. Now, if you combine together these different ideas, viz. that a flood presents the image of certain destruction—that in its approach it is sudden—in its ravages indiscriminate—in its progress irresistible, you will perceive with what propriety it is here employed as an emblem of death. (*N. Morren, M.A.*) **Like grass which groweth up.**—*Like grass which groweth up.*—1. It is in vain to seek for a paradise or a home in this poor, delusive world. 2. After all, we ought not to weep too much over the vanity of life. Human life answers the purpose for which it was given. What Christian would consent to take up with earth and be for ever exiled from heaven? It is an infinite privilege that a good man may die. 3. It ought not to be a ground of despondency to good men that they are growing old and beginning to decay, and drawing rapidly towards a termination of their course. Death will not swallow up all. "There is a land above the stars and joys above his power." 4. The delusive and fleeting nature of all terrestrial things, and the afflictions which are largely mingled with them, ought to make us long more earnestly after heaven. When we cannot find here a place on which to rest the sole of our foot, it ought to endear to us the thought of our eternal home. 5. The shortness of life and the unsatisfying and perplexing nature of all that it has to bestow, ought to stir us up to diligence in the proper business for which it was given us. (*E. D. Griffin, D.D.*)

Vers. 7-11. **For we are consumed by Thine anger, and by Thy wrath are we troubled.**—*Man under a consciousness of Divine displeasure.*—I. IT AROSE FROM A SENSE OF MORAL WRONG. "Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee," etc. True it is that all our iniquities, even the most secret, those wrought in the deepest concealment, stand out clearly evermore to the eye of God. Thus a sin-convicted conscience profoundly feels that man is consumed by His anger, and by His wrath is he troubled. When a sinful spirit becomes conscious of its sinfulness, it invests the Almighty with the most terrible attributes of vengeance. II. IT SOLVED THE UNHAPPINESS OF LIFE. 1. Life is sad. "We are consumed by Thy wrath." The same trials of life which are regarded by the man who has a sense of Divine forgiveness as the disciplines of a loving Father, are regarded by the man who is impressed with a sense of guilt as the inflictions of an incensed Judge. Hence Providence is different to different men. One feels it a system of grace, another a system of rigorous severity. 2. Life is empty. "We spend our years as a tale that is told." Some translate "tale" thought, and some, sound that dieth away. How soon the loudest sound, even the crash of thunder, dies away in the atmosphere! 3. Life is brief. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten." (*Homilist.*) *A conception of God's anger.*—God's anger is His love thrown back upon itself from unresponsive and unloving hearts; just as a wave that would roll in smooth and unbroken green beauty into the open door of some sea cave is dashed back in spray and foam from some grim rock. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 8. **Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance.**—*Sin estimated by the light of heaven.*—God and men view objects through a very different medium, and are placed with respect to them in very different situations. God is present with every object; He views it as near, and therefore sees its real magnitude. But many objects, especially those of a religious nature, are seen by us at a distance, and of course appear to us smaller than they really are. God sees all objects just as they are; but we see them through a deceitful medium, which ignorance, prejudice and self-love place between them and us. If you are willing to see your sins in their true colours; if you would rightly estimate their number, magnitude and criminality, bring them into the hallowed place, where nothing is seen but the whiteness of unsullied purity, and the splendours of uncreated glory; where the sun itself would appear only as a dark spot, and there, in the midst of this circle of seraphic intelligences, with the infinite God pouring all the light of His countenance round you, review your lives, contemplate your offences, and see how they appear. I. Bring forward our INQUIRIES, that is, our more gross and open sins, and see how they appear in the light of God's countenance. Have any of you been guilty of impious, profane, passionate, or indecent, corrupting language? How does such language sound in heaven? in the ears of angels, in the ears of that God, who

gave us our tongues for noble purposes? Have any of you been guilty of uttering what is untrue? If so, bring forward all the falsehoods, all the deceitful expressions, which you have ever uttered, and see how they appear in the presence of the God of truth. Have any of you been guilty, either at home, or in foreign countries, of perjury, or false swearing? If so, you may here see the awful Being whom you mocked, by calling Him to witness the truth of a known deliberate lie. And how, think you, such conduct appears in His eyes? Have any of you been guilty of fraud, injustice, or dishonesty? If so, bring forward your dishonest gains; hold out the hands which are polluted by them, and see how they look in heaven, in the presence of that God, who has said, Let no man overreach or defraud his brother in any matter; for the Lord is the avenger of all such.

II. Bring our HEARTS into heaven, and there, laying them open to view, see how they will appear in that world of unclouded light, and unsullied purity. Surely, if all the evil thoughts and wrong feelings which have passed in countless numbers through either of our hearts, were poured out in heaven, angels would stand aghast at the sight, and all their benevolence would scarcely prevent them from exclaiming in holy indignation, Away with him to the abode of his kindred spirits in the abyss! To the omniscient God alone would the sight not be surprising.

III. Take a similar view of our SINS of OMISSION. Our whole lives present one unbroken series of duties neglected, of favours not acknowledged. And, oh, how do they appear, when we review them in the light of God's countenance! But the duties which we owe to God are not the only duties which we are required, and which we have neglected to perform. His law also requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves. And this general command virtually includes a great number of subordinate precepts; precepts which prescribe the duties of the various relations that subsist between us and our fellow-creatures. And how far have we obeyed these precepts? Oh, how much more might we have done than we actually have done, to promote the temporal and eternal happiness of all with whom we are connected! Nor do our sins of omission end here. There is another Being whom we are under infinite obligations to love, and praise, and serve with supreme affection. This Being is the Lord Jesus Christ, considered as our Redeemer and Saviour, who has bought us with His own blood. We are required to feel that we are not our own, but His; to prefer Him to every earthly object. Every moment, then, in which we neglected to obey these commands, we were guilty of a new sin of omission. (*E. Payson, D.D.*) *All sin committed under the eye of God:—I. SIN is INWARD and OUTWARD LAWLESSNESS.* It is disloyalty in heart and life. A black and bitter thing leading to black and bitter consequences.

II. MEN COMMONLY ATTEMPT TO CONCEAL THEIR SIN. 1. From themselves—and will hardly admit that some evil deeds are sins under their peculiar circumstances. 2. From society generally. 3. From God Himself, who sees and knows their sins in all their enormity and aggravated character. III. IN ATTEMPTING TO CONCEAL THEIR SINS MEN ARE DOOMED TO COMPLETE FAILURE. They are already "before Thee"—even "our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance." 1. It is so with all our personal sins. 2. With family sins. 3. With Church sins. 4. With national sins. IV. To ATTEMPT TO HIDE SIN IS TO COMMIT FURTHER AND DEEPER SIN.

1. Against ourselves—deeply injuring our moral nature. 2. Against our fellows—lowering the moral tone of society. 3. Against God—who is increasingly wronged and outraged. V. MEN OUGHT TO ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR SIN. Private sin. Public sin. All sin of every kind and character should be penitently confessed to God. "Thou hast," etc. VI. GOD HAS A COMPLETE KNOWLEDGE OF ALL SIN COMMITTED AGAINST HIM. It is in the very light of His countenance. 1. We have only a partial knowledge of sin,—in ourselves, in our friends, in society generally. 2. We have dim and imperfect conceptions of sin at best; for human lights are always changing, but God sees sin in itself and in the light of His own countenance, which never disguises evil. 3. We cannot prevent God seeing and knowing our sin. He Himself places it before His own eyes in all its nakedness and reality.

What, therefore, must be the ultimate shame and misery of those who persist in sin? Therefore repent and believe the Gospel. (*W. Unsworth.*) *Secret things brought to light:—*If you were to take this church, as it is in ordinary daylight, and seek to inspect the secret impurities with which its atmosphere abounds, your sight would be unable to detect them. It would be the same if in broad daylight you were to examine the cleanest drawing-room in the cleanest house in this city; the sight would detect no uncleanness in its atmosphere, it would appear perfectly pure. But now let a bright ray of sunlight stream through the church or

through the drawing-room. Look into the beam! What do you see? Why, a new world: a multitude of motes, innumerable particles of dust, vast quantities of impure matter all floating about in the atmosphere which seemed so clean! In the broad, common light they lay concealed, but in the bright, sunny beam the secret things are discovered, and live and move before our gaze. Are there any secret things in our worship which need to be revealed? Do we worship in the light of God's countenance, or in the light of mere tradition and custom? What more sweet and beautiful than the bringing of a gift to place upon God's altar! It seems so spiritually pure and sound. We often regard it as a sign of moral and spiritual health. But worship is not so superficial a thing that it can be so superficially judged. Worship which may pass muster in a worldly light reveals its impurities in a more searching spiritual light. Every worshipper who passes into the light of God's countenance is met by this bold challenge, "Has thy brother aught against thee?" and that is a challenge which searches us through and through. "First, be reconciled to thy brother." Our secret relationships are held up in vivid clearness before us, and their rectification is an essential condition in all acceptable worship. Now let us pass from our worship to our social fellowship. Look at the dim, thick light in which social life is lived. The darkness is sufficiently tempered to enable us to detect prominent crimes, presumptuous sins—outrage, murder, and obtrusive forms of lust. But in this dim, thick light how much can be concealed, how many deformities, how many crooked dispositions, how many perverse purposes, how many malicious designs, how many revengeful spirits! Social life is poor because social light is dim. If we want a stronger social life we must have an intenser light, in which secret uncleanness will rise up to be judged. Here is a ray from God's countenance (Matt. v. 39). Flash that through social life, let that light play on our relationships; would any horrible crookedness be revealed? It is not a business motto. It is not a social maxim. Here is rather the maxim of the world, "Pay a man back in his own coin." A man can do that and not violate the current standard of social morality. He may do it and yet live up to social light. But if such action will satisfy society, it does not satisfy God. "Pay a man back in his own coin!" That is not how the great God pays us! (Ps. ciii. 10). That was not the way of Christ (1 Pet. ii. 23). That was not Paul's way (1 Cor. iv. 12). The Lord purposes for us a clean, sweet, wholesome, social life, free from all secret foulnesses, and we can only obtain it by permitting the light of His countenance to fall upon us, and bringing our life into conformity with its great requirements. There is a bright side to all this, and I want to close with a gentle and encouraging word. The light which thus brings into prominence the secret sins also brings into prominence the secret virtue. The good Lord takes the candle and sweeps the house, not just to find the dust, but find the piece of silver! No bit of silver is lost. Every bit of secret goodness is seen in the light of His countenance. (J. H. Jowett, M.A.)

Ver. 9. We spend our years as a tale that is told.—*Life—a tale*:—Assuming this version to give the true idea of the author, we have here three thoughts. 1. Significance. A tale has some meaning; is intended to impart some idea to others. Life is big with meaning. Amongst the many things which the tale of life speaks out are two wonderful things. (1) Man's power of opposing himself, the arrangements of creation, and the will of God. (2) The amazing patience and condescending mercy of God. 2. Observance. A tale implies, if written, readers; if oral, listeners. It is intended for observers. What observers has the life of every man! Society, devils, angels, God, are all observing, all reading us. Every act tells out some portion of this tale, and falls upon unnumbered ears. 3. Transitoriness. "A tale told." Not inscribed upon marble or brass, not even written in a book,—but just "told." The transitoriness of this tale, however, is not in its influence that is everlasting, every idea will tell on the ages, but in its earthly form of expression. It is passing away from here like a flower, a vapour. (*Homilist.*) *Life—a tale*:—I. Seeing that life imperceptibly passes, it SHOULD BE THE CARE OF US ALL, THAT IT BE NOT MISSPENT, OR ITS OPPORTUNITIES UNIMPROVED. Life may be passed as vainly as the time occupied in hearing an idle tale. 1. Some tales are light and trifling,—merely to amuse and make the reader laugh. Such, also, is the life of some. Always light-hearted, never serious. They tread a round of vanity. 2. Other tales are of a grave caste, and turn on the interests of human life; but they are altogether worldly in their tone and tendency. So with the lives of many. They occupy their days with business; they are industrious, enterpris-

ing: but they have no concern about spiritual things. 3. Some tales are tales of truth. They give an account of godly men who served God in their generation, and died in peace. Such are the lives of Christians. They are using the means of grace, and growing in weanedness from the world; they seek the salvation of others, and prepare themselves for the coming of the Lord. II. THE MOST IMPORTANT OF THE TALE IS ITS CLOSE, AND SO ALSO IT IS WITH LIFE. The interest thickens towards the end. 1. Some tales, whether serious or trifling, have an unhappy termination. So the life of many. They die without preparation and without hope. The tale of human life is soon told, but how momentous are its issues! 2. Other tales have a joyful ending. Hope is realized. So the life of God's people. Whatever doubts, troubles, trials, disappointments chequered it, the close of it is peace. III. SOME TALES COME SOONER TO A CLOSE THAN OTHERS. So life;—in some cases three-score years and ten, or four-score years; in other cases not sixty, not fifty, not forty years—not thirty or twenty years, or even ten. Delay not. Make sure of salvation now. (*W. H. Hewitson, M.A.*) *Life an exclamation*.—I. The main idea of the text is THE TRANSIENTNESS OF LIFE; it has the brevity of a cry. Some lives have only one word, some several, yet is each an exclamation. Some have the completeness of finished sentences; some fail in the midst; some have only a beginning, rather intimate that there is something to be said than say it. Then is life short, indeed, when man dies, not because he has exhausted a force so much as because he has met with an obstruction. And yet how often is this the case! The days are "cut off;" "the sun goes down while it is yet day;" "the flower fadeth." Then, also, is life short when, though its voice fails not at the commencement of its utterance, it is broken off in the midst, and gives no complete expression to the deep meaning with which it is charged. And yet how often is it as an unfinished cry! How often do men pass away before they have half revealed the significance of their being! Things are long and short in comparison. The sense of duration is not absolute. The insect that lives but a day has, or might have, the feelings with which we regard seventy years. . . . Suppose a being to live two millions of years, he would look down on our existence of seventy years with the same feelings as those with which we regard the creature of a day. It is only eternity that is really long—absolutely long. Eternity makes life nothing, and yet everything; sinks it to utter significance, and yet invests it with inconceivable importance. II. If life is transient as a cry, it is A CRY FULL OF MEANING. The importance of utterances does not depend on their length; it is not how long it takes to express a thing, but the nature of the thing expressed, which decides the greatness of the expression. A few words may reveal a world of meaning. Life is a cry, but what does it not reveal? The broken speech of our earthly days is the voice of souls. It shows what we are as souls; our principles, habits, etc. . . . And, showing what we are, it shows also what we shall be, what we shall be for ever. And it does more than show what we shall be, it helps to make us it. Many different cries proceed from our common nature. Life in some is a cry of wonder, an expression of amazement at this mysterious universe, and their own mysterious being. Life in some is a cry of pain, . . . grief from physical suffering, grief from adversities of lot, grief from social pressure on the heart's affections. Life in some is a cry of joy, the rapid, incoherent speech of ecstatic feeling. I do not ask which of these your life is, nor does it much signify in relation to the most important of all matters. But I do ask you, what is the temper and the form of your life? Time, which is so short, is the season for conversion, salvation; and without these, when it is passed, you will find yourselves in an eternity for which no preparation has been made. Everlasting life dates from regeneration, not from death; we cannot have the life immortal if we be not born again. (*A. J. Morris.*) *The tale of our years*.—I. THE TALE OF OUR YEARS IS TOLD IN CHAPTERS. This is necessary for reference, for the understanding of the main points and features of the story—chap. i., chap. ii., chap. iii., and so through the table of contents. But what are these chapters? Is there one devoted to infancy, that piece that every one forgets if he ever knew it? Is there another for childhood with its gambols, summer days in the woods and on the shore, and Christmas Days in the dear old home? Is there another for youth, that sentimental time, so foolish and yet so sweet? Is there one for manhood, with its responsibilities and strenuous work, and yet one more for old age with its pensiveness and its memories, "the tender grace of a day that is dead"? But these are, after all, only the headings of the chapters. When you read what is written you would perhaps be inclined to make other divisions. There is, e.g. a chapter of

sins. Every tale told has that in it. Then there is the chapter of opportunities, the chapter of change, the chapter of sorrows, the chapter of mistakes. When the true man turns to read through some of these, the tears fall upon the page. He can hardly dare to think. But blessed be God he can pray. To read the story of the years in a spirit of penitence and trust is so to number our days as to get us a heart of wisdom. II. THE TALE OF OUR YEARS IS ILLUSTRATED. Illustrations are exceedingly popular in these days. Now, one advantage of an illustration is that by it an impression is conveyed immediately. It is to a page or two of writing what a photograph is to a water-colour drawing, or what a telegram is to a letter. The salient features of the situation are seized at once; what would take ten minutes to read is taken in from a picture in ten seconds. So there are many people who see the illustrations who never read the story. Has it ever struck you that it is precisely so in our lives? For one who reads their story there are a hundred who see the pictures. From them they form their opinion of the story. For example, such a comparatively unimportant thing as manners is an illustration of life's story. If you acknowledge an acquaintance in the street as if you saw a ticket-of-leave sticking out of his pocket, you will make an impression on him. It may be that behind a lofty look and a disdainful air there is a kindly heart and a really humble nature. But it was the illustration that was seen and that lingers in the mind. How true it is, too, that our habits illustrate the tale. Such things as exaggeration, little mean ways, indolence, unpunctuality. Or, again, how often we illustrate our story by exhibitions of temper. This is seen by our children and servants, and perhaps by some who have read less of the tale of our years than those who share our home. Now, there is a sense in which all our acts are illustrative. III. THE TALE OF OUR YEARS HAS A PLOT. It is often not intricate and dramatic. It may be free from excitement, from that which in some stories is so unhealthy, the sensational. It may be homely, familiar, and commonplace. But it is there. God has a plan for my life. Not more surely had He for Abraham and David or for a Tennyson, a Gladstone or a Bismarck, the greatest of great men than He has for me. There is a hidden unity, an interaction and a coinciding, a sequence, to which we have at present no complete key. Life is not a chaos, it is a cosmos. IV. THE STORY OF OUR YEARS HAS AN END. It is soon told, "the days of our years are threescore years and ten," etc. "A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday," etc. 'Twas but yesterday that we were children, our world the nursery. 'Twas but yesterday that we were wed, that our children were born, and now 'tis toward evening; the day is far spent—the tale of our years will soon be told. Now of 999 out of every 1,000 of these tales it might be said, they are fleeting literature, they soon pass out of circulation; even the critics forget them, and they are interred in the vast literary sepulchre of the British Museum. But are they on that account valueless? Not necessarily. Those forgotten books may have suggested ideas to greater minds than their authors'. A spark may be dropped that kindles the fires of genius, and they blaze out in a splendour that impresses the world. So these lives of ours, which seem so commonplace, may enrich others. V. THE TALE OF OUR YEARS HAS A MORAL. Every tale has, implicitly if not explicitly. And so has every life. When it is finished, it leaves on the mind of those who have known it intimately, some impression. There are some features that stand out, some moral qualities that have given a tone to the personality, or some principles that it has livingly illustrated. Men sum up their impression of the character. "He was a successful man, but he never lost the simplicity of his tastes or the geniality of his demeanour." "He was a prosperous man, but his wealth corrupted his spirituality." "He was a disappointed man, but his sorrow never soured him." "He had an uphill fight, but he won the respect of all and the love of many." But what the moral will be depends upon the dominant motives of the life. Are all lower considerations brought into subservience to that all-comprehending and ennobling ideal—"Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever"? Then, if it be that, the story told by the years will be a "Pilgrim's Progress," a progress out from sin and bondage and selfishness, guided by the heavenly light, up to the Cross, where the burden of guilt rolls off into the grave of the Divine forgiveness; through the dark valley of temptation and awful conflict with him who would spill your soul; through "Vanity Fair," unsoiled by its corruptions, to the Delectable Mountains of a solid and settled peace; then to the land Beulah, "where the shining ones commonly walk, because it is high unto the city;" until only the river remains, over which there is no bridge, but for which there is a

Divine Pilot who makes it shallow for all who trust: "when thou passest through the waters I will be with thee," etc. Then through the gate over which is written, "Blessed are they who do His commandments," etc. (*R. B. Brindley.*) *Our years*.—1. Our years are "determined" (*Job xiv. 5*); give entertainment to this thought, close as we are upon the end of another year. "Fear not, fret not, weary not, poor pilgrim of a day. The pilgrimage will soon be over. Thy days are determined. The number of thy months is with me. I have appointed thy bounds that thou canst not pass. Thou wilt soon accomplish as an hireling thy day. There is a time to be born, and a time to die." 2. Our years are connected the one with the other. They are not like adjacent islands, deep water flowing around and between. We go right onwards, treading on the same kind of ground to the end. Such, too, usually, is the growth of character in the individual man. It goes on growing through the year, and it will not stop growing at the end of one year, and then begin again to-morrow morning when the year is new. The growing may be quickened or it may be confirmed a little, by the impressions and the sanctities of this last hour; quickened or confirmed in goodness; or else, alas, the heart, passing through these solemnities and agitations without a real religious faith, will be hardened in evil, and made more impervious to the impressions of any future season. And yet here let us be careful, else we shall come near to the acceptance of the very worst intellectual doctrine of this time—the doctrine of inevitable necessity, or, religiously viewed, the doctrine of a moral continuity in character and being, which nothing can break. We never lose our personal identity, character runs on, the same thinking substance, the same immortal soul continues; but grace, that renovating, cleansing, saving power, is introduced into the consciousness, transforms the character, lives in the experience, brings out the Divine images, makes the "new creature in Christ Jesus." Need I say how prophetic our years become when we thus begin them in grace? Grace is the earthly name for glory. Glory is the heavenly name for grace. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*)

Ver. 10. **The days of our years are threescore years and ten.**—*The days of our years*.—I. **LIFE'S EARTHLY LIMIT.** "Threescore years and ten." 1. How long when viewed in the light of time—when compared with the common lot of mankind. 2. How short when viewed in the light of eternity. II. **LIFE'S COMMON HERITAGE.** "Yet is their strength labour and sorrow." 1. Life even at its best estate is made up largely of labour and sorrow, of working and weeping. 2. Thank God for the labour and the sorrow, for they help us to rise to higher things. "Before I was afflicted," etc. III. **LIFE'S FINAL TRANSITION.** "We fly away." 1. Happy transition for the Christian. The restraints of this cage life are ended. 2. Hopeless transition for the Christless. (*Homiletic Monthly.*) *New Year*.—I. **GOD HAS DIVINELY APPOINTED THAT LIFE SHALL BE MEASURED BY DIVISIONS OF TIME.** Day and night, spring, summer, autumn and winter are God's way of distributing time. Each division is big with suggestions to us for whom the divisions were made. 1. It is a beneficent arrangement. The changes from the brightness of noonday to the blackness of midnight, from spring's sunshine and flowers to autumn's shadows and yellow leaves, from summer's heat to winter's frost, are voices whose emphasis and pathos are ever uttering grand yet awful lessons about mortality and death. 2. The arrangement furnishes symbols of our lifetime. Spring paints our childhood, summer our manhood, autumn old age, and winter death. Each year is an epitome of life. II. **LIFE IS MEASURED BY YEARS BECAUSE OF ITS BREVITY.** III. **LIFE MUST BE MEASURED BY YEARS BECAUSE OF ITS WORTH.** Each year is dealt out to us in particles because of the preciousness of time. The possibilities that lie in every year, for good or evil, are prodigious. IV. **LIFE MUST BE MEASURED BY DIVISIONS OF TIME BECAUSE OF ITS IMPERCEPTIBLE DEPARTURE.** It ebbs from us with every breath. We never had less of it than we begin this new year with. All the past is spent. Whether it has been squandered or well laid out, it is gone, and it went almost imperceptibly. (*Ibid.*) *The limits of life*.—I. **EXPLANATORY REMARKS.** 1. Consider threescore years and ten, or four-score years, as the limit beyond which the life of man doth not pass. The folly which leads men to expect to live a hundred years, because one individual may have reached them, is like that which encourages them to expect mercy in their last hour, because the thief on the cross obtained it. It hath the worst effects on life, and produces the bitterest feelings of disappointment and regret in death. (1) If we attend to the situation of the wicked, we will perceive the wisdom of this limitation of life. Seventy or eighty years are surely a sufficient space for the

exercise of the Divine patience with them, and for proving what is in their hearts, whether they will keep His commandments or no. (2) To the righteous, life is a state of manifold temptations, and as God doth not afflict willingly, He will not subject them longer to these than He sees it necessary for the trial of their graces.

2. Consider that the limits of human life which are here specified are reached by few. Death commonly selects for its victims life at its best, and man in his prime. It becomes us, therefore, to say, "I will use the world as if I were soon to leave it; I will live with my friends as if I were soon to part with them; I will discharge my duty as becomes one who expects soon to give in his account."

3. The protracting of life to the limits here specified is not in itself desirable. The strength of such old men is labour and sorrow. (1) In consequence of the decline of their faculties, the aged are unfit for labour; and when they do apply themselves to it, they are soon obliged to desist. To them the grasshopper is a burden. (2) Mental application is oppressive to them likewise. It is a toil to them to read, and what they do read is quickly forgotten. (3) The languor and the wandering of their minds in religious duty distresses them. The affections which were once so active and fervent, now move slowly and reluctantly; and when they contrast their present with their past condition, it fills them with the painful apprehension that the Spirit of God hath abandoned them, and that they have lost what God hath wrought. 4. When life is come to these limits, its extinction may be hourly expected. It becomes the aged to submit to death without murmuring. It is your duty to be ready for your departure, and to employ every moment that remains in cultivating the spirit of the world to which you are going.

II. CONCLUSION. 1. To those who have arrived, or are on the point of arriving, at these limits. (1) Think on the many opportunities you have had of promoting the Divine glory in comparison of others; and remember, that to whom much is given, of them also shall much be required. (2) Remember that if you are strangers to Christ, your saving acquaintance with Him must be now or never. 2. To those who are yet at a distance from these limits of human life. (1) Let those who are far advanced in years be the object of your pity and of your kind attentions. Encourage them in their labour, and cheer them in their sorrow. (2) Acquaint now yourselves with God; and if your days shall be shortened, grace shall conduct you more speedily to eternal life; and should they be prolonged for fourscore years, it will support and comfort you amidst the labour and sorrow of the season of decay. (3) Consider the diseases and afflictions which may be sent to you in the early seasons of life, as intended to remind you that death is at hand, and to induce you to submit to it cheerfully. (*H. Belgrave, D.D.*) *From twenty to seventy*:—The seventieth milestone of life is here planted as at the end of the journey. A few go beyond it; multitudes never reach it. First, then, I accost those of you who are in the twenties. You are full of expectation. You are ambitious—that is, if you amount to anything—for some kind of success, commercial, or mechanical, or professional, or literary, or agricultural, or social, or moral. Are you looking for wealth? Well, remember that God controls the money markets, the harvests, the droughts, the caterpillars, the locusts, the sunshine, the storm, the land, the sea, and you will get wealth. Perhaps not that which is stored up in banks, in houses and lands, but your clothing, and board, and shelter, and that is about all you can appropriate anyhow. What a critical time, the twenties! While they continue you decide your occupation and the principles by which you will be guided. You make your most abiding friendships. You fix your habits. Lord God Almighty, have mercy on all the men and women in the twenties! Next I accost those in the thirties. You are at an age when you find what a tough thing it is to get recognized and established in your occupation or profession. In some respects the hardest decade of life is the thirties, because the results are generally so far behind the anticipations. Nine-tenths of the poetry of life have been knocked out of you since you came into the thirties. Men in the different professions and occupations saw that you were rising, and they must put an estoppel on you, or you might somehow stand in their way. They think you must be suppressed. Your decade is the one that will probably afford the greatest opportunity for victory, because there is the greatest necessity for struggle. As it is the greatest time of the struggle, I adjure you, in God's name and by God's grace, make it the greatest achievement. The fact is, that by the way you decide the present decade of your history you decide all the following decades. Next I accost the forties. Yours is the decade of discovery. No man knows himself until he is forty. By that time he has learned what he can do, or what he

cannot do. He was sailing on in a fog and could not take a reckoning, but now it clears up enough to allow him to find out his real latitude and longitude. He has been climbing, but now he has got to the top of the hill, and he takes a long breath. Oh, this mountain-top of the forties! You have now the character you will probably have for all time and all eternity. Tell me, O men and women who are in the forties, your habits of thought and life, and I will tell you what you will for ever be! My sermon next accosts the fifties. This is the decade which shows what the other decades have been. If a young man has sown wild oats, and he has lived to this time, he reaps the harvest of it in the fifties, or if by necessity he was compelled to overtoil in honest directions, he is called to settle up with exacting nature some time during the fifties. O ye who are in the fifties, think of it! A half century of blessing to be thankful for, and a half century subtracted from an existence which, in the most marked cases of longevity, hardly ever reaches a whole century. By this time you ought to be eminent for piety. You have been in so many battles, you ought to be a brave soldier. You have made so many voyages, you ought to be a good sailor. So long protected and blessed, you ought to have a soul full of doxology. My sermon next accosts the sixties. The beginning of that decade is more startling than any other. In his chronological journey the man rides rather smoothly over the figures "2," and "3," and "4," and "5," but the figure "6" gives him a big jolt. He says: "It cannot be that I am sixty. Let me examine the old family record. I guess they made a mistake. They got my name down wrong in the roll of births." But, no, the older brothers or sisters remember the time of his advent, and there is some relative a year older and another relative a year younger, and sure enough the fact is established beyond all disputation. Sixty! Now, your great danger is the temptation to fold up your faculties and quit. You will feel a tendency to reminisce. If you do not look out you will begin almost everything with the words, "When I was a boy." But you ought to make the sixties more memorable for God and the truth than the fifties, or the forties, or the thirties. You ought to do more during the next ten years than you did in any thirty years of your life, because of all the experience you have had. My subject next accosts those in the seventies and beyond. My word to them is congratulation. You have got nearly, if not quite through. Here and there a skirmish with the remaining sin of your own heart and the sin of the world, but I guess you are about done. How do you feel about it? You ought to be jubilant because life is a tremendous struggle, and, if you have got through respectably and usefully, you ought to feel like people toward the close of a summer day seated on the rocks watching the sunset. The most of your friends have gone over the border, and you are going to join them very soon. They are waiting for you. What we all need is to take the supernatural into our lives. Do not let us depend on brain, and muscle, and nerve. We want a mighty supply of the supernatural. How to get it? Just as you get anything you want. By application. If you want anything you apply for it. By prayer apply for the supernatural. Take it into your daily business. A man got up in a New York prayer-meeting and said: "God is my partner. I did business without Him for twenty years, and failed every two or three years. I have been doing business with Him for twenty years and have not failed once." Oh, take the supernatural into all your affairs! (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The days of our years*:—The days of our years are threescore years and ten. There is more sound than reality in that statement. The figures are illusory. Take from the seventy years some five years of more or less irresponsible infancy, and the figure drops to sixty-five. From sixty-five subtract one-third of itself as spent in sleep, and the figure drops to some forty-three years. That is, assuming that we live out the whole string of the seventy years. But let us take the obviously too high average of human life at fifty years: make the same deductions, and we shall find the average of human life reduced to some thirty years. But, though life is short, yet it is immortal; both the statements are true, and are therefore reconcilable. The leaves of every summer fall and die, but the great forests fatten and strengthen, and wave in the winds of centuries. An individual man dies and can no more be found than can the knell that dies upon his grave, yet humanity continues—continues building its cities, its temples and towers, weaving and spinning, carving and singing, going with a high joy, as if no grave had ever been cut in the breast of the green earth. We are not, therefore, to mope and moan about our own little day; we are not to lock ourselves up in the little prison of the uncertainty of our own existence; we are not to sit down and read the Bible till death tells us that it is time to go. We

have to take in all the world as if it were our business to look after it; we must be inspired by our immortality, not discouraged by our frailty. It was thus that Jesus lived. He died ere He had lived out half His seventy years, yet He never died at all. He said: "Pull down what temple you like, that is good, and I will build it again: you cannot pull down God's temples except that they may be rebuilt and enlarged;" and whilst the enemy had Him, the one on the left shoulder and the other on the right, and were hurrying Him away to kill Him, He turned His head over His shoulder, as it were, and said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Jesus Christ still keeps His place in civilization. He begins where others end. Where they cry from exhaustion He puts on His strength. Where the mystery bewilders and blinds them, He dispels it by many a shaft of light. He is the propitiation for my sins, He stands between me and God, and O, mystery of love, He stands between me and Himself; for He, too, is Judge, and the sentence of life and death is upon His lips. He knows my days—He comforts me with many a promise. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) **And if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow.—The evening of life sorrowful:**—1. From the ordinary weaknesses of the body. Very few are permitted to carry with them down into the vale of years the vigour of youth. The muscles lose their elasticity, the eye grows dim, the ear is dull of hearing, and the whole body bends toward the grave. 2. From decay of the mental energies. The power of thought, of reflection, of association, and of reasoning, the power of recollection and of memory, seem all to partake of the same weakness as do the powers of the body. 3. From depression of animal spirits. The mind that has been active, and has commanded attention and respect, cannot, without some degree of pain, see itself neglected, and sinking into comparative disesteem. Hence we cannot wonder if we see crossing the cheek, furrowed with age, the tear of melancholy. 4. From loss of companions. He stands like a tree which was once in the bosom of a forest, but now is left to feel the full weight of every storm, while the associates of his youth, whose united energies would obtrude the blast, have all perished; and his decaying boughs too strongly indicate that he must soon yield the soil to a later growth, and permit the winds of heaven to pass unobstructed. 5. From the impression that every step is upon the margin of the grave. Every pang he feels reminds him that his grave will soon be ready. So tardy flows the stream of life as to assure him that soon the heart will beat no longer. (*D. A. Clark.*)

Ver. 11. Who knoweth the power of Thine anger? even according to Thy fear, so is Thy wrath.—*The power of God's anger:*—1. When I consider THE DIFFICULTIES WHICH LIE IN THE WAY OF OUR MEASURING THE POWER OF ANGER THAT RESIDES IN THE BOSOM OF GOD, I conclude that it is chiefly His steady and orderly goodness which has thrust His displeasure out of sight. Only occasionally does nature suggest wrath. Her deliberate arrangements are all inspired by goodness. I have often had occasion to observe how quietly the earth sets herself to repair, by slow and helpful work, the mischief which had been wrought in an hour, and I have never been able to witness it without admiration. I well recollect a scene which seemed to set me in the midst of nature's fury. A fertile and populous Alpine valley had been turned to desolation by the storm of one winter's day, when fierce torrents from heaven had snatched the frost-loosened stones from the mountain's crest, and rolled them down its huge ribs with a rattle like thunder, to hurl them, an avalanche of barrenness, upon the peasants' farms below. At once the wrath of Heaven had undone the labour of generations of patient men, silted up their homesteads and mills, torn up by the roots their vines and mulberry-trees, and turned into a bed of stones the acres on which their corn had grown. Here, one thought, might be seen "the power of His anger." But long before I passed that way, the steadfast beneficence of God's earth, lending itself to toilsome and unrepining hands, as it is wont to do, had begun to correct the mischief of its sudden wrath; and years on years of prosperous husbandry may pass over these peasant families before another day of ruin shall come to fill their vale with lamentation. Thus the earth bears witness that the Lord is slow to anger but of great mercy; that "in a little wrath He hides His face from us for a moment," but it is "with everlasting kindness He hath mercy on us." The experience which we have had of God in our own lives is to the same effect. To most of us, the days on which disaster fell into our life to crush us may be the most memorable we have spent; but they are by far the fewest. Such bitter days we count upon our

fingers; our happier ones by years. The healthful and gladdening influences of God's bounty, and human fellowship, and hope, and natural affection, are all about us continually. Judgment is God's strange work; but His tender mercies are over all His works. 11. Yet, although we cannot reach to the bottom of God's wrath, and need not regret that we cannot, **THERE IS ONE WAY OPEN TO US BY WHICH WE MAY PARTLY ESTIMATE IT.** The wrath of God is "according to His fear"; to His fearfulness, that is, or His fitness for inspiring in the bosoms of men an awful and sacred dread. Such attributes as infinity, immensity, unsearchableness, almightiness, and omnipresence, are very fit to overwhelm our feeble souls under a consciousness of helplessness which is near of kin to terror. When to these is added the moral magnificence of a justice which judges by an absolute standard, and of a perfection which makes no account of anything in comparison of mere rightness or goodness, then such frail and yielding creatures as we are, whose very virtues are compromises, in whom nothing is found of perfect temper, may most reasonably shrink in terror. 1. Susceptible souls are sometimes, under favourable conditions, wrought to fear by the mere vastness, or mystery, or loneliness of God's material works. 2. The mass of men are too unimaginative or too stupid to be much moved by the mere sublimity of God's everyday creation. They need occasional outbursts of unwonted violence to prick their hearts to fear Him. God does not always mean, when He lets loose disease or disaster among men, to "make a way to His anger," as He is said to have meant when He plagued old Egypt. For the most part He means mercy. He is still "turning His anger away and not stirring up all His wrath." But what He probably does design by exceptional explosions of the fatal forces which slumber in nature is to awaken a wholesome terror in dull hearts, and to suggest how dreadful His wrath may prove when the time for wrath shall have come, since now in the time of grace His providence can be so fearful. 3. All this, however if we take it by itself, does not mean a great deal. In order to estimate the capacity of wrath in the Almighty, I need to know more than His strength, more than His material terribleness. I must know whether there exists in His moral nature any severity which will dispose Him to be angry on just cause, which will steel Him against the infirmity of unrighteous pity, and will move Him to be rigorous where rigour is required. In other words, has God in Him any element of moral terribleness? Is He of such deadly earnestness in His displeasure against wrong that He can, in despite of pity, inflict the extreme of pain, of wrath, of bitter death? for, if so, He is beyond question a most fearful God. A Being who possesses such strength as His, and at the same time is not too tender to use it against sin, must be to every sinner unspeakably dreadful. I do not say whether God can inflict uttermost suffering for sin, judge ye of that; I say He can endure it. He bore what it would be fearful to see another bear. He pursued sin to His own death, and in His jealousy for justice satisfied justice in His own blood. I make bold to ask every one of you who is not sure that he has repented of his sins, whether he thinks the God who took flesh and died for sin at Jerusalem is a God with whom it is safe to trifle? (*J. O. Dyles, D.D.*) *On the greatness of God's anger:*—First see how anger can be ascribed to God: for an infinite and Divine nature cannot be degraded to those affections and weaknesses that attend ours. Anger is a passion, but God is impassible. Anger is always with some change in the person that has it, but God is unchangeable. Certainly, therefore, anger and the like affections can by no means be ascribed to the infinitely perfect God, in the proper and usual acceptation of the words, but only by an anthropopathy. God is said to be angry, when He does some things that bear a similitude to those effects that anger produces in men. I. **PREPARATORY CAUTIONAL OBSERVATIONS.** 1. Every harsh and severe dispensation is not an effect of God's anger. The same effect, as to the matter of it, may proceed from very different causes. Love is sometimes put upon the rigour of those courses, which at the first aspect seem to carry in them the inscriptions of hostility. 2. There is a great difference between God's anger and His hatred; as great as there is between the transient expiring heat of a spark, and the lasting continual fires which supply a furnace. God was angry with Moses, David, Hezekiah, and with His peculiar people; but we do not read that He hated them. The effects of His anger differ as much from the effects of His hatred, as the smart of a present pain from the corrosions of an abiding poison. II. **INSTANCES IN WHICH THIS UNSUPPORTABLE ANGER OF GOD DOES EXERCISE AND EXERT ITSELF.** 1. It inflicts immediate blows and rebukes upon the conscience. When God wounds a man by the loss of an estate, of His health, of a relation, the

smart is but commensurate to the thing which is lost, poor and finite. But when He Himself employs His whole omnipotence, and is both the archer, and Himself the arrow, there is as much difference between this and the former, as when a house lets fall a cobweb, and when it falls itself upon a man. 2. God's anger exerts itself by embittering of afflictions. Every affliction is of itself a grievance, and a breach made upon our happiness; but there is sometimes a secret energy, that so edges and quickens its afflictive operation, that a blow levelled at the body, shall enter into the very soul. As a bare arrow tears and rends the flesh before it, but if dipped in poison, as by its edge it pierces, so by its adherent venom it festers. 3. It shows and exerts itself by cursing of enjoyments. We may, like Solomon, have all that wit can invent, or heart desire, and yet at last, with the same Solomon, sum up all our accounts in "vanity and vexation of spirit." Alas! it is not the body and the mass of those things which we call plenty that can speak comfort, when the wrath of God shall blast and dispirit them with a curse. We may build our nest soft and convenient, but that can easily place a thorn in the midst of it, that shall check us in our repose. III. THOSE PROPERTIES AND QUALIFICATIONS WHICH DECLARE AND SET FORTH THE EXTRAORDINARY GREATNESS OF GOD'S ANGER. 1. It is fully commensurate to the very utmost of our fears, which is noted even in the words of the text: "According to Thy fear, so is Thy wrath." 2. It not only equals, but infinitely exceeds and transcends our fears. The misery of the wicked, and the happiness of the saints, run in an equal parallel; so that by one you may best measure the proportions of the other. And for the former of these, we have a lively description of it in 1 Cor. ii. 9. 3. Though we may attempt it in our thoughts, yet we cannot bring it within the comprehensions of our knowledge. And the reason is, because things which are the proper objects of feeling, are never perfectly known, but by being felt. 4. We may take a measure of the greatness of God's anger by comparing it with the anger of men. How dreadful is the wrath of a king! (Prov. xix. 12). But what can be said of the terrors of an almighty wrath, an infinite indignation? IV. IMPROVEMENT. 1. The intolerable misery of such as labour under a lively sense of God's wrath for sin. 2. The ineffable vastness of Christ's love to mankind in His sufferings for them. 3. Terror to such as can be quiet and at peace within themselves, after the commission of great sins. 4. The most natural sequel and improvement of all that has been said of God's anger, is a warning against that cursed thing which provokes it. We see how dreadfully it burns; let us beware of the sin by which it is kindled. (*R. South, D.D.*) *The power of God's anger:*—There is a slavish fear of God, and there is also a filial fear. The one belongs to the man who know God only as Creator—the other to him who through the Spirit of adoption has been led to know God as a Father. Which fear, then, is it which the psalmist gives as the measure of God's wrath: "Even according to Thy fear, so is Thy wrath"? We cannot decide between the two, for either will equally serve as a standard, and therefore both may be considered as intended by the Spirit. But the difficulties of interpretation are not done with, so soon as we have settled that the passage thus admits of double application. There are more senses than one in which God's wrath is according to His fear, whether that fear be the fear of a slave or the fear of a son; and we cannot, perhaps, better divide so intricate a subject, than by taking the two great classes of mankind, the lovers of the world and the lovers of God, and endeavouring to show in each case the applicability of the text. I. We begin with those who as yet have turned no willing ear to the invitation, "Be ye reconciled to God," and we are to listen to this thrilling question circulating through their ranks, "Who knoweth the power of God's anger?" What then? If I view the whole family of man, exiled from happiness for the offence of their forefather, do I know nothing of the power of God's anger? If I look upon our globe, going down with its teeming tenantry into the sepulchre of waters—if I survey the cities of the plain, drenched with the fiery showers—if I behold Jerusalem turned up by the ploughshare of the Roman, and her sons and her daughters scattered like the ashes of a furnace—if I see God exemplifying with an awful fidelity the word of the psalmist, "A fruitful land maketh He barren, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein"—know I nothing of the power of the anger of the Lord? No man knows the power of God's anger, because that power has never yet put itself forth to its full stretch. Is there, then, no measure of God's wrath no standard by which we may estimate its intenseness? There is no fixed measure or standard, but there is a variable one. The wicked man's fear of God is a measure of the wrath of God. There is such a fear and such a dread of

that God into whose immediate presence he feels himself about to be ushered, that even they who love him best, and charm him most, shrink from the wildness of his gaze and the awfulness of his speech. And we cannot tell the man, though he may be just delirious with apprehension, that his fear of God invests the wrath of God with a darker than its actual colouring. On the contrary, we know that "according to the fear so is the wrath." We may therefore pause, and beseech those amongst you who are still living at enmity with God seriously to lay to heart this simple, but solemn truth—that fear is no microscope, when turned towards the wrath of your Maker. It cannot give the true dimensions, but it is utterly impossible that it should give larger than the true. God's anger is altogether measureless: when once aroused we set no limits to its power; hence it is not possible that the fear should mount too high: wrath keeps pace with it in its most enormous strides. But God's anger may be arrested; and here again it is that according to the fear, so is the wrath. The fear which gave a measure of wrath, in itself gives also the measure and the degree wherein it should be executed. God willeth not the death of any sinner, but would rather that all men should repent, and turn unto Him and live. Let this fear produce submission, obedience; and the wrath which was just ready to strike is mitigated and softened away; according as men do more or less tremble at God's judgments, God does more or less execute them. Thus the power of the anger is not to be understood, because it is altogether inexplicable. II. We turn to those men who have been admitted by adoption into the family of God, and we seek for senses in which, in reference to them, it holds good, that according to his fear, so is God's wrath. It would appear from a verse in the 130th psalm, that true fear of God arises from a sense of God's forgiving love—"But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared." It is, you observe, distinctly affirmed that the fear of God is the result of being forgiven of God. Let us, for an instant, trace the connection, and then turn it to a further illustration of the text. We may admit that in transactions between man and man such a connection does not necessarily exist at all. The forgiveness may be accorded without change of heart, and is not necessarily productive of change of deportment; but the reverse of all this must be affirmed when the forgiving party is God: He pardons only those whom He hath Himself made penitent; He renews the man when He remits his offences, and thus there is at once an assurance that the man becoming an altered man on becoming forgiven, forgiveness will bind him to God's service by all those ties of gratitude and affection which an act of free grace seems most calculated to produce. And from this it clearly follows, that he who has most of the fear of God, will have the keenest sense of the wrath of God. It is the man who lives much upon Calvary, who frequently visits the scene of the Saviour's agony, and who marks with wonder, with contrition, and with thankfulness the pouring forth of the most precious blood for the sake of his own rescue from final perdition—this man it is who will fear God with the fear to which forgiveness is parent; and who, we may now ask, can know so much of the wrath of God as he who is thus conversant with the emptying of that wrath on the head of the Redeemer? On this one occasion, though it may be on no other, God set forth to the intelligent creation the power of His anger; and if it were not that our affections are quickly borne down by the mysteries of Christ's death, so that we can form to ourselves no conception of the intenseness of anguish, but are quickly bewildered and confounded at the very mention of the sweat of blood and the hidings of the Father's countenance; if we could estimate—but who can estimate?—eternity condensed into a moment, and driven into the soul; if we could estimate the wretchedness, if we could weigh the burden, if we could count the arrows, and thus bring within our compass the endurances of the Saviour, there might rise up some amongst us to reply affirmatively to the question—"Who knoweth the power of Thine anger?" But, nevertheless, though no one can affirm of his knowledge that it is coextensive with the power, yet must all perceive that he carries knowledge furthest who is most deeply studious of the sufferings of Christ. And if it be undeniable that he will fear God most who is most with Christ in the garden and on the mount, and if it be equally undeniable that he who most scrutinizes the anguish which thronged the work of expiation will discern most of the anger of the Lord, then it will follow at once that the wrath is in proportion to the fear. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Vers. 12-17. **So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.—Man imploring the mercy of God:—Moses prays—**I. FOR A RIGHT

ESTIMATE AS TO THE DURATION OF LIFE. "Teach us to number our days," etc. 1. There is a certain judgment to be formed as to the duration of our earthly life. The prayer does not mean that we should know the hour, scene, or circumstance of our end; but that we should have a practical impression that life is temporary and preparative. 2. There is a tendency in man to neglect to form a true estimate of life. "All men think all men mortal but themselves." 3. The formation of a correct judgment is essential to practical wisdom (ver. 12). II. For a RESTORATION TO THE BLESSINGS OF LIFE. 1. Divine favour (ver. 13). The meaning is, remove the sense of Thy displeasure, bless us with the consciousness of Thy favour. 2. True satisfaction (ver. 14). Let the satisfaction be early. Come at once. Let it run through the whole of our life. "That we may rejoice and be glad all our days." Let the satisfaction be proportioned according to our past affliction (ver. 15). Let our future joys compensate for our past affliction. III. For a DISCOVERY OF DIVINITY IN LIFE. 1. In His works, to men and their children (ver. 16). The glory of human life is to see the glory of God in all the works of His hand. 2. In the prosperity of man's own works. (*Homilist.*) *Numbering our days*:—This is a psalm of life and death, and one of the finest in the whole Bible. The comparisons made between the frailty and brevity of human life and the omnipotence and eternity of God are very striking. But a right use of the sense of mortality is a priceless blessing. We must all be accountants and arithmeticians in the best sense. Like the wise merchants we must frequently take stock in order to see where we stand. And we must also number our nights, with their blessings of rest and repose and renewal, for human life is incomplete without the night as well as the day. I. Every man must come to his last day. We are born to die, and we die daily. Our home is not here, but yonder. II. Man has a set time in which to live. Job speaks of certain bounds which man cannot pass. His life is fitted within certain boundaries by Divine Providence. III. Man's life on earth is comparatively short. We are asked to number our days, and not our years or months or weeks. We must live a day at a time. IV. Man is dangerously apt to forget this numbering. He allows the days to slip away unnoticed. He counts his oxen and sheep, but not his days. He numbers other men's days, but not his own. As Sir Thomas Smith said some months before his death, "It is a great pity men know not to what end they are born into the world until they are ready to go out of it." V. The nature of the numbering advocated by the psalmist. "Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." We cannot number our days rightly without the Lord as our Teacher. We must go in for numeration under Divine guidance. It is not mathematical but moral counting—a numbering that brings glory to God. The chief end of man is to seek wisdom—not riches, or worldly honours, or sinful pleasures—but wisdom and not the wisdom of the world, but that of God. We have emphasized the truth of man's mortality, let us also emphasize his immortality. (*J. O. Davies.*) *Divine teaching*.—I. WHO IS IT THAT TEACHES? It is God Himself. The mere record, as contained in the world which we see, or in the written Word which we read or hear, is not of itself sufficient. It is the letter, not the life: it cannot of itself convey a saving knowledge of the truths, of which it is nevertheless the chosen depository. Christ must be revealed in us as well as to us ere we can know Him as we ought. It was in Him, as the apostle tells the Galatians, that God was pleased to "reveal Himself." II. HOW DOES GOD TEACH? In many ways. By parents, ministers, friends. Also by outward objects—churchyard, storm, epidemic, etc. III. THE END OF GOD'S TEACHING. "That we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Do you find this a hard lesson? The Israelites found it so, and their stiff-neckedness is written in an enduring record for your learning. The old world found it so; for they were "eating and drinking," etc. The foolish virgins found it so. Their lamps were gone out, they themselves were slumbering, when the bridegroom came and the door was shut. Are you wiser? Have you profited by these warnings? Have you been "taught"? Are you numbering your days with a consciousness of the relative difference between time and eternity? But what is wisdom? That is the practical question which so many never ask, though it concern them so vitally to learn the lesson; that is the question, too, which so many ask, but not of Him who alone can give them the true answer. What, for instance, did Moses himself esteem wisdom to be? Not all the learning of the Egyptians with which he was conversant, for he renounced it all, esteeming the reproach of Christ better than all the riches of Egypt. And what is Job's definition of wisdom (Job xxviii. 28; 1 Cor. iii. 19). What did the

great apostle pronounce it not to be, after he had ceased to sit as Saul of Tarsus at the feet of Gamaliel? And what does he say it is? First, the receiving of Christ by us as sinners; secondly, the adorning of the doctrine in our lives. (*Bp. Sumner.*) *Numbering our days*:—I. WHAT IS INTENDED BY NUMBERING OUR DAYS? 1. We must form a correct estimate of human life, comparing its average length with its interests. 2. We must cherish a serious conviction of the uncertainty of life. Boast not thyself, young man, of thy strength, nor old man of thy wisdom, for a worm is in the bud of youth and at the root of age. 3. We must pay an observant regard to our days as they pass away. Days, weeks, and years are but the landmarks. II. THE SPECIFIC PURPOSE FOR WHICH WE ARE TO NUMBER OUR DAYS. 1. Wisdom consists in the adoption of the best means to secure the best ends. In what relation do I stand to God and eternity? is the first question which every man should put to himself. Until he can answer this solemn inquiry satisfactorily, he is but a fool in knowledge and a child in his pursuits. 2. To apply our hearts unto wisdom, we must moderate our affections to earthly objects. Eternity will be our grand concern. Like the apostle, we shall learn to die daily, we shall be crucified to the world with its affections and lusts; it will gradually recede and eventually disappear as an object of felicitous contemplation. 3. We must peculiarly cherish those graces which mitigate the sorrows and heighten the joys of the present life. 4. We must cultivate those dispositions of mind which will increase all the lawful enjoyments of life. Habitual dependence upon God, walking with humility and gratitude beneath his favour, adds zest to all our enjoyments. (*S. Summers.*) *The transitoriness of life*:—I. THE FEELINGS SUGGESTED BY A RETROSPECT OF THE PAST. 1. The analogies of nature which correspond with human life. All things here are double. The world without corresponds with the world within. No man could look on a stream when alone by himself, and all noisy companionship overpowering good thoughts was away, without the thought that just so his own particular current of life will fall at last into the "unfathomable gulf where all is still." No man can look upon a field of corn, in its yellow ripeness, which he has passed weeks before when it was green, or a convolvulus withering as soon as plucked, without experiencing a chastened feeling of the fleetingness of all earthly things. No man ever went through a night-watch in the bivouac, when the distant hum of men and the random shot fired, told of possible death on the morrow; or watched in a sick room, when time was measured by the sufferer's breathing or the intolerable ticking of the clock, without a firmer grasp on the realities of Life and Time. 2. Moses is looking back, and his feeling is loss. Many a one consumed, like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, by the wrath of God. Many a Hebrew warrior stricken in battle, and over him a sand-heap. And those who remembered these things were old men—"consuming," his strong expression, "their strength in labour and sorrow." We stand upon the shore of that illimitable sea which never restores what has once fallen into it; we hear only the boom of the waves that throb over all—for ever. 3. There is, too, an apparent non-attainment. A deeper feeling pervades this psalm than that of mere transitoriness: it is that of the impotency of human effort. "We are consumed"—perish aimlessly like the grass. No man was more likely to feel this than Moses. The cycles of God's providences are so large that our narrow lives scarcely measure a visible portion of them. So large that we ask, What can we effect? Yet there is an almost irrepressible wish in our hearts to see success attend our labours, to enter the Promised Land in our own life. It is a hard lesson: to toil in faith, and to die in the wilderness, not having attained the promises, but only seeing them afar off. II. THE RIGHT USE OF THESE SAD SUGGESTIONS. Duty is done with all energy, then only, when we feel, "The night cometh, when no man can work," in all its force. Two thoughts are presented to make this easier. 1. The eternity of God. Shall we give up our hopes of heaven and progress, because it is so slow, when we remember that God has innumerable ages before Him? Or our hopes for our personal improvement, when we recollect our immortality in Him who has been our refuge "from generation to generation"? Or for our schemes and plans which seem to fail, when we remember that they will grow after us, like the grass above our graves? 2. The permanence of results. (1) The permanence of our past seasons. Spring, summer, autumn, are gone, but the harvest is gathered in. Youth and manhood are passed, but their lessons have been learnt. The past is ours only when it is gone. (2) The permanence of lost affections. The sound and words are gone, but the tale is indelibly impressed on the heart. So the lost are not really lost. Perhaps they are ours only truly when lost. Their patience, love,

wisdom, are sacred now, and live in us. (3) The permanence of our own selves—"The beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." Very striking this. We survive. We are what the past has made us. The results of the past are ourselves. (4) The permanence of work. Not a true thought, pure resolve, or loving act, has ever gone forth in vain. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *For the New Year*:—I. **THE WISDOM CONTEMPLATED IN OUR TEXT** means something like the following: "Teach us, O God, the essential truth as embodied in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in His life. Then enable us to accept Him in faith." II. **THE WORD "HEART" INCLUDES ALL THE FACULTIES.** The whole soul and spirit, with all their strength, are to be applied in the search for wisdom. III. **GOD'S QUALIFICATIONS TO INSTRUCT US.** 1. He possesses sufficient knowledge. Is it not true that in the study of history, science, or philosophy, we are thinking God's thoughts? It is said of Agassiz, that before he would venture upon a line of investigation, he would bow his head in prayer, and ask God to direct him in the discovery of the truth. Let us pray, likewise, that God will teach us wisdom; that He will enable us to discover the highest, and the greatest truth; the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, His only begotten Son. 2. God has the power to teach. 3. God has the strong personality necessary to impress the learner. 4. God's works are evidence to us that He is competent to teach us wisdom. Can we look across the broad meadows of our valleys, the rolling pasture lands on the hillsides, and the boundless grain-fields of redeemed prairies, without feeling in our souls that He has stretched these out before us, and for us, in infinite wisdom? And as we dig into the bowels of the earth, and discover stupendous and varied forces, undreamed-of wealth of gold, silver, copper, oil and gas, are we not confounded and led to exclaim, "What infinite wisdom, goodness and power are manifested here"? IV. **TIME IS OUR ONLY OPPORTUNITY FOR ACQUIRING WISDOM.** An Italian philosopher expressed in his motto "that time was his estate; an estate, indeed, that will produce nothing without cultivation, but will always repay abundantly the labours of industry, and satisfy the most extensive desires, if no part of it be suffered to lie waste by negligence, to be overrun by noxious plants, or laid out for show rather than for use." Time is our opportunity to estimate human life by the purpose to which it should be applied. It should be measured by the eternity to which it leads. (*R. V. Hunter.*) *Life measured by days*:—Life must be measured by days—I. **BECAUSE A DAY IS A DIVINE DIVISION OF TIME.** 1. This division of our time by God into periods whose coming and going must be felt, is a beneficent arrangement. Without it the voice of time would be a monotone in which we should sleep, not listen; or, even if we listened, it would make no impression on us. "Days should speak." 2. God has given us, in the arrangement of "days," striking symbols of the lifetime they unitedly compose. Each day is an epitome of a life. Morning paints our childhood, noon our manhood, night our death. II. **BECAUSE OF ITS BREVITY.** We do not attempt to reckon our mortal life by centuries, scarcely by years; for they are so uncertain, and at best there are so few of them. Only then do we realize that the sum of life demands, and will repay, careful calculation, and that a blunder in it is of immense mischief. III. **BECAUSE OF ITS WORTH.** Gold-dust and diamonds shall be weighed by grains, not by tons. So, because of its preciousness, "Time is dealt out by particles," and we number it, not in decades or in years. Life, as a whole, is of such untold worth, that every portion of it is priceless. IV. **BECAUSE OF ITS IMPERCEPTIBLE DEPARTURE.** Its final departure is marked and emphatic enough. The agonies of bereavement, the mysterious process of dying, make that known and felt. But it is equally and more solemnly true, that life is always departing. It ebbs from us with every breath. (*Homilist.*) *The brevity of human life*:—The frailty of our being; the certainty of our death; the shortness of the intervening period; these are ideas with which we are familiar; and yet, strange to say, they seldom influence us, either justly or constantly. We may use this knowledge, in order to add to stoical indifference; to give pathos and interest to poetry; to induce certain arrangements with respect to our property or our families: to augment, by contrast, the enjoyment of the passing hour; but these are not the essential purposes to which our knowledge of the shortness of life ought to be applied. In the midst of all these speculations we may fail to "apply our hearts unto wisdom." I. **THE BREVITY OF HUMAN LIFE.** "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Against this destiny no sagacity and no prosperity can build up a shelter. II. **OUR INDISPOSITION TO CONTEMPLATE WISELY THE RESULTS OF THAT BREVITY.** That which follows death; the introduction to another world; responsibility; judgment to

come; the vision of God; eternal weal or woe; the friendly or unfriendly mediation of Christ; the spiritual character which welcomes or opposes the celestial manifestations of truth and wisdom; these are the associations which properly belong to death. Yet from this view of death, men deliberately turn away! III. Thus situated, thus exposed, thus beguiled, how palpable becomes the truth, THAT A WISE USE OF OUR CONVICTION OF MORTALITY IS THE GIFT OF GOD. Unless God shall deign to teach, we refuse to learn. The means of instruction are indeed abundant. Much knowledge is afloat in the world; and the daily events of life utter solemn accents, were we disposed to listen. But the machinery of instruction; the apparatus of revelation; the combination of events, are inadequate to make us wise. These are the means of wisdom, but they are not the disposition to be wise. The conversion of the heart is from God. (*G. T. Noel, M.A.*) *Numbering our days* (to children):—I. WHAT IT IS TO NUMBER OUR DAYS. 1. To find out the number of them. You cannot hope to live above seventy; it is an even chance whether you live to be thirty; and you are not sure that you will live a day. 2. To consider the kind of them. They have all been days of blessing—yet all of sin. Still God has spared you, and all His gifts continue with you. II. FOR WHAT PURPOSE WE ARE TO NUMBER OUR DAYS. 1. So as to be ready for the last one when it comes. What is the preparation needed? To be in Christ, and so escape condemnation in the judgment (*Rom. viii. 1*). To be like Christ, and so fit for the pure joys and company of heaven (*1 John iii. 2*). To be each of these things now, as our last day may come at any time (*Matt. xxiv. 44*). 2. So as to use them to the best advantage. Time given to sin is wasted and something worse. You must not only be doing, but doing good. Cultivating the garden of life. Digging out the weeds, and digging in the flowers and useful herbs (*Eph. iv. 22*). Cultivating the garden of your neighbour also. Helping the sinful out of sin, the suffering out of sickness, the sorrowful out of grief (*1 John iii. 17*; *Rom. ix. 1-3*; *2 Cor. i. 4*). 3. So as to make up for lost days. Time is a river, and runs only once under the bridge of life. Still lost time may be made up for a little by working extra in the time that remains. The train behind time makes up for it by putting on extra speed. You may do the same. In one hour get through the work of two. III. HOW WE ARE TO LEARN TO NUMBER OUR DAYS ARIGHT. "So teach us," etc. The text is a prayer. Moses could not number his days profitably. But God could teach him, and he cries to be taught. You cannot begin all this too soon. The Inquisition tortured its victims by putting them in a cell which gradually contracted till at last it crushed them to death. So life—large and roomy-looking in youth—gets narrower year by year, till at last we are pressed in the arms of death. Therefore begin early. (*J. E. Henry, M.A.*) *The wise reckoning of time*:—I. WE OUGHT, AS CHRISTIANS, TO APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED OF MAKING GREAT PROGRESS IN KNOWLEDGE—IN INTELLECTUAL IMPROVEMENT. Every thing is tending to show that the human race will soon be under no other government but that of mind; that, whatever may be the instruments which it shall use, intelligence will be the arm that will rule the world. By no higher ends than earth can afford, a multitude of unsanctified minds have been stimulated even to death in the career of mental improvement. Time, health, riches, life, have been sacrificed in the over-reachings of their souls after knowledge. But every Christian has infinitely higher motives to impel him to make acquisition of true science. If he be asked why he is labouring to obtain stores of knowledge, he can answer, because "the Lord hath need of them." II. WE OUGHT TO COUNT UPON THE OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED FOR FORMING AN ELEVATED RELIGIOUS CHARACTER. 1. One of these is the awakened attention and increased facilities for studying the Bible. 2. As another event in these times, adapted to form religious character, we may notice in some respects a salutary change in the ministry of the Gospel. It is now freed from many of the encumbrances of former ages that destroyed its power on the conscience and the heart. 3. Another fact bearing on this point is, that the days which we are numbering are days in which "the glorious ministration of the Spirit," in that form which it took after the ascension of Jesus, has become more pervading and effective than it has been since the day of Pentecost. III. WE OUGHT TO COUNT UPON EXERTING A FAR MORE WIDELY EXTENDED INFLUENCE AS CHRISTIANS. Such are the laws of our intellectual and social being, and such are the relations and connections of one mind with another, that an influence of some kind we must and shall inevitably exert. The kind of influence exerted, and the direction which that influence shall take, will be one of the most solemn items of man's last account to his God. The elements of Christian influence are knowledge

and holiness. How much more available is the power of holy example now than in those past days, when population was more sparse, and the means of personal intercourse more restricted! What an organ of extended Christian influence does the religious Press constitute! Think, too, what instruments of power are put into the hands of Christians by the organization of the great benevolent societies of those times. They can thus truly extend themselves, in an important sense, "beyond their measure,"—can stretch out the arm of mercy and pour light on the darkness and miseries of the whole earth. (*D. L. Carroll, D.D.*) *On numbering our days*:—I. WHAT IS IMPLIED. In order to make a just estimate of our days, let us reckon—1. Those days, or divisions of time, in which we feel neither good nor evil, neither joy nor grief, and in which we practise neither virtue nor vice, and which, for this reason, I call days of nothingness; let us reckon these, and compare them with the days of reality. 2. The days of adversity, and compare them with the days of prosperity. 3. The days of languor and weariness, and compare them with the days of delight and pleasure. 4. The days which we have devoted to the world, and compare them with the days which we have devoted to religion. 5. The amount of the whole, that we may discover how long the duration is of a life consisting of days of nothingness and of reality; of days of prosperity and of adversity; of days of pleasure and of languor; of days devoted to the world, and to the salvation of the soul. II. CONCLUSIONS. 1. The vanity of the life that now is, affords the clearest proof of the life to come. 2. Neither the good things, nor the evil, of a life which passes away with so much rapidity, ought to make a very deep impression on a soul whose duration is eternal. 3. This life is a season of probation, assigned to us for the purpose of making our choice between everlasting happiness or misery. 4. A life through which more time has been devoted to a present world, than to preparation for eternity, corresponds not to the views which the Creator proposed to Himself, when He placed us in this economy of expectation. 5. A sinner who has not conformed to the views which God proposed to Himself in placing him under an economy of discipline and probation, ought to pour out his soul in thanksgiving, that God is graciously pleased still to lengthen it out. 6. Creatures in whose favour God is pleased still to lengthen out the day of grace, the economy of long-suffering, which they have improved to so little purpose, ought no longer to delay, no, not for a moment, to avail themselves of a reprieve so graciously intended. (*James Saurin.*) *Right estimate of life*:—The prayer implies—I. THAT THERE IS A CERTAIN JUDGMENT TO BE FORMED AS TO THE DURATION OF AN EARTHLY LIFE. What is it? Not the exact hour, scene, or circumstances of our end. We thank Heaven for concealing all this. Ignorance of this is—1. Essential to our practical watchfulness. 2. To our personal enjoyment. 3. To our social usefulness. It means that we should have a practical impression that life here is temporary and preparative. II. THAT THERE IS A TENDENCY IN MAN TO NEGLECT THE FORMATION OF SUCH A JUDGMENT. Why this tendency? 1. Not from the want of circumstances to suggest it. History, observation, experience—all remind us every day of our end. 2. Not from any doubt that we have about the importance of realizing it. All acknowledge the importance. But—(1) From the secularity of one controlling purpose. (2) From the instinctive repugnance that we have to death. (3) From the moral dread of future retribution. (4) From the delusive suggestions of the tempter. "Ye shall not surely die." III. THAT THE FORMATION OF A CORRECT JUDGMENT IS ESSENTIAL TO PRACTICAL WISDOM. "That we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." 1. Such judgment would serve to impress us with the connection between this life and the future. 2. It would serve to moderate our affections in relation to this earth. 3. It would serve to reconcile us to the arrangements of Providence. We are pilgrims, voyagers, scholars. 4. It would serve to stimulate us to render all the circumstances of this life subservient to a higher. Time is bearing us and all away. (*Homilist.*) *The just estimate of the shortness of human life, and our proper employment here*:—I. AS REGARDS THE PRESENT WORLD. 1. As all virtues in general, both by their own proper influence, and the blessing of God, which reason leads us to expect, and Scripture expressly assures us of, conduce to prolong our days, the consideration of their natural brevity may well direct us to a virtuous conduct; particularly to sobriety, temperance, and chastity; to a prudent moderation of anger; and to whatever duties have especially the promise or the prospect of long life annexed to them. 2. Since we have but a small time to stay here, it is our wisdom to make it as easy and agreeable to ourselves, and all with whom we have any intercourse, as we are able; and to imitate persons of prudence, who

occasionally go journeys together; bearing with each others' temper and behaviour; giving mutual comfort and assistance under the misfortunes and inconveniences of the way; and continually endeavouring to preserve or restore the good humour and cheerfulness of the company. 3. The shortness of life should teach us to be speedy and diligent in doing all such things as we ought to do. 4. The shortness and precariousness of our present state of being should teach us to avoid long pursuits of worldly profits or pre-eminences; which probably either we shall not have time to attain, or must soon quit. 5. A fifth use of numbering our days is, to check and compose all strong emotions of mind about worldly concerns; for in so transitory a state there can be nothing to deserve them. Why should we be elated with hope of future good, when both our own lives, and those on whom our expectations may depend, are subject to such innumerable chances; and the higher we raise ourselves in imagination, the more afflicting will be our fall? Why, again, should we be dejected with fear of future evils, when a thousand accidents which none of us can guess at beforehand, may prevent their coming; or, if they do come, our head may be laid low enough before that time, and far enough out of the way of feeling them? 6. The most important lesson, taught us by the shortness and uncertainty of our present life, considered in itself, is, that we may reasonably expect, and should therefore continually look forward to another. II. WITH RESPECT TO THE ETERNAL LIFE WHICH IS TO FOLLOW. Whatever conclusions men may think they can draw from the former view, yet, when our life on earth is contemplated as a state of preparation for another and an endless one, then neither the wit, nor almost the folly of man, can make any other than virtuous inferences from the shortness of it.

1. Conviction of the necessity of applying diligently to know and do our duty. 2. Encouragement to persist in it to the end against temptation. 3. Support under the afflictions to which we are exposed in the meanwhile. (*T. Secker.*) *Life wisdom*.—What is the wisdom which comes from the numbering of our days? Rather let me put it in this way: What are the varieties of human life which this wisdom condemns? 1. The anxious life. A matter of temperament, you say. Yes, to a certain extent. Blood, inherited disposition, may not be overlooked here. Then it is said that this over-anxious condition of the mind is a result of impaired health. And here also is a truth. It is only a very superior person who can rise above and triumph over his physical condition; who can be equable, and wise, and tender, when the body is sick. But admitting all this, still education, reason, truth, must not be left out here. There is such a thing as a man taking himself in hand for correction. He may call reason to his aid. He may smite his propensity with the hand of truth. So here, the hand of truth is raised for smiting, for condemnation. First, this truth,—your own helplessness; secondly,—God's infinite goodness. And now comes the wisdom of the text, sharpest, strongest of all to rebuke and condemn here. Thus it speaks: It will soon be over. The dream will soon be past. The battle will soon be fought. Do not worry then. The burden so heavy, you shall carry it but for a day. The trial so sharp, you shall soon have an escape from it. These things will soon have an end, and that for ever. Oh, how quiet, how peaceful is the region to which human life hasteth!

2. The selfish life. This covers the whole range from mere indifference to hate; from hands which are folded in the presence of human want, to hands which are raised to beat down the weak and the struggling. Consider that only for the brief period of this life is it given unto any one of us to work our life power into the welfare of our fellow-men. 3. The worldly life. It may be to make money; it may be to get into places of honour; it may be the acquisition of knowledge. It matters not. Only so that the life of man is circumscribed by sense. Only so that in its noblest outreachings it is bounded by this world. So that the man does not love, or think upon, or care for, anything which he cannot handle, or see, or analyze. Just so sure as this is the case, so surely does the wisdom prayed for in the text condemn, "Thou fool, thou hast not numbered thy days." 4. The irreligious or unchristian life. Doth not the fact that our days may end at any time condemn such a life? Unpreparedness for an event which may be precipitated at any moment,—is not this folly? (*S. S. Mitchell, D.D.*) *Time wisely computed*.—I. THE PSALMIST'S PETITION. It suggests—1. A duty to be discharged: "number our days." The very term implies—(1) That they have a limit, and that this is within the scope of our powers to calculate. The tale may soon be told. (2) The uncertainty of life. (3) The preciousness of time. As the miser counts and recounts his gold because it is his treasure, and fears lest a single piece should be

lost, so should the child of eternity number those few and fleeting days which constitute his only season for preparing for eternity. Here alone is parsimony a virtue. 2. An inaptitude on the part of man for the fulfilment of the duty. He is called, indeed, to that for which his understanding is qualified, but to which his heart is not inclined. 3. This duty involves—(1) A comparison of the number of our days with the duration of eternity. (2) A comparison of the work which we have to do, with the space allotted for its accomplishment. 3. His need of assistance in the duty. God communicates this necessary instruction by His Word, and Providence, and Spirit—reminding by many a solemn text, by many an awakening dispensation, and by many an inward admonition, that "The time is short."

II. THE END TO WHICH THE PETITION WAS DIRECTED. What is "wisdom"? We need no better definition than that which describes it to consist in "pursuing the best end by the best means"; and seeing that happiness is "our being's end and aim," and that holiness is the only revealed means of securing it, the definition in question obviously identifies wisdom with godliness. "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom." Seek, then, to apply your hearts to the "wisdom which cometh down from above." (C. F. Childe, M.A.) *The divine arithmetic of life*:—If ever we ought to practise what has been called the Divine arithmetic of life, it is at the close of one year and the beginning of another. In garrison towns there is a cannon fired at noon, and when people not accustomed to it hear it for the first time, they generally start and say, "Oh my!" so that the gun is often called by soldiers the "Oh my!" People are startled by the noise, but they might start, too, at the thought of how quickly each day passes. How much more ought we to feel the passing of a year! We have known fond mothers who got their children photographed annually to compare the pictures and see the progress that had been made. Were our spiritual photographs compared with those of last year, would we be found to have grown in grace? Have we been as happy as we might have been; have we done any acts of purely unselfish kindness; has any one been much the better for our existence during the past year; have we offered up one uninterrupted prayer? Let the walls of our chambers speak; let our churches, houses, offices speak. Are we more trusting in God and more useful to man? (E. J. Hardy, M.A.) *The true use of time*:—The man who numbers his days rightly, numbers them not as if they ended anything, but as if they began something. He thinks of them in their termination as bringing him, not to an end, but to a beginning, a beginning for which, if rightly used, they prepare and fit him. You should not look upon men and women as if they were grown, as trees which stand in their maturity plain to your sight. You should look upon them as seeds which are planted, which are hidden as yet, but which are destined to have appearance of full growth by and by. If you will only carry yourself in thought over beyond the time of what you call death; if you will only stretch your lives out endlessly, and conceive of yourselves continuing as living beings with all your present powers amplified and quickened to greater intensity of expression for ever and ever; if you will only think of yourselves as having close and emphatic connections with that which is beyond as well as that which is here—if you will only think of yourselves in this way, I say, until the next world has become as actual and impressive to your consciousness as the present world is, you will then put true measurement upon and give the true significance to time. You will then see what it is worth and what it is not worth. You will then see what it should lead to and what you cannot afford to have it lead to. And seeing this you will apply your hearts unto wisdom. Wisdom is a great word, because the idea it symbolizes is great. It is greater than knowledge, for knowledge symbolizes only what one has received. Knowledge symbolizes the accumulation of facts, the gathering and retention of information, the reception on the part of our memories of whatever has been discovered. But wisdom represents that finer power, that higher characteristic of mind, which suggests the proper application of facts, the right use of knowledge, the correct direction of our faculties. He whose heart is applied to wisdom has put himself in such a position that he can think divinely—think as God would think in his place. Have you this wisdom touching the government of your lives? Do you see your connections with eternity, with its law and its love, with its opportunities and its occasions, with its joys and its glories? Are you living as those should live who can never stop living, who cannot even remain what they are, but must become better or worse? It is well for us that we can be taught of God. It is well that heaven has not left us in our ignorance. What would the world know of right and wrong but for God? What should we know even of ourselves

but for Him? Let us, therefore, more and more accept God as our Teacher. Let us read His Holy Word with profound attention. Let us study Nature with reverent and inquisitive eyes. Let us by every method inform ourselves in respect to those great duties and obligations which deliver us from frivolity and sin. (W. H. Murray.) *How rightly to number our days*:—I was reading of King Alfred, who, in the days long before the modern time-pieces were invented, used to divide the day into three parts, eight hours each, and then had three wax candles. By the time the first candle had burned to the socket, eight hours had gone; and when the second candle had burned to the socket, another eight hours had gone; and when all the three were gone out, then the day had passed. O that some of us, instead of calculating our days by any earthly time-piece, may calculate them by the numbers of opportunities and mercies which are burning down and burning out, never to be relighted. (T. De Witt Talmage.)

Ver. 13. Return, O Lord, how long! and let it repent Thee concerning Thy servants.—*God's return to the soul or nation*:—I. GOD DOETH SOMETIMES DESERT AND DEPART FROM HIS PEOPLE FOR A TIME. Not in regard of their union, but in regard of communion and manifestation. Though nothing is hid from the heat of this sun, yet our souls may be hid from the light of this sun: God doth sometimes depart from His own people. There are some graces that do not open nor show themselves but in the sunshining day of God's presence—thankfulness, joy, assurance. But there are other graces, that are best seen when God withdraws, and when God is absent—faith in God, and love to God especially. II. THE PEOPLE OF GOD ARE VERY SENSIBLE OF HIS DISPLEASURE. They look upon it as a very tedious thing; and most afflictious. "O Lord, how long?" Without the presence of God they have no enjoyment, their enjoyments are as no enjoyments: the presence of God with them is the top of all their enjoyments. If the sun be down, it is not all the torches and candles lighted up that will give you a day; and if God be gone, it is not all your creature comforts will give you joy. III. IN THE TIME OF THOSE DEPARTURES THEIR GREAT DESIRE IS THAT GOD WOULD RETURN. What is the presence of God but the most desirable thing in the world? (Acts iii. 19). God's presence is the saint's pleasure. God never returns empty-handed to His people. When He hath stricken them, He will let out more love unto them than ever before. IV. WHEN THE LORD DOETH RETURN UNTO HIS PEOPLE, HE DOETH THEN REPENT HIM CONCERNING HIS SERVANTS. 1. God doth not repent by the changing of His affection, but by the changing of His dispensation. 2. God will more easily repent of His judgments than of His mercies. 3. How it may appear that when God returns unto His people, that then He will repent Him concerning His servants. Why that appears by the thing itself. If a man say he will go from such a town and never return again, and then do return, he doth repent him concerning the thing, by his return; and so concerning God (Jer. xviii. 7, 8). 4. But then, how shall we know in case God be absent, or God be departed, to know that God will return again? You may know it by your relations. If you be in covenant with God, God will return again to you though now He be absent; "Though He afflict you with rods, His lovingkindness will He not take away, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail." V. WHAT SHALL WE DO THAT GOD MAY RETURN AGAIN? 1. Be sure of this, that you keep your door open, the door of your hearts open for Christ's return. When the master is abroad, the servant sits up to keep the door open for his coming in. 2. Be sure of this, that now in the time of Christ's absence you neglect no duty, though very unsavoury to you. The more unsavoury the duty now is unto you through the absence of Christ, the more acceptable unto Christ. 3. Be sure that you go and stand there where Christ used to be. (W. Bridge, M.A.)

Ver. 14. O satisfy us early with Thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.—*An early interest in God's mercy essential to a happy life*:—1. That a man may live happily, that he may rejoice and be glad all his days, it is necessary that he should be early freed from all fears of death. Will it be said, he may refuse to think of death? I answer, he cannot always banish this subject from his thoughts in a world like this, where so many things occur which are suited to remind him of it. But from this cause of unhappiness, the man who early obtains satisfactory evidence that he is a subject of God's pardoning mercy, is entirely free. 2. That a man may rejoice and be glad all his days, it is necessary that he should be freed in early life from a guilty conscience, and from apprehensions of God's

displeasure. But from these causes of unhappiness the man who is early satisfied with God's pardoning mercy is free. He enjoys peace of conscience and peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 3. To render a man happy during the whole progress of life, it is necessary that he should be early freed from care and anxiety, and especially from apprehensions of losing what he most loves. But it is impossible that an unpardoned sinner should feel perfectly safe, or that he should be free from care, anxiety, and apprehension. 4. That a man may rejoice and be glad all his days, he must early learn, in whatsoever state he is, therewith to be content. A discontented man is, of course, an unhappy man. But it is impossible that an unconverted sinner should be otherwise than discontented. While the soul is empty it cannot but feel uneasy, dissatisfied, discontented. But far different is the situation of one who is satisfied early with God's mercy. What the sinner seeks in vain he has found. The light which sheds its radiance on his path is furnished, not by lamps, but by the sun, a sun which never sets. The water which quenches his spirit flows, not from broken cisterns, but from the inexhaustible fountain of living waters. 5. That a man may rejoice and be glad all his days, it is absolutely necessary that he should early obtain the mastery of his appetites and passions, and be secured against the evils into which they would lead him. And no young man can have any security that he shall not be left to form such habits, unless he obtains that security which is afforded by God's sanctifying grace and pardoning mercy. Presume not then, young man, upon thine own strength. Where so many others have fallen, thou mayest fall. Against such a fall thou canst have no security until thou obtainest the protection of God. Let Him hold thee up, and then, and then only, wilt thou be safe. This safety is enjoyed by all who are satisfied early with His mercy. (*E. Payson, D.D.*)

Abiding satisfaction:—The text sets before us—I. THAT WHICH ALONE CAN SATISFY THE SOUL. II. WHEN THAT SATISFACTION OUGHT TO BE SOUGHT. Oh, to seek it early! how much easier it is, how much more reasonable and according to the order of things, than to neglect it. Let not the frivolities, and the foolishnesses, and the delusions, and the day-dreams of life, cheat you of the one great thing. III. THE BLESSED RESULTS OF THAT SATISFACTION, IF SOUGHT AND FOUND. The very design of the Gospel is to restore the human race to happiness, and glory, and immortality. (*H. Stowell, M.A.*)

The prayer and the plea:—I. THE PRAYER. 1. The kind of blessing sought. "Thy mercy." 2. The measure of it. "Satisfy us." I never knew a scholar who had so much learning that he did not wish any more; or a rich man who was so rich, that he wanted no more wealth; or a man of the world who had had so many pleasures, that he had no desire for more; or one who was so well off, that he was in every respect thoroughly content. There is always a craving for something that we have not. We never can say, "It is enough!" There is just one thing that will fill any heart, and that is, God's mercy. When a man has got that, he can say, with Paul, "I have all, and abound." 3. The time of it. "Early"—in the morning. This is the very prayer for young people. They may be said to be in the morning of life. You can never ask or get the blessing too early—too soon. II. THE PLEA. "That we may rejoice and be glad all our days." The reason given in support of the prayer is, that it would make those who offer it happy and glad, then and ever after. That would be no plea with a stranger, but it would be with a father. We have here the secret of true happiness. Many would put it differently—"That we may be good and holy all our days;" or, "That we may do what is right, and please Thee all our days." That is all very good, and one may pray that too, but mark this—the plea is, that we may rejoice and be glad, as if joy and gladness could not be got in any other way. The sooner you experience the mercy of God, the sooner will you be truly happy and glad. 1. It will give present joy and happiness. John Bunyan was so overjoyed when he first found mercy that he could hardly contain himself, and tells us that as he went along the road, he could have told "the very crows on the ploughed land" what God had done for him, and how glad and happy he was, now that he was a pardoned man. 2. It will give future joy and happiness. "All our days." When a child has got a new toy, at first it is everything to him; he is overjoyed about it, but soon he tires of it, and lets it fall out of sight, and seeks something else. But God's mercy makes a man glad all his days. The gladdest hour of his life may be when he first finds it, but his peace is "like a river," and flows on from day to day. And then, when the end comes, it is best of all: "all our days,"—not only here, but hereafter,—and that is the great thing. (*J. H. Wilson, D.D.*)

Satisfaction:—I. THE DEEPEST YEARN-

ING OF MAN IS FOR SATISFACTION. "O satisfy us." That is everywhere and evermore the cry of humanity. And what a strange cry it is, when you think of it. Man is the offspring of God; the bearer of His image; he stands at the head of the terrestrial creation; he possesses wondrous capacities of thought, and feeling, and action. The world, and all that is in it, has been formed in a complete and beautiful adaptation to his being. Nature seems to be ever calling to him with a thousand voices, to be glad and rejoice; and yet he is unsatisfied.

II. SATISFACTION CAN ONLY BE FOUND IN THE REALIZATION OF DIVINE MERCY.

1. Divine mercy is that which meets man's greatest need—the need of pardon for sin. 2. Divine mercy brings all other blessings in its train. Pardon with Him is meant just to put us into a condition, legally, in which He can lavish upon us all the wealth of blessing that He possesses. It is one link only in a chain of benefits, reaching from the moment when it is bestowed right on through the ceaseless cycles of an eternity to come. He gives him a new heart; He sends His Holy Spirit to dwell in him; He sanctifies, and gradually makes him meet for heaven.

3. Divine mercy is a permanent good—it endures. The blessings which it involves are eternal in their nature. You cannot affirm this of any other gifts. III. DIVINE MERCY IS TO BE SOUGHT BY PRAYER. How easy, suitable, gracious is this method!

(C. M. Merry.) *The young man's prayer*:—I. WE WILL MAKE OUR TEXT THE GROUNDWORK OF A SOLEMN PLEADING WITH YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN TO GIVE THEIR HEARTS TO CHRIST THIS DAY. 1. The voice of wisdom reminds you in this our text that you are not pure in God's sight, but need His mercy. Remember, then, that if you be saved in the morning of life, you will be wonderful instances of prevent-ing mercy. 2. Salvation, if it comes to you, must not only be mercy, but it must be mercy through the Cross. Nothing else can "satisfy" a sinner. 3. I would press this matter of a youthful faith upon you, because you have a dissatisfaction even now. Well, then, I would have you come to Jesus, for depend upon it there is that in Him which can thoroughly satisfy you. What can you want more to satisfy your heart than love to Him? You say that not only does your heart want something, but your head. My witness is that there is in the Gospel of Christ the richest food for the brain. You get Christ as the central sun, and then every science and fact begins to revolve round about Him just as the planets travel in their perpetual circle around the central orb. 4. Our text says, "O satisfy us early with Thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days." We never rejoice in the true sense of the term; we never possess solid gladness, till we are satisfied with God's mercy. It is all a mockery and a pretence; the reality never comes to us till God's mercy visits our heart; but after that what joy we know!

II. Take the text as YOUR ADDRESS TO GOD. Every word here is significant. 1. "O." This teaches us that the prayer is to be earnest. Dull, dead prayers, ask God to deny them. We must pray out of our very souls. The soul of our prayer must be the prayer of our soul. "O satisfy us." 2. Makes it a generous prayer when you are at it. "O satisfy us early!" Pray for your brothers and sisters. I am sure we are verily guilty in this thing. Those that sprang from the same loins as ourselves, would to God that they were all saved with the same salvation. 3. See to it, next, that your prayer be thoroughly evangelical. "O satisfy us early with Thy mercy." The prayer of the publican is the model for us all. 4. Let the prayer be put up now at once. The text says, "O satisfy us early." Why not to-day? Oh that it had been done years ago! But there was time enough, you thought. There is time enough, but there is none to spare.

(C. H. Spurgeon.) *Early religion escapes the sequel of a lost life*:—There is a very interesting story told in a book of Dr. Barrett's of an aged peer, a benevolent and distinguished lawyer and judge in his day. In his old age he was converted to a saving knowledge of Christ. But the story is that in his old age it was almost pitiable to see him at times. When his friends spoke brightly and cheerfully to him, he would say, "I am saved, but my life is lost." He could not bring back the past, and that past stood out before him in such dark, ghastly vividness that he could not rise above the depression—he had lost his opportunity. Young men, young women, beware lest your lives are lost. True, you may come to Christ and be saved in after years; but the precious hours that are wasted now, without any serious purpose, are wasted for ever.

Vers. 15-17. **Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.**—*Gladness for sadness*:—Our prayer should be for—I. PROPORTIONATE GLADNESS; that our God who has filled one scale

with grief would fill the other scale with grace till they balance each other. I have been told on the Scotch lakes that the depth of the lake is almost always the same as the height of the surrounding hills; and I think I have heard that the same is true of the great ocean; so that the greatest depth is probably the same as the greatest height. Doubtless, the law of equilibrium is manifest in a thousand ways. Take an instance in the adjustment of days and nights. A long night reigns over the north of Norway; in these wintry months they do not even see the sun; but mark and admire their summer; then the day banishes the night altogether, and you may read your Bible by the light of the midnight sun. Long wintry nights find compensation in a perpetual summer day. There is a balance about the conditions of the peoples of differing lands: each country has its drawbacks and its advantages. I believe it is so with the life of God's people: therein also the Lord maintains a balance. "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." The good Lord measures out the dark and the light in due proportions, and the result is life sad enough to be safe, and glad enough to be desirable. A step further, and we have it thus, sorrow often prepares for joy. It might not be safe that you should enjoy worldly prosperity, at the outset of life. Your adversities in business are meant to teach you the worthlessness of earthly things, so that when you have them you may not be tempted to make idols of them. In the spiritual life God does not run us up with glittering virtues all of a sudden; but deep prostration of spirit and thorough humiliation prepare the under-courses; and then, afterwards, stoned upon stone, as with rows of jewels, we are built up to be a palace for the indwelling of God. Sorrow furnishes the house for joy. Once again, let me say to you, there is such a connection between sorrow and joy that no saint ever has a sorrow but what it has a joy wrapped up in it. It is a rough oyster, but a pearl lies within those shells if you will but look for it. Once more: the day will come when all the sorrows of God's sending will be looked upon as joys. Perhaps in heaven, among all the things which have happened to us that will excite our wonder and delight, our furnace experience, and the hammer and the file will take the lead. Sorrow will contribute rich stanzas to our everlasting psalm.

II. PECULIAR GLADNESS.

1. Gladness at the sight of God's work. When we are in deep tribulation it is a sweet quietus to survey the handiwork of our Father in Heaven. His work in providence, also, is often a consolation to us. Let us but see what God has done for His people and for ourselves in years past, and we are cheered. Trouble itself, when we see it to be God's work, has lost its terror. A certain Persian nobleman found himself surrounded by soldiers, who sought to take him prisoner; he drew his sword and fought right valiantly, and might have escaped had not one of the company said, "The king has sent us to convey you to himself." He sheathed his sword at once. Yes, we can contend against what we call a misfortune; but when we learn that the Lord hath done it, our contest is ended, for we joy and rejoice in what the Lord doeth; or, if we cannot get the length of rejoicing in it, we acquiesce in His will.

2. Gladness at the revelation of God to our children. No better comfort can be found for bereaved mothers than to see their sons and daughters converted.

3. Gladness at beauty bestowed. Sorrow mars the countenance and clothes the body with sackcloth; but if the Lord will come to us and adorn us with His beauty, then the stains of mourning will speedily disappear.

4. Gladness at our own work being established. To build up the Church and win souls for Jesus is first of all God's work, and then our work. Why should a Christian work to win souls? Answer: because God works in him to win souls. God works to set us working: our work is the result of His work.

(1) The text prays for our work that it may succeed: "Establish Thou the work of our hands." Oh, if God will but prosper us in our work for Him, how happy we shall be! It is wet weather just now, the damp of sorrow is on all things, and so the seed sown in tears is speedily reaped in joy. Is not this something to comfort us? Let us pray God to send us more of it, that by conversions our work may prosper.

(2) Then we pray that our work may be lasting,—that is the chief point. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 16. Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children.—*The religious consecration of our households*.—I. TRUTHS SUGGESTED IN THIS PRAYER. 1. That real religion, wherever it exists, is a Divine production in the human mind. "Thy works," etc. It is a work, and a work of God. God begins it. 2. That they who have experienced its power and preciousness themselves are anxious for its prevalence among those most dear to them. "Their

children." 3. That the preservation of religion in families is a leading object of God's dispensations. 4. That it becomes the young, as they rise to years of consciousness and maturity, to unite their prayers with the prayers that are offered on their behalf. O satisfy us with Thy mercy. II. ENCOURAGEMENTS TO PRESENT THIS PRAYER. 1. It is a point in which God's glory, and man's good, are found to meet and centre. You do not run counter to the tide of Divine designs, but in unison. It is God's work, and God's glory. 2. It is a subject to which the richest promises are made. 3. It has been amply answered in every age. III. PRACTICAL HINTS FOR OUR OWN CONDUCT. 1. Aim to be the instrument of fulfilling your own prayer. Show them God's glory. 2. Take heed there is nothing in your conduct to counteract your instruction. 3. Ascribe to God all the glory of success. (*Evangelist.*) *Desire that God would let His work appear*:—I. THE "WORK" OF GOD, as mentioned here, denotes, primarily, the establishment of Israel in the promised land of Canaan; ultimately, the preparation of the way for the Messiah and His Church. II. WHEN THIS "WORK" MAY BE SAID TO "APPEAR." It may be described as appearing anew in different periods; as a work, delayed at times, yet "revived in the midst of the years." Often, after seeming to have let alone His work, has the Divine Being awoke, laid bare His arm, and set His hand a second time to His unfinished work. The degree of piety prevailing at any time is the gauge by which we may measure that progress of this work in the prosperity of Israel. III. WHY IT IS SO DESIRABLE THAT THIS PRAYER SHOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED. The first concern of a Christian is, that his own life may be given to him as a prey; that He who has begun may perform the good work of His grace in his own soul: the second is, that the same good work may extend to others; that they also may be sharers with ourselves of the same salvation. 1. This desire is the dictate of piety,—of a regard to the glory of God. 2. It is equally the dictate of benevolence,—of a regard for the happiness of others. (*R. Hall, M.A.*) *Work and glory*:—This psalm has the threefold interest of subject, of authorship, and of association. Of subject, because it contrasts and combines God and man in the most thrilling and yet most natural way. All the greatness of God and all the weakness of man, and this so as to draw man to God in the longing cry, "Let Thy work appear to us, let the beauty," etc. And this interest is enhanced by the bare possibility that we read in this psalm, "a prayer of Moses, the man of God." How wonderful was his history, second only in interest to that of our Lord. And then the associations of this psalm—read as it is over the grave of our beloved departed ones. Therefore our attention is aroused when we come to consider the teachings of such a psalm. I. "SHOW THY SERVANTS THY WORK." God worketh everywhere and always. Above all in Christ, in the Holy Ghost, and in all the operations of His grace. But man sees it not. Many things hide it. God must show it to him. And here Moses prays that his people may be made to see God's work. Let us, as we need to, make the prayer our own. II. "AND THEIR CHILDREN THY GLORY." The glory spoken of is the self-manifestation of God. There might, in conception at least, have been God and no glory. But it pleased Him not thus to be. He came forth to communicate, to recreate, to redeem. That forthcoming was outshining. And Moses prayed not only for the generation then living, but for their children. What better prayer can parents offer for their children than this? What better defence against the anxiety on their behalf which they feel so often and so keenly? And God has, in large degree, answered for us this prayer. Let us be grateful for the blessing, and let us hand it on. Never consent that your children should receive a Godless education. The prayer of the patriot, like that of the saint, must be, "Show the children Thy glory." (*Dean Vaughan.*)

Ver. 17. *Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.*—*The beauty of the Lord*:—We all feel moral beauty to be the highest. Much as we may admire the delicate touches of light and shade in a landscape, the rainbow tints on the rosy-coloured Alps, the beautiful gothic of the arched forest, the fragrant Kentish banks, the human face divine, yet we all feel that given a touch of heroism, martyr-like courage, or persevering fidelity to truth, the beauty of character as far exceeds beauty of face as the soul is higher and nobler than the tabernacle in which it dwells. Blessed be God, the Divine nature can be restored to us, "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound," and as at the Cross we receive pardon and remission of our sins, so in vital union with Christ do we receive the new nature and the new name. I. THE BEAUTY OF GOD IN OUR CHARACTER. We

cannot have the highest beauty without having God. I do not say we cannot have anything that looks beautiful. Everything that is amiable, considerate, gentle, true, unselfish in human character is in one sense beautiful—but if you look deeply enough you will see that one thing is wanting, and that without life in God, these virtues are only like the broken arches of Bolton Abbey—beautiful in ruins.

1. God's image is beauty of the highest type. 2. The beauty of the Lord is brought out by the Spirit of God in the Christian. Character is a garment. Men see it. Religion is the life of God in the soul of man, and it blossoms before men. It is hard to see how a man can be churlish, or cold, or morose, or selfish, and yet claim to be considered a Christian; religion is not grace grafted on to our nature, but grace changing, purifying, and renewing our nature, so that we become new creatures in Christ Jesus. 3. In the midst of religious privileges this beauty may decay and decline. The Jews. 4. The production of this likeness may involve severe providences. To bring out the Divine likeness so that it may last, you may have to pass through the fiery furnace. God may put us in the furnace, but He will never heat it too highly: the picture will never be marred—never: "He will finish the work." II. THE BLESSING OF GOD ON OUR UNDERTAKINGS. I like that expression, "work of our hands"—because all work, brain-work for instance, has to do with them, and all the forms of common toil as well. "Establish our work!" Can we all conscientiously ask God to do that? I do not mean in a spiritual sense as members of Churches, but as Christian men. Are you conducting your work on such principles that you can ask God to bless it? If not, the distinction between spiritual and secular will not help you. There is, of course, in reality no such distinction. It is conventional. But assuming that you use the distinction, how can you ask God to bless the work of your hands, if it is base, tricky, evil? When the prayer in the text was uttered—1. It was the morning of a new life. Beautiful prayer that at special seasons. When the daughter is leaving her home, and bride and bridegroom are commencing the battle of life together, having to plan, to achieve the position which circumstances make possible to them. Yes! it is a season to kneel around the family altar, and for the fatherly lips to ask God to bless the work of their hands. So is it when we commence new undertakings about which we are full of much anxiety, and which will necessitate much effort. Who can bless, if God cannot? 2. It was the prayer of earnest men. God does not prosper our laziness, but our labour. Moreover, God meant all of us to use our hands. We want earnest hands. Not that earnestness is all. We want intelligence, thought, devoutness, wisdom, behind the earnestness! Our prayers will be but mockeries unless we have work to be established after all. 3. It was the expression of Divine dependence. The best building will soon show signs of downfall and destruction unless the work be cemented together by God. (*W. M. Statham.*) *The cry of the mortal to the undying*:—I. THE YEARNING AND LONGING CRY OF THE MORTAL FOR THE BEAUTY OF THE ETERNAL. The word translated "beauty" is, like the Greek equivalent in the New Testament, and like the English word "grace," which corresponds to them both, susceptible of a double meaning. "Grace" means both kindness and loveliness, or, as we might distinguish, both graciousness and gracefulness. And that double idea is inherent in the word, as it is inherent in the attribute of God to which it refers. So the "beauty of the Lord" means, by no quibble, but by reason of the essential loveliness of His lovingkindness, both God's loveliness and God's goodness; God's graciousness and God's (if I may use such a word) gracefulness. The prayer of the psalmist that this beauty may be "upon" us conceives of it as given to us from above and as coming floating down from Heaven, like that white Dove that fell upon Christ's head, fair and meek, gentle and lovely, and resting on our anointed heads, like a diadem and an aureole of glory. Now, that communicating graciousness, with its large gifts and its resulting beauty, is the one thing that we need in view of mortality and sorrow and change and trouble. And then, note further, that this gracious gentleness and longsuffering, giving mercy of God, when it comes down upon a man, makes him, too, beautiful with a reflected beauty. If the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, it will cover over our foulness and deformity. II. THE CRY OF THE WORKER IN A FLEETING WORLD FOR THE PERPETUITY OF HIS WORK. "Establish," or make firm, "the work of our hands upon us," etc. Our work will be established if it is His work. This prayer in our text follows another prayer (ver. 16)—namely, "Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants." That is to say, my work will be perpetual when the work of my hands is God's work done through me. When you bring your wills into harmony with

God's will, and so all your effort, even about the little things of daily life, is in consonance with His will, and in the line of His purpose, then your work will stand. If my will runs in the line of His, and if the work of my hands is "Thy work," it is not in vain that we shall cry, "establish it upon us," for it will last as long as He does. In like manner, all work will be perpetual that is done with "the beauty of the Lord our God" upon the doers of it. Whosoever has that grace in his heart, whosoever is in contact with the communicating mercy of God, and has had his character in some measure refined and ennobled and beautified by possession thereof, will do work that has in it the element of perpetuity. And our work will stand if we quietly leave it in His hands. Quietly do it to Him, never mind about results, but look after motives. Be sure that they are right, and if they are, the work will be eternal. Just as a drop of water that falls upon the moor, finds its way into the brook, and goes down the glen and on into the river, and then into the sea, and is there, though undistinguishable, so in the great summing up of everything at the end the tiniest deed that was done for God, though it was done far away up amongst the mountain solitudes where no eyes saw, shall live and be represented in its effects on others and in its glad issues to the door.

(A. Maclaren, D.D.) *A lovable God*:—Our times need the doctrine of a lovable God—a God whose moral beauty may be all around us and upon us. The distortion and deformity of the Deity have long enough followed mankind. The moral beauty of such a Being should be above us, and in man's heart and life. This "beauty" may in part be seen in the assumption of a long day for the unfolding of the Divine plan. It is perfectly vain to seek the "beauty of God" in the few days that surround man here. It is necessary to chant the words of the old anthem, "from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God." As we cannot take up a drop of water from the Atlantic and find in that drop the flow of the tides, the lifting up of billows, the power that floats all the ships of a thousand ports, and the soft and loud music of calm and storm; as to see the ocean we must grasp it all in its rocky bed, bordered by continents, so we cannot, in the face of a dying infant, or in the adversity of a good man, see the government of love of God. It has boundaries wider than these. We must wait, and, what the fleeting moments of man deny, ask the great years of God to bring. The tides of the mind, the deep music of human waters, cannot be seen in the drop of life. There is a God of justice that may be all lovable. The punishment may be so just, so inseparable from conscious guilt, so essential to the welfare of time and eternity, that it will not make God fearful, but will be one more circle of splendour in His halo of light. Alongside this attribute of justice must be seen with wonderful distinctness the fatherly love. We must give thousands of years of time to a Divine love. Our earth must be seen floating, not in an ether which our chemists shall attempt to weigh—not even in that sweet ether which Figuiet imagines to surround some stars, and to be the food of the souls beyond—but floating in a Divine love.

(D. Swing.) *Moral beauty*:—What are some of the characteristics of moral beauty? 1. Beauty has no sharp angles, but its lines of continuance are so gentle that curve melts into curve. The truly beautiful life has no breaks, no harsh traits, or times when the better nature seems asleep or on a journey; no sudden starts from moral torpor into fresh spiritual life. The moral life is uniform; varied, it may be, at times, but pervaded always by the same spirit. But let it be said emphatically that this beauty cannot be put on. The blast that shall awake the soul's rich melody must come, not from without, but from within. This beauty can be sustained only by taking our Saviour's motto, "I am not alone, but the Father is with me." The felt presence of God will be efficient beyond all things in keeping passion subdued and temper under control, while we maintain in the daily flow of life that sweet serenity with which everything good is seen to be in harmony. I remember seeing a picture of Joseph's workshop, representing the carpentership of our Lord. The holy light which encircled the place rested on the shavings, the chips, the plane, and the saw, making it look like a picture of heaven. The painter was right; for with our Lord there was just the same Divine beauty in His handling of the plane and the saw as when He stooped at the grave of Lazarus and bade him rise and come forth. In so far as we can put this spirit into the humblest of work or play we make it divinely beautiful. 2. This beauty grows, or, if not, it cannot be. This is so with the outward beauty of the universe and its changes; year by year the spring in its delicate foliage is beautiful as it comes upon us so full of promise from the lifeless winter; but not less beautiful is the glow of summer; nor is the limit of this beauty reached till the fields bend with

ripening grain, the trees with golden, luscious fruit, and the vines are drooping with the purple clusters. But the beauty of character, as that of nature, fades as soon as it ceases to grow. Take God's perfect law, and look at it as the microscope for the examination of your characters; bring it to the level of your thought, feeling, and conduct for a single day; look close and deep, endeavour to ascertain precisely how your soul would appear with the strictest standard of judgment applied. I trust many of you would find ample reason to be happy and thankful; but are you sure that the microscopic mirror would not reveal to you those defects of which otherwise you were not aware? But apply this scrutiny to your Saviour's character, and it only brings to light finer lines and richer hues of spiritual beauty; and those who have been long in the holy temple of that Divine character feel that it still grows upon them, and they can see more and more to admire every year they live. Thus it is that the best of men and women can talk of themselves in the humblest terms, not because they are less good, but because they use the microscope of God's law upon themselves, and therefore see the difference between themselves and their heavenly Father. The more of His Spirit they have the more earnestly they crave for more.

3. Such are some of the characteristics of moral or spiritual beauty; and we need it for our own sake and for the sake of our fellow-man. (1) For our own sake, because without it we cannot in any sense be satisfied with ourselves. (2) We need this beauty of character for the sake of others; it is this which, far more than anything else, confers goodness and the power of doing good. You will do good not so much by what you say as by what you are. What you say and do for others, and what you give, is the mere multiplicand of which yourself and the soul of goodness in you is immeasurably the larger multiplier; and the nature of the product depends mainly upon the multiplier. 4. Contemplate for one moment the union of strength and beauty in our great Exemplar, Christ; and the degree to which that strength, in Him so peculiar, lay in His beauty of character. As for strength, the world has not seen might like His. You know how the multitudes were silenced into respect by His presence. His days were full of energetic toil, and the prophetic phrase, "travelling in the greatness of His strength," seems to refer to the momentous journey from His baptism to His cross; but would this might have come down through the ages had it not been for its majestic and transcendent beauty? 5. Take with you on your life's journey the motto given in our text: "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." Seek with strength that beauty that shall make your strength immeasurably stronger; so far as you can see along your path, instead of thorns, instead of briars, show by your faithful conduct that the flowers of heaven can grow on earthly ground. Worship God in the beauty of holiness; not alone in formal prayer and praise, but by making your work itself worship, your enjoyments thanksgiving. Rejoice in the Lord always; and so live that yours shall ever be a happy, lovely service, one that waits not for its reward in heaven, but is in itself an exceeding great reward.

(A. P. Peabody, D.D.) *The beauty of God*.—I. WHAT IS THE BEAUTY OF GOD? Some have said that beauty is the indication of utility, the stamp of the highest usefulness. Others have made it to consist in the harmony of opposites; others in proportion or symmetry; others in conformity to a certain ideal standard of perfection. The saying attributed to Plato comes nearest to satisfying us,—"Beauty is the splendour of truth." It is the lustre of perfection, the sign or token of a completed ideal. It always suggests the thought of a Being behind who seeks to realize His ideas and express Himself in them, and give a conception of their worth and beneficence. Do not beauty and sublimity owe their power to this, that they are suggestions of the illimitable, the transcendent, the infinite? Once in the history of this sinful world infinite beauty appeared. Divine loveliness spoke and acted among us, shone through the eyes, and lived in the actions and sufferings of Jesus of Nazareth. A beauty more splendid than day and all the jewelled crown of night, more tender than the most ethereal tints of flowers, more sublime than the mountains—the beauty of Divine love and truth and righteousness, of patience and longsuffering, dwelt in mortal flesh, streaming evermore through its covering, seeming the richer and tenderer for its covering, till it shone out in noon-tide glory through anguish and death. It is a perception of the beauty of God, a delight in it, a desire after it, which distinguish the spiritual man from others.

II. THE BEAUTY OF GOD AS REFLECTED IN MAN. There is always a suggestion of joy and hope about spiritual beauty. It speaks of a wide horizon. It is the beauty of a day in spring, having a hold of the future, while struggling with east winds and rain; looking on to summer, and not back upon it as do the fairest autumn days.

It is the beauty of the rising sun, or of the sky before sunrise that presages a day of glory. Benevolence is the essential element. It is love that is lovely. To love the Infinite One and all Being in and through Him cannot but impart to the soul a deep beauty in harmony and alliance with the fairest scenes in Nature. But it is a strong and abundant life that is beautiful. Strength is the natural and genuine root of loveliness; and if there be anything fair to look upon that is not associated with this, but is rather a tender delicate grace inseparable from feebleness of principle or purpose, it must be somewhat of the nature of a sickly flush. Only, we should not forget that there is a beauty that precedes strength. For this is a characteristic of God's work as distinguished from man's, that it carries a measure of beauty with it from the beginning through all its stages. There is one beauty of the tender shoot and another of the plant in flower. Unity is an element of beauty. Intellect requires unity and is pursued through all sciences by this quenchless thirst. Conscience, heart and imagination also desire it, and without it have no rest. If we will examine it, we shall find that in every object which we reckon beautiful there is unity open or concealed. What we call proportion, harmony, balance, order are only modifications of this. But unity must never be so understood as to seem in conflict with freedom. The beautiful is free, expansive, flowing. Unity and freedom are both included in this utterance, as they are in the truth of things—"I will walk at liberty because I seek Thy precepts." Joy also is an element of beauty. The joy that we get by looking at Christ is healing and softening. It is a joy from beholding beauty of the loftiest and tenderest kind, and must be productive of beauty. Repose is not less an element of beauty. How powerfully this element of calm strikes us in the life of our Lord. He had the repose of a perfectly balanced soul, of strength and love, of patience, meekness, and unshaken trust in God. Hence there is a beauty in Him of which the tranquil majestic vault of heaven and the serene stars are a picture. They who inherit His peace cannot but inherit something of His beauty. Naturalness and unconsciousness must be added as necessary to all the elements of beauty. Let us have simple reality, whatever else we want. The beauty of life is life. We do not make beauty. It grows. We must not seek it directly, else we shall certainly miss it. Now, what light does this psalm shed on this beauty of God? What light does it give on the means of attaining it? First of all, a soul must have its home in God. It must have rest and a centre, and it can only have this in the bosom of infinite love. It must realize God's eternity. A deep sense of sin is another outstanding element in this psalm, and there is no real beauty possible to sinful man without that. The gladness that God gives, and the wisdom that God gives, are both prominent here, and they are both necessary to work out the beauty of God in us. (A. Raleigh, D.D.) *The beauty of the Lord*:—There is a relation between beauty and work. In this writer's mind the two things are indissolubly connected. To him the beauty of the Divine nature is the beauty of an energy ever streaming forth towards some harmonious and perfect end. This is clear from the parallelism between the parts of this sentence: "Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants," "And Thy glory unto their children," and, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God rest upon us." God's work, then, is His glory and His beauty. The three are correlated as parallel, and therefore kindred, ideas. Perfect beauty is the fruit of activity ever tending towards useful and beneficent ends. You may have a beautiful statue or a beautiful picture, but the highest beauty is when you have movement and development. A painted flower, however exquisitely wrought, can never exercise the same charm as a growing wheat-stalk or an expanding rose-bud. Work itself is beautiful. What is more fascinating than to watch the movements of a skilled workman, a master of his craft? Let us understand, then, that the only truly beautiful life is the active life. The beautiful hand is the hand that has wrought something for the benefit and enrichment of humanity, that has achieved something for the common good. If I were to ask you to name the most beautiful life ever lived upon this earth, you would not hesitate. You would name the life of Jesus of Nazareth, the life whose motto was, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" and whose record was, "He went about doing good." And herein was its beauty, that though cut off in its prime, He could say, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." And I want you to feel that "the beauty of the Lord our God" may be upon us in all honest, earnest doing. No one ever asks whether Jesus of Nazareth was physically beautiful or not. He may have been plain-featured, as was Socrates; none the less is He the "altogether lovely" to our thought. It is

significant that religion should be always spoken of in the Bible as a work of Divine "grace" in the heart; and "grace" is an essential element in our conception of beauty. It is the same identification as that which arose in the mind of the psalmist. He is thinking of no mere outward decoration stuck on to hide something ugly, like the plaster and stucco adornments of our modern debased architecture, which only accentuate the native hideousness of that which they are designed to conceal. He is thinking of the beauty which is the expression of an inward life, the "beauty of holiness." (*J. Halsey.*) *The beauty of God*:—Beauty is that indescribable something in an object of sight or thought which awakens in us a feeling of satisfaction and gratification by the presentment of a perfect symmetry and harmony, a true proportion and adjustment, a unity without confusion or discord of a multitude of parts in a complete and congruous whole. And thus far the feeling is one and the same in the region of sense and in the region of mind. The beautiful in nature, the beautiful in art, the beautiful in literature, the beautiful in a person, the beautiful in a character, might be spoken of without impropriety in the same terms and ascribed substantially to the same characteristics, however distinct and diverse its action in these several provinces. The effect, the influence of beauty is, of course, utterly different in a thing and in a person—in a scene or a landscape on the one hand, in a countenance or a character on the other; and yet the same nominal account might be given of both, and the admiration awakened by both might be described in the very same phrase. Even so is it in that beauty which the text speaks of. Like that love of God which the Bible tells of, and which we must conceive of, however inadequately, as of the same nature and texture, so to say, only differing in its intensity and its purity, as the love which glorifies and sanctifies this human life of ours, so also is the beauty of God and the admiration of it by men and angels not to be idealized away in the fear of too much humanizing it; rather shall we dare to say of it, that it is the same quality and the same emotion in nature and science with the human, only infinitely lifted above it by its application to that one object in which there is no touch of defect in the beauty, and no possibility of excess in the admiration. It is still the symmetry and the harmony, the unity in manifoldness, the combination of parts in one consistent and congruous whole, which is the beauty, and which awakens the admiration of God Himself. But now, lest we should lose the thought in words, or fail to grasp the thing signified, just because it is so far above out of our sight, let us mention two or three particulars, the absence of any one of which in the revelation of what God is would be fatal to the beauty, and therefore fatal to the admiration, of God. 1. And we shall all, I think, be willing to place first, and not last, the Divine holiness as an attribute essential to the perfect Being. When a man really feels what sin is, feels what is the hatefulness, the meanness, the shamefulness,—what is the wretchedness of sin, or of having sinned; that he even wishes to have it judged, and punished, and slain in himself; that it were no boon, but a sore penalty to be left with, and in, his sin, punishment being excused him;—I am sure that that man would miss in God, if it were not there, the attribute of severity; he would feel that the proportion, that the balance, that the combination was imperfect, if the Lord God were not, whatever else He be, strictly, severely just, of purer eyes than to look with toleration upon iniquity whatever the consequence to the creature that has done amiss, and let in the tempter. 2. But if holiness is the first ingredient of the Divine beauty, certainly you will all say that sympathy is the second. To have revealed to me only a just God, only a God who rewards or recompenses according to our deservings, or only a God who makes His sun to rise indifferently on the evil and the good, and has made no provision at all for the mighty transition from the one class to the other by an all-availing sacrifice and by a sanctifying Spirit—this would be to break the unity, to destroy the harmony, of Divine beauty, for it would leave me such as I am, out of the light and the warmth, out of the very reach and scope of the saving regard. I want the sympathy, which can supplement, which can condescend to touch the leper, and avail to say to the dead man, "I say unto thee, Arise." 3. And we must not end without a third element, and what is that but the Divine help? Oh, when the battle has gone against me, when the good resolution has been again broken, when the severe lesson of consequence has been learned yet once more in vain, where should we be and what, if we might not still look up and lift up the eyes to One who is willing, often as it is, to help our infirmities, who will not upbraid us with sin or ingratitude will we but seek Him again with all our hearts, crying out for strength perfect in weakness, nay, enabling us to hazard the

audacious yet most true paradox, "When I am weak," just then, and then only, "I am strong"? Oh, "let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us," stirring us first to admiration, then to adoration, and then to communion. Let us remember how each one of the constituent parts of the Divine beauty is associated in Scripture with the name of Love. In one single letter St. Paul uses the three phrases, "Love of God," "Love of Christ," "Love of the Spirit." In one single verse St. Paul brings together in prayer the Trinity of the Divine Unity when he says, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship (or communion) of the Holy Ghost be with you all." Grace, love, communion. What lack we yet? Only that we stir up the gift; only that with such blessings as ours we starve not for lack of using; only that we cast ourselves more humbly upon the goodness and forbearance, and longsuffering which has suffered us all these years, and still waits to bless. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Beauty*:—Beauty would be said, I dare say, by scholars, to be not a Hebrew, but a Greek idea. And yet the Hebrews had an idea of their own of beauty, and a very original one. I. **THAT GOD IS BEAUTIFUL** (2 Chron. xx. 21; Ps. xxvii. 4; Zech. ix. 17; Isa. xxxiii. 17). 1. A feature of God which appears to me to have this attractiveness is His own love of beauty. All the beauty that exists in the universe is of God's making. "From Him all things sweet derive their sweetness, all things fair their beauty, all things bright their splendour, all things that live their life, all things sentient their sense, all that move their vigour, all intelligences their knowledge, all things perfect their perfection, all things in any wise good their goodness." 2. A second feature of the mind of God which makes the same impression is the artistic perfection He bestows on His work. The two great instruments of modern scientific investigation, the telescope and the microscope, have enlarged our knowledge of God's works in opposite directions. 3. There is a beauty of a still higher order, which we call moral, and this is still more characteristic of God. There are some elements of moral character which we cannot see displayed in men or illustrated in their actions without the heart rising up to greet them with delight. Gentleness, for instance, is of this nature. Is there any sight more touching you can see in a home than a strong man stooping to a child, and laying aside his strength and dignity to be its playmate, or in the streets than a father leading his little one and waiting patiently for the toddling feet? The same may be said of generosity. If a man who has been wronged, having both right and power on his side, yet forbears to take revenge and heaps kindness on his enemy, poetry will celebrate his act, and every heart that listens to it will respond. Self-sacrifice, voluntarily giving up comfort and dignity to go down to the rescue of the miserable, commands the same kind of allegiance. Now, all the qualities of this class, in their highest form and intensest degree, belong to God. They are comprehended in what is called the grace of God. 4. One other feature of the beauty of God must be mentioned, because it is the one which the Old Testament writers chiefly had in view when they conceived God as beautiful. This is holiness. God is even called in one passage "the beauty of holiness." Now, by this word we generally understand a negation of everything impure, absolute freedom from sin and abhorrence of it. But in the Scriptures the word has a more positive and a richer signification: it signifies the perfection and unison of all God's attributes. No quality belonging to a perfect being is absent from His nature; every quality is present in perfect development; and all are in unbroken harmony. This is very nearly the Greek idea of beauty. II. **THE CHURCH OF GOD IS BEAUTIFUL**, and its beauty is derived from the beauty of God: "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." Is not holiness beautiful? Is there anything else so beautiful? I appeal to you who have seen it. Have you ever known any one who was conspicuously holy; who, when he met you, created in you the impression often that he had just come out of the presence of Jehovah, and that the glory of the interview was still lingering about him; whose very look reminded you of God and heaven, and was an undeniable proof of their existence? If you have known such an one, tell me if you have ever seen anything else so beautiful as such a character? It is all beautiful, but there are some elements of holiness that have a quite peculiar attractiveness. Humility is one. What a lovely grace that is, especially when it is united with exceptional position or exceptional gifts! Unselfishness produces the same effect on the beholder, and so does the simplicity of a large manhood. But the beauty of the Church and of the true Christian is not only the beauty of the Lord in the sense of being like His, but also in the sense of being obtained from Him. It is not natural, not derived. It is a beauty which the Lord puts

upon His people; and it is communicated not from without, but from within. (*J. Stalker, D.D.*) *Man's prayer for triumph over time and death*.—I. MAN'S CHARACTER WHEN DIVINELY BEAUTIFIED. The prayer is that the beauty of God should "be upon us." Then we shall remain. Our circumstances will change, our condition alter, our bodily powers decay, but upon us, that is upon something that is the actual, veritable indestructible we, a Divine something may ever rest. The "beauty of God" is that something. "All colours, lines, beauties of visible creation and of the invisible heavens are but dim hints of the ineffable beauty of God," the beauty not of His creation, which is only a partial manifestation of Him, but of His character, which is Himself. This beauty of holiness is the beauty of God. When it clothes, covers, possesses, in a word is "upon" the human character, man is Divinely beautified. 1. What is the nature of this beauty? (1) Manifest. Exquisite variety. (2) Complete. No blemish or defect. (3) Lasting. True character endures. Fever cannot burn out truth, consumption cannot waste away conscience, the axe or the guillotine cannot smite love. When we pray for the beauty of God, then we pray for a character that nothing can consume, or wither, or even enfeeble. 2. What is the method of its attainment? (1) Right relationship with God. God must be our home, the sphere of our thoughts, labours, loves. Reconciled to God; at one with God. (2) The discipline of the past. It was upon Moses, when he was old, that the "beauty of the Lord our God" was to rest. Just as it was upon "Paul the aged" that there gathered the glories of contentment, and peace, and heroism, that lit up his brow as with a diadem from heaven. II. MAN'S WORK WHEN DIVINELY BLESSED. "Establish Thou the work of our hands," etc. Men's works outlive them. This is true in every sphere. The common mason's labour has helped to build houses that will stand long after he has become dust. And in the realms of mind and morals it is still more emphatically so. But man's great triumph, as Moses felt his would be, is in work that God so establishes that generations to come shall be blessed by it. It may have been quiet work. It may have been unseen work, as the hidden under waves of the tide that leave their deep ripples congealed on the sand long after the tossing, breaking surface breakers have been absorbed again in the great sea. Yes, in its results, work done for God and done in God's Spirit is permanent. The results of the work of a reformer, like Luther, or statesman like Hampden, or philanthropist like Howard, are henceforward part and parcel of the moral universe, as truly as the planets are part and parcel of the material. But yet more permanent. They will last throughout eternity. (*Homilist.*) *Spiritual beauty*.—This beauty is—I. VARIED. Faith in Abraham; patience in Job; purity in Joseph; meekness in Moses; earnestness in Paul; love in John; all in Jesus. II. GROWING. Like corn: first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear; like the growth of trees: first the seedling, then the young tree fenced round, then the large tree fully developed, with its beautiful arch reflecting perfectly the great arch of the majestic sky overhead; like light: first the twilight, then the silver dawn gradually growing into the golden splendours of noon. III. UNFADING. Earthly beauty grows until it reaches full bloom, and then it begins to fade. But not so with the beauty of God. It grows brighter and brighter, for ever and ever. Time cannot write its wrinkles; care cannot plough its furrows; disease cannot impress its marks upon any of the features of this beauty; death cannot breathe upon its fadeless bloom. IV. ATTRACTING. Josephus informs us that the babe, Moses, was so remarkable for beauty, that "it happened frequently that those that met him, as he was carried along the road, were obliged to turn again upon seeing the child; that they left what they were about and stood still a great while to look on him." Thus the perfect beauty of childhood is attracting, and in this it is a lovely symbol of spiritual beauty. The beauty of God upon the primitive Church drew the eyes of the heathen toward her, and forced from them the exclamation, "Behold these Christians, how they love one another." The beauty of God upon the disciples caused the people around to wonder, and take "knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." The beauty of God upon the members of the Church has been drawing and assimilating men of all tribes and all ages. And in proportion as her members have this beauty upon them are they successful in making others lovely. V. UNCONSCIOUS. A dutiful daughter watches by the bedside of her dying mother; anticipates her every wish; serves her day and night. How beautiful she is, but she does not know it. So with spiritual beauty (*Ex. xxxiv. 29; Matt. xxv. 37-39*). Thus, like the beauty of stars and rainbows, and flowers, and birds, and children, the beauty of God upon us, not in

crescent fragments, but in full-orbed splendour, is invariably unconscious, until revealed to us by those who gaze upon it. VI. RARE. It is rare as a few flowers amid a garden of weeds; rare as a few pebbles gleaming up out of an ocean of sand; rare as a few star clusters shining on the dark breast of night. It is rare and yet free, rare and yet attainable. Oh, it is wonderful that this beauty should be so uncommon when it is so free! It is universally attainable, for "it is unto all and upon all them that believe." (*John Dunlop.*) *The privilege of believers in knowing God's glory; and the effects of it upon their personal holiness:—*I. THE PRIVILEGE OF ZION'S CHILDREN. II. THE EFFECTS WHICH THE BEAUTY OF THE LORD OUR GOD PRODUCES; it establishes the work of our hands; yea, most certainly the work of our hands shall be established. The privilege mentioned in our text consists of two parts: a vision of the beauty of the Lord, and an appropriation of Him as our God. The means of this vision and appropriation is usually called faith in the Word of God. 1. The work of our personal salvation is a great work, in which every one is concerned to be established. This is the one thing needful; and until we have some assurance of it, we can never be happy. Let us labour; then, to enter into this rest by faith. 2. Another great work every believer will wish to see carried on, and established, is the furtherance of Messiah's kingdom upon earth. "Let Thy kingdom come," he will constantly pray, in the conversion of Jew and Gentile, in the progress of the Gospel at home and abroad. (*R. Frew.*) *Moral beauty:—*1. THIS BEAUTY OF THE LORD OUR GOD WAS ORIGINALLY UPON US,—was the primitive endowment of mankind, our highest and divinest excellence, described by our Creator Himself His own "image." 1. Wisdom and knowledge. 2. Moral purity. 3. Vigour of moral purpose, or rectitude of will. 4. Supreme felicity in the Divine favour. 5. Immortal life. II. THIS BEAUTY, OR MORAL PERFECTION, HAS BEEN LOST. 1. By the fall, or the incipient act of human disobedience against God, moral evil has contaminated the whole of our nature. Sin entered, and in its train soon followed ignorance, error, weakness, guilt, misery and death. 2. The moral beauty of our original nature is utterly lost. If there exist any traces of man's former beauty, they resemble such only as are left behind in the fragments of an edifice, or a city, which a conflagration has destroyed, or an earthquake shaken into ruins. 3. Our moral beauty, so far as relates to ourselves, is irrecoverably lost. III. WHAT GROUND THERE IS FOR HOPING THAT THIS BEAUTY OF THE LORD OUR GOD MAY YET BE RESTORED TO US. 1. We now see this beauty actually restored, in the person of the Son of God in our nature. He is called the second man, the Lord from heaven,—the restorer of the ruins of the first Adam,—by the renovation of the moral nature of all who are in Him,—upon the principle of assimilation to His own moral beauty. 2. The ministry, or dispensation of the Spirit, furnishes another firm support to the hopes of those who are desirous of attaining to the beauty of the Lord their God. The souls whom the Spirit of God renews and adorns after the image of Jesus Christ, shall retain the freshness and the perfection of their new and spiritual beauty for ever; and neither grow old nor grow weary in the felicities of their heavenly state. 3. The promises of the Divine Word are also replete with assurances of the restoration of our fallen nature. 4. The Mediator, Jesus Christ, is now glorified at His Father's right hand in our nature; and has received all power in heaven and on earth,—power directly official and mediatorial, for the purpose of completing those objects that brought Him into our world corporeally. 5. Our hope, if not founded upon the experience of the saints of God, is yet confirmed and illustrated by it; for what we read concerning those in distant ages, and what we have witnessed in our own days,—of the knowledge, holiness, obedience, spirituality, joy and triumph of the Lord's people, that we know is attainable still. And since the attainment of a renewed mind depends upon no gifts of nature, no mysteries of art, no advantages of birth, no endowments of education, no privileges of station or rank, but entirely upon Divine grace, every anxious, humble, wrestling heart may indulge the joyous hope of receiving the blessing. IV. WHAT MEANS MIGHT BE USED BY US TO PROMOTE THIS DESIRABLE AND GLORIOUS CONSUMMATION, THE ATTAINMENT OF MORAL PERFECTION, FELICITY, AND IMMORTALITY. 1. The text sets before you by example, the important, all-important exercise and means of prayer. 2. There must be diligent attention to the Word of God, and faith in it. This is the celestial mirror both of truth and beauty; the very exact, identical reflection or image of all that we are required both to be and to do; not a broken fragment, as the heathens fabled in their classic story of the natural mirror of truth, first given perfect into the hand of man, but afterwards dashed to the ground, and pieces only of which can now be gathered up and fitted together with

much skill and infinite labour by the wisest of the sons of men; but that mirror of truth which we possess is perfect and entire,—the mirror of the Divine mind, most pure, perfect, and unsullied. Into this law of liberty we must daily look, not as "a natural man beholding his face in a glass," but coming thereto and continuing therein, that we may be changed, and till we are "changed, into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." (*G. Bedford, D.D.*) *Beauty from Christ*:—Modern science teaches us that the crimson colour of a rose is not in the rose itself, but consists alone in the flower's property of picking out, and reflecting back the crimson ray that mingles in the sun's white light. And this applies to flowers of every hue. Their beauty is not their own; it is wholly due to the colours which emanate from the sun itself. So it is equally true of the believer. He has no grace of beauty in himself, but all his purity of thought and life, like the beauty of the flowers, is drawn from the Sun of Righteousness. In Christ he is "fair as the splendid, flower-embroidered hangings of Judah's royal palace." (*R. Venting.*) *Work made beautiful*:—A pathetic story is told of Professor Herkomer, the famous authority on art. His aged father, who lived with him in his beautiful home at Bushey, Herts., used to model in clay in his early life. Later, when he had nothing definite to do, he took to it again; but his constant fear was that his work would show the marks of imperfection. At night he would go to rest early, and then his talented son would take up his father's feeble attempts and make the work as beautiful as he well knows how. When the old man came down in the morning he would go to see the work, and say, with evident satisfaction, "Ha! I can do as well as ever I did!" May we not believe that the hands of Divine Love will thus make beautiful our feeble work for God till it shall bear the light of day, and be perfect to all eternity! (*F. B. Meyer.*)

PSALM XCI.

VERS. 1-16. He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.—*A song of faith*:—I. THE SOLITARY VOICE OF FAITH. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High"—how high up that "secret place" must be; how deep the silence up there; how pure the air! How far above the poisonous mists that cling to the low-lying swamps; how far out of the reach of the arrows or shots of the foeman, is he that dwelleth with God by communion, by constancy of desire, by aspiration, and by clear recognition of the Divine goal of all his work! "He that dwelleth" thus, "in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty"—and since He is Almighty the long shadow that that great rock casts will shelter him who keeps beneath it from the burning rays of the fiery sunshine, in every "weary land." Let me keep myself in touch with God, and I keep myself master of all things, and secure from the evil that is in evil. II. THE GREAT ASSURANCES WHICH ANSWER TO THIS SOLITARY VOICE OF FAITH. Now, is it true, as the psalmist goes on to portray under a double figure of battle and pestilence, that the man who thus trusts is saved from widespread calamities which may be devastating the lines of a community? If we look on the surface it is not true. Those that "dwell in the secret place of the Most High" will die of an epidemic—cholera, or smallpox—like the men beside them that have no such abode. But, for all that, it is true! For suppose two men, one a Christian, another not, both dying from the same epidemic. Yet the difference between the two is such that we may confidently say of the one, "He that believeth shall never die," and of the other that he has died. It is irrelevant to talk about vaccination being a better prophylactic than faith. No doubt this psalmist was thinking mainly of physical life. No doubt, also, you and I have better means of interpreting and understanding Providence and its dealings than he had. And for us the belief that they who "dwell in the secret place of the Most High" are immune from death, is possible and imperative, after a fashion far nobler and better than the psalmist could have dreamed. We must remember Old Testament conditions when we read Old Testament promises, and apply New Testament interpretations to Old Testament assurances. When we read, "there shall no evil befall thee," and think of our own harassed, tempest-tossed, often sorrowful lives, and broken, solitary hearts, we must learn that the

evil that educates is not evil, and that the chastening of the Father's hand is good; and that nothing that brings a man nearer to God can be an enemy. The poison is wiped off the arrow, though the arrow may mercifully wound; and the evil in the evil is all dissipated. III. A DEEPER voice still coming in, and confirming the enlarging all these promises. God Himself speaks, promising deliverance consequent upon fixed love. "Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him." As the word in the original suggests, when a poor man presses himself close up against the Divine breast, as a dog might against his master's limbs, or one that loves might clasp close to himself the beloved, then God responds to the desire for close contact, and in union He brings deliverance. Further, He promises elevation consequent on acquaintance with Divine character. "I will set him on high"—high above all the weltering flood of evil that washes vainly round the base of the cliff—"because he hath known My name." Loving acquaintance with the revealed character of God lifts a man above earth and all its ills. Further, there is the promise of Divine companionship consequent on sorrows. "I will be with him in trouble." Some of us know what that means, how we never get a glimpse of God until earth was dark, and how when a devastating flood as it seemed came sweeping over the fair gardens of our lives; we found, when it had gone back, that it had left fertility that we knew nothing about before. "With long life will I satisfy him," through the ages of eternity, and "show him My salvation" in the glories of an immortal life. (A. Maclaren, D.D.) *The special providence of God*:—Rarely, if anywhere, has faith made so complete a shield of God, or planted itself so firmly within the circle of His defence. No wonder we find this psalm called in the Talmud a "Song of Accidents," that is, a talisman or prophylactic in times of danger. And no wonder the ancient Church used it as its "Invocavit," to rally and encourage the hearts of the faithful in troublous and stormy times. The question is, How are we to understand it? Is it true? Can a man, because he is a Christian, and fears God, count upon such immunity as is here described? Does he lead a sort of charmed life, clothed with impenetrable armour, which no shaft of pestilence can pierce, so that while thousands or tens of thousands may fall at his right hand, he shall never be touched? We know that it is not so. Is there, then, any way in which we can interpret it, so as to use it with intelligence and profit to ourselves? I. THE DIFFICULTY WE FEEL IN CONNECTION WITH THE PSALM IS NOT THAT IT ASSUMES A SPECIAL PROVIDENCE, AS WE CALL IT. This is taught everywhere in Scripture. It is difficult, indeed, to see how there can be any providence at all if it does not condescend to particulars, and take the individual, as well as the community or the race, into account. In the Old Testament its primary concern is with Israel as a people, and with the individual only in a subordinate and secondary degree. In the New Testament the individual is more distinctly and definitely an object of Divine regard. He, and the community of which he forms a part, are equally essential to one another, and that because the Church is not moved and governed from without, but from within; and such a government is impossible, except by the indwelling of the Spirit of God in the heart of each individual believer. II. THE DIFFICULTY WHICH MEETS US HERE, THEN, IS NOT THAT OF A SPECIAL PROVIDENCE, BUT OF THE MANNER IN WHICH IT IS SAID TO ACT. 1. In the Old Testament the Divine providence was specially concerned in so guiding and controlling the history of Israel, that in it as a nation the kingdom of God, or of the Messiah, should be realized. He was to judge the world with righteousness, and the poor with judgment. His reign was to be an era of peace and prosperity which should know no end. Those who were to be more immediately about Him, and to occupy the chief places of honour and authority, were to be His own people, to whom in a special sense He belonged. And round them, in ever-widening and more distant circles, were to be the other inhabitants of earth, all under the sway of the same benignant sceptre. 2. In the New Testament the point of view is entirely different. Religion is not embodied in a national history, nor is the kingdom of God an earthly kingdom, as even the disciples believed it would be up to the Day of Pentecost. Its essential characteristics are spiritual—righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. What made the difference? It was the Cross of Christ. On this stone of offence Israel had stumbled, and been broken in pieces. The kingdom of God was henceforth to appear under altered conditions. The old things having passed away, all things became new. And on this new creation was the impress of the Cross. And how had the Cross so transformed the whole spiritual outlook and hopes of men? It had shown that the greatest evil was sin, and that the

righteousness which was to characterize the kingdom of the Messiah could only be reached by atonement. Henceforward the great evil to be shunned was not poverty, nor hardship, but that which all along had arrayed itself against Him, and finally had nailed Him to the tree. Henceforth the greatest blessing to be gained was to have His spirit of disinterested and generous self-sacrifice. But the Cross of Jesus was more than the altar of expiation, more than the revelation of a love that passeth knowledge. It was also the consummation of His own experience, the perfecting of His humanity. But the sacrifice of the Cross, it may be said, was voluntarily borne. And though Christians must be ready to suffer for the truth, and to lighten the world's burden, by bearing it as Christ did, may they not expect to be delivered from those evils which are neither imposed by loyalty to the Gospel, nor assumed for the good of others? Have they no right to look for special protection in times of famine or pestilence; or does God send these indiscriminately on the evil and the good, just as He sends the sunshine and the rain? Undoubtedly He does, and Christians have no right to look for immunity from the ills that are the common lot of men. Inasmuch as they are still a part of a sinful humanity, they must share in the judgments which may come upon it. But does a Christian, then, derive no advantage from his Christianity in such visitations? By no means. For he has placed himself under God's care, who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, and who cannot allow His servant to suffer, simply because He will not take the trouble to save him, or grudges what the effort might cost. Moreover, he is persuaded that God is acquainted with every particular connected with his trial, the very hairs of his head being all numbered, and that if He chose He could secure his absolute safety. And what reconciles him to the fact that God does not choose? What but the conviction that there is thus to come to him a larger blessing than he would otherwise receive? (*C. Moinet, M.A.*) *God's secret and shadow*.—I. THE POSITION INDICATED. 1. The place. We are to enter and to abide in the secret of God. (1) God's Word has its secret. There are some who read it through chapter by chapter, who have a large amount of superficial biblical knowledge, but who know comparatively nothing of its grand, glorious, momentous secrets. There are others who so read it that they grasp the real meaning, the grand spiritual realities that underlie its utterances; they so read it that they catch the very spirit of its Divine Author, so that the views formed and the feelings kindled towards the subject of which it treats, are the same as God's. Such may be said to enter into the secret of God, or into "the secret place of the Most High." (2) Communion with God has its secret. There are some who say their prayers very regularly and very devoutly. So far as outward decorum and forms of speech are concerned, they are faultless. But communion with God there is none. There are others whose communion with Heaven is a sublime reality. The very presence of the Heavenly Father is consciously enjoyed. (3) The love of God has its secret. There are some, and we fear professing Christians too, whose feelings towards God are those of polite reserve. They know nothing of living in the love of God. But there are others who get into His very heart. They are children. (4) The purpose of God has its secret. There are some who feel little or no interest in that which lies close to God's heart, engages His profoundest sympathies, and employs His untiring energies. They have never entered into that purpose, never felt its vital importance, never conceived its glorious design. Never seriously considered whether by their lives and actions they were co-operating with God, or opposing Him. But there are others who have so closely identified themselves with God's purpose that it is the great centre to which every line of thought, of feeling, of intention, and of sympathy converges. 2. The attitude. "He that dwelleth." To dwell means a fixed, settled, habitual mode of life. It must be so with our conduct in reference to God's Word, God's friendship, God's love, and God's purpose. We must dwell in them, live in them. We must ask for no holiday, no leave of absence, there must be no departure. 3. How attained. How can we reach and take up our abode in this the very heart of God? Christ supplies the answer, "I am the way," etc. II. THE BLESSING ENJOYED. 1. We have indicated what it is to dwell in the secret place of God's Word. With minds thus furnished and filled we are under their protection. The world's thoughts, and ideas, and principles of things may assail us, but they cannot do much with us; we know better; we have received a higher education, our minds are fortified with God's thoughts, guarded with God's ideas, protected with God's principles. 2. We have indicated what it is to dwell in the secret place of God's communion.

In that position we get our whole nature animated with holy impulses, sympathies, tastes, and dispositions. We get our whole nature magnetized with the nature of God. With our whole nature thus infused, fired, animated, and magnetized with the very impulses and inspirations of God's nature, we are under their protection. We are lifted into a higher sphere of life. 8. We have indicated what it is to dwell in the secret place of God's love. In that position we get our best, strongest, and supreme affections impregnated with the love of God. We live under its shadow and protection. By its high and holy and potent influence we are preserved from the love of low, base, temporal, inferior things. 4. We have indicated what it is to dwell in the secret place of God's purpose. In that position our energies, our sympathies, our interests, our intentions, and our pursuits are all enlisted and engaged in co-operating with God in bringing about the desire of His heart and the great pleasure of His will. In our labours and toils, our efforts and struggles to destroy sin and to establish holiness, whether it be in our own hearts, in the lives and conduct of our children, or in the spirit and practice of the world, we are under the protection and shadow of the Most High, because we are identified with God's purpose. (*B. Pierce.*) *The believer safely dwelling in God*:—I. **THE PLACE** the psalmist has in mind. Intercourse and communion with the God that made us is not, as some represent, a fallacy. You may describe it as an idle thing; and so might the blind man say of the light of this glorious sun, and so might the deaf man say of music. But the thing is real; and your doubts of its reality lie in this—you want the discerning faculty. You want to be brought into contact with your God. II. **THE CONDUCT OF THE BELIEVER**. Strip the text of metaphor, and this "dwelling" in God is only another term for trusting God. Try your confidence by these two tests. Is it an habitual, everyday confidence? Did it lead you yesterday, the day before, and the day before that—has it led you to-day—to cast yourselves on the Lord? Is it a habit of faith? And then—is it grounded on the blood of the Lord Jesus? Is it a confidence in a reconciling, pardoning, redeeming God? III. **THE BLESSING WHICH THE BELIEVER FINDS IN THE HABITATION HE DWELLS IN**. This is expressed in almost the same terms in which his conduct is expressed. He "dwells in the secret place of the Most High"; that is his conduct. He "shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty"; that is his privilege. Make God your refuge, and He will be your refuge; take Him as your habitation, and He will be your habitation; seek shelter in Him, and He will shelter you; go to Him for refreshment, and He will refresh you; delight thyself in Him, and He will give thee the desires of thy heart. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *A home in Christ*:—The psalmist has been pierced with the shafts of unkindness, yet he speaks of what he seems perfectly sure when he speaks of his dwelling in the secret place of the Most High, and abiding under the shadow of the Almighty. What is more sweet than this promise? I. **THE SECRET PLACE**. 1. Some think the secret here spoken of is that intimacy of fellowship which God's children enjoy in communion with Him. 2. Others think it has a more definite or special meaning. To my mind it is certain that the secret spoken of contains a promise and an expectation of the coming Messiah. The Wonderful, named in Isa. ix., is in the margin rendered "secret." So, in the text, the word rendered secret is connected with the Messiah; then the Christian's hiding-place is in Christ. II. **DWELLING IN THIS SECRET PLACE**. He that dwelleth, he who has a home, in Christ shall abide in the shadow of the Almighty. Every congregation might be divided into those who make their home in the world and visit Christ, and those who have their home in Christ and visit the world. A home in Christ. Oh, wondrous thought! The psalmist speaks of God as a refuge, a home, an abiding-place. John says, We dwell in Him and He in us. He is in all we have, all we are, and all we hope to be or hope for. You might as well undertake to describe a sunset to the blind or music to the deaf, as to talk of dwelling in Christ to one who has never tasted of the graciousness of the Lord. No man knows this but he who is already in Christ. III. **THE PROMISE**. He shall abide, etc. When God's love makes a promise, His sovereignty secures its fulfilment. He shall abide in the shadow of the Almighty. 1. In that shadow the Christian finds protection. We may live and die in its shadow. It is always the same, yesterday, to-day and for ever. 2. There is also refreshment in this shadow. He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High has a perfect home, complete in all that can contribute to its safety, rest, and perfectness. Oh, make the experiment! (*J. A. M. Chapman, D.D.*) *God our dwelling, and in our dwelling*:—Where is the secret place of the Most High? We can find it by two spiritual lines of measurement, as by latitude

and longitude at sea. The longitude, we will say, is the omnipresence of God. All do not practically believe that God is everywhere. Many will acknowledge this in words, while they have no realizing sense of it which makes it of practical value. To know the longitude at sea would be of little use without another element in the calculation, the latitude; as to know the latitude without the longitude leaves the mariner bewildered. Frequently a passing ship will set her signals to inquire of another ship, What is your longitude? though the latitude may have been determined by the sun at noon. Hence the other element of measure to find the secret place of the Most High, though we know Him to be everywhere, is a praying heart. It is interesting to know that the place here mentioned is not confined to one spot. A man may always live under the same tent; the place where he eats and sleeps will always be a secret place to him; yet the tents may be movable, sometimes in a valley, then on the side of a hill; then upon the hill top. So the secret place of the Most High is movable. As there is no latitude at the poles, no longitude at Greenwich, because longitude is the distance east or west from Greenwich and latitude is the distance from either pole, this represents that which heaven will be to us, where there are no seeming distances from God; for we shall no more walk by faith but by continual sight. But on earth, in all our journeyings toward heaven, we have constant need to find the secret place of the Most High, that is, a place of communion with God. The promise in the text is to such as make praying their breath; who hold continued communion with God, referring all things to Him as their fixed habit; breathing out love, adoration, confession, supplication, more intimately than they commune with the dearest friend. The promise is that they shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. This may signify—1. Nearness. A child walking with you abides under your shadow; you are never far from him, you keep him in sight, within reach. 2. Protection. We cannot estimate the benefit of frequent prayer. (N. Adams, D.D.) *The secret of the Most High*:—We have here two distinct aspects of the one life in their living relations with one another. The first clause furnishes the living reason for the second; while the second is the necessary complement of the first. The luxuriance of the figures which the psalmist employs is due to the exuberance of a profound faith that has mastered all difficulties and contradiction, and dares to assert to the utmost possibilities of language the perfect security of those that dwell in the secret of the Most High. We are here in truth at the very highest point of pre-Christian revelation with regard to man's spiritual relation to God, and it would be difficult even now to express the truth in question more grandly and truly than it is here expressed. I. THE SECRET OF THE TRUE LIFE. There is something inspiringly grand in the conception here offered, that the secret of man's truest and noblest life is identical with the secret of the Most High. The brute may find its life in the relations of the visible and temporal. But it is precisely in this that man is essentially different from the brute. He is not true man until he occupies the eternal standpoint; he does not begin to live until he has the vision of God. When man finds God's secret place, he finds the place of eternal calm. 1. Such a life is marked by "inwardness." In finding the secret of the Most High, man finds his most inward self. He enters into the inner temple of spirit, and feels the throb of life at its deepest point where it reveals its affinity to the essential life of God. 2. Again, to dwell in the secret of the Most High is to know God and be in fellowship with Him. By knowing God I do not mean an intellectual belief in His existence or a correct conception of His nature and attributes. I mean by it the direct consciousness of His presence. The life enters into the inner realm where God is seen, and gazes upon the glorious vision. 3. Such a life will be actuated and inspired by the highest ideals of service. Those that stand in the presence of God are of necessity "ministers of His that do His pleasure." Those that truly walk with God will walk like God. II. THE SECURITY OF THE TRUE LIFE. There are three stages. 1. In the first (vers. 1-8), the idea of temporal security predominates. The man of God is immortal until his work is done. 2. In the second stage (vers. 9-13), the figures used are more suggestive of spiritual or quasi-spiritual foes. 3. The next and last stage (vers. 14-16), leads us from security and victory to honour and glorification. The relation between the victorious man and God grows wondrously near; it is a relation of mutual knowledge and of mutual love. The language grows indefinite, the glory gathers in nebulous suggestion of a dazzling beyond, the godly man becomes transfigured before us, and a cloud receives him out of our sight. (John Thomas, M.A.) *The secret of His presence*:—There is some-

thing about the word "shadow" that always interests, for there never has been a shadow without the light; thus the "secret place" must be a place of brightness. It is a place where God is, for the nearest of all things to me in the sunlight as I journey is my shadow, and he who walks in my shadow or rests in it must be very near to me, so that when I am in the shadow of God I can reach forth my hand and touch Him; I can lift up mine eyes and see Him face to face. I know there is a sense in which God is always near us; He is in all things and He is everywhere; but there is something about the "secret of His presence" to which every one is a stranger until he has dwelt there. I. THE TYPICAL REFERENCE must be to the holy place of the tabernacle, which the priests were privileged to enter; but Peter assures us that we have become in this new dispensation "a holy priesthood," so that it is possible for us to enter on that ground. For in the tabernacle just beyond the veil was a glory cloud, and all the magnificence that could be wrought in gold and silver, purple and fine linen; but I am persuaded that even that was as nothing when compared to that which awaits us when we enter the secret place of God. II. It would be impossible for one to read the verses immediately following the text without being impressed with the fact that THE MOST REMARKABLE RESULTS WILL FOLLOW OUR ABIDING AND DWELLING IN THE "SECRET PLACE." 1. In the "secret place" there is peace. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," our Master said, "but in Me ye shall have peace." I have read that a certain insect has the power to surround itself with a film of air, encompassed in which it drops into the midst of muddy, stagnant pools, and remains unharmed. And the believer may be thus surrounded by the atmosphere of God, and while he is in the midst of the turmoils of the world he may be filled to overflowing with the peace of God, because God is with him. This is true whatever your occupation, if it is ever so menial. The Rev. F. B. Meyer tells us of Lawrence, the simple-minded cook, who said that "for more than sixty years he had never lost the sense of the presence of God, but was as conscious of it while performing the duties of his humble office as when partaking of the Lord's Supper." What peace he must have had. 2. In the "secret place" there is purity. I suppose we might have been with Jacob when in his dream he saw the heavens opened and beheld the angels going up and coming down and heard the voice of God, and we should only have seen the dreary mountains round about. I doubt not but that we might have been with Paul when he was caught up to the third heaven, and we should have seen nothing but the humble surroundings of his tent; and I doubt not but that if Paul were here he would see God here this morning, and he would have walked on the street with Him yesterday. Is not the trouble with ourselves instead of our surroundings or our times? Every permitted sin encrusts the windows of the soul and blinds our vision. And every victory over evil clears the vision of the soul, and we can see Him a little plainer. 3. In the "secret place" there is power. There can be no effective service that is not the outcome of communion. Our Lord's Day precedes the week of work, and this is always the plan of God. That wonderful fifteenth chapter of John is founded on that idea. We must abide first, and after that we cannot help but bear fruit. Oh that we might be so near to Him that we should be magnetized and charged with a spiritual force that the world can neither gainsay nor resist. III. HOW MAY I ENTER INTO THIS "SECRET PLACE"? Cannot something be said that will make the way plain? It can all be summed up in this answer. None can "know the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him." Jesus Christ said, "I am the way, I am the door, by Me, if any man will, he shall enter in." There are some places in the Bible where the way seems plain. "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood dwelleth in Me and I in him." (J. W. Chapman, D.D.) *Abiding in God*.—Mr. Meyer says, "The sun says to the little earth planet, Abide in me. Resist the temptation to fly into space; remain in the solar sphere, and I will abide in the formation of thy rocks, the verdure of thy vegetation, and of all living things, baptizing them in my fire." "Abide in me," says the ocean to the alcove, that shows symptoms of division from its waves. "Keep thy channel unsilted and open, and I will pour my fulness up to thy furthest shore twice in every twenty-four hours." Abide in me. The vine says it to the branch, that it may impart supplies of life and fruit; the air says it to the lung, that it may minister ozone and oxygen to its cells; the magnet says it to the needle, that it may communicate its own specific quality, and fit it to guide across the ocean the mighty steamer, laden with the freight of human life.

Ver. 2. **I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust.**—*The soul's experience of God*:—I. A SOUL'S EXPERIENCE OF GOD. The humblest child of God has as great a weapon forged for his defence of spiritual truths as has the most learned: they each have an experience of God, and that is a weapon which can never be blunted by any intellectual parrying. II. THE WEALTH OF SUCH A SOUL-EXPERIENCE OF GOD. 1. He is my refuge—from trouble, sorrow, despair. 2. He is my fortress. The forces arrayed against the soul are not merely powers which need to be coerced if they are to yield their best, but some of the forces are in antagonistic opposition to the soul. At such times as these, what a fortress was to the people of ancient days—a place of secure defence—so God was to the psalmist. 3. He is my God. This is an advance upon the other two utterances. It is a grand thing to be able to say of any one, "He is my refuge." It is a better thing to be able to say, "He is my fortress, my protector." But it is the acme of happy experience to say, "He is my friend, my companion, my confidant." III. THE RESULT OF HIS SOUL-EXPERIENCE OF GOD. "In Him will I trust!" Trust, or faith in God, is the experiment of the soul in spiritual things, and the only way to a fuller knowledge and a more blessed experience. No longer need the scientist sneer at the faith, the experiment of the Christian, for the man who trusts God in all the circumstances of life is as rational, and proceeds from as rational a basis, as the scientist who, starting from the known, goes on by experiment to discover the unknown. Let your experience of God, of the Christ, of the Holy Spirit, never alter, except to be enlarged, purified, and intensified. This is the will of God concerning you. What are you to do in order to obtain that better experience? Why, this: you must experiment with God—"In Him will I trust"—along the lines He shall reveal. (*W. A. Todd.*) **My God.—My God.**—To try and preach from this text is like trying to carry honey in your hands. Ere you can reach your friends to whom you would give it, you will find that a large part of it has oozed out between your fingers: or that you failed to convey to others what was so delicious to yourself. My text has been to my own heart sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. Have you been in the Alps, or in some other region where the scenery is peculiarly impressive, and where you have witnessed some transcendently beautiful and sublime view, have you tried to tell your friends what you have seen? How utterly you have failed, your words are all inadequate to give them any satisfactory idea of the glorious spectacle you have seen. Now, the unspeakable beauty of these two words is such that I feel I cannot fully convey it to you. I have seen in these two words such a wonderful display of the Lord's condescension, of His favour to His chosen, and of the intense delight which springs therefrom, that I feel all incompetent to set it forth to you. However, may God the Holy Spirit give His help, and our meditation shall be sweet. Think—I. OF THESE TWO WORDS TOGETHER. Now, to get at them, let us think of some of the special occasions in which God's children have used them and have said, "My God." 1. This is the young convert's early confession. See Ruth's word to Naomi—"thy God, my God." 2. The statement of the Christian belief. There is one creed and confession of faith. See Thomas—"My Lord and my God." 3. They have often been used to declare the determination of the believer when he has been surrounded by opponents and persecutors. See old Micaiah when the false priests were around him. "As the Lord my God liveth." 4. They express the secret vow of the believer as he consecrates himself to the Most High. See Jacob at Bethel—"then shall the Lord be my God." 5. They have been the deepest possible comfort to children of God in times of terrible trouble. See our Lord upon the cross, when all the waves and billows of judgment were going over His soul—"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" 6. And in times of great deliverance. Hear Miriam's song—"He is my God and I will exalt Him." Daniel to Darius—"My God hath sent His angel," etc. May these words be the frequent language of our lips. II. THE FIRST WORD, "MY." "My God." How can I call God mine? How can I call that mine which I cannot even conceive? If my thoughts cannot compass it, my heart shall possess it. Love possesses what reason cannot even look upon. But this daring appropriation means—1. That I own God to be my God. 2. That I do personally recognize him. He is not a god in cloudland to us; He is intensely real and true. 3. That we have come into personal relations with Him, and—4. That we have appropriated Him to ourselves. III. THE LAST WORD, "God"—what does it mean? But that is more than I can answer. There is no defining the Incom-

prehensible One. Yet we can call Him "My God." But reflect upon His being near as to—1. His nature, His person, His essence. 2. His attributes. 3. In what He has done I do not know, but I seem to myself to have talked away and to have missed my aim and object altogether, compared with what I have felt in meditating in private upon these dear and blessed words, "My God." It is a deep well, but the water is cool and sweet if you can draw it up. "My God"—there is more than satisfaction in the words. If you have no money, never mind; you are rich if you can say, "My God." If the husband is buried, if the children have gone home to heaven, do not despair, thy Maker is thy husband, if you can cry, "My God." If your friends have forsaken you, if the unkindnesses of men drive you to say, "My God," you will be a gainer by them. Anything which weans from earth and leads to heaven is good. I saw yesterday a park in which they were felling all the trees, and yet there were the poor crows building on elms that were marked to be cut down. I thought to myself, "You foolish birds to be building your nests there, for the woodman's axe is ringing all around, and the tall elms are tumbling to the ground." We are all apt to build our nests in trees that will be cut down. We get to love the creature, and to say, "My this," and "My that," and from this weakness our sharpest sorrows arise. If you build nowhere but on the tree of life, which can never be felled, your happiness will be eternal. For this you must be able to say, "My God." (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 3. Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.—*The snare of the fowler*:—A very comforting text to all believers, when beset by temptation. I. THE SNARE OF THE FOWLER. 1. It is intimately connected with secrecy (Prov. i. 17). Many a man has been entrapped into sin by Satan, not knowing that it was evil! Some one has hinted to him in business, for instance, "You may very safely do such-and-such a thing; all the shopkeepers in the street have done it; it is not actually dishonest; it improves the article; and although you can thus sell an article at a dearer rate than you ought to sell it, yet you need not tell the public; and if the article is all the better for it, it is quite fair and safe that you should adulterate it." And so the good easy man, not opening both his eyes, I think, but shutting one of them a little, lest he should see too well to be able to fill his pockets in the dark, is a little taken aside; and by and by he is led to discover that the act which he has done is the taking of him in the snare of the fowler, for he has been sinning against his God, and his God therefore punishes him for it with many stripes, and lays his rod upon him. 2. It is generally noted for its adaptation. A cunning enemy we have to deal with; he knows our weak points; he has been dealing with men for these last six thousand years; he knows all about them. He is possessed of a gigantic intellect, though he be a fallen spirit; and he is easily able to discover where our sore places are, and there it is he immediately attacks us. If we be like Achilles, and cannot be wounded anywhere but in our heel, then at the heel he will send his dart, and nowhere else. He will find out our easily besetting sin, and there, if he can, he will attempt to work our ruin and our destruction. Let us bless God that it is written, "Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler." 3. It is frequently connected with pleasure, profit, and advantage. Cleopatra's asp was introduced in a basket of flowers; so are sins often brought to us in the flowers of our pleasures. Satan offers to the drunkard the sweetness of the intoxicating cup, which rejoices him, when his brain is rioting in frolic, and when his soul is lifted up within him. He offers to the lustful man the scenes and pleasures of carnal mirth, and merriment, and delight, and so he leadeth him astray with the bait, concealing the hook which afterwards shall pain him. Let us remember that the snare of the fowler is generally connected with some pretended pleasure or profit, but that Satan's end is not our pleasing, but our destruction. 4. Sometimes the fowler very wisely employs the force of example. We all know the influence of the decoy-duck, in endeavouring to bring others into the snare. How very often Satan, the fowler, employs a decoy to lead God's people into sin! You get with a man; you think him to be a true Christian; you have some respect for his character; he is a high professor, can talk religion by the yard, and can give you any quantity of theology you like to ask for. You see him commit a sin; ten to one but you will do the same, if you have much respect for him; and so he will lead you on. And mark, Satan is very careful in the men whom he chooses to be decoys. If he wants his errand well done, he sends one to me whom I call brother; and so through the brotherhood of

profession I am apt to give him credence and pay him respect; and then if he goeth astray the force of example is very powerful, and so I may easily be led into the net too. Take care of your best friends; be careful of your companions. Choose the best you can; then follow them no farther than they follow Christ. Let your course be entirely independent of every one else. II. *THE DELIVERANCE.* Two thoughts here: from—out of. First, He delivers them from the snare—does not let them get in it; secondly, when they do get in it He delivers them out of it. The first promise is the most precious to some of us; the second is the best to others. 1. He shall deliver thee from the snare. How does He do that? (1) Very often by trouble. I doubt not, many of you have been saved from ruin by your sorrows, your griefs, your troubles, your woes, your losses, and your crosses. All these have been the breaking of the net that set you free from the snare of the fowler. (2) At other times God keeps His people from the sin of the fowler by giving them great spiritual strength, a spirit of great courage; so that when they are tempted to do evil they say, with decision, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" 2. God delivers His people, even when they get into the snare. Alas! you and I know something about the net; we have not only seen it spread, we have been in its folds. We know something about the cage, for we have, unfortunately, been in the cage ourselves, even since we have known the Lord. The fowler's hand has been upon our neck; it has only been the sovereign grace of God that has prevented him from utterly destroying us. Poor Christian and Hopeful got into the fowler's net when they entered into the castle of Giant Despair; but the key of promise picked the lock, and they escaped. They were in the fowler's net, too, when Flatterer cast a net over them, and left them in the lane; but there came one who, after he had beaten them full sore, took the net off, and they went on their way, better men than before. O backslider, be cast down, but do not despair; God will restore thee yet. III. "*SURELY.*" The assurance of every truth of Scripture is just the beauty of it. Now, it says "surely He shall deliver thee." Why? First because He has promised to do it; and God's promises are bonds that never yet were dishonoured. Secondly, because Christ Jesus hath taken an oath that He will do it. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 4. *He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust.*—*The covering wing:*—There is here a very distinct triad of thoughts. There is the covering wing; there is the flight to its protection; and there is the warrant for that flight. "He shall cover thee with His pinions"; that is the Divine act. "Under His wings shalt thou trust"; that is the human condition. "His truth shall be thy shield and buckler"; that is the Divine manifestation which makes the human condition possible. I. *THE COVERING WING.* The main idea in this image is that of the expanded pinion, beneath the shelter of which the callow young lie, and are gathered. Whatsoever kites may be in the sky, whatsoever stoats and weasels may be in the hedges, they are safe there. The image suggests not only the thought of protection but those of fostering, downy warmth, peaceful proximity to a heart that throbs with parental love, and a multitude of other happy privileges realized by those who nestle beneath that wing. If we have felt a difficulty, as I suppose we all have sometimes, and are ready to say with the half-despondent psalmist, "My feet were almost gone, and my steps had well-nigh slipped"; when we see what we think the complicated mysteries of the Divine providence in this world, we have to come to this belief that the evil that is in the evil will never come near the man sheltered beneath God's wing. The physical external event may be entirely the same to him as to another, who is not covered with His feathers. Here are two partners in a business, the one a Christian man, and the other is not. A common disaster overwhelms them. They become bankrupts. Is their insolvency to the one the same as it is to the other? Here are two men on board a ship, the one putting his trust in God, the other thinking it all nonsense to trust anything but himself. They are both drowned. Is drowning the same to the two? As their corpses lie side by side among the ooze, with the weeds over them, and the lobsters at them, you may say of the one, but only of the one, "There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling." For the protection that is granted to faith is only to be understood by faith. The poison is all wiped off the arrow by that Divine protection. It may still wound, but it does not putrefy the flesh. The sewage water comes down, but it passes into the filtering bed, and is disinfected and cleansed before it is permitted to flow over our fields. II. *THE FLIGHT OF THE*

SHELTERLESS TO THE SHELTER. "Under His wings shalt thou flee to a refuge." Is not that a vivid, intense, picturesque, but most illuminative way of telling us what is the very essence, and what is the urgency, and what is the worth, of what we call faith? There are plenty of men that know all about the security of the Refuge, and believe it utterly, but never run for it; and so never get into it. Faith is the gathering up of the whole powers of the nature to fling myself into an Asylum, to cast myself into God's arms, to take shelter beneath the shadow of His wings. And unless a man does that, and swiftly, he is exposed to every bird of prey in the sky, and to every beast of prey lurking in wait for him. The metaphor tells us, too, what are the limits and the worth of faith. A man is not saved because he believes that he is saved, but because by believing he lays hold of the salvation. The power of faith is but that it brings me into contact with God, and sets me behind the seven-fold bastions of the Almighty protection.

III. THE WARRANT FOR THIS FLIGHT. "His truth shall be thy shield." Now, "truth" here does not mean the body of revealed words, which are often called God's truth, but it describes a certain characteristic of the Divine nature. And if, instead of "truth," we read the good old English word "troth," we should be a great deal nearer understanding what the psalmist meant. You cannot trust a God that has not given you an inkling of His character or disposition, but if He has spoken then "you know where to have Him." That is just what the psalmist means. How can a man be encouraged to fly into a refuge unless he is absolutely sure that there is an entrance for him into it, and that, entering, he is safe? And that security is provided in the great thought of God's troth. "Thy faithfulness is like the great mountains." "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord; or to Thy faithfulness round about Thee?" That faithfulness shall be our "shield," not a tiny targe that a man could bear upon his left arm, but the word means the large shield, planted in the ground in front of the soldier, covering him, however hot the fight; and circling him around, like a tower of iron. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Safe shelter:—The Lord here compares Himself to a hen covering her brood, and He speaks not only of the wing, which gives shelter, but He enters into detail, and speaks of the feathers, which give warmth, and comfort, and repose.

I. WHEN MAY THIS TEXT BE RELIED UPON BY A BELIEVER? 1. In cases of extreme peril. (1) Public calamity. (2) Domestic grief. (3) Personal danger. 2. But texts of Scripture like this are not made to be hung up on the nail and only taken down now and then in stress of weather. Blessed be God, the promise before us is available for sunny days, yea, for every hour of this mortal life. You always need protection, and, believer in Christ, you shall always have it. 3. In times of temptation. 4. In times of expected trials. Many a true servant of God has said to himself, "What shall I do when I get old? I am just able now to pick up a living, but what shall I do when these withered limbs can no longer avail to earn my daily bread?" Do? Why, you will have the same Father then as you have now to succour you, and you will have the same Providence then as now to supply your wants. You thank God for your daily bread now, and you shall have your daily bread then, for He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust. 5. In the hour of death.

II. HOW MAY WE EXPECT THE TEXT TO BE FULFILLED? 1. It may possibly be verified to us by our being preserved altogether from the danger which we dread. God has often, as predicted in the present psalm, in times of pestilence, and famine, and war, preserved His people by remarkable providences. Strong faith has always a particular immunity in times of trouble. When a man has really, under a sense of duty, under a conscientious conviction rested alone in God, he has been enabled to walk where the thickest dangers were flying, all unharmed. 2. There are some dangers from which the providence of God does not preserve the Lord's people, but still He covers them with His feathers in another sense, by giving them grace to bear up under their troubles. You shall find your afflictions become your mercies, and your trials become your comforts. You shall glory in tribulation, and find light in the midst of gloom, and have joy unspeakable in the season of your sorrow. 3. In yet another way doth God set seal to this record when by His grace having sustained His servants in their trouble He brings them out of it greatly enriched thereby. Oh! it is a great blessing to be put through the fire, if you come out purified.

III. WHY MAY WE BE SURE THAT IT SHALL BE SO? 1. Faith enlists the sympathy of God. 2. God's promise is pledged. You keep your promise to your child, and will not God keep His promise to you? O rest in Him, then; He shall cover us with His feathers, for His own word declares it. 3.

Moreover, you are His child, and what will not a father do for his own dear child? Were he a stranger you might take little heed though he were in trouble, in danger, or in deep distress—but your child, your own child—oh! you cannot rest while he suffers. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **Under His wings shalt thou trust.—God's protective care:**—The simile before us represents the mother-bird guarding her young until they can guard themselves. It is protection as a process in training until one has learned to use his capacities for self-protection. The figure before us may be so misused as to emphasize what we may call the "nursery idea" in religious life. God's purpose and plan is to train man to be self-reliant. As the meaning of all true charity is found in that help which develops self-help, so is God's method in training man. His protecting help is to make man competent to help himself. This is a wide-reaching principle. The kind of God it discloses is one who has great respect for the creature He has made—a God who has put His image upon man by endowing him with certain qualities capable of growth; a God who puts great value upon the manly, self-sustaining character; a God who expects that when one is a child he will speak as a child, he will understand as a child, he will think as a child. But this same God expects that when the child grows into the man, he will put away childish things. A God who specially puts His protecting care round about the growing time of moral and spiritual childhood, that one may grow up into self-reliant, spiritual manhood—it is this kind of God who is revealed under this familiar likeness. It is truly the mother-bird brooding over her young, teaching, training, and caring for them against the time they must care for themselves. So, also, does this figure show us a certain kind of man—namely, a man who has developed a spiritual vigour and strength under the protecting care of God; a man who has learned from God that he has a mind which can expand with the thoughts of God, a heart which can throb with the feelings of God, a will which from feebleness and indecision can, under this same Divine training, grow virile and resolute. What can come nearer to what must be the true religion of the world as that which shows God protecting man, so that man may grow up into protecting himself? and, again, man affectionately accepting that protection, so that mind, heart, and will may grow up into religious self-reliance? Do we not see in Nature that the picture of the young always under the mother's wing argues sick offspring when Nature would have growth in healthy self-reliance? In like manner Christian character, if it deserves the name, must be other than an exotic, to be cared for under glass and at a certain temperature. The true likeness is not to a tropical palm in a greenhouse, but rather to a sturdy oak or elm, living and growing in the climate of a North American winter. I know of no better illustration of God's protecting care rightly used than in the staunch ocean steamer sailing out at the appointed time into the teeth of a hurricane. It is advertised to sail over the seas. The commander is not consulting the signals to see when he can safely set sail. Nor once under way is he studying his chart to find where he can make a harbour. Lighter ships, built for coast service, run for a refuge. Not so the sturdier craft. It is not seeking shelter or protection from the storm. But, with valiant confidence in itself, it moves out into the storm, with much buffeting, some breakages, half-speed at times—yes, occasionally "hove-to," so terrific is the gale—yet with no purpose to turn back, but moving on—steadily, slowly, resolutely moving on. (*A. H. Hall.*)

Ver. 8. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.—The reward of the wicked:—I. THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SUFFERINGS OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED. The same external afflictions and trials may befall them; but to the righteous they are educational, to the wicked they are punitive—"the reward," etc. II. THE DIVINE RULE IN THIS WORLD IS RIGHTEOUS. Under it the godly are protected by God, while the wicked are punished. III. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE DIVINE RULE IS NOT ALWAYS MANIFEST IN THIS WORLD. IV. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE DIVINE RULE WILL ULTIMATELY BE CLEARLY MANIFEST TO ALL. The godly with their eyes "shall see the reward of the wicked." There is a state where all the apparent inequalities of the moral government of our world will be clearly rectified (*Isa. iii. 11*). V. THE WEAK AND FEARFUL BELIEVER, NOTWITHSTANDING HIS FEARS, SHALL NOT PERISH WITH THE WICKED. "Only with his eyes shall he see the reward of the wicked," while he himself shall enjoy the glorious inheritance of the good.

Ver. 10. **Neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.**—*Immunity from disease.*—That wealthy promise has not become exhausted by the lapse of time. Rather has the promise acquired a new and deeper significance, and it now embraces in its generous charge the interests of the soul. We move amid moral pestilences. Plague-stricken people are all about us—men and women afflicted with moral and spiritual diseases which carry the germs of perilous contagion. How are we to escape them? The Master went into the very precincts of the plague, and yet was immune in the foul contagion. Disease demands prepared conditions. If the conditions are absent the contagion is impotent. What, then, was our Lord's condition when he entered into fellowship with men and women who were smitten by the plague of sin? "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." How different it all was in the life of Judas Iscariot! "The devil put it into the heart of Judas!" The germs fell in the prepared conditions; they found a congenial lodgment, and they bore their issues in an evil life. 1. One of the primary pre-disposing conditions of disease is physical exhaustion. The natural forces are reduced. The energy is spent. The army is driven away from the walls, the gates are left undefended, and the enemy has an open way. Our physical defences are found in the natural resistances of the body. Let these be impoverished, and our security is gone. Let me change the analogy. In the life of the body we are only safe when our income exceeds our expenditure. How is it with the soul? The strength of the soul depends upon the quality of its resistances. If the soul is strong and powerful, the Pharisaic germ of hypocrisy or the microbe of actual vice will gain no foothold. But the soul can become faint. Its defences can be straitened, and the stronghold may then be easily taken at the first besiegement of sin. Now, how does a soul become exhausted? We can use our previous figure: the expenditure has exceeded the income. We have broken correspondencies with our resources. We have ignored the land of rest. Men easily capitulate to the evil one when, by neglect of prayer, they have reduced themselves to spiritual exhaustion. 2. Another of the predisposing conditions to disease is bad food. Diet is not altogether a matter of indifference when we are considering the advance of disease. Some foods are the friends of hostile microbes; they are the forerunners of disease; they prepare the way, arranging congenial conditions. How is it with the soul? Is diet of any moment? With what kind of food are we feeding the mind? Is it a food which predisposes the mind to offer hospitality to the foe? How about our reading? Let us subject ourselves to a rigorous self-investigation. Can we honestly expect our minds to be healthy with the kind of food we give them? Thoughts are foodstuff. Where, then, shall we gather them? "He gave them bread from heaven to eat!" The Lord's bread will make us immune against disease. "This is the bread, of which, if a man eat, he shall not die." 3. Another predisposing condition to disease is undisciplined emotion. The bacteriologist has told us that excessive grief and fretfulness open the doors to the invading army of disease. It is not so much some commanding emotional passion which exhausts the body; little frets can do it. We can lose a pound quite as effectually by dropping two hundred and forty pennies as by losing a sovereign. The great point to remember is, that all these dispositions lower the strength and quality of our physical defences. How is it with the soul? Undisciplined emotion is a condition against which we must be on our guard. How easily some people can be stirred into violent emotion! Now, all unharnessed emotion impoverishes the spiritual defences. The devil likes nothing better than to get our emotions well stirred, to make us satisfied with these pleasurable feelings, and then behind our satisfaction to carry on his nefarious work. Emotionalism is the forerunner of evil contagion, and provides conditions for the microbe which will end at last in the bondage of an eradicable disease. Let me mention one other predisposing condition of moral and spiritual disease. 4. Our bacteriologists tell us that one of the greatest discoveries of the last generation has been the absolute necessity of scrupulous cleanliness in all surgical work. Our doctors are now vigilant to the last degree in closing every door against the entrance of dirt. Operations are performed with sterilized instruments under the most exacting conditions of cleanliness. The smallest remnant of uncleanness affords a foothold for disease. How is it with the soul? Is there any need of the same scrupulousness? Are we as vigilant in maintaining the purity of our spirits as the surgeon is in maintaining the cleanliness of His work? Do we not rather treat small scruples lightly, and do we not laugh at the morally painstaking, and label them faddy or puritanical?

We retain a dirty little prejudice, or some spirit of undue severity, or some little policy which we persuade ourselves cannot be called wrong, but only expedient; and those retained uncleannesses afford the occasion an opportunity to the enemy of our souls; and through the entrance thus obtained he leads all the forces of darkness and the strong black battalions of hell. If we are to defeat him we shall have to attend to the scruple. One grain of dirt can afford sustenance to a host of microbes. Now, let me recall the glorious promise with which I began. "Neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling." It is possible for us to be in the world and yet not of it, to mix with sinners and yet be separate from them, to be perfectly pure and yet to go and be their minister and guest. Our only security is in God. In Him we have all-sufficient defences. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *Safety from disease*.—In 1854, when Mr. Spurgeon had scarcely been twelve months in London, there was raging there a fearful epidemic of Asiatic cholera. With all his youthful ardour he plunged at once into the work of relieving the sick and the suffering and the dying, and of burying the dead. Weary and worn with much work, he one day came back from a funeral service feeling as though he himself were a prey to the awful judgment and scourge of God. He was passing along a certain street, and he observed in the window of a shoemaker's shop a paper wafered to a pane of glass, and on which were inscribed in large characters the 9th and 10th verses of the 91st psalm—"Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling." Mr. Spurgeon said, "That was God's message to me. I at once took heart, and from that moment I neither felt any fear of the cholera myself nor did I suffer any harm from repeated ministries upon the sick and the dying."

Vers. 11-13. For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.—*God's angels helping good men on earth*.—I. GOD HAS ANGELS AT HIS COMMAND. 1. Spiritual existences. 2. Full of vitality. 3. Mighty in power. 4. Rich in knowledge. 5. Countless in number. 6. Vast in variety. Spirits differ from spirits as plant from plant, star from star. They differ in nature, in the kind and measure of faculty. In experience. Some are older and more intelligent than others. In office. From Gabriel, who "stands in the presence of God," down to that spirit next in degree to man. There are principalities and powers amongst them. II. GOD EMPLOYS HIS ANGELS TO HELP GOOD MEN ON EARTH. 1. Human life has many "ways." There is the way of the boy, the way of the man, the way of the husband, the way of the father, the way of the merchant, the citizen, the statesman. 2. These "ways" are perilous. There are stumbling-stones at every step; temptations to infidelity, insensibility, dishonesty, falsehood, revenge, etc. 3. God sends His angels to help the good in all these "ways." They impart—(1) Sustaining power. (2) Conquering power. III. CONCLUSION. If angels are thus engaged in helping good men on earth, the following things may be inferred:—1. That there must be some method by which they can communicate with man. What is this method? What is that which is the great sustaining and conquering power in man? Thought. Thought makes the man. May not angels have the power of suggesting thoughts—strengthening and all-conquering thoughts? 2. That the spiritual interests of man must be supremely important. 3. That it is consonant with the highest dignity to minister to the lowly. 4. That it is a profound disgrace to man that he should feel so little interest in the spiritual concerns of his brother. If angels are thus concerned for us, should we not be doubly so for ourselves? 5. That the humblest Christians may take courage. (*Homilist*.) *Angelic protection in appointed ways*.—I. THERE ARE WAYS WHICH ARE NOT IN THE PROMISE. "All thy ways" are mentioned; but some tracks are not to be followed by children of God, and are not their ways. 1. Ways of presumption. In these men court danger, and, as it were, defy God (Matt. iv. 6). 2. Ways of sin, dishonesty, lying, vice, worldly conformity, etc. We have no permit to bow in the house of Rimmon (Eph. v. 12). 3. Ways of worldliness, selfishness, greed, ambition. The ways by which men seek personal aggrandizement are usually dark, and crooked, and are not of God (Prov. xxviii. 22; 1 Tim. vi. 9). 4. Ways of pride, self-conceit, boastful promisings, pretended perfection, etc. "Pride goeth before destruction." 5. Ways of will worship, wilfulness, obstinacy, fancy, day-dreaming absurd impulse, etc. (Jer. ii. 18). 6. Ways of erroneous doctrine, novel practice, fashionable ceremonial, flattering delusion, etc. (2 Tim. iii. 5). II. THERE ARE WAYS IN WHICH SAFETY IS GUARANTEED. 1. The way

of humble faith in the Lord Jesus. 2. The way of obedience to Divine precepts. 3. The way of childlike trust in providential guidance. 4. The way of strict principle, and stern integrity. 5. The way of consecrated service, and seeking God's glory. 6. The way of holy separation, and walking with God. III. THESE WAYS LEAD US INTO VARIED CONDITIONS. 1. They are changeful and varied: "all Thy ways." 2. They are sometimes stony with difficulty: "foot against a stone." 3. They may be terrible with temptation. 4. They may be mysteriously trying. Devils may throng the path—only to be met by holy angels. 5. They are essentially safe, while the smooth and easy roads are perilous. IV. BUT WHILE WALKING IN THEM ALL BELIEVERS ARE SECURE. 1. The Lord Himself concerns Himself about them:—"He shall give His angels charge over thee." He will personally command those holy beings to have an eye to His children. 2. Mysterious agencies protect them: angels bear them up in their hands, as nurses carry little children. Wonderful tenderness and power! Angels acting as servants to men! 3. All things are on their side, both visible and invisible. Command is laid on all to protect the saints (Ps. lxxi. 3). 4. Each one is personally watched over. "Charge over thee to keep thee" (Isa. xlii. 6; Gen. xxviii. 15). 5. That watchfulness is perpetual—"All thy ways" (Ps. cxxi. 3, 4). 6. This guard also confers honour. How noble a thing to have the courtiers of heaven for a *corps de garde*! 7. All this comes to them by Jesus, whose the angels are, and whom they serve (Isa. xliii. 4). V. LESSONS. 1. See how the lowest employment is consistent with the highest enjoyment:—Keeping guard over the Lord's stumbling children is no discredit to angels. 2. How cheerfully we should watch over others! How vigorously should we hold them up whenever it is in our power. To cast off a stumbling brother is not angelic, but the reverse. 3. How safe we ought to feel, how fully trustful we ought to be. Alexander slept soundly, "for," said he, "Parmenio wakes." 4. How holy we should be with such holy ones for watchers! Great privileges involve heavy responsibilities. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 12. **They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.**—*Angels our guardians in trifles:*—The Scriptural representation brings down the ministration of angels to what appears trivial and insignificant, in place of confining it to some great crisis in the history of the righteous. And it is this fact which is so forcibly set before us by our text. For what contrast can be greater? We direct you to the examining whatsoever is told you in the Bible as to the nature and endowments of angels. You cannot come from such an examination but with minds fraught with a persuasion of the greatness and gloriousness of the Heavenly Hosts, impressed with a sense of the vastness of their capacities, the splendour of their excellence, the majesty of their strength. And then we set you to the considering what occupation can be worthy of creatures thus pre-eminently illustrious; not allowing you indeed to indulge the excursions of imagination, which might rapidly hurry you into the invisible world, and there place before you the thrones and dominions of those whom God is pleased to honour as His instruments in the government of the universe; but confining you to the single truth, that angels have offices to perform to the Church, and that every righteous man is a subject of their ministrations. I want a guardianship which will go with me to my everyday duties, which will be around me in my everyday trials, which shall attend me in the household, in the street, in my business, in my prayers, in my recreations; which I may be aware of as watchful where there is no apparent peril, and which I may be assured of as sufficient where there is the worst. And such a guardianship is revealed to me, when the hosts of heaven are affirmed to be employed on the protecting me against the most trifling accident. Oh! it might not do much towards cheering and elevating the poor and unknown of the flock, or towards the daily, hourly upholding of such as have higher places to fill, to be told of angels as encamping, as they encamped about Elisha, crowding the mountain with chariots of fire and horses of fire, when the King of Syria sent a great host to take the man of God. It cannot be often, if ever, that there is anything parallel to this peril of the prophet. But it just brings the celestial armies, in all their powerfulness, into the scenes of ordinary life—in other words, it gives to the doctrine of a Divine providence all that extensiveness, that individuality, that applicability to the most inconsiderable events, as well as that adequacy to the most important, which we require, if the doctrine is to be of worth and of efficacy, at all times, to all ranks, and in all cases—to be told that God has commissioned angels, the mightiest of His creatures, to bear us up in their hands, not lest we

fall over a precipice, come beneath an avalanche, sink in a torrent, but lest at any time we hurt our foot against a stone. We are far, however, from being content with this view of the passage. There is indeed something that is exquisitely soothing and encouraging in the thought that angels, as ministering spirits, are so mindful of us that they look to the very pebbles which might cause us to trip;—how can we be other than safe if we do but trust in the Lord, when there is such care for our safety that the highest of created beings sedulously remove the least impediments, or watch that we surmount them? But this proceeds on the supposition that the hurting the foot against a stone is a trivial thing. We have spoken of the contrast in the text as though it were matter of surprise, that such an instrumentality as that of angels should be employed to so insignificant an end as that of preventing the hurting the foot against a stone. But is it an insignificant end? Is there, after all, any want of keeping between the agency and the act, so that there is even the appearance of angels being unworthily employed, employed on what is beneath them, when engaged in bearing us up, lest at any time we hurt the foot against a stone? Nay, the hurting the foot against a stone has often laid the foundation of fatal bodily disease: the injury which seemed too trifling to be worth notice has produced extreme sickness, and ended in death. Is it different in spiritual respects, in regard of the soul, to which the promise in our text must be specially applied? Not a jot. Or, if there be a difference, it is only that the peril to the soul from a slight injury is far greater than that to the body: the worst spiritual diseases might commonly be traced to inconsiderable beginnings. There is many a man who evinces, for a time, a steadfast attention to religion, walking with all care in the path of God's commandments, using appointed means of grace, and avoiding occasions of sin, but who, after a while, in the expressive language of Scripture, leaves his first love, declines from spirituality, and is dead, though he may yet have a name to live. But how does it commonly happen that such a man falls away from the struggle for salvation, and mingles with the multitude that walk the broad road? Is it ordinarily through some one powerful and undisguised assault that he is turned from the faith, or over one huge obstacle that he falls to rise not again? Not so. It is almost invariably through little things that such a man destroys his soul. He fails to take notice of little things, and they accumulate into great. He concedes in little things, and thus gradually gives up much; he relaxes in little things, and thus in time loosens every bond. Because it is a little thing, he counts it of little moment; utterly forgetting that millions are made up of units, that immensity is constituted of atoms. Because it is only a stone, a pebble, against which his foot strikes, he makes light of the hindrance; not caring that he is contracting a habit of stumbling or not observing that, whenever he trips, there must be some diminution in the speed with which he runs the way of God's commandments, and that, however slowly, these diminutions are certainly bringing him to a stand. Learn, from what angels are intent to do for you, what you should be earnest in endeavouring to do for yourselves. Those glorious, though invisible, beings bestow not their vigilance and carefulness on what is unworthy so lofty an instrumentality. They would not give such earnest heed to pebbles in the way, if it were not that pebbles are what men stumble over till precipitated into perdition, or what they mount upon till elevated into excellence. And if it might make you feel as though it were only at some great crisis, under some extraordinary temptation, or confronted by more than common enemies, that you had need for anxiety, effort, and prayer, to be told of angels as attending you to ward off the thunderbolt, or chain the tempest, oh, let it teach you how easy a thing it is to lose the soul, from what insignificant beginnings may fatal disease rise, with what unwearied earnestness you should avoid disobeying God in trifles, conforming to the world in trifles, relaxing in duty in trifles, to be told that angels, creatures of surpassing splendour and might, are commissioned to bear us up in their hands, not lest at any time we rush into the lion's den, or fall from the mountain top, but "lest at any time we hurt the foot against a stone." (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Angel guardianship*:—A little boy asked his mother to let him lead his little sister out on the green grass. She had just begun to run alone, and could not step over anything that lay in the way. His mother told him he might lead out the little girl, but charged him not to let her fall. I found them at play, very happy in the field. I said, "You seem very happy, George? Is this your sister?" "Yes, sir." "Can she walk alone?" "Yes, sir, on smooth ground." "And how did she get over these stones which lie between us and the house?" "Oh, sir, mother charged me

to be careful that she did not fall, and so I put my hands under her arms, and lifted her up when she came to a stone, so that she need not hit her little foot against it." "That is right, George. And I want to tell you one thing. You now see how to understand that beautiful text, 'He shall give His angels charge concerning thee, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.' God charges His angels to lead and lift good people over difficulties, just as you have lifted little Ann over these stones. Do you understand it now?" "Oh, yes, sir, and I never shall forget it while I live." Can one child thus take care of another, and cannot God take care of those who put their trust in Him? Surely He can; and there is not a child among you here to-day, over whom He is not ready to give His holy angels charge. (*Christian Herald.*)

Ver. 13. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder.—*Spiritual victory*:—This promise refers not only to the reptiles and wild beasts of outwards evil, but also to evils in which the deadliness of sin is concentrated against our individual hearts—the evil thoughts and deeds and words and habits that assault and hurt the soul. The lion is that inward sin, that special impulse and temptation which has most power against you. It is the favourite vice against which you are weakest. Oh! let none of us shirk the momentous question. Are you, or are you not, wrestling with; have you, or have you not, conquered the sin which doth most easily beset you? Let a man but once give himself over to a besetting and unrepented sin, and all else becomes in vain. Therefore, as you love your lives, enter alone, and with awful resolution, the dark caverns of your own hearts, face once for all the lion who lies lurking there, lay aside utterly the fancy that he can remain there without destroying you, give up the idle notion that you can fence yourself round against him by reason, or by philosophy, or by prudential reserves; or by vague procrastinations of the struggle. Nothing will save you but desperate wrestling with all the gathered forces of your life intensified by grace and prayer. But notice that the more early this battle is undertaken the more surely is it won. Hercules in the legend, while yet an infant in the cradle, strangles the serpent sent to slay him. He who strangles serpents in his youth will slay monsters in his manhood; he of whom the grace of God has taken early hold, and who has early strength to conquer temptation is not likely later on to lose his self-reverence and his self-control; if in the flush of youth he has stood at the feet of the law he will be little likely to revolt afterwards. Victory is won more easily at fifteen than at twenty, and more easily at twenty than at thirty, and a hundredfold more easily at thirty than at sixty. And alas! which of us has not been in one way or another defeated? Which of us can encounter that poison-breathing lion in the dark cavern of his heart, and strangle it fearlessly as once he might have done? But, lastly, lest such thoughts should tempt any one to despair, let me add at once that it is never too late to fight, never too late to mend, never impossible to slay the lion within you, and to tread the young lion and the dragon under foot. Was not King David a murderer and an adulterer, and yet God gave him back the clean heart and the free spirit? Was not King Manasseh an apostate and a worshipper of Moloch; and yet did he not learn to know that the Lord was God? And was not John Bunyan once a godless tinker; and did not he grow up to write the "Pilgrim's Progress"? If you have sinned with these, cannot you with these repent? (*Dean Farrar.*)

Vers. 14-16. Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him.—*The character which God approves*:—I. THE CHARACTER WHICH GOD APPROVES. It is founded in the knowledge of Himself; it is established in the love of Himself, which that knowledge naturally inspires, and it is manifested and completed in the worship of Himself, which is the genuine expression of that powerful and animating affection which we are bound to cultivate. II. THE PRIVILEGES WHICH BELONG TO THIS CHARACTER. How great a satisfaction and relief is it in the time of affliction to have the company of a faithful and affectionate friend, who takes a part in our sorrow, who tenderly hears all our complaints! who kindly watches over our weakness! Such friends are the precious gifts of God. But they cannot be always near to each of us, and in many cases, all their attentions and sympathy are fruitless. Is there, then, no eye to see, and no powerful hand to assuage the sorrows of the heart, and the pains of sinking nature? Yes—"I," saith the Lord, "will be with you!" (*J. L. Adamson.*) *A good man and the great God*:—I. A GOOD MAN IN RELATION TO THE GREAT GOD. 1. He loves God.

"He hath set his love upon Me." All his affections are set on God; in Him his soul reposes. 2. He knows God. "He hath known My name." He knows Him, not merely with the intellect, but with the heart, experimentally. God's "name" is Himself. You can only really know a man as you sympathize with him. 3. He worships God. "Call upon me." II. THE GREAT GOD IN RELATION TO THE GOOD MAN. "Because" the good man is thus in relation to God, God does two things for him. 1. Delivers him. "Therefore will I deliver him." Delivers him from all evils, natural and moral. 2. Dignifies him. "I will set him on high," where he shall have the sublimest views, enjoy the greatest security, command the greatest attention and respect. (*Homilist.*) *The favourite of God*:—I. WHAT GOD SAYS OF HIM. 1. "He knows My name." (1) As a sin-hating, sin-avenging God! and this knowledge was a means of leading him to a deep sense of his own personal corruption, guilt, and danger as a sinner. (2) As concentrated in the name of Jesus, who "shall save His people from their sins." 2. "He hath set his love upon Me." In the love of a Divinely-illuminated believer there is—(1) Gratitude. (2) Admiration. (3) Delightful complacency. 3. "He shall call upon Me." "A holy heart," says Leighton, "is the temple of God, and therefore must be a house of prayer." II. WHAT GOD SAYS TO HIM. 1. There are some important truths implied. Though persons may be the objects of Divine favour, yet they are not exempt from trials and crosses of various kinds. Though the guilt of sin be taken away, there remains some of the effects of it, which God's people feel while in the body; and though they are sinners saved by grace, yet they are still on probation for eternity, and exposed to temptations, and pains, and sufferings, and to death itself. 2. There are some important truths expressed. The Lord's eye of infinite love is always fixed upon His suffering children; His ear of infinite love is wakefully attentive to their cry; His hand of infinite love is exerted to support them under their troubles, and finally to exalt them above them. (*IV. Dawson.*) *Love must be fixed on God*:—Now, that is not a state to be won and kept without much vigorous, conscious effort. The nuts in a machine work loose; the knots in a rope "come untied," as the children say. The hand that clasps anything, by slow and imperceptible degrees loses muscular contraction, and the grip of the fingers become slacker. Our minds and affections and wills have that same tendency to slacken their hold of what they grasp. Unless we tighten up the machine it will work loose, and unless we make conscious efforts to keep ourselves in touch with God, His hand will slip out of ours before we know that it is gone, and we shall fancy that we feel the impressions of the fingers long after they have been taken away from our neglectant palms. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *I will set him on high, because he hath known My name.*—*The name of God known*:—Knowing by sight and knowing by name are the two expressions we use in common conversation to indicate a slight and superficial acquaintance with any one. To say that we know a man by name, and only so, is to lay claim to the least possible acquaintanceship, and yet God's declaration runs, "I will set him on high because he hath known My name." Evidently one of two things is true. Either the preparation needed for entrance into heaven is a very slight and trivial one, being the mere ability to remember and repeat a given word; or else there must be in this Bible phrase, "knowing God's name," a vast deal more meaning than appears. Without doubt we are all agreed in favour of the second of the two alternatives. In modern life proper names are given in such an artificial way that we have come almost to forget the original purpose and design of names. But when we come to look into the matter we find that there is more in a name than this, or, at least, that there ought to be. Consider, by way of illustration, the method a naturalist, a chemist let us say, follows in assigning names to the materials with which he has to deal. He gives to things names that tell their own story—names that to the practised eye reveal in a moment the nature of the thing named. When a chemist discovers a new compound he does not name it at random, he does not choose a name simply because it strikes his fancy; indeed, he has really no choice at all in the matter, for the very laws of his science compel him to assign to the new substance a name which tells exactly, by means of a pre-arranged system of letters and numbers, just what the ingredients are, and in precisely what proportions they are mingled. Thus with the chemist to know the name of anything is equivalent to knowing the nature of it. Of course, taking men as they are and the world as it is, the application of this principle to proper names would be out of the question. And yet in primitive communities, and in that state of society which we find depicted in the earlier books of Scripture, some approach to this

method of assigning names according to nature is observed. The proper names in the Book of Genesis almost all of them point to some personal characteristic either of body or mind in the bearer of the name. With these thoughts fresh in our minds we shall be better able, I think, than without them we could have been, to appreciate the singular stress laid in Scripture upon the importance of knowing God's name. What is really meant is this, that man's highest privilege, the end and purpose for which he was created, is to know God. But notice this: Every stage, every epoch, era, crisis in this progressive revelation of God has been marked by the annunciation of a name (Gen. xvii. 1; Exod. iii. 14; vi. 3). Just is proportion to men's enlarged knowledge of the nature of God has been their need of a new name for Him, not so much to replace as to supplement the old name. In other words, the names of God are so many tide-marks to indicate the continuous rise of revelation. The risen Christ is speaking to the eleven on a mountain in Galilee. They are there by an appointment made on the day of the Resurrection. They are alone together. They are soon to part. The movement is one when we naturally listen for a word of power. Now, if ever, is the time for the whole substance of the revelation which this Christ has come to bring to be compressed into a sentence. It is spoken: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." This is the Christian name of God. This is the new dispensation ushered in. Is God the Father our Father? Do we know Him as the provident and faithful parent who cares for all our cares, who watches for our need, who lifts us when we stumble and strengthens us when we stand? Do we look upon the world we live in as His workmanship? Do its glory and its beauty, its wealth of storm and sunshine, speak to us of Him? Is God the Son our Saviour? Do we accord anything more than a cold assent to those sentences of the Creed that tell how for us men and for our salvation He came down from heaven, and, in the dreariness and isolation of a poor man's lot, toiled, and wept, and prayed, and suffered? Do we really find in Him and in His Cross a refuge when conscience upbraids us and the thought of guilt lies heavy on the heart? Is God the Holy Ghost our Sanctifier? All unworthy of so Divine a guest, do we still believe that He is our guest, and that He dwells within us? Do we supplicate His greater nearness and dread the thought of grieving Him away? Are we willing that His presence should be to us a cleansing fire, burning away all that is base and worthless in us? The doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity is precious to believers, not on account of its title; no special virtue is claimed for that, but simply because it faithfully reflects what the Scriptures teach about the being of God. The Bible tells us plainly that God is one. The Bible tells us plainly that God is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The doctrine of the Trinity couples together these two declarations, and affirms of them that they cannot be conflicting, that they must be harmonious. That is the whole of it. The Church does not stultify herself by asserting that three means the same thing as one, or that one equals three. But what the Church in this instance does is merely what natural science in a hundred instances does—she affirms two truths, the relations between which can only be dimly discerned, and, having asserted them, she lets them stand. There are motions of the heavenly bodies that cannot be reconciled with Newton's law of gravitation. But does astronomy deny either the fact of the motions or the truth of the law? No; she accepts both, and bides her time, hoping for fuller light. The doctrine of the Trinity of God in no sense militates against the doctrine of the Unity of God. Indeed, the assertion of the Unity is quite as much an essential feature of the doctrine as is the assertion of the Trinity, for the ancient faith is this: "That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity." (W. R. Huntington, D.D.)

Ver. 15. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him.—Four great promises:—Peter speaks of "exceeding great and precious promises" (2 Pet. i. 4). The promises of the text are among this number. I. **HE WILL ANSWER THEIR PRAYERS.** He answers—1. Kindly. 2. Quickly. 3. Always. 4. More abundantly than we ask. 5. Wisely. II. **HE WILL BE WITH THEM IN TROUBLE.** We cannot escape trouble in this world (Job v. 7). In trouble many persons are forsaken of their friends. But God is the companion and friend who is nearest to us when we need Him most. In poverty, persecution, sickness and death He will be with us. III. **HE WILL DELIVER THEM.** 1. Surely. 2. By unexpected means. 3. Completely. 4. Eternally. IV. **HE WILL HONOUR THEM.** It is not wrong to seek honour, but

we should seek the best (Rom. ii. 7; John v. 4, 44). God honoured Moses, Joshua, David, Ruth. These promises belong only to the people of God. (*Anon.*) *Prayer and its answer*:—I. A DECLARATION. God has said in positive terms, "He shall call upon Me." It therefore does not rest with the creature, whether he will call upon Him or not; it is not a matter poised in the balances of the creature, whether he shall pray or not. God has not left it to man, whether he shall take up prayer or lay aside prayer, but He has made it a part of His own sovereign appointments, of His own eternal decrees, which can no more be frustrated than salvation itself. Therefore this soul, that "dwells in the secret place of the Most High"—"he shall call upon God." "He shall call upon Me." When shall he call? Why, when the Lord pours out "the Spirit of grace and of supplications"; when the Lord lays wants upon his heart; when the Lord brings conviction into his conscience; when the Lord brings trouble into his soul. Then to call upon the Lord is no point of duty, which is to be attended to as a duty; it is no point of legal constraint, which must be done because the Word of God speaks of it; but it is a feeling, an experience, an inward work, which springs from the Lord's hand, and which flows in the Lord's own Divine channel. II. A PROMISE. "I will answer him." What will He answer? Why, He will answer those prayers, which He Himself has indited. He will answer those wants, which He Himself has created. He will answer those hungerings, which He Himself has produced. But the answer that God gives, He gives in His own time. And I believe many of the children of God have had to cry to Him for days and weeks and months and years. But sometimes the Lord is pleased to answer our prayers more immediately; He brings us into those straits and troubles from which we cannot extricate ourselves, and then will answer our prayers and fulfil the promise. But perhaps it is in such a way as we least expect; and yet in such a way as most glorifies Him. We say, "Lord, make me rich." He says, "I will; but thou must first be made poor." We say, "Lord, let me have a precious view of Christ." "I will; but you must first have a wretched view of self." "Let me know the riches of Christ's blood." "I will; but you must first know the depth of your guilt." (*J. C. Philpot.*) *Prayer answered*:—You may not get what you fancy you need. You may not get this, that, or the other blessing which you ask, for perhaps they are not blessings. We are not always good at translating our needs into words, and it is a mercy that there is Some One who understands what we do want a great deal better than ourselves. But if below the special petition there lies the cry of a heart that calls for the living God, then, whether the specific petition be answered or dispersed into empty air will matter comparatively little. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The honour God puts on His faithful servants*:—The biographer of the Countess of Huntingdon tells how, "One day at court the Prince of Wales inquired of Lady Charlotte Edwin where Lady Huntingdon was, that she so seldom visited the court. Lady Charlotte replied, with a sneer, 'I suppose praying with her beggars.' The Prince shook his head, and, turning to Lady Charlotte, said, 'Lady Charlotte, when I am dying, I think I shall be happy to seize the skirt of Lady Huntingdon's mantle to lift me with her up to heaven.'" (*R. Pitman.*)

Ver. 16. **With long life will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation.**—*Long life desirable*:—Were it possible, angels perhaps would gladly exchange their seats of bliss, their harps of gold, and their crowns of glory, for the opportunity of playing the part we have in the great drama of the universe. I. BECAUSE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD WHICH WE MAY HERE ACQUIRE. The more we know of God the more we shall love Him, and the more we love Him the more readily and efficiently shall we serve Him, and the more efficiently we serve Him the more exquisite the felicity we shall enjoy in His service. Now, there is a knowledge of God which we may acquire in the present life which we shall not have the opportunity of acquiring again. The method by which God is conducting the affairs of our world is different from any other; but it is only for a time. It has been adopted to secure a certain purpose, when that is secured it will cease (1 Cor. xv. 24, 28). Let us, then, improve the shining hour. If every thought of God will augment our eternal happiness and joy, let us seek to make the most and the best of life, by acquiring as full and comprehensive a knowledge of Him as the present life and state will admit. II. BECAUSE OF THE GRACE OF GOD WHICH WE MAY HERE EXPERIENCE. As the sick child has a fuller and more demonstrative proof of the care, tenderness, and affection of an earthly parent than the child in health, so we have a fuller and

more demonstrative proof of the care, tenderness, and affection of our Heavenly Parent than even angels can have. Think of the constant attention the tender care, the loving forbearance required on the part of God to keep us from falling, to support us under trial, to bear with our mistakes and blunders, our fears and unbelief. III. BECAUSE OF THE OBEDIENCE TO GOD WHICH WE MAY HERE DISPLAY. We are now encompassed with foes, beset with temptations, surrounded by opposing influences, and some of these are of the most subtle and alluring character. To obey God now, to pursue a course of unswerving adherence to His will and command now, is to give Him a higher and stronger proof of our fidelity and love than we shall have the opportunity of giving Him in any future state. And is God indifferent to such a proof of faithfulness and affection? He appreciates it with pleasure; He contemplates it with delight. IV. BECAUSE OF THE WORK FOR GOD WHICH WE MAY HERE ACCOMPLISH. V. BECAUSE OF THE REWARD WHICH WE MAY HERE OBTAIN. The right employment of every talent will ensure the more hearty commendation of the Master. (*B. Preece.*) *Christianity and longevity*:—It is high time that religion joined the hand of medical science in attempting to improve the world's longevity. Adam lived 930 years. Methuselah lived 969 years. As late in the history of the world as Vespasian, there were at one time in his empire forty-five people 135 years old. So far down as the sixteenth century, Peter Zartan died at 185 years of age. I do not say that religion will ever take the race back to antediluvian longevity, but I do say the length of human life will be greatly improved, and a person will be called a child at 100 years of age (*Isa. lxx. 20*). Religion has only just touched our world. Give it full swing for a few centuries and who can tell what will be the strength of man and the beauty of woman, and the longevity of all? I. RELIGION MAKES THE CARE OF OUR PHYSICAL HEALTH A POSITIVE CHRISTIAN DUTY. The Christian man lifts this whole problem of health into the accountable and the Divine. He says, "God has given me this body, and He has called it the temple of the Holy Ghost, and to deface its altars, or to mar its walls, or crumble its pillars, is a God-defying sacrilege." So wonderful are these bodies that God names His own attributes after different parts of them. His omniscience—it is God's eye. His omnipresence—it is God's ear. His omnipotence—it is God's arm. The upholstery of the midnight heavens—it is the work of God's fingers. His life-giving power—it is the breath of the Almighty. His dominion—the government shall be upon His shoulder. A body so divinely honoured and so divinely constructed, let us be careful not to abuse it. When it becomes a Christian duty to take care of our health, is not the whole tendency toward longevity? II. RELIGION IS A PROTEST AGAINST ALL THE DISSIPATIONS WHICH INJURE AND DESTROY THE HEALTH. Bad men and women live a very short life. Their sin kills them. Byron died at Missolonghi at thirty-six years of age, himself his own Mazeppa, his unbridled passions the horse that dashed with him into the desert. Edgar A. Poe died at Baltimore at thirty-eight years of age. The black raven that alighted on the bust above his chamber-door was "delirium tremens." "Only this and nothing more." Napoleon Bonaparte lived only just beyond mid-life, then died at St. Helena; and one of his doctors said that his disease was induced by excessive snuffing. How many people we have known who have not lived out half their days because of their dissipations and indulgences! Now, practical religion is a protest against all dissipation of any kind. "But," you say, "professors of religion have fallen, professors of religion have got drunk, professors of religion have misappropriated trust funds, professors of religion have absconded." Yes, yes; but they threw away their religion before they did their morality. III. RELIGION TAKES THE WORRY OUT OF OUR TEMPORALITIES. It is not work that kills men; it is worry. When a man becomes a genuine Christian, he makes over to God not only his affections, but his family, his business, his reputation, his body, his mind, his soul—everything. Industrious he will be, but never worrying, because God is managing his affairs. "All things work together for good to them that love God." Is there not rest in that? Is there not tonic in that? Is there not longevity in that? Suppose a man is all the time worried about his reputation? One man says he lies, another man says he is stupid, another man says he is dishonest, and half-a-dozen printing establishments get the man under Hoe's cylinder and flatten him out, and he is in a great state of excitement and worry, and cannot sleep at night; but religion comes to him and says, "Man, God is on your side; He will take care of your reputation; if God be for you, who can be against you?" How much is that man going to worry about his reputation? Not much. Oh,

nervous and feverish people of the world, try this almighty sedative; you will live twenty-five years longer under its soothing power! It is not chloral that you want, or morphine that you want; it is the gospel of longevity. "With long life will I satisfy him." IV. RELIGION REMOVES ALL CORRODING CARE ABOUT A FUTURE EXISTENCE. A mighty One on a knoll back of Jerusalem one day, the skies filled with forked lightnings and the earth shaking with volcanic disturbances, turned His pale and agonized face toward the heavens, and said, "I take the sins and sorrows of the ages into My heart. I am the expiation. Witness earth, and heaven, and hell, I am the expiation." Accept that sacrifice and quit worrying. Take the tonic, the inspiration, the longevity of this thought. Religion is sunshine; that is healthy. Religion is fresh air and pure water; they are healthy. Religion is warmth; that is healthy. Ask all the doctors, and they will tell you that a quiet conscience and pleasant anticipations are hygienic. Glory be to God for this robust, rubicund religion! It will have a tendency to make you live long in this world, and in the world to come you will have eternal longevity. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

PSALM XCII.

Vers. 1-3. **It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord.**—*Good to be thankful*:—1. Had we no other motive but our own personal happiness, we should find it "a good thing to be thankful." When we have reviewed the mercies of past years, traced the hand of Providence in all our course from infancy onwards, and seen goodness following us all the way, and then have fallen down before our God, with molting hearts and tender eyes, or have poured forth our feelings in some sacred hymn of praise, have we not at such times known the highest luxury this earth can afford? A friend of mine in travelling, happened to lodge in one of the hotels of a neighbouring city, and in the middle of the night he heard some one in an adjoining room singing in a low but earnest tone of voice, Addison's hymn, "When all Thy mercies, O my God," etc., the whole of which he went through, evidently supposing that none heard him but his God. He proved to be a governor of one of our Western States, suffering under an incurable disease, of which he soon after died. But what a frame of mind must that have been which poured forth the gushings of a full heart at the midnight hour, and with a consciousness of approaching death, in such a hymn as that. And as there is no grace which so immediately fills the heart with pleasure, so again it would seem as if none might be more easily cherished than thankfulness. We have so much to make us thankful, that it would appear as if none could resist the impulse. And then, in addition to this, the natural heart is apparently more susceptible of this Christian grace than of any other, so that they who show right feeling in nothing else have seemed moved at times to gratitude to God. And though earth has many trials, yet God has given to us, as well as to everything else in nature, a wonderful restoring power, which makes it easy for us to recover a cheerful and thankful spirit. 3. Again, it is a good thing to be thankful, because such a spirit exhibits religion in a beautiful form to others. We have read of instances of great thankfulness in the midst of great privations, and we may have seen them. We may have gone to some wretched abode of poverty, where it seems, that had it been our lot to dwell there, we could discover nothing but occasion to murmur at our hard fate, and we may have heard there expressions of gratitude and acknowledgments of God's goodness that have perfectly amazed us. Have we not gone away in love with such a spirit, and ashamed that we possessed no more of it? 4. "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord," because it is pleasing to Him. It is true that our returns of praise can add nothing to God's glory or happiness, and yet He has declared that "whoso offereth Him thanks and praise, he glorifieth Him." When we confer a favour on a fellow-man we say that we want no thanks for it, meaning thereby that we did not do it for the sake of the thanks; we want not the thanks for our own sake, but as evidence of a right state of heart in him. And for the same reason God loves the returns of gratitude. (*W. H. Lewis, D.D.*) *Thankfulness*:—After the return of the Jews from captivity the liturgy of the

temple service was rearranged, and this psalm was selected as the Sabbath psalm, and appointed to be sung in the morning service when, on the offering of the first lamb, the wine was poured out as a drink-offering unto the Lord. We must all feel the appropriateness of the selection. What more proper and profitable Sabbath employment than to sing praises unto the name of the Most High? This Sabbath, then, let us raise this Sabbath psalm. By our thanksgiving we shall worship God; through our thanksgiving God will bless us, and we shall prove, in our own experience, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord." I. **THANKFULNESS IS THE BEST ANTIDOTE TO THE EVILS OF LIFE AND LIGHTENS LIFE'S BURDENS.** The burdens of life are not equally distributed; but no life is without them. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards." The chief difference between us lies here—while one man gets him to his burden and carries it, another frets and murmurs and magnifies it. Now, thankfulness, perhaps more than anything else, helps us to keep our eye fixed upon the brighter side of life. If every night as we retired to rest we added up and recorded the mercies of the day, and started each following morning with the record in our hands, what a transfiguration of our life there soon would be! The gloom around us would be scattered, the trees would seem to clap their hands, the mountains and the hills to rejoice together, and the meadows to break out into song. II. **THANKFULNESS QUICKENS SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION AND ENLARGES SPIRITUAL CAPACITY.** Take a son who accepts every attention and provision of his mother as a matter of course, regards all that she has done for him as her duty and his due, looks upon all her service as simply fulfilling her obligation to him—what will that son know of his mother's heart? She may make some great sacrifice for him, and he will greedily accept the gift without appreciating the cost at which it is given. But take a child whose tender heart is touched with every token of the mother's thoughtfulness and love, that child will understand something of the mother's heart; as it leaves the gift to fly into its mother's arms, it will feel something of the joy the mother feels in giving, and the mother's love will be more to it than the gift itself. It is precisely so with us in our relation to God—the thankful heart discerns and realizes God. The more we are thankful the more we know God as our Friend and our Father. Our thoughts will be nearer the truth and our hearts will be nearer to God because we accept His blessings with gratitude. And thankfulness enlarges spiritual capacity. There are some attitudes of mind and heart in which God cannot bless us. The thirsty man might as well lower a sealed bottle into the well as a man seek blessing from God with a sealed heart. Let us remember this when we think of unanswered prayers. Now, thankfulness opens the heart to God, and God's blessing fills the open heart as the fresh air rushes through the open window, and the light of heaven fills the unshuttered room. When the heart is thankful for past mercies, new mercies are not far away. III. **THANKFULNESS FOSTERS CONFIDENCE AND LOVE.** The heart that registers mercy received knows there is mercy to follow. The milestones we reach on the King's highway become guide posts to the Royal City. The ungrateful heart keeps no record of the past, its memory furnishes no evidence of the eternal faithfulness, and every step in life is an untrodden path; but the thankful heart treasures up the record of the past, and travels along as though it had been that way before. That record becomes a guide. With that in our hand we feel no fear, shrink before no difficulty, cringe before no spectre, bow beneath no burden, but trudge along in the confident possession of a strength greater than our own. Soldiers march best to music. They go to face the fatal fire of the musketry, and encounter the keen edge of the sword, but the cheerful and triumphant strain of music quickens their spirit, strengthens their resolve, whets their energy, dissipates their fear, and inspires their courage. Christians live best to praise. It lifts their thoughts from the possibilities of the "awful unknown" and centres them in the faithfulness of their Father. (*F. Wells.*) *Thanksgiving—a good thing*:—I. **THE SPIRIT OF THANKFULNESS, AND THE AUDIBLE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF MERCIES RECEIVED, ARE GOOD ON THE PART OF THE INDIVIDUAL RECIPIENT THEREOF.** II. **IT IS A GOOD THING FOR THE CHURCH OF GOD TO GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD, IN OPEN AND SPECIAL ACTS OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT.** III. **IT IS A GOOD THING FOR A NATION TO GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD, AND ESPECIALLY WHEN DISTINGUISHED NATIONAL MERCIES ARE VOUCHSAFED.** (*T. W. Aveling.*) **To sing praises unto Thy name, O Most High.**—*Praise*:—I. **THE REASONABLENESS OF PRAISING GOD.** It is His due; and we defraud Him of that which He has a just claim to, at our hand, if we hold it back. To have minds furnished with scientific acquirements, or stored with historical information, or replenished with theological doc-

trine, and yet to fail to confess with adoring praise that God, with whose wonders, whether of science or of providence or of redemption, we are daily conversant—this is to be as like Satan as we well can be. While, on the other hand, devoutly to acknowledge God in His great works, to laud and magnify His holy name more and more, in proportion as our knowledge is enlarged—this is to be like the holy angels, who live in the continual contemplation of His excellencies, and in the adoring acknowledgment of them. II. THE ADVANTAGES WHICH ACCOMPANY THE RIGHT DISCHARGE OF THIS DUTY. 1. It is a most cheering and enlivening occupation. It is impossible for any one to enter into it with all his heart, without having his spirit refreshed and invigorated by the exercise. One cannot imagine a person to be habitually dejected who spends much of his time in it. 2. It is an antidote to our natural selfishness. In many of our duties we have an eye to ourselves, even while our thoughts are directed to God or to our neighbour. In prayer, for instance, this is the case, and even in thanksgiving. But praise, as distinct from thanksgiving, is eminently unselfish: it draws away our thoughts from ourselves, and fixes them exclusively upon God. We adore and praise Him not merely for those of His perfections, of the advantage of which to ourselves we are directly conscious, but for others also—such as His majesty and greatness, His justice, His wisdom, His power, the advantage of which to ourselves is less immediate and less obvious. (C. A. Heurtley, D.D.)

Ver. 2. **To show forth Thy lovingkindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night.**—*Morning and evening songs:*—The Jews have for a long while used this psalm in their Sabbath worship; and this, not because there is much if any allusion to Sabbatic rest in it, but because it is fitting that on that day above all others our thoughts should be lifted up from all earthly things to God Himself. It is a psalm of praise, and this should be the Christian's continual exercise. And we should avoid all slovenliness and formalism in our praise; and as before prayer it is well to pause and consider what we are going to ask for, so in praise we should not rush upon it helter-skelter, but engage in it with prepared hearts. Thus the psalmist would have us offer praise; not mere praise, but varied praise, praise with distinct subjects at appointed seasons. Note, then—I. MORNING WORSHIP. "To show forth Thy lovingkindness in the morning." There cannot be more suitable time for praise than this. Every morning is a sort of resurrection. We are full of vigour then. Let us give the Lord the bud of the day, its virgin beauty, its unsullied purity. The morning is the choice time. And so is it with the morning of our life. Nothing can happen to you who are young so blessed as to be converted now, while you are young. And the bright morning-like periods of our life—these, too, should be seasons for showing forth God's lovingkindness. We have our darker hours, our more sombre seasons, but when the joy days come, let us always consecrate them by praise to the giver of them. Do not, as some do, who, if they are prospering, make a point of not owing to it. We often whine as if our lives were martyrdoms, and every breath a woe, thus slandering the good Lord. There are bright days like the morning, and in them we ought to render praise. And see what is to be the subject of our praise—God's lovingkindness. Was there ever such a word in any language as this word lovingkindness? It is a duplicate deliciousness. There are within it linked sweetnesses long drawn out. It is a kind of word with which to cast spells which should charm away all fears. And this lovingkindness we are to show forth; we are not to keep it to ourselves. I do not mean by talking of it to every one he meets, casting pearls before swine, as it would be to some men, but by the very way in which he speaks, acts, and looks. A Christian ought to be the most cheerful of men. Let the joy of the Lord be our strength. II. EVENING WORSHIP,—"to show forth Thy faithfulness every night." The evening is the Sabbath of the day, and should be the Lord's. And our subject should be God's faithfulness, for we have had more experience of it. Notice that the text says "every night," the dark, drear, cold nights as well as others. Let the old who are nearing the night of life show forth the Lord's faithfulness. And let us all publish it abroad. If there be any one topic on which Christians should speak, it is this, and they should speak of it bravely, continuously, thankfully and positively. Satan makes a dead set upon it in the minds of many tempted ones, and therefore all the more should you bring the strength of your testimony that God doth not forsake His people. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Morning and night set to music:*—I. A GENERAL STATEMENT (ver. 1). "To give thanks unto the Lord"—1. Is in harmony with the original design of creation (Job

xxxviii. 7). Sin has brought discord with it into the world; but it is supremely a good thing to add to the world's harmonies, and not to its discords. 2. Is the highest expression of human service. (1) It is good for a man when he learns to give, to feel that he has so much of blessing as that he can afford to give out of the fulness that is in him: good for him to forget himself, and to think of some one whom he feels a yearning desire to bless. (2) It is good "to give thanks." A grand thing when man has that delicacy of feeling that enables him to appreciate a blessing, to recognize its source, its value, and in return acknowledge his own indebtedness. (3) Further, it is good "to give thanks unto the Lord." Anything that brings man into contact with God, everything that reciprocates the relationship between man and God, is ennobling. God gives. In thanks I give something back. 3. Imparts joy to the heart of the Lord Himself. All that we know of the heart of God teaches us that He yearns for this response. II. DETAILS. 1. The morning song. To show forth God's "lovingkindness in the morning" is a grand exercise, when the energies of life are refreshed once more; when the morning dew rests upon mind and heart; when everything is vigorous; and when the day's toils have not taken the spring and vivacity out of your spirit. 2. The evening song—"To show forth . . . Thy faithfulness every night." The faithfulness represents the strong side, the robust aspect, of Divine goodness. It expresses the fidelity of God; His strong adherence to His promise. This represents the more fatherly aspect of His goodness: the power that sustained you in the struggle of the day. (*D. Davies.*)

Vers. 4-6. For Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy work: I will triumph in the works of Thy hands.—*Delight in God's works:*—The Hebrew prophets and psalmists, when their minds were in the most exalted and inspired state, saw God in everything; in the mightiest and in the meanest movements of the universe, in all the events of history and in all the incidents of the individual experience. They were all and everywhere the works of God. To them the universe was no self-propelling machine, but a living organism of which God was the ever present soul. 1. Religious people are often afraid of science, and denounce it as an enemy to faith and piety. But what is science, and what is its aim? Its aim is to know and understand God's work in nature. Why should such an aim be construed as antagonistic to religion or detrimental to piety? God has not sent us into the world blindfolded to the wonder and glory of His works, as if He did not mean us to unriddle the secrets of His workmanship. 2. Then there are rich poetic reasons for a closer communion with the Divine works of nature. God has endowed the meanest nature among us with the susceptibility of being pleased and delighted with the scenes of beauty and grandeur with which the world is filled. We were made for very sweet and pure enjoyments, and not only to grind in the mill of our daily work. This must have been partly what the psalmist meant (ver. 4). 3. Then there is the religious motive to a more intimate acquaintance with the works of God. "How great are Thy works, and Thy thoughts are very deep!" The Divine thoughts are embodied and expressed in the Divine works. And if we wish to know God more perfectly, what ideas the Divine Being has been expressing in His creative acts—ideas of beauty, goodness, and power; to know something of the range of the infinite wisdom, and something of the sweep and compass of Almighty power, we must give ourselves with greater energy to the contemplation and study of His works. (*C. Short, M.A.*) *Divine workmanship:*—I. **THE WORK OF THE LORD.** 1. Creation. 2. Providence. 3. Grace. The renovation of the heart of man, the removal of idolatry, the creation of the beauties of holiness, that is the work of God. And it is His chief work, His sublimest achievement. II. **SOME REASONS OR GROUNDS ON WHICH A CONTEMPLATION OF THIS WORK OF GRACE IS SO EMINENTLY FITTED TO INSPIRE THE BREASTS OF GOOD MEN WITH SENTIMENTS OF PECULIAR GLADNESS.** 1. Because it is a work of such beneficial character and tendency. Wherever you see a sinner converted from the error of his ways, you see the firstfruits of a most glorious state, the scene of a mighty harvest. 2. Because it contains the richest impress of the hand of its Author. 3. Because it is a work so surprising and unexpected. "Eye hath not seen," etc. 4. On account of its permanency. This work shall advance and triumph, till there shall be unbelief nowhere, faith everywhere; hatred nowhere, love everywhere; confusion nowhere, order everywhere; darkness nowhere, light everywhere; Satan nowhere on earth, Christ everywhere. 5. Because of its necessary connection with still higher operations. The work is too much for one world to hold. When it has

filled one world it will rush over into another, and fill the recesses of eternity when earth is a cinder and time a story. (*W. Beaumont, D.D.*) *The Christian made glad*.—I. AN INTERESTING SUBJECT. It is the work of God—1. To redeem the soul (John iii. 16; Ps. lxxxix. 19; Rom. viii. 3; v. 6-8). 2. To regenerate the soul (Eph. ii. 1; 2 Cor. v. 17; John i. 13; 1 Pet. i. 23). 3. To receive the soul to favours and privileges lost by sin (Eph. ii. 11-13; 19-22). 4. To comfort the soul (Isa. xl. 1, 2; 2 Cor. i. 3, 4; Ps. cxix. 50; Rom. xv. 4; Acts ix. 31). 5. To protect and save His people to the end (Rom. viii. 31). 6. To glorify the soul (John xiv. 2, 8; xvii. 24). II. AN INTERESTING STATEMENT: "Thou hast made me glad through Thy works." This gladness is—1. Divine (Ps. xl. 1-3). 2. The gladness of experience (Ps. iv. 7). 3. Social joy (Mal. iii. 16). 4. The gladness of faith and hope (Rom. xv. 4; Heb. vi. 16-19; Titus i. 2; ii. 13). III. A JUDICIOUS RESOLUTION: "I will triumph in the work of Thy hands." This implies—1. Grateful acknowledgment of Divine obligation (1 Pet. i. 3). 2. Intimate acquaintance and rapturous satisfaction with the works of God's hands (1 Cor. ii. 2; Gal. vi. 14). 3. Expectation of an ultimate and complete triumph. 4. A determination to proclaim the works of God's hands to others. (*Helps for the Pulpit.*)

Ver. 5. **O Lord, how great are Thy works!**—*Man's admiration and marvel at God's great works*.—A near connection of Sir David Brewster, but not a relative, who in former years often lived in his house, and formed one of the loving watchers by his death-bed, gives this characteristic and striking anecdote: "When we were living in his house at St. Andrew's, he was much occupied with the microscope, and, as was his custom, he used to sit up studying it after the rest of the household had gone to bed. I often crept back into the room on pretence of having letters to write or something to finish, just to watch him. After a little he would forget that I was there, and I have often seen him suddenly throw himself back in his chair, lift up his hands, and exclaim, 'Good God, good God! how marvellous are Thy works.' One Sunday morning I said to him that it had been given to him to show forth much of God's great and marvellous works, and he answered, 'Yes, and I have found them to be great and marvellous; and I have felt them to be His.'"**Thy thoughts are very deep.**—*The depth of God's thoughts*.—I. Out of those thoughts have come all that EVER HAVE BEEN, AND THAT ARE GONE. Who can tell the number of worlds, with all their productions, populations, institutions, that have been and that are no more? They were all once in the thoughts of God. II. Out of those thoughts have come all that ARE AND WILL BE. How vast is this universe! Who can tell the number of worlds and systems, and the myriad creatures of varied species, sentient and insentient, rational and irrational, that belong to them? They all came out of the depths of God's thoughts; the archetypes and germs were all there as in immeasurable seas. Who shall tell what worlds and beings are yet to come? Generations of creatures in all planets may succeed each other as waves that break upon the shore. But all the worlds, systems, and existences that are ever to come, are in THE THOUGHTS OF GOD. How "deep," then, are God's thoughts! (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 6. **A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this.**—*The degradation of man*.—In this psalm we have a contrast between the animal and the spiritual life, the latter exulting in God, uttering His praise, receiving His thoughts, studying His works; the former cleaving to the earth, wallowing in the dust, with no ambition that soars higher than the husks which it eats, or the roof of the sty which it occupies. "A brutish man." It is originally a compound expression—"a brute-man." It is a degrading epithet, and it is employed in common daily life. I. MAN'S NATURE IS VERY CLOSELY ALLIED TO THAT OF THE ANIMAL. It is difficult to define the boundary between instinct and reason. The mental faculties of man and of the animals run in parallel lines to a point high up on the scale, where the difference begins. Animals serve man, and should be treated justly, considerably, kindly. II. THE DEGRADATION OF MAN TO THE LEVEL OF THE ANIMAL. 1. When he is ruled by appetite, not by conscience. A man will sometimes attempt to justify his avarice, his pride, his vindictiveness, his sensuality by saying that he is only following the lead of passions which God has implanted in him; that the light which "leads astray is light from heaven," that God has created the appetite in his nature. Yes; but God never intended it to rule or lead; He intended it to serve, to be under the

control of reason and conscience and religious principle. 2. When he eats and drinks, and does not worship. Training may produce a great change in animals; education may turn the stolid rustic into an intelligent, cultured scholar; but there is something greater than any advantage which education may confer—that is, the capacity of union and communion with God of lifting up the soul to the Most High. And yet there are some who ignore this, who cast this pearl before the swine of evil passions, darken the window that looks heavenwards, nail the shutters over it, so that not a ray of light can reach the spirit; go down, down to the animal, as if there were no God, no worship, no adoration, no gratitude. The altar is in ruins; and the man has become as the brute. 8. Because he is working blindly. Take a man who is bent on acquiring wealth, who sacrifices everything on the altar of Mammon; he is shrewd, quick to take advantage of the favourable breeze, successful, makes his “pile,” as they say. Is he working blindly? Yes, blindly; he has never discerned the meaning of what he is doing, he has never appraised the course at its right value, never estimated its bearing, its consequences to his moral nature; he is like a mole, scratching and burrowing in the dust, with no eye for the broad universe, and the light of God that floods it. And there is no thought of the future. He degrades himself to an equality with the brute, forgetting that while the beast “goes downwards to the earth,” the spirit of man “goeth upward,” and that man shall receive in another state “according to that he hath done in the body, whether it be good or bad.”

III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS DEGRADATION. 1. He has no eye for the greatest and noblest in life. Just as the eyes and the light, the air and the lungs correspond to each other, so it is with beauty and taste, science and intellect, friends and affection. And there is a spiritual faculty by which we discern spiritual things. The brutish man represses, restrains, stifles this faculty; resists the Spirit of God, who would quicken, direct, enlarge it. 2. He does not, then, value his nature, as God values it. He has degraded himself to a level with the swine; he has no sense of sonship, no feeling of spiritual dignity, he has gone down and down to the mire. Happy is he if he comes to himself, if in a sane moment the animal is cowed, and the angel asserts itself, and the ragged swineherd says, “I will arise and go to my Father.” 3. He has no resources in time of suffering and trouble. God is a stranger—he dreads the thought of God—would fain hope that God does not exist. He is like the brute; he has nothing to fall back upon. Very different is the experience of the spiritual man. Trouble comes; but he sees God in it. The tempest gathers; but “His way is in the whirlwind,” etc. The deep, full, bitter cup is presented—but it has been mingled by a Father’s love. The bear deprived of her whelps can only rage and moan; the brutish man bereaved of his children can only curse and rebel; the godly man, missing his loved ones in the gloom of the gorge of death, can say (Job. i. 21). (*J. Owen.*)

Ver. 8. **But Thou, Lord, art most high for evermore.**—*The utmost for the Highest.*—Mr. G. F. Watts, the spiritual seer amongst our modern masters of art, was asked by an enterprising editor to quote the motto which had been most influential in his artistic life. He replied, “I have invented a motto for myself, ‘The Utmost for the Highest.’” There is a matchless inspiration for life, as for art, in Mr. Watts’ characteristic message. The Divine election of youth is vision, and its grace is the passion for the highest. Longfellow recognizes it when he makes the typical climber a youth—

“A youth, who bore, ‘mid snow and ice,
A banner, with the strange device,
Excelsior!”

And one of the latest additions to the roll of climbers of the Matterhorn, the Alpine peak last to be conquered because most inaccessible, is a young French girl of seventeen, who, by a happy coincidence, rejoices in the name *Félicité*. It is the youngest of the modern nations to enter the concert of great world powers whose citizens urge their growing race to “hitch their wagon to a star.” Economists have discussed of late the interesting phenomenon in business life that the most successful men are mostly young. The spectacle of millionaires under forty has perplexed them. The secret probably comes nearest to revealing itself in the suggestion that it is the ambition of youth for the highest, and the willingness, unfettered by maxims of prudence, to venture everything in its attainment that explains their success. Emerson penetrates the arcana of the same mystery with

his saying, "The hero is one who takes risks." The excelsior spirit is by nature a prerogative of the young. They are in a peculiar sense "children of the highest." But the earliest of the grave perils that await the young is the danger and discouragement of diillusionment; the peril of seeing the highest and becoming content with less than the highest—of settling into inglorious ease with the best undone and the utmost untried. Less than the utmost is sacrilege in the sanctuary of the highest. "She hath done what she could" is the test of the service of duty as well as of the sacrifice of love. To do our best is the proof of talent in the ethical sphere, for the pursuit of the highest, and not its attainment alone, is the hallowing of work. This is the pursuit that Michael Angelo reverently expounds: "Nothing makes the soul so pure, so religious, as the endeavour to create something perfect; for God is perfection, and whosoever strives for it strives for something that is godlike." It is the strife for the best that matures and enriches character, whether the joy of triumph is added or withheld. It is not the song alone, but the spirit of the singer, that perfects the utmost for the highest. It is said of Jenny Lind that in conversation one day with Mr. John Addington Symonds, she said of her life-work, "I sing to God." There is a memorial brass in the chapel of Balliol College, Oxford, to the late Mr. Lewis Nettleship, who a few years ago was lost in an ascent of Mont Blanc, with an inscription that has been to many an abiding inspiration: "He loved great things and thought little of himself; desiring neither fame nor influence, he won the devotion of men, and was a power in their lives; and, seeking no disciples, he taught to many the greatness of the world and of man's mind." Life's greatness of privilege and of responsibility meets and mingles in the inscrutable sense that our "utmost" lives and moves in others. And lest we should imagine that the utmost for the highest is merely an artistic euphemism for the eager strife for fame and prestige, we need day by day to guard any noble ambition within us from depreciating into the pursuit of the paltry boons of self-seeking by holding it back from

"The longing for ignoble things,
The strife for triumph more than truth."

To do this successfully we must watch also lest

"We wind ourselves too high
For mortal man below the sky."

To remember the sanctity of common life, and that obedience to simple dues simply fulfilled are ladders on which we climb to our highest things, will be to most of us the way of enduring conquest over meaner modes of the soul. We cannot serve the lower within us and reach the higher beyond us. Weighted with self, the wings of the strongest weary. There is no gain except by loss. Perhaps a beautiful converse of Mr. Watts' motto might be found in Michael Angelo's suggestive saying, "As the marble wastes, the image grows." Waste and growth, how they correlate themselves in all progress towards the highest; their very correspondence, indeed, is life's law of progress. (*F. Platt, B.D.*)

Ver. 10. But my horn shalt Thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil.—*Character: an ordination charge:*—The image of lifting up the horn denotes strength, courage, victory over enemies—the power and glory which rays out from the Christly life in the soul. In the legends of early Christianity we read that night and day a cloud of light shone round about Jesus; and the old masters used to paint a nimbus round His sacred head, by which they sought to express, or at least to suggest, the Divinity of our Lord. We do not blame them. The halo was there, though it rarely assumed the form of a visible Shechinah. It was the beauty of holiness—something to be felt and not seen. John said, "We beheld His glory"—the Shechinah occasionally shining forth, as in the Transfiguration. But that was at rare intervals, whereas the power of the holy life was always present. And here also is the hiding of His ministers' power, in the bright, subtle aura, the throbbing, living light that streams from them, the Christlike character that rays out from the life of Jesus in the soul and makes the atmosphere bright and healing around about them. The true minister is not simply a speaker, not at all an actor—he is more; he is an influence, a

spiritual force, a fragrance—subtle, pervading. All unconsciously we exert an influence for good or evil. Was there not a power of healing in the very shadow of Peter as it fell? There is that in every man, call it what you will, which adds to or detracts from all he may say or do. Character, the Greeks called it. You miss it in biography; it refuses to be put into words—but it is there; we all know it, we have all felt it. It is as inseparable from man as his own shadow. The psalmist's horn was not the loose tantûr which formed part of the Eastern head-dress. What he meant was that as the horn grows out of the animal, even so the glory of the Divine life rays out in a luminous character. It is the life of Christ in the soul that will make our life beautiful to behold and powerful for good. Raphael, in sketching his figures, gave his first attention to the drawing and modelling of the limbs, adding the draperies only after he had satisfied himself as to these. He thus succeeded in imparting to them an air of inimitable ease and truthfulness; whereas Carlo Maratti, as Reynolds informs us, was of opinion that the disposition of drapery was a more difficult art than even that of drawing the human figure. The natural result was, that "in Maratti the disposition of the drapery appears so artificial that he is inferior to Raphael even in that which gave him his best claim to reputation." Have a far greater care for the cultivation of sound principles than of the winning manners of the "society man" or the accomplishments of the drawing-room—all very well in their way. It has been not altogether inaptly remarked that good breeding is surface Christianity. A graceful address and the "manners that maketh man" may form a suitable finish to a noble character. But be you careful not to deal in varnish or veneer. Cultivate the Spirit of Christ—it will shed a lustre over any society. And how may this be attained? By God's grace. Let not the simplicity of the reply blind you to the wealth of its meaning. "For Thou art the glory of their strength." "In Thy favour shall our horn be exalted." "I am anointed with fresh oil." As guests were anointed at feasts with perfumes, so are believers cheered and delighted by fresh outpourings of Divine grace. The consciousness of God's favour is the oil that maketh the face to shine; it transfigures life. "As He prayed the fashion of His countenance was altered." It was the secret of the Lord's Transfiguration. And the same truth applies to all Christians. Have we not seen men and women possessed with great ideas, their countenance all aglow with a sweet saintliness, in their eyes a deep, living light? You might well say that in their case the resurrection was already past, or that they had begun to put on the resurrection body. Dignity of mind will impress itself on the most homely countenance, and through determined spiritual preference we may obtain a spiritual body. But it means constant and unbroken communion with God. (*M. O. Evans.*) **I shall be anointed with fresh oil.**—*The holy oil:*—The world, like the Athenians (*Acts xvii. 2*), is ever craving for some new thing. And they will take immense trouble to gratify this craving. It is a proof in itself, were there none other, that the world has nothing really satisfying to offer. Its happiness is always "in the next room." Real freshness, newness of heart and life, the secret of perpetual youth is to be found alone in Him in whom "all things are become new." Now, of this freshness the psalmist speaks in our text. Let us inquire—I. **HIS MEANING.** What is this oil? It is undoubtedly the type of the Holy Spirit. Now, this oil was—1. Sacred (*Psa. lxxxix. 20; Ex. xxx. 33*). The tabernacle and all its furniture were sanctified by it. And it tells of the Holy Spirit (*Luke iv. 18; Acts x. 38*). 2. Ennobling. Prophets, priests and kings were consecrated by it to their great offices. And those whom the Holy Spirit anoints are, now, made kings and priests unto God. 3. Invigorating, enabling. The Greek runners and wrestlers were anointed with oil, as it was supposed to give them strength and help in their contests. Undoubtedly it is so in the Christian race; this oil gives power for all we have to do or bear. The Church's crying need is power from on high. All human strength will fail to win a single soul if the power of the Holy Ghost is wanting. For instance of counterfeited power (*Acts xix. 13-17*). Lay to heart Christ's words (*Luke xxiv. 49*). 4. Uniting (*Psa. cxxxiii. 1, 2*). Strife, anger, wrath—all depart under the influence of this anointing. 5. Gladdening. A joyous face is often a sermon in itself. Gladness of heart which shines out of us, whether we will or no, is no mean testimony to the presence of the Christ within. God wants us to be glad (*Heb. i. 9*). If we are not, press the inquiry (*Job xv. 11*). 6. Illumining and guiding (*1 John ii. 27*). And—7. Perfuming, fragrant. See the fragrance of Mary's alabaster box of ointment. And we are to be a sweet savour of Christ. II. **THE CONDITION OF THIS ANOINTING.** 1. Union with the

anointed one—Christ. 2. Abiding in Christ. If we walk after the flesh, this anointing cannot rest on us. "Upon man's flesh it shall not be poured." Are we in communion with Him now? (*E. W. Moore, M.A.*) *Fresh grace confidently expected*:—David is very positive. He does not say, I hope, but, I shall be. And this is not wonderful, for the subject of this psalm is the ever living God. Now, on this confidence of David, note—I. IT WAS A CONFIDENCE FULL OF MEANING. For it meant—1. That his strength would be renewed. It was a common belief amongst Orientals that anointing with oil added to a man's vigour. So David felt and knew that whenever it was required God would renew his strength. 2. That he should be afresh assured of the Divine favour. To anoint a man with oil was a token of his welcome to your house. His feet were washed that he might be refreshed, and then the guest worthy of especial honour was anointed with perfumed nard. David had the favour of God as a shepherd boy, he found it anew as a warrior, and he had yet other tokens when he became King of Israel. Every favour received is a pledge of more to follow. Dawn is the earnest of noon. 3. That he should be confirmed in his estate. It is noteworthy that David was anointed three times. First of all by Samuel, in prospect of his ultimately becoming king; a second time by the men of Judah, when he reigned over a part of the nation; and a third time at Hebron, when the whole Israelitish nation came together, and he was solemnly elected to be their king. Perhaps he recollected this, and looking upon these various anointings as confirmations of his kingly state, he felt that God would yet further confirm him therein. There were many rebellions against him, but they were all futile. Now, we are kings and priests unto God, and Satan, if he could, would soon bring our kingdom and priesthood to an end; but it is written, "Thou maintainest my lot." 4. That he should be qualified for his office by the bestowal of fresh grace. This was the meaning of the anointing whether of king or priest. This is a very sweet confidence for us. If you are a minister of the Gospel, you will have a thousand reasons for feeling yourself to be incompetent, and you might well throw down the staff of your pastorate, and leave work, if you were not sure that your sufficiency is of God. 5. That he should have more cause of delight. Anointing was intended to give pleasure. There are some now-a-days who would like to strike out everything from mortal life which gives pleasure. We have societies now which are anti to every mortal thing that is pleasant and agreeable, and if there remains one solitary enjoyment in this vale of tears which has not some society opposed to it, I have no doubt that some genius will commence a crusade against it to-morrow. The theory is that all wholesome things are nasty, and that all gratifications are deadly. Now, I do not believe in this theory for ordinary life, much less for spiritual life. Men used of old to anoint the heads of their guests to give them pleasure, and they were never blamed for it; and the Lord intends that His people should have the richest pleasure in their souls. He is the happy God, and would have those around Him happy. He never intended this world to be a great workhouse, a great drill shed, or a convict settlement, so arranged that labour should banish joy. He has made this world to be a happy lodging for His dear children till He shall call them home. I believe the Lord intended His people to be the happiest people under the sun. When I see certain of them repining, complaining, fretting, worrying, and calling that state of mind "experience," I pray, "The Lord save me from that experience." Our Lord Jesus was sorrowful not as our example but as our substitute; He was put to grief that we might be joyous; He bore our load that we might have no load to carry. We which have believed do enter into rest, and in that rest we discover new joys each day. The banks of the river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God, are not dark with weeping willows, or dreary with a jungle of thorns and thistles, but they are lovely with the rose of Sharon and the lilies of the valley, and among its shady groves the righteous lie down at peace. Yes, we did rejoice, we have rejoiced, and we mean to rejoice again. II. THE CONFIDENCE OF OUR TEXT IS WELL GUARDED. When we rest in God we may boast as we will. I stood the other day by a spring, pleased to see it bubble up constantly with cool, refreshing water. One who came thither to fetch water for her house said to me, "It is always the same, sir, always the same; I never knew the sharpest frost to freeze it, or the most burning summer to dry it; the stream is equally full at all times of the year." This was very different from a fountain which I often pass, which more than half the year bears the notice, "This drinking fountain is closed during the winter"; and very different from those brooks in our own and other lands which

live upon the rains, and therefore do not contain a drop of water in the time of drought. Why does the spring always remain the same? Because it has tapped the great fountains. There is a deep that croucheth beneath, there are vast secret reservoirs in the bowels of the earth, and if you can set them abroad, you are sure of a perpetual supply. Now, if you live upon God, you can say, "All my fresh springs are in Thee." And all this is so because of our union with Christ. Every Christian is a part of Christ. And because the Holy Spirit dwells in us. It was a good day for the poor widow of Zarephath in which Elijah came to live with her. If I had been in her case I should have felt that I was safe enough, for if God did not think of me He would think of Elijah. O, child of God, know ye not that ye are the temples of the Holy Ghost? Look, too, at the promises of God's Word. They are to me a gradual revelation. I cannot realize, grasp and understand them except by degrees. I have one for to-day, but I shall find another open for me to-morrow. The train which starts from London to go to the North continues to traverse the distance day by day—how is it supplied with water? Why, there are trenches between the rails in several different places, and from them the engine drinks as it rushes along; it is supplied as it runs. This is just what our Heavenly Father has done for you. You are on the road to heaven, but between here and there there are many stores of grace waiting for you. Our experience has proved that we shall be afresh anointed. We have been so many a time already. Changes are appointed for us as long as we are here. David said, "My mountain standeth firm; I shall never be moved," but in a very little time he sang another hymn. When I hear brethren so very confident I am reminded of a story I have heard of the olden times, when a young gentleman who had never travelled before went over Hounslow Heath, and was accosted by another gentleman who rode by his side and joined in an interesting conversation. Our friend said at last, "I have always been told by my father that this is a very dangerous heath, but the old gentleman, I think, was exceedingly nervous, for we have come all this way without being molested by highwaymen." "Yes," said the other, "but now is the time for you to stop and deliver;" and he clapped his pistol to his ear. It often happens when we say that we shall have no more temptations that our confidence is in itself a temptation. But when times of sore trial come the Lord has appeared for us. III. THIS CONFIDENCE CALMS ALL OUR FEARS. Sometimes we are filled with fear on account of our soul poverty. Our text is the answer to it. I am poor, but I shall receive my daily pension. Imagine two Israelites talking together one day, and one of them says to the other, "Your cupboard seems to be very empty, I fear you are improvident." "But," says the other, "do you know, we gathered this morning an omer full of manna, and it exactly supplied my family. I have a wife and a troop of boys with mighty appetites, and very soon the omer which had been full was empty, but we look for more to-morrow." "Nothing in the house!" said the other, "do you not feel distressed?" "No, not at all." "Why not?" "Because I believe the manna will fall to-morrow morning, and that there will be just as much as I shall want, so that I have no need to lay by any in store." "Very imprudent," said the other. "I believe we ought to make hay while the sun shines. If you will come to my house, I will show you the good stock of manna which I have carefully laid by." "No," said the other, "I do not care to see it just now, but I will tell you what I will do; I will come down to-morrow at dinner-time and see it." So the man gathered in the morning his own manna fresh, and his family have been satisfied with it and delighted, and after they have eaten he says, "I will go down and see my rich friend's manna; he was much better off last night than I was." He goes to his friend's door, but his friend does not seem pleased to see him. "I have come to see your manna that you stored up so carefully." But the other blushes, and owns that he has none to show. "Why not?" his friend inquires. "Well, the fact is, I do not want you to come into my tent at all. I must come forth from it myself. There is a most detestable smell all through the tent. I had to take away the manna and bury it, for it bred worms, and stank." "Ah," said the other, "then, after all, I did well to live upon daily manna, and to have no stock in hand; and you did foolishly to lay by a store." Beloved, it calms our fears about our poverty when we remember that the granary of heaven is not exhausted, and that as each morning breaks we shall find the dew of grace lying about our tent. IV. AND THIS ASSURANCE TENDS TO RAISE OUR HOPES. As to our holding on to the end, as to our useful service, as to full fellowship with Christ. V. THIS MAKES US FEEL GREAT PITY FOR THOSE

WHO CANNOT HOPE TO BE ANOINTED WITH FRESH OIL. Such are all those who are destitute of faith. The present may please you for the present, but there are evil times coming. It is a blessed thing to be so rich that there is no end to your wealth, and nobody can say that but a Christian. It is a blessed thing to have a stream at your foot, which will never fail; and nobody has such a river but a Christian. O the utter, utter poverty of the man who lives and dies without Christ. God grant it may not be so for us. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Anointed with fresh oil.*—I. CHRISTIAN ILLUMINATION IS THE ANOINTING OF THE SACRED SPIRIT (2 Cor. i. 21; 1 John ii. 20, 27). 1. The conversion of man is effected through the influence of God's truth applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit. It is in the very essence of this process that the verities of Scripture impress themselves with such resistless energy over the whole man that he is compelled to yield to their influence. It is, however, the influence of Truth—reasonable, genial, and gratifying to its subject. 2. The subsequent growth in grace of the man who has become a believer is effected by the same Almighty and gracious influence. The Word of God is the nutriment of faith. 3. Nothing short of close personal dealing with the Spirit of God in prayer will maintain the proper influence of Divine truths over our understanding, our conscience, and our affections. II. CHRISTIAN CONSECRATION IS THE ANOINTING OF THE SPIRIT. Great is the change made in the individual who is the subject of such consecration. The disciple who declares to the servant-maid, "I know not the man," is hard to identify with him who, on the temple steps, exclaims, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." The result of such an anointing upon our Churches would be incalculable good; the growth of holy enjoyment, and the increase of holy usefulness, would elicit from all quarters of the land the joyful shouts proclaiming a present God, and wonders wrought by His power. III. CHRISTIAN GLADNESS IS THE ANOINTING OF THE SPIRIT (Ps. xlv. 7; Heb. i. 9). Gladness is the inheritance of the saints, and, in regard to it, we often need to be "anointed with fresh oil." Exhortations to joy are frequent in both the Old and New Testament. Joy is one of the foundations of the kingdom of grace in the heart, which is righteousness, joy, and peace. This holy gladness rests on the twofold basis of a firm, constant belief in the all-pervading providence of God, and a confident assurance of participation in His forgiving mercy, manifested in the Lord Jesus Christ. IV. CHRISTIAN GRACES ARE THE ANOINTING OF THE SPIRIT (Gal. v. 22, 23). There is a legend which represents St. Francis as having looked so long and so eagerly on the body of the suffering Saviour, that the prints of the nails were reproduced in his hands, and the mark of the spear in his side. There is another legend, which affirms that Veronica possessed a napkin with which the Lord Jesus wiped His brow on the way to Calvary; which cloth was said to bear upon it a perfect representation of the Saviour's countenance. These fables have lying behind them an important fact—the assimilating power of communion with Christ (2 Cor. iii. 18). (*W. G. Lewis.*) *Freshness.*—I. ITS EXCELLENCY. 1. In our devotions. 2. In our feelings. Whether it be exultation or depression, let it be true, not superficial or simulated. 3. In utterance Nature, pure and unsophisticated, is the best instrument for grace. 4. In labour. We ought to serve the Lord to-day with just as much novelty in it as there was ten years ago. I may even venture to say thirty years ago. Talk of Jesus as if you were telling news. Is it not always glad tidings, fresh from heaven? II. THE FEAR OF ITS DEPARTURE. 1. Christian people can lose the freshness of their own selves by imitating one another. By adopting as our model some one form of the Christian life, other than that which is embodied in the person of our Lord, we shall soon manufacture a set of paste gems, but the diamond flash and glory will be unknown. 2. Another way of spoiling your freshness is by repression. The feebler sort of Christians dare not say, feel, or do, until they have asked their leader's leave. 3. If we want to keep up our freshness, however, the main thing is never to fall into neglect about our souls. Do you know what state the man is generally in when you are charmed by his freshness? Is he not in fine health? III. HOPE OF ITS RENEWAL. Let us not think that we must grow stale and heavenly things grow old with us. 1. For, first, our God in whom we trust renews the face of the year. He is beginning His work again in the fair processes of nature. The dreary winter has passed away. The time of the singing of birds is coming on, and the sweet flowers are peeping out from their graves, enjoying a resurrection of glory and beauty. Now, this is the God whom we serve; and if we have been passing through our winter-time, let us look out for our spring. If any of you have been

growing cold of late—if any of you have grown stale and mechanical, and have fallen into ruts, come, look up: look up, and pray the great Renewer to visit you. 2. Moreover, there is an excellent reason why you may expect to have all your freshness coming back again: it is because Christ dwells in you. Do you not know it? Christ is formed in you the hope of glory; and, if so, your glory will be fresh about you, for He never grows stale. It is God that said of Him, "Thou hast the dew of Thy youth." 3. Then there is the other grand doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. If your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, shall He not be always to you a fountain of new life—a spring of fresh delights? Why, it must be so. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Vers. 12-15. **The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.**—*The prosperity of the righteous*.—I. **WHO SHALL FLOURISH?** "The righteous." There are none who are righteous by a righteousness of their own—that is, a righteousness derived from themselves; but there are those who are righteous by a righteousness derived from God. Of this the apostle speaks; "That I may be found in Him, not having mine own," etc. There is a twofold righteousness spoken of in the Scriptures: the righteousness of justification, and the righteousness of sanctification. These are very distinguishable from each other; and unless it is clearly discriminated, a confusion will pervade the whole of the religious system. The one is the change of our state; the other of our nature. The one is a relative change; the other personal. The one entitles us to glory; the other is a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. The one is an instantaneous operation, and applies at once; the other is gradual and progressive. Yet they are always inseparable, though distinguishable. II. **HOW SHALL THEY FLOURISH?** "Like the palm-tree; . . . like a cedar." There is a real and active progressiveness in religion; though Christian principles and passions at present are all imperfect, yet they are growing, and shall advance to maturity. This progressiveness is to be considered as a Christian's duty, his desire, and his privilege. His duty; and therefore it is so often enjoined upon him. "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge," etc. "Giving all diligence add to your faith," etc. His desire; therefore he "forgets the things that are behind," etc.; and therefore his prayer is, "Perfect that which concerneth me." "Forsake not the work of Thy own hands," etc. His privilege, and therefore it is provided for him; "therefore it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;" and from this fulness he is to receive "grace for grace." III. **WHERE SHALL THEY FLOURISH?** "In the courts of our God." There it is that you have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. There His ordinances are dispensed—the ordinances of life. There God hath commanded the blessing, even life for evermore. In order to enjoy these advantages, you must be planted there, as a tree must be, in order to be fruitful; that is, you must be fixed there. How is this? In two ways. One by choice—for, "where the treasure is, there will the heart be also"; and where the heart is, there you are, wherever the body may be. The other is by the frequency of your attendance, availing yourselves of every opportunity the providence of God allows you to be found there. IV. **WHEN SHALL THEY FLOURISH?** "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age." Not that they escape all the effects of old age, far from it; but as the apostle says, "When the outward man perishes, the inward man is renewed day by day." When the outward ear grows deaf, then the inward man hears the voice of God. When the eye grows dim, the mind is irradiated and enlightened. When the fleshly parts grow weak, we are "strengthened with might in the inner man." It is one of the consequences of old age in Christians to look towards heaven. There he reckons upon his relations and friends. "There my best friends, my kindred dwell—there God my Saviour reigns." He seems to have more connection with that world than with this. We look for meekness in the aged. The young are giddy, fierce, fiery, and determined—the older are willing to give up everything for the sake of peace, unless it is a good conscience and truth. There we look for maturity and judgment in divine things—that he should be able to distinguish things that differ, that his heart may be established in righteousness. He has not only had faith, but experience: the one is help to the other. V. **WHY ARE THEY TO FLOURISH?** "To show that the Lord is upright." There seems something remarkable in this. Their fearing God, attending His ordinances, and "bringing forth fruit even to old age," shows that they are upright; but how does it show that God is upright? It does this in two ways. First, as it evidences His faithfulness to His engage-

ments. All the ways of the Lord are mercy; not only mercy, but truth; because they are in fulfilment of His promises. Then, next, because it shows their adhering to Him with purpose of heart; and not turning back from Him, shows that they found Him what they took Him to be. Had they been deceived in Him they would have given Him up. Under the law, the servant that had his ear bored gave proof that he loved his master; and he would not have loved him if he had not behaved well to him. The attachment and the adherence of the servants of God proclaim his faithfulness; and show they have not been disappointed in their expectations of Him. Just like the venerable Polycarp, who, when asked to deny his Saviour or perish, saith, "He has been a good master to me these eighty years, and can I now forsake Him?" This shows the perseverance of the Christian; not what he is, but what God is. "By the grace of God I am what I am." VI. WHO CAN BEAR HIS TESTIMONY TO THIS TRUTH? "I," says David; "He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him." Every one can say this, and will say this, who has, like David, made God his rock for building upon—his rock of danger—his rock of refreshment, whose streams follow him all the wilderness through. (*W. Jay.*) *The plants of grace*:—I. THE THREEFOLD RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH ALL THE GODLY POSSESS. 1. Imputed. This is sometimes called the righteousness of God, because God provided it; it is called the righteousness of Christ, inasmuch as He performed it; it is also called the righteousness of faith, as that is the appointed means whereby we receive it. 2. Implanted. He is the subject of new principles, motives, feelings. 3. Exhibited. A changed heart will be seen in a changed life. II. THE COMPARISON EMPLOYED. 1. For the righteous to be compared to the palm-tree, reminds us of the important truth that the most useful is the most flourishing believer. 2. The righteous will also grow as the cedar in Lebanon. A flourishing Christian is a growing Christian; he grows in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; he advances in the divine life, and abounds more and more both in the active and passive fruits of the Spirit. III. THE PLACE SPECIFIED. "The house of the Lord," etc. "Christians," says an able writer, "are like soldiers; it is easier to fight in the regiment, where the men stand shoulder to shoulder, than standing alone to maintain some solitary outpost. They are like live coals; when separated they go out, but when gathered into heaps they burn and brighten, so as even to purify gold and silver. They are like trees; they grow the tallest where they stand together, running no small chance, like a solitary tree, of becoming dwarfed, stunted, gnarled, and bark-bound, if they grow alone. You never yet saw a tall and tapering mast which, catching the winds of heaven in its outspread wings, impelled the gallant ship on through the sea, and over the rolling billows, but its home had been the forest; there, with its foot planted upon the Norwegian rock, it grew amid neighbours that drew up each other to the skies." IV. THE PERIOD INDICATED. "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age," etc. This, of course, does not imply that all the godly live to be old. It is true that the fear of the Lord prolongeth days; but still it often happens that the fairest specimens of sanctified humanity are called away in their early prime and promise. What the words signify is, evidently, that if they lived to be old their souls would continue to prosper, and that the peaceable fruits of righteousness would still be produced. V. THE REASON ADDUCED. "To show that the Lord is upright," etc. A most conclusive proof have we in every "old disciple" of the faithfulness of God. When the hoary-headed saint reads the promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," he can stand up and say to all the world, It is true, for so have I found it during the whole course of my pilgrimage. (*Expository Outlines.*) *The provision made in the Gospel for the progressive advancement in holiness, and the way in which we may avail ourselves of that provision*:—I. THE BLESSED SECURITY FURNISHED IN THE GOSPEL FOR OUR MAKING DAILY PROGRESS IN THE WAY OF HOLINESS, EVEN TO THE END OF LIFE. This security we may consider as resting on these two grounds. 1. God hath declared this to be His unchangeable purpose with regard to all His people. 2. He hath also revealed to us the means by which that purpose is to be carried into effect, and which we see to be admirably adapted for answering the purpose for which they were intended. (1) The mediation of Christ. (2) The dispensation of the Spirit. II. HOW WE SHOULD AVAIL OURSELVES OF THIS AMPLE PROVISION MADE IN THE GOSPEL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF OUR FAITH, AND FOR OUR MAKING DAILY PROGRESS IN THE WAY OF LIFE. 1. Let us often fix our thoughts on that abundant provision, believing the declarations of God's Word, and that they shall be fulfilled in the experience of all who receive

them in faith, and act upon that faith. 2. Let us attend regularly and conscientiously upon the means of grace which are intended for promoting our spiritual improvement. 3. Let us set ourselves without delay to engage entirely in the duties of the Christian life, and to do so heartily, as to the Lord, and to do so in the exercise of faith, believing that in the inexhaustible fullness of Christ there is enough and to spare for all—grace suited to our state and circumstances, whatever they may be. (*J. Muirhead, D.D.*) *Tongues in trees*.—I. THE PALM-TREE AND THE CEDAR GROW IN APPARENTLY UNCONGENIAL SOIL. In the East the palm does not grow in the fertile loam, but in the arid sand, where there appears to be no moisture to sustain it, and where the scorching sun seems almost certain to destroy it; and the cedar of Lebanon grows, not in the fertile, sheltered valley, where the streamlets play and the silvery rivers glide, but on the rocky heights, where all seems cold and sterile. And the righteous in this world grow and flourish in apparently uncongenial soil. II. THE PALM-TREE AND CEDAR GROW BECAUSE THEY ARE FED BY HIDDEN RESOURCES. The palm in the desert is fed by hidden springs that flow beneath the surface of the dry sand; its roots drink deep and are sustained, and they send up the moisture into the leaves and branches, and they are refreshed and invigorated. The roots of the cedar are fed by the streams that come trickling down from the snow-crowned tops of Lebanon; they go far and wide into the fissures of the rocks, securing stability by their sturdy grasp, and continuing strong by drinking of the perpetual supply that comes down from the melting snows. So the righteous in this world grow and flourish. Like the palm, they are fed by hidden resources: with joy they draw water out of the wells of salvation. Like the cedar, the righteous grow, for they are fed by hidden resources which come from above; the water of life flows down from the river of life that flows by the throne of God. III. THE PALM-TREE AND CEDAR, FED BY HIDDEN RESOURCES, GROW INTO THINGS OF BEAUTY AND UTILITY. In many particulars the righteous are as the palm-tree, for they yield the fruit of the lip and of the life to the praise and the glory of God; and their lives are not only happy and holy, but exceedingly useful to their fellow-men. They live, not for themselves, but for others, and endeavour to leave the world better than they found it. They also afford grateful shelter and shade to the weary and heavy-laden ones. "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." They are as palm-trees, the emblems of victory; they have been victorious over the difficulties that beset their pathway and opposed them in their coming to Christ—they have overcome Satan, and they are overcoming the world, and they are to conquer even death itself. Much that we have said about the palm will apply with equal force and aptness to the cedar, for it is towering and widespreading and evergreen, exceedingly noble, and very useful; and there is this additional about the cedar—its wood was exceedingly useful for sacred purposes, being used in the building of places dedicated to the worship of the Most High. So the righteous—they grow stately like cedars, and when cut down by the hand of death, they are removed to the new Jerusalem, and form part of the Church triumphant in the skies. (*F. W. Brown.*) *The righteous flourishing like the palm-tree*.—"The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree." We must, of course, consider this comparison as chiefly applicable to our adorable Redeemer, the King of Righteousness, and the Tree of Life. It must also have some relation and likeness to the character of every faithful servant of God. I. THEIR USEFULNESS. "The extensive importance of this tree (says an Eastern traveller) is one of the most curious subjects to which a person can direct his attention. A considerable part of the inhabitants of Egypt, Arabia, and Persia, subsist almost entirely upon its fruit. They boast of its medicinal virtues. Their camels feed upon the date stone. From the leaves, they make a variety of articles for domestic use. From the fibres of the boughs, thread, ropes, and rigging are manufactured; from the sap is prepared a spirituous liquor; and the body of the tree furnishes fuel." However remiss individual Christians may be in the discharge of their duty, the natural tendency of religion is to make them "fruitful in every good work" (Col. i. 10). Where are the homes for orphans? Where the hospitals for the sick? Where the asylums for the lunatic and the blind? These are the monuments of righteousness. These are founded by the Gospel of Christ. Who are the patient and painstaking teachers? Who are the first and foremost in carrying light and cultivation among savage tribes? Who are the peacemakers? Who are most ready to discharge their duties as citizens, and neighbours, and friends? Whose promises are the most solemnly and strictly

kept? Whose principles are the source of the greatest benefit to mankind? The righteous—the children of God. II. **THEIR RESISTANCE TO EXTERNAL CALAMITIES.** It is a remarkable fact, that the more you attempt to hinder the growth of this tree, by pressing it down with weights, by heaping stones and rubbish upon its roots, and by injuries to the bark, the stronger powers of resistance does it manifest: shooting up its straight and upright trunk a hundred feet and more. And even when the old stock has withered and decayed with age, and fallen prostrate to the ground, fresh sprouts spring vigorously from the roots; thus giving rise (as some have thought) to the fable of the Phœnix dying, and another rising from its ashes. When does the spiritual life of the righteous flourish best? Not when all hindrances and temptations are removed. Not when the skies are always bright, and the breezes soft and refreshing. Not when prosperity gathers about the Christian everything which heart can wish for. The soul is much more likely to rise upward, or assert its higher claims, when misfortunes, and ill-usage, and wrongs, are pressing heavily upon it. As the bodily strength is best developed and preserved by those inured to toil, and who boldly face the tempest and the cold, so is our inner life invigorated and prolonged by the roughnesses and afflictions which beset the good man's way. III. **THEIR DURATION.** According to the report of naturalists, this tree is most productive from the thirtieth until the eightieth year, and continues to flourish for more than two centuries. At first thought, it might seem almost absurd to say, that the children of God live longer than those who serve the world, the flesh, and the devil. But the Bible certainly encourages this idea (Ps. lv. 24; Prov. iii. 16; Ps. xci. 14–16). Habits of regularity, and moderation, and self-restraint, which the rules of the Gospel require, do greatly contribute to the health and happiness of such as observe them. And who does not know that peace of conscience, the sense of sins forgiven, and of God's favourable regard, are more efficacious remedies for healing our infirmities than any which can possibly be devised? (*J. N. Norton.*) *The righteous flourishing*.—I. **IN THEIR USEFULNESS.** 1. While other trees are distinguished by their devious trunks, the palm shoots perpendicularly upward to a considerable height, and thus resembles the pious mind, whose inclinations and pursuits ever tend toward heaven. Even Mahomet could say of the generous man: "he stands erect before his Lord: in every action he follows the impulse received from above, and his whole life is devoted to the welfare of his fellow-creatures." 2. The palm-tree is noted for the abundance of its fruit. The powerful action of the sap is developed not only in thick umbrageous foliage, but in multitudes of flowers and dates. Are not thus the righteous pictured forth by this tree? They who "have put on Christ" abound in every good thought, word, and work, and remembering that they are the branches of the living vine, they yield much fruit of righteousness to the glory and praise of God. Are they not eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, and feet to the lame? II. **IN THEIR RESISTANCE TO EXTERNAL CALAMITY.** Neither weight nor violence can make this tree grow downwards or crooked; but the more it is oppressed, the more it flourishes, the higher it towers, and the stronger and broader it becomes at the top. From this singular quality it became the emblem of constancy, patience, and victory by the Eastern nations; and hence Christ was honoured at Jerusalem by the waving of the palm branches; and the redeemed in heaven are described as carrying palms in their hands, in token of the triumphs they had achieved. No situation so thoroughly proves the Christian as the afflictions of mortality. The feeblest infant may endure the sunshine, but it requires the man to face the storm. III. **IN THEIR DURATION.** It has been the prayer of the great and good, that they might never outlive their usefulness: and when we behold the aged, hoary, not with wisdom, but with hairs, we tremble lest they have lived in vain. But when we contemplate the pious patriarch spared for threescore years and ten, who has been both parent and priest of his domestic flock, he resembles, indeed, a fruitful palm-tree, which, still yielding fruit in its old age, is only awaiting for the transplantation of the master of the vineyard. Many are they which have flourished thus around us; but their time of vigour and usefulness has expired, and now they beautify, and enrich the paradise of God. (*John Grigg.*) *Palm-tree Christians*.—What is there about the palm-tree which would suggest its employment as a figure to describe a righteous man? Let the reader remember where it grows, and he will see. As often as not it grows in the desert. In its own home it is the noblest product of the vegetable world. It lives to a great age, and the older it grows the better its fruit becomes. It often marks the one spot in the desert where water can be found. Other vegeta-

tion can spring up under its shadow; it provides food and shelter for the weary and travel-worn. Now let us apply the analogy to our Christian life. In the first place, we may regard the palm-tree as a type of strength. Christian character ought to be stronger than native self-sufficiency, wherever found. Growth in holiness means breaking away little by little from dependence upon the good things of this life. Though rooted in earth we rise higher and higher to breathe the free air of heaven. Health, riches, success, power, fame, should all be held loosely. They are God's gifts, to be used for His glory, but Christian character should be independent of their presence or absence. They may add to the brightness or interest of life, but if they take to themselves wings and fly away, faith should remain uninjured. Our love for and confidence in Christ should be independent of the external trappings of the soul. How often we find well-meaning, but weak, Christians thrown off their balance by a stroke of adversity, and ready to curse God and die. Further, the palm-tree affords guidance to the thirsty traveller. It is frequently the indication of the presence of water. That which nourishes its own roots can, of course, quench the thirst of man and beast. Christian character has a function of a similar kind, and should never rest till it has fulfilled it. It is our business to live so that men may take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus. How often the weary and heavy-laden will turn to the meek and quiet, helpful spirit of one who is wise in the things of God! One now and again hears the remark that So-and-So is evidently in possession of a secret, a secret of goodness which ordinary people have not. As a concluding remark, it may be well to mention over again the fact that the palm-tree affords food and shelter to those who need it. Some Christian Endeavourers, at any rate, must have read with special interest Mr. Jowett's recent sermon on the death of Dr. Berry. It was a happy thought of the preacher to speak of the departed Nonconformist leader as one who had been "a hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." It is said of Dr. Berry that many persons have lived, as it were, by his strength. He has given fresh heart and new hope to many a one who was overborne in the battle of life. There is many a man to-day who would have made shipwreck of himself and his career except he had found a friend, under the shade of whose sympathy he was able to abide until he was strong enough to go forward by himself. To be such a shelter is a great thing in this world. (R. J. Campbell, M.A.) *The righteous like the palm-tree*:—The palm grows not in the depths of the forest or in a fertile loam, but in the desert. Its verdure often springs apparently from the scorching dust. "It is a friendly lighthouse, guiding the traveller to the spot where water is to be found." The tree is remarkable for its beauty, its erect aspiring growth, its leafy canopy, its waving plumes, the emblem of praise in all ages. Its very foliage is the symbol of joy and exultation. It never fades, and the dust never settles upon it. It was, therefore, twisted into the booths of the Feast of Tabernacles, was borne aloft by the multitude that accompanied the Messiah to Jerusalem, and it is represented as in the hands of the redeemed in heaven. For usefulness, the tree is unrivalled. Gibbon says that the natives of Syria speak of 360 uses to which the palm is applied. Its shade refreshes the traveller. Its fruit restores his strength. When his soul fails for thirst, it announces water. Its stones are ground for his camels. Its leaves are made into couches, its boughs into fences and walls, and its fibres into ropes or rigging. Its best fruit, moreover, is borne in old age; the finest dates being often gathered when the tree has reached a hundred years. It sends, too, from the same root a large number of suckers, which in time form a forest by their growth. What an emblem of the righteous in the desert of a guilty world! It is not uninteresting to add that this tree, once the symbol of Palestine, is now rarely seen in that country. (Joseph Angus.) *Like a cedar in Lebanon*.—*The righteous like a cedar*:—1. Downwardly, as to humility. 2. Upwardly, as to heavenly-mindedness. 3. Inwardly, as to heart holiness. 4. Outwardly, as to usefulness. 5. Grow even in the midst of storms. 6. Grow imperceptibly. 7. Grow till it ceases to grow. The strongest cedar in Lebanon shall cease to grow; so shall every righteous man, as to this world; but the very thought of the termination of his growth here should remind him of the issue of this termination. (T. Adam.) *The good man like a cedar*:—How does the cedar grow? I. BY THE UNFOLDING OF ITS INNER LIFE. The cedar of a thousand years once slept in a little germ. Thus holy souls grow by putting forth the germinant powers within them. II. BY THE APPROPRIATION OF THE OUTWARD. The cedar assimilates to its own substance

things that are unlike itself. The dewa of heaven, the salts of the earth, the gases of the air, it turns all into its own essence. Thus the godly soul turns everything into its own character. III. BY THE INFLUENCES OF THE TRYING. Whence comes the strength of the cedar? Not merely from the dew that sprinkles its branches nor the sunbeam that warms its heart, nor the soil that feeds its roots; but from the tempests also. Even so trials help the growth of the true soul: it makes hostile elements do it service. IV. BY ITS OWN CONSTANT ACTIVITY. The sap may be regarded as the very spirit of the tree, and that is ever active; it runs up the roots through all the pores of the trunk into every branch and leaf. From the leaves it runs back again, feeding and strengthening every part as it goes down to the very roots. Thus circulation goes on; it is incessant. The cedar grows so long as it lives; when it ceases to grow it ceases to live. So is it with the soul. There is no end to its growth. It passes from strength to strength, from glory to glory, through all ages. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 13-15. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.—*The trees in God's courts.*—I. THE PLANTING. It sounds odd to hear of planting a tree in a house, and of its flourishing in courts; but remember an oriental house is a sort of quadrangle. It is a four-square building, with the middle open to the sky, and generally there is a small garden, in which a palm-tree, or an olive, or some other evergreen tree will be found planted: so that what seems strange to us—a tree planted in a house—was not at all strange to David or to anybody else who lived in the city of Jerusalem. And it is a very beautiful figure—this being planted within the four courts of God's house, that we might grow right in the middle of the place where God with His family deigns to dwell. Well, we are planted in God's house in two respects. First, in regeneration, when we are born into the house; and secondly, at our profession of faith, which should be by baptism, when we are publicly brought into the house and planted in the likeness of Christ's death by being buried, after His commandment, in the water. 1. Planting implies, first, that there has been something done for us that we could not do for ourselves. A tree cannot plant itself. And you know, there is a necessity that there should be a work of grace upon our souls, which shall come, not from ourselves, but distinctly from God. 2. It implies, too, that there must be a great change in our position, for a tree that is planted has been growing somewhere else. Do we know ourselves to be "new creatures in Christ Jesus"? 3. It implies also that there is life in us. God does not intend to have dead stumps standing in His court. If we do not know the life of God, we know not God at all. 4. And it implies that we ourselves have taken hold of the soil wherein we have been planted. Are you seeking for vital truth to sustain your soul's vitality? Do you in the ordinances send out the rootlets of your desire, to seek after what God has prepared for you? Is there in you a living sap flowing, which sap is being fed by what you draw in from the soil in which God has placed you? II. THE PROMISE. "Those that be planted shall flourish." 1. Because God has said that they shall. His promises are sure to be fulfilled. If He plants a tree He will cause it to flourish. Therefore, be very hopeful. As your needs arise, they shall be supplied. 2. Because of the goodness of the soil. They are planted where the means of grace abound, and where the Holy Spirit has promised to abide. 3. Because they are planted in a sheltered position. Are you not like a vineyard on a very fruitful hill, which He has hedged about and walled, and in which He has put a wine-press, and which He has watered every morning, and, lest any should hurt it, has kept night and day? 4. Because they are so near the husbandman (John xv. 1). Now, if any of you are not flourishing, though you are planted in the house of the Lord, I am sure it is not through any faultiness on God's part. Let such ask Him, and ask themselves, the reason why, and go to Him in prayer, and say—"Good Lord, I am planted in Thy house; make me to flourish according to Thy word." III. THE CONTINUANCE OF THIS FLOURISHING. "They shall bring forth fruit," etc. There are some that begin with a spurt, and it is soon over; and there are some trees that promise exceedingly well for fruit, but the blossoms did not knit, hence they fail to yield fruit in due season. But those whom God plants, and whom He makes to flourish, bring forth fruit, and continue to bring it forth till old age. 1. What fruit, then, you will ask, do they bring forth? (1) There is the fruit of testimony. I distinctly recollect hearing a blind old minister talk of the lovingkindness of the Lord when I was sixteen or seventeen, and the encouragement that he gave me

has never departed from me. A young man could not have done that, because he had not attained so much experience; but the weight of years, and even of infirmities, made that venerable blind man's testimony very, very weighty to my soul. (2) Saints bring forth fruit in the way of savour when they grow old. Many young ministers can rattle out some of the truths of the Gospel very readily; but if you want to taste the sweetness, to feel the unction, to enjoy the savour, you must hear one that has had long and deep experience. It must be so. There is an inimitable mellowness about the Christian who has grown old in his Master's service. (3) The aged Christian ought to have the fruit of patience. You remember Dr. Hamilton's story of poor old Betty, who could not do anything but lie in bed and cough, but she said, "Well, bless the Lord, whatever the Lord has told me to do I have tried to do it; and when He said, 'Betty, bring up your family,' I tried to bring them up in the fear of God. When He said, 'Betty, go to the house of God and sing My praises,' I was delighted to do it. And when He said, 'Betty, go upstairs and lie in bed and cough;' well, I will do it," she said, "and bless the name of the Lord for letting me do it, so long as there is anything to be done for Him." (4) One of the most delicious fruits that Christians produce in their old age is calm, quiet confidence in God. 2. The text does not speak of old age merely bringing forth fruit, but it says—"They shall be fat and flourishing," which means that Christians, in their advanced years, shall have a fullness of savour and life in them. IV. THE MANIFESTATION THAT AFFORDS CONCLUSIVE PROOF OF THE DIVINE FAITHFULNESS. "To show that the Lord is upright." These good folks are to bring forth fruit, and to be fat and flourishing, on purpose to manifest before the eyes of all men "That the Lord is upright: He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him." "That the Lord is upright." Well, how does the fruit-bearing of an aged Christian show that? Why, it shows that God has kept His promise. He has promised that He will never leave them nor forsake them. There you see it. He has promised that when they are weak they shall be strong. There you see it. He has promised that if they seek Him they shall not lack any good thing. There you see it. He has promised them, "Thy bread shall be given thee; thy water shall be sure." Hear what they have to say, and you will see it. He has said, "Even to hoar hairs I am He. I have made and I will bear, and I will carry you as in the days of old." There you have it. Ask them. There you see it. We put "Q. E. D." at the end of a proposition when it is proved. So you may put that down at the end of the problem of life. God is good to His people. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Fruitfulness of piety*.—I. THE FRUITFULNESS OF PIETY. Its abundance. It is like the palm-tree. The righteous surpass the wicked, as the palm-tree the grass that is cast into the fire. "Much fruit" glorifies God. The palm, the noblest tree of the plain, and the cedar, the noblest tree of the mountain, both stand as symbols of the righteous. Both are superior to the caprices of seasons. The palm looks from a lofty eminence down on the desert, and the cedar defies the storm. Both are enduring. Fruits are better than seeds. Deeds than profession. II. THE IMMEDIATE AND ULTIMATE SOURCE OF THIS PIETY. They are planted in the courts of the Lord. Piety must find its nutrition in holy exercises. Worship, meditation with the lights of Christian truth should lead on to far higher spirituality than the broken lights of the Old Temple services. There is never a doctrine in the Word or nature that is not intended for enrichment and elevation of the true and temper of life. III. THE FRUITFULNESS OF PIETY GIVES DIRECT AND HONOURABLE TESTIMONY TO GOD. "The Lord is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him." Dependence on God essential to fruitfulness. (G. D. Johnson.) *Plants that grow in the Church*.—I. THE PLACE WHERE THESE RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE SHALL DEVELOP is said to be the house of Jehovah. This is the temple of God's ancient people. 1. The psalmist uses this figure to describe the character of the righteous. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree." This is the kind of plant that grow in the house of Jehovah, quite in contrast with the wicked described as springing as the grass. The grass springs up quickly and withers as quickly. The palm-tree grows tall and straight. So with the righteous. The palm-tree also is strong. The righteous, those who have been made righteous with God's own righteousness, can stand against the fiercest tempests of sin and temptation. 2. The palm-tree is the most graceful and beautiful of trees. In the Song of Solomon, the most beautiful of women is likened to it. We learn to esteem a most beautiful one whose features were at first repulsive, because of the character of righteousness that has enveloped his person. 3. The palm-tree, too, is endogenous. While

many trees grow by additions of rings to the outside, this tree grows by adding cell within cell, thus developing from within outward. The man you have known as a boy, now developed into a truly righteous character, has done it by no change that you can detect without. You recognize his features distinctly enough as those of the boy. Character makes the difference. It is an expansion that has come from within. 4. The palm-tree is useful for its food products. II. GOD IS IN HIS HOUSE. God dwells in His church to-day, in the assemblages of His people, as nowhere else, to make central power-stations for the production of righteous lives. The area for the growth of the date palm is limited. There is no fruit at an altitude of more than one thousand feet above the sea-level. So God has given us a place where He can successfully grow the righteous. It is His Church. III. THEY SHALL FLOURISH. No one cares to start a business that is going to fail, or to live a life that is not going to be life indeed. A sixteenth-century man who owned a lot in London instructed his architect that the lot was small, but he would have him remember that he owned all the way up. That is the advantage the righteous man has. The possibilities of his development are limited only by infinite space upward. The immeasurable altitudes belong to him. (*D. T. Wyman.*) *Soul planting*.—I. THE SOIL WHICH IT REQUIRES. "The house of the Lord." "The courts of our God." This means the redemptive religion of God; or, in other words, the Gospel. Nothing but the Gospel has the power to quicken, nurture, and fully develop the human soul as it is found in its corrupt state. Science, philosophy, poetry, social ethics, and all the arts and influences of civilization have tried and failed. You may as well expect that an acorn would grow to a perfect oak planted in the sand, as to expect that the soul will grow to its proper proportions if planted in any soil but the Gospel. II. THE PROSPERITY WHICH IT WILL REALIZE. "Shall flourish." 1. Flourish in size, multiplying their branches of power, and towering higher and higher. 2. Flourish in strength. Ever receiving more vitality and vigour. 3. Flourish in beauty. More majestic in figure, more exquisite in hue, more charming in flower. 4. Flourish in fruitfulness. Clusters increasing with every age. "They shall flourish." How glorious the soul may become! (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 14. **They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing.**—*The fruitfulness of aged Christians considered and urged*.—I. THE DUTY OF THE RIGHTEOUS. 1. The fruits which may be expected of them. Knowledge, holiness, patience, meekness, quietness of spirit, renunciation of the world, preparedness for death, a heavenly conversation, also a deep concern for the honour of God, the support of religion, and the good of mankind. 2. How reasonable it is, that such fruits should be found in them. (1) From the nature of religion, as a vital principle, or the Divine life in the soul. True grace is growing. "A well of water springing up unto everlasting life." (2) Through the natural force of habit and custom. Having been so long in Christ's school, we reasonably expect that they should have made a great progress in knowledge and religious skill: that they will be expert in the exercises of devotion; have a greater command of their passions and tongues, than younger persons; and not be, like them, tossed about with every wind of doctrine, or the sport of vanity and temptation. (3) They have more advantages and fewer temptations than others. (4) They may expect peculiar assistances from the Spirit of God, in proportion to their many prayers and improvements. II. THE PRIVILEGE AND HAPPINESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS. "They shall flourish," etc. Time, which impairs their strength and everything else in the natural world, shall improve their graces, meliorate or refine their fruit. And this they are to expect from Divine influences attending the means of grace. The faithfulness of God is engaged to do this. Therefore the psalmist adds, "to show that the Lord is upright," or faithful to His promises. He then subjoins his own testimony to the truth of this: "He is my rock;" I have found Him kind, powerful and faithful in supporting the religious life in my soul, under all my difficulties and trials; and you will also find that "there is no unrighteousness in Him." III. APPLICATION. 1. Let aged Christians labour after greater fruitfulness. (1) For your own peace and comfort. (2) For the honour of God and your profession. (3) For an example and encouragement to others. 2. They who would bring forth fruit in old age must begin betimes to do so. 3. Learn the great usefulness of public ordinances. (*Job Orton, D.D.*) *Old age*.—I. Let us look at SOME OF THESE INEVITABLE EXPERIENCES OF ADVANCING YEARS, WHICH EVINCE THE NEED OF SOME PRINCIPLE OF GREENNESS AND VITALITY

BEYOND THE POWER OF TIME OR OF EARTHLY CHANGE. In the first place, if we live long, we must outlive the keen enjoyment of mere pleasure,—of the lighter and gayer portions of life. The feeling rapidly grows upon one, that the game of life is too doubtful, and its stakes too desperate, for trifling; and many of the voices, much of the laughter, which used to make him glad, and on which in early life his free soul could float forth in entire sympathy, have become as vapid as the crackling of thorns. With regard to the more serious pursuits of life, a man very early ascertains and exhausts the capacities of his condition, knows all that he is likely to be and do, and sees but little unattained for which he can reasonably hope. Golden visions have grown dim, wide and far-reaching prospects have been narrowed, and the horizon is fast shutting in on every side. The foremost places in society, the commanding posts in public life, are constantly usurped by younger and still younger claimants, so that instead of the fathers are the children and the children's children. Then, again, though the domestic life of the aged is often serene and happy, it is made so only by the hallowing power of a higher world; for, in an early point of view, it is but little that we can promise ourselves in declining years as to our social and domestic relations. II. Let us look at SOME OF THOSE THINGS WHICH WE SHALL NEED FOR OUR HAPPINESS, UNDER THE FULL CONSCIOUSNESS OF DECLINING YEARS. In the first place, we must feel that we have lived for some worthy purpose, accomplished some satisfying and permanent results, laid up some treasure that cannot be taken from us. Let us walk with God now,—and then, should the days come when we can no longer walk with men, we shall still retain our hidden life with Him; and in hoary winter, when the harvest of our earthly life has passed, and its sheaves are all gathered in, the fruits of piety shall still be ripening for a better harvest in heaven. Again, would we enjoy a happy old age, let us make kindness and love the law of our lips and our lives. Let us bind ourselves by ties of mutual benefit with as many of our fellow-beings as we may. Again, would we pass a happy old age, let us not forsake the communion of our departed friends. Let us learn of the spirit of Jesus to regard those who have gone as still near and with us, as separated from us but by a thin veil, which faith may make transparent, and as forming a goodly company to welcome us to our final rest, and to shed over the majestic courts of heaven a familiar, homelike aspect. (*A. P. Peabody.*) *Improvement*:—The Bible is always telling Christian people to go forwards—to grow—to become wiser and stronger, better and better day by day; that they ought to become better and better, because they can, if they choose, improve. This text tells us so; it says that we shall bring forth more fruit in our old age. Now, what does all this mean? It means that the life of our souls is in some respects like the life of a plant; and therefore, that as plants grow, so our souls are to grow. Why do you plant anything, but in order that it may grow, and become larger, strong, bear flower and fruit? Be sure God has planted us in His garden, Christ's Church, for no other reason. Why has God given us senses, eyes, and ears, and understanding? That by them we may feed our souls with things which we see and hear—things which are going on in the world round us. But is this enough? Consider, again, God's example which He has given us—a tree. If you keep stripping all the leaves off a tree as fast as they grow, what becomes of it? It dies, because without leaves it cannot get nourishment from the air, and the rain, and the sunlight. Again, if you shut up a tree, where it can get neither rain, air, nor light, what happens? The tree certainly dies, though it may be planted in the very richest soil, and have the very strongest roots: and why?—because it can get no food from the sky above. So with our souls. We must be fed, and strengthened, and satisfied, with the grace of God from above—with the Spirit of God. Consider how the Bible speaks of God's Spirit as the breath of God; showing us that as without the airs of heaven the tree would become stunted and cankered, so our souls will without the fresh purifying breath of God's Spirit. Again, God's Spirit is often spoken of in Scripture as dew and rain. His grace, or favour, we read, is as dew on the grass; and again, that God shall come unto us as the rain, as the former and latter rain upon the earth; and again, speaking of the outpourings of God's Spirit on His Church, the psalmist says (*Ps. lxxii. 6*); and to show us that as the tree puts forth buds and leaves, and tender wood, when it drinks in the dew and rains, so our hearts will become tender, and bud out into good thoughts and wise resolves, when God's Spirit fills them with His grace. (*C. Kingsley, M.A.*) *Fruit in old age*:—A cynical statesman said, with more, perhaps, than a grain of truth, "youth is an illusion; manhood a blunder; old

ago a regret." So it may be; so it is—in a life of godlessness. But in such a life only. "The righteous shall flourish," etc. I. THE FRUITS OF TESTIMONY TO GOD—the witness which a matured Christian bears to Him as the God of our salvation. 1. There is testimony to His faithfulness, to the sure foundation of His Word, especially the Word of His Promise. We are the children of promise, and have to live by it. Is the promise true? Can it be trusted? Will God never fail? The aged among us know that He and His word abide for ever. 2. Testimony to the righteousness of God's government. He is equitable and just, without respect of persons, showing displeasure to the wicked and favour to the righteous. 3. Testimony to the joy of the Christian life, to the blessedness of fellowship with Christ. Like other men they have been tried and tempted; but how readily will they testify that these experiences could not separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus their Lord. II. FRUITFULNESS IS ALSO SEEN IN THE INWROUGHT GRACES OF THE SOUL, in the virtues and excellences to which the righteous attain. The life of a Christian man is a growth. He gradually leaves behind him the weaknesses and imperfections of youth. 1. You will generally see in old age a nobler and more perfect patience, not a dull acquiescence in a fate that cannot be averted, but an intelligent, glad submission to the will of a Father who is loved. 2. We often see a generous, unselfish interest in those who shall come after them, interest in work which cannot benefit themselves; the promotion of Christian aims and industries the fruit of which they cannot live to see. 3. The power of Christian hope. 4. The grace of spiritual preparedness, of meetness for the heavenly inheritance, readiness to depart and be with Christ. This God gives before the summons is delivered, so that His people shall not be taken unawares. (*J. Stuart.*) *Triumphs of old men*:—Lord Palmerston, the famous statesman, when he was sixty-eight, began to feel that he was old, and said: "I am getting old; I will be laid aside. There will be no further use for me." But Lord Palmerston went to a library in order to find some particular subject, and while looking for it, he took down the life of Wesley, and found that Wesley preached and taught with unabated strength when he was eighty-six years old. Palmerston's hopes began to rise, and then he happened to hit on the life of Cato, and found that Cato influenced the world more after he was eighty years of age than during all his previous life. Then Lord Palmerston found in the same library on the same day the life of Julius Cæsar, and he read that Julius Cæsar had never been a soldier and had never visited a military camp until forty-nine years of age. According to Lord Palmerston, he learned that there had been wrought out in human life the greatest things man has ever done between fifty and sixty years of age. Then he declared: "I did not get what I went to the library to secure, but I secured what was far better—hope."

PSALM XCIII.

VERS. 1-5. **The Lord reigneth; He is clothed with majesty.**—*The Supreme Ruler of the world*.—The psalm teaches the following things concerning the rule of God over the world:—I. It is ALL-GLORIOUS. God "clothed!" Poetry has represented the universe as the costume of the mighty Maker. How inexpressibly magnificent is that costume! But His clothing is of no material fabric. His moral character is His garment, and that character is transcendently grand—"glorious in holiness." II. It is ALL-MIGHTY. "The Lord is clothed with strength." How strong in might must He be who sustains and manages the stupendous universe! How strong in intellect, to arrange and plan and balance the countless globes of space! How strong in purpose! No swerving from the original plan; the same from age to age. III. It is ALL-ENDURING (ver. 2). Under His Government all past generations of men lived and died, and all coming ones, down to the last, will be the subjects of His Almighty rule. IV. It is ALL-VICTORIOUS (vers. 3, 4). What within the whole range of human vision or experience is more sublimely awful than the sea when the tempest has lashed it into fury, when its waters rise like lofty mountains, and fight and foam like maddened lions? But these floods are only emblems of floods more terrible and dangerous—the floods of the wicked

passions of wicked souls. But He is above those floods. V. It is ALL-HOLY (ver. 5). This "house"—where is it? Everywhere. (*Homilist.*) *The Eternal Sovereign*:—I. **THE KING.** 1. Supreme in authority—none higher, greater; the primal source of law. 2. Infinite in wisdom—omniscient, unerring. 3. Holy in character (ver. 5)—knowing nothing of prejudice, partiality, connivance at wrongdoing; hence, righteous in administration, consistent, and beautiful in all. 4. Glorious in apparel—"clothed with majesty," "clothed with strength" (His attributes are His royal robes) (ver. 1). 5. Excellent in laws (ver. 5)—"thy testimonies are very sure," in rewarding obedience, in punishing transgression—they are just, perfect, good, can never fail. 6. Almighty in power (vers. 3, 4)—tumults and wars are all under His sovereign control. II. **THE KINGDOM.** 1. Creation. 2. Providence. 3. Grace. 4. Everywhere. From eternity unto eternity. III. **THE LESSONS.** 1. We must first know Him as Saviour before we can obey Him as Sovereign. 2. Despite the most furious storms that may rage around the Christian or the Church, we have nothing to fear while "The Lord reigneth." He is mightier than nature's mightiest forces, and stronger than the "Strong man armed." We are "in His hand"; nor earth nor hell can pluck us thence. (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*) *The Divine Kingship*:—I. **IN RELATION TO CREATION.** Life has no intelligible meaning, there is no satisfactory explanation of anything apart from the belief, "The Lord reigneth." To find "laws," yet to deny the Law-maker; to admit processes, yet to negative the mind which started and controls the processes; to gaze on astounding effects, and yet ignore the only adequate Cause; to talk of kingdoms, and yet reject the reigning Sovereign, is, to all intents and purposes, the climax of folly, and a gross violation of all correct logical principles. "Worlds are but signs of His presence, systems are but His initials in bold type, and the universe but His flaming superscription. All the activities displayed are but a faint symbol of the unlimited and ceaseless movements of the King. They are but bubbles on the rushing torrent of His onward sweep, sprays from the cataracts of His operations, wavelets upon the fathomless ocean of His activity." II. **IN THE SPHERE AND MYSTERIES OF PROVIDENCE.** In all the dramas of life—individual life, family life, national life, Church life—we must rise in thought and faith from secondary causes to the great First Cause: from mere caprice to Eternal Sovereignty: from the seeming accidental to the actual Divinity, which governs every life, evolves every history, and works all things after the counsel of His own Will. His march is in mystery—through the shadowed avenues of His "Hidings," the very emblems of His Majesty being the robes of His concealment. What can we know of the interlacings of life with life? of the mysterious and untraceable effects of blood relationship? of hereditary and transmitted evil, disease, influence, and so forth, down through the vast chain of human life and history? Here, the highest created intellect must pause in adoring wonder, and say, "Just and true are Thy ways, O King of saints." Are any of you troubled and dismayed about the outcome of events, complicated and strange in your eyes, relative to the Church? "The Lord reigneth." We have nothing to fear. III. **IN THE HISTORY AND PROGRESS OF CHRISTIANITY.** Christianity does not rest on such side-issues as the miracles of Christ, but on Christ Himself, and its culminating fact—the miracle of His Resurrection. He is its grand historic Reality, its abiding supernatural fact. How came it to be a history, if it is not true? How came it to be first reported, and then to be written, if it were wholly or in part false? The magnetism of Christianity was never greater among the nations than it is to-day. "Think of the undermining process that has been slowly but surely going on in the hoary systems of idolatry, and how the old mythologies have been transfixed by rays of light from Bethlehem and Tabor. Brahma and Vishnu are quaking on their precarious thrones, and Buddha lies sprawling on the rivers of China. Add to this the fact that the Christian religion is making in our day a vast impression on society, and enters more deeply than ever into the thoughts and life of the world. It is leavening all literature. Essays, poems, treatises, biographies, and even novels are almost as full of it as sermons are. It affects legislation, sweetening the Statute-book, and purifying the fountains of justice. It is never weary of erecting hospitals, asylums, orphanages, homes, colleges, and other monuments of beneficence whose name is legion." Do these look like the symptoms of an exhausted force or a dying cause? (*Ibid.*) *The stability of God's throne*:—I. The stability of God presented to us in the Scripture consists in HIS FIXED CHARACTER AND PURPOSES, BACKED BY UNLIMITED POWER. It is not law—regular and uniform sequence, dependent on the necessity

of things—to which the Bible refers the order of nature. There is a will above law, and a character of infinite wisdom and goodness behind will, which is the support of the universe. But this wisdom and moral excellence could not sit upon a throne, God could not be a king without power equal to His wisdom. Separate the two, conceive of wisdom without power, or power without wisdom, and there could be no stability in the system of things. Power alone would be ever fashioning and destroying; wisdom would be ever contriving without accomplishing, or else would confine itself to the field of its own limited resources, because it would be unwise to push further. God's majesty and strength as a ruler is, in fact, the union of His perfect attributes. II. **THE STABILITY OF THE WORLD RESULTS FROM THE STABILITY OF GOD.** It is the place where He unfolds His fixed but progressive system. "The world is established that it cannot be moved." This stability is an emanation of the wisdom and power of God—of wisdom which has contrived it as the theatre where He is carrying forward His great plan, and which must be kept in its place as long as the plan demands, and of power which deals with unyielding matter, as easily as the potter with the clay. III. The psalmist proceeds to speak of FORCES NATURAL, AND PERHAPS MORAL OR HUMAN, WHOSE VIOLENCE SEEMS FOR THE TIME TO OBSTRUCT THE PLAN OF GOD AND TO ENDANGER THE STABILITY OF THE SYSTEM.

1. Casting our eyes first upon the seemingly irregular forces of nature, with what awe we behold the great deep agitated by tempests, etc. These are wild, convulsionary forces, but others wear away or alter the earth in silence. In a course of ages what vast effects are produced by moisture, by heat and cold, by the soil descending with the currents of rivers, by melting snow and the decay of vegetable matter. But notwithstanding all these powers, violent or quiet, the world is established that it cannot be moved. The agitated sea and air, the flood and the lightning, do their work, and that on the whole a beneficent work according to God's laws, without endangering the safety of the system. 2. But violence in the moral world, the fury and wild force of nations, as of individuals, is not only against moral order but also against the original conception of the system. The fact of sin, then, the impetuous rage of sin on the great scale, looks as if finite beings were getting the better of God, as if they were disappointing Him, and marring somewhat the majesty of His throne, when they lift up their waves against Him. But it is far otherwise: the Lord on high is in the end shown to be "mightier than the noise of many waters, yea than the mighty waves of the sea."

(1) The law of retribution is continually coming into play, when nations commit great crimes. The blind force of finite minds punishes itself, and thus clothes God before the eyes of His creatures with majesty, and establishes His throne. (2) God draws good out of evil. IV. The psalmist passes on by an easy sequence to teach us that GOD'S TESTIMONIES OR PRECEPTS ARE SURE, that is, are true, permanent, and to be relied upon. If the swelling waters that lift up their voice are symbols of disorder among nations as well as in nature, the transition is yet more smooth; for from the majesty and power of God as displayed against rebellious nations we go directly to His precepts which they have violated and which He upholds by His judgments. The great system of righteousness must take a permanent place in a mind of boundless wisdom, which has no biases and needs no experience. And not only this, but the moral in God's sight must have a far higher value than the physical; righteousness is the stability of His throne; it were better for heaven and earth to pass away than that He should favour or sanction one jot of injustice. If so, His precepts are sure, they can never be abrogated, never be made light of. They are the reliance of all who love righteousness, individuals or nations. And thus holiness becomes His house for ever. Having a character of holiness which will never alter, He demands a like disposition from those who worship Him. 1. Whatever adds to the strength of the conviction that God and His precepts are immovable, adds also to the power of the righteous in the world. 2. Times of natural and moral convulsion are pre-eminently times calculated to bring God before the mind. They bring Him from behind the cloud, He seems to show His face, and to those who humble themselves before Him He speaks words of encouragement and hope. 3. How glorious the system of God will appear to those who shall see it in its oneness and completion. God will not seem slow or slack then, but majestic, almighty, all-wise, one and the same through the whole drama. We look upon some vast mountain of solid rock; we call to mind that it has defied the elements for ages; the flood rose and fell leaving it as it was, the rains and snows have scarcely made an impression on its surface; it has outlasted all human works and will stand until the doom.

Such, to illustrate great things by small, will the stability of God's system appear, when surveyed and traced out from the heights of Heaven. But even in this world we may expect that at some future time there will be a most profound impression pervading mankind of the stability and oneness of God's counsels; general history will one day be more wrought out than now, and will be brought into harmony with revelation. When such a time shall come, the world will appear to be one more than now, and the race one, and the counsels of God one from their germ to their perfect fulfilment. (T. D. Woolsey.)

Ver. 2. Thy throne is established of old: Thou art from everlasting.—The eternity of God:—I. THE VASTNESS AND MAJESTY OF THIS TRUTH. Apart from wonder and curiosity, there appears no substantial object in ascertaining how far the sun is from the earth, or Sirius from the sun, or one world from another, or in computing the waves in that sea of time which has been rolling from the creation of the globe until now. But when we take these vast measurements as counters by which, though in the faintest degree, to approximate the idea of God's eternity; when we use them as steps by which to rise towards that height, as lines by which we try to fathom something of that depth; when we think of the universe in its present relations as only a single season in His endless years; when in these rocky joints and scars we trace the tide-marks of His ceaseless action, the footprints of His forth-going from eternity—then do we find a special use in these computations. At least, in our attempt to form some conception of God, they serve to steady us. In their degree, they lift us to a higher point of contemplation. As the fine spider's web stretched across the telescopic lens enables us to appreciate the movement of the stars, so, in their turn, do these objects, stretched across the area of our thought, help us to recognize the boundlessness of the Almighty. **II. REGARD THE TRUTH SET FORTH IN THE TEXT AS A NECESSITY OF REASON.** The words of the psalmist here are not a mere metaphor: they proclaim a reality. This orderly movement of the universe must have proceeded from design, which implies pre-existent mind. Indeed, the human mind itself, which thus conceives an eternal Mind, testifies to the existence of such a Mind. It is more conceivable that the substantial Root of these transient phenomena should be intelligent than that it should be non-intelligent. Our thoughts, perplexed at the best, are compelled to lodge somewhere; and they lodge far more satisfactorily upon the proposition of eternal mind than upon the proposition of eternal matter. **III. This truth of God's eternity, vast as it is, and transcending all finite thought, is, in some sense, A STANDARD FOR HUMAN MEASUREMENT.** 1. It presents a standard of human littleness. Here stretches before us the limitless horizon on which the drama of human life stands out in full relief. Across this disc of absolute being glide all our plans, our pursuits, and the lines of our mortal years. And, compared with this, what are they all? That which we call "a long life"—what is it as it thus flits into nothingness? What are our schemes in which we plunge our hearts and our hopes? What are our achievements, our monuments of brass or granite, when all the ages of the world upon this fathomless deep are but a ripple, a scud of foam? 2. The eternity of God is also a standard for human hope and confidence. For, fleeting as is the measure of our days, to this immutable Being we are bound by imperishable relations. "God is patient because He is eternal;" and we may learn to be patient in proportion as we realize our share in that eternity—patient with this swift-flying time, that will not let us rest, but hurries us through the precious years; patient with this transient suffering and loss; patient with any special affliction, considering that it is only a part of a transcendent scheme. 3. The text presents a standard of personal responsibility. Among all the interests of life, among all that claims our love or tempts our desire, this throne that is established of old demands our supreme homage. The criterion of all our conduct is the will of Him who is from everlasting. (E. H. Chapin.)

Ver. 3. The floods . . . lift up their waves.—Thoughts for the seaside:—I. What are the waves saying to us of HUMAN LIFE? Even in its greatest tranquillity there is its deep throb and moan; the sea is really never at rest. Life is like the sea, in constant motion. However exempt some may seem to be from anxiety and care, every heart knows its own bitterness, every spirit its own sob and sigh. Especially to the Christian this is not a place of rest. Toil and care, temptation and sorrow, mingle in the woof and warp of life. The waves therefore speak to us

of the restlessness of human life. They also speak to us of the changefulness of life. How ever-changing the ocean is! At one time its waves are lashed into frantic fury, and its huge billows leap mountain high; anon, it is hushed and rocked to a cradled calm; at one time it is all aglow, and flaming with phosphorescent fire; at another time it is dull and leaden, and looks like liquid blue. How changing, too, is human life! Seasons of sorrow succeed seasons of gladness. Life is made up of losses and crosses, as well as of prizes and crowns. Especially is the life of the Christian chequered with storm and calm, shadows and sunshine, smiles and tears. The waves speak to us also of the separations of life. How the sea separates continent from continent and shore from shore! How many farewells are uttered on its shores! Life is full of adieus, from the cradle to the grave. The waves also speak to us of the depravity of life. By sin, death came into our world; and the ocean is like a mighty grave. II. **WHAT ARE THE WAVES SAYING TO US OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE?** 1. The history of God's Providence has been as the ebb and flow of the tide. The rising tide has ever gained back what it seemed to lose, and it rises higher and higher; and the issue shall be that the knowledge of the Lord shall one day cover the earth as the waters cover the face of the mighty sea. 2. The sea cannot be controlled, but it can be made subservient to man, and a minister to his good. So we cannot command or control Divine Providence; but we can work with it, obey its laws, and make it subservient to our present and permanent good, and with its friendly aid we may sail to a better and a brighter shore. 3. The sea has an under-current. Although the waves may leap and roar, or the surface of the deep may be calm and still as a sheet of glass, yet the great deep, undisturbed, moves on! So, in the course and conduct of Divine Providence, around the shores of time, in the bays and creeks of human affairs, the waters may twist and twirl; but the great purposes of God move on, and His undisturbed affairs perpetually progress. III. **WHAT ARE THE WAVES SAYING TO US OF ALMIGHTY GOD?** They speak to us of His power, wisdom, goodness, immensity. The sea is the symbol of infinity and eternity. (*F. W. Brown.*)

Ver. 5. **Thy testimonies are very sure.**—*Things that are sure*:—Men love things that are sure. Uncertainty is painful, and often maketh the heart sick. We cannot live upon shadows and clouds. It is no use building a house upon the sand. I. **THE PROTECTION OF GOD** (Ps. xviii. 2; cxxv. 2). God is our strength, our shelter, our shield, our sun, and for ever. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my Father's love shall be my portion, my joy, my immortal life. This is enough; I ask no more. II. **THE FULFILMENT OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.** The ruins of Tyre, Babylon, and Nineveh attest that there was in ancient years a sure word of prophecy, and, as time passes on, the Word of the Lord continueth to be its own witness. It needs no defence. The Bible, in the march of daily events, is fulfilled to the letter. Sooner shall the Nile cease to flow, to rise and fall, than the word of prophecy fail. So with the promises of the Bible. They are renewed every morning. III. **THE CONFUSION OF SLANDERERS.** Let loose talkers remember (Prov. xix. 5). And if the liar and gossip should have annoyed you, let your soul find hope in this gracious promise (Prov. xvi. 7). Go on your way, then, with a light step and a brave heart, and the Lord in whom you trust will deliver and comfort you. IV. **THE HARVEST TIME.** Science teaches you that the earth's fertility is boundless. Cultivate it wisely, and it will blossom as the rose. And what saith the Scripture of God, and the earth which He made (Gen. viii. 22; Ps. cxlv. 15; xxiii. 1)? Fear not, then, to ask God for your daily bread. He hath promised it; He will give it. V. **THE REWARD OF TRUE SERVICE.** God is a good paymaster. He will not be debtor to any man. His reward will be abundant. Be brave and true, then, in the service of God. VI. **THE REMISSION OF SINS.** This salvation is free. You need bring no silver, gold, or precious stones. This salvation is full. It is for every soul and for every sin. This salvation is everlasting. It begins on earth, and is continued in heaven. VII. **THE RESURRECTION OF THE JUST.** (*G. W. McCree.*) **Holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, for ever.**—*The house of the Lord*:—I. **THE NECESSITY OF HOLINESS.** 1. The ministers of God's house must be holy in manner, motive, life, doctrine. 2. They must preach holiness. 3. All in the Lord's house are called to holiness. It is profitable to meditate beforehand on the glorious majesty and might of the Eternal Sovereign to whose palace we are going. It is dangerous to engage in worldly conversation, or irrelevant thoughts, up to the sacred porch. II. **THE METHOD OF HOLINESS.**

They do not show an intelligent appreciation of the holiness of the house of the Lord who are indifferent to the order and symmetry of its services. One step in public and united worship rests on another. If the first be missed it is not easy to reach the second. Be in time! There is a calm preliminary exercise indispensable to those who would be in time for the entire service. Looking round to know what people are coming in and going out is not the business of everybody. Let your thoughts be directed continually to the Lord. (*E. J. Robinson.*) *The beauty of holiness*:—Beauty is a strong and deep word, capable of the fullest possible meanings. There is nothing which appeals to the finer side of our emotional nature which may not be included in the word beautiful. Well, we find that God has added to His wisdom and power that great adornment which we call "beauty"; in all our natural relations with Him we are constantly meeting with it and being uplifted by it. It is the allurements which is ever seeking to draw us to better and noble ideals; it seems to give us glimpses into worlds of enjoyment which are in the nature of God Himself; it is the music which accompanies the march of knowledge, the glow and enthusiasm which dignifies the colder toils of mere science. Beauty! it is God's mark upon the world. Well, but the inquirer asks, in my other relationship to God, the moral relationship, is there any adornment or accompaniment which may be said to be parallel to this? If God has adorned the work of His hands with this wonderful beauty, is there anything in the moral world corresponding, and the answer is, Yes. You have it again and again in the Hebrew phrase, "the beauty of holiness." "Holiness becometh thine house." The real beauty of religion gathers about the personal character; the adornment of a house of prayer is in the lives of the people who worship in it. Men and women who during the week have lived beautiful lives—just and honest, merciful and kind, intelligent and refined—if they gathered in the plainest meeting-house ever erected, and their worship was devoid of all ritual, would there not be a beauty in it which nothing sensuous could ever create, a spirit in it which would be an inspiration to all who were present? But for this worship they must come together. Solitary worship is impossible to most men; we must feel the common pulse of sympathy, and so coming together we make the reality of the worship. "Holiness becometh thine house." They who bring into it the earnest desire to find the inspiration for the best and noblest life will bring with them the secrets of a beautiful worship. We shall utterly fail to accomplish this unless we seek to grow familiar with the beautiful aspects of God's own will and character. It is an unfailing law that you grow like that with which you are most familiar. We carry about with us the manners of the place which commands most of our time and affection. Let our religion be the mere letter, the lifeless creed, the rigid formalism, and whatever fidelity and strength there may be about us, our life and our worship, there will have no beauty. We shall repel where we ought to attract. We shall wonder why others are so joyous and why to us there is so much constraint in religion. But we have to cultivate the other side, and it is the earnest endeavour of some of us to seek in our teaching always to discover that side—the side which allures, attracts by the noblest means. And we can hardly do that without striving to show the dangers and imperfections of the merely formal side of religion. To preach against a dead creed is not to say a word against a living, a beautiful belief. To denounce the orthodox uncharitable is not to say a word against the loving, vital theology of one whose beliefs are all warm with the love of God and of men. To point out the dangers of mere artistic performance in worship is not to deny to any man the right to express the sense of adoration in the way which seems to be most suitable. But we must stand by the living belief and the sincere worship, and they are inseparable from character, and character is fed by the living truths of God. Let us be quite frank with ourselves. Are we earnestly striving to be better men and women? Do we come to this act of worship with the honest desire to gain strength to conquer all our evil, and to become truthful, right-doing, brave, compassionate men and women? If that is our aim we bring the best adornment—a beauty greater than any of art or music—the holiness which becomes the house of God. (*W. H. Harwood.*) *Holiness becomes the worship and service of God*:—In the temple, every "little" ornament even of the mighty structure that crowned the cliffs of Zion was "holy" to the Lord. Not the great courts and inner shrines and pillared halls merely, but all. Not a carved pomegranate, not a bell, silver or golden, but was "holy." The table and its lamps, with flowers of silver light, tent and staves, fluttering curtain and ascending

incense, altar and sacrifice, breastplate and ephod, mitre and gem-clasped girdle, wreathon chains and jewelled hangings—over all was inscribed "Holy," while within, in the innermost shrine, where God manifested Himself above the mercy-seat, was the Holiest. Thus the utter holiness of that God with whom they had to do was by every detail impressed upon the heart and conscience of ancient Israel. (*A. B. Grosart.*)

PSALM XCIV.

VERS. 1-23. O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth . . . show Thyself.—Persecutors and their victims:—I. **THE AWFUL CONDITION OF THE WICKED PERSECUTOR.** The persecutors referred to (vers. 1-10) are represented as "proud," speaking "hard things," as "workers of iniquity," as "breaking in pieces" the people of God, as "slaying the widow and the stranger," and "murdering the fatherless." Every age and country has abounded with such oppressors, they are rife even in this land of liberty. 1. They are prayed against by their godly victims (vers. 1, 2). 2. They are understood by their godly victims, who saw in their hearts—(1) Atheism (ver. 7). (2) Brutality (ver. 8). (3) Folly (vers. 8-10). II. **THE BLESSED CONDITION OF THEIR PIOUS VICTIMS.** These victims regarded their persecution—1. As a Divine chastisement (ver. 12). All afflictions even when they come by the cruel persecution of men are employed by the Almighty Father as chastisements and corrections. Although He does not originate the evil He directs it and uses it for good. 2. As a Divine chastisement that would come to an end (ver. 13). The afflictions will not continue for ever, a long and blessed repose will ensue. The persecutors will fall into the pit which they have dug. The sinner is ever his own destroyer; with every crime he is sinking his own dark bottomless pit into which he must fall. 3. As a chastisement under which they were guaranteed Divine support. The pious victims experienced (1) Divine help (vers. 17, 18). (2) Divine consolation (ver. 19). 4. As a Divine chastisement that would end in the ruin of their enemies (vers. 20-23). (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 7-10. Yet they say, The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.—The absurdity of libertinism and infidelity:—In the style of the sacred authors, particularly in that of our prophet, to deny the existence of a God, the doctrine of providence, and the essential difference between just and unjust, is one and the same thing (Ps. x., xiv., liii.). 1. If ye consider the discernment and choice of the people, of whom the prophet speaks, ye will see, that he had a great right to denominate them most brutish and foolish. What an excess must a man have attained, when he hates a religion, without which he cannot but be miserable! 2. Having taken the unbelieving libertine on his own interest, I take him on the public interest, and, having attacked his taste and discernment, I attack his policy. An infidel is a disturber of public peace, who, by undertaking to sap the foundations of religion, undermines those of society. Society cannot subsist without religion. Nor can worldly honour supply the place of religion. Finally. Human laws cannot supply the place of religion. To whatever degree of perfection they may be improved, they will always be imperfect in their substance, weak in their motives, and restrained in their extent. 3. The infidel carrieth his indocility to the utmost degree of extravagance, by undertaking alone to oppose all mankind, and by audaciously preferring his own judgment above that of the whole world, who, excepting a small number, have unanimously embraced the truths which he rejects. 4. Yet, as no man is so unreasonable as not to profess to reason, and as no man takes up a notion so eagerly as not to pique himself on having taken it up after a mature deliberation; we must talk to the infidel as to a philosopher, who always follows the dictates of reason, and argues by principles and consequences. Well, then! Let us examine his logic, or way of reasoning; his way of reasoning, ye will see, is his brutality, and his logic constitutes his extravagance. In order to comprehend this, weigh, in the most exact and equitable balance, the argument of our prophet (vers. 9, 10).

These are, in brief, three sources of evidences, that supply the whole of religion with proof. The first are taken from the works of nature; He who planted the ear; He who formed the eye. The second are taken from the economy of Providence; He that chastizeth the heathen. The third are taken from the history of the Church; He that teacheth man knowledge. These arguments being thus stated, either our infidel must acknowledge that they, at least, render probable the truth of religion in general, and of this thesis in particular, God regardeth the actions of men: or he refuseth to acknowledge it. If he refuse to acknowledge it, then he is an idiot; and there remains no other argument to propose to him, than that of our prophet, Thou fool! When wilt thou be wise? But if the power and the splendour of truth force his consent, then, with the prophet, I say to him, O thou most brutish among the people! 5. Why? Because in comparing his logic with his morality I perceive that nothing but an excess of brutality can unite these two things. 6. I would attack the conscience of the libertine, and terrify him with the language of my text, He who teacheth man knowledge, shall not He correct? That is to say, He who gave you laws, shall not He regard your violation of them? The persons whom I attack, I am aware, have defied us to find the least vestige of what is called conscience in them. 7. Perhaps ye have been surprised that we have reserved the weakest of our attacks for the last. Perhaps ye object, that motives, taken from what is called politeness, and a knowledge of the world, can make no impressions on the minds of those who did not feel the force of our former attacks. It is not without reason, however, that we have placed this last. Libertines and infidels often pique themselves on their gentility and good breeding. Reason they think too scholastic, and faith pedantry. They imagine that, in order to distinguish themselves in the world, they must affect neither to believe nor to reason. Well, your accomplished gentlemen! do you know what the world thinks of you? The prophet tells you; but it is not on the authority of the prophet only, it is on the opinions of your fellow-citizens that I mean to persuade you. You are considered in the world as the most brutish of mankind. You live among people who believe a God, and a religion; among people who were educated in these principles, and who desire to die in these principles; among people who have many of them sacrificed their reputation, their ease, and their fortune to religion. Moreover, you live in a society the foundations of which sink with those of religion, so that were the latter undermined, the former would therefore be sunk. All the members of society are interested in supporting this edifice, which you are endeavouring to destroy. What is this but the height of rudeness, brutality, and madness? (*J. Saurin.*) *God and human misery*:—Whatever we think of it, there can, I think, be no doubt that the pressure of human misery has led many to doubt that there can be a God at all; and, if He exists, whether He can be as beneficent as He has been represented to be. Men simply say that if they were omnipotent they would not tolerate the wrongs that now smite, the evils that now destroy. They say that they could not tolerate it if they had only power to prevent it, but God, if He exists at all, and if He be all-powerful, seems to us as if He paid no heed, but restrains His power and lets the hideous carnival of misery go on from generation to generation. Now, let me say inferences on this line are often hasty, and obviously erring. Things are overlooked that must needs be considered if intelligent judgment is to be reached. I do not know, indeed, any explanation that removes every difficulty. Concerning some things we can at best but yet see as through a glass darkly. Still, I want to mention some things that, in forming our judgment concerning God and His relation to human misery, should never be forgotten. 1. Wrong is very often done by the general ascription to God of all human misery. Men overlook what the Divine purpose of our Lord was, to declare the relation of God to the sin and woe of our race. We find in the world wheat and tares—that is indisputable; the tares are hurtful, deadly—yes, but whence came they? Not from God: He repudiates alike responsibility and blame. "An enemy hath done this." The world is not as God wants it, not as God designed it, not as God seeks it shall yet become. He should not, therefore, be credited with, or blamed for that which men freely and wickedly do. Now, it is no reply to say that God should have made a race that could not sin. That is but the spluttering of human ignorance. God had a right, if He saw it wise, to create a race of moral beings; but moral being you cannot have without the possibility of sin. If the moral nature be given, then man may exercise his power in good or in evil. He can go up or go down, can do the one because he can do the other. 2. Wrong is often

done by thinking of the misery that prevails as if it were undistributed. We are apt to think of the mass of suffering that we know exists as if it fell on one human heart. But no one bears it all. It falls on those who are countless in their multitude. Every heart knows its own sorrow, but no heart knows the sorrow of all other hearts. Each carries his own burden. Now, let us be honest and face the facts. We speak of human misery as crushing men and women. But should they be crushed by it? Have we a right to complain of misery as mastering us, if we do not take advantage of the grace by which God means us to master the misery? And then let us not overlook that into every life, however darkened, there comes some compensation. I have known a man declaim against God for creating a world like this, speak of it as hurtful and unfair and without interest; and within a few minutes he was in raptures over a painter's reproduction of a very little bit of the earth or of the sea. I have known a man complain by the coffin of his child, but never thank God for the gift of that child, or for all the gladness the child meant to him during the years that it lived. 3. Wrong is often done by overlooking the slowness of moral progress. The cruel wrong that grieves and hurts is not, as I have pointed out, of God. He is against it, and He would have men to put it away from them. But then men are slow in responding to the Divine call. Of course we should have been far further on in progress than we are now, and we would have been if we had only been more responsive to God; but the selfishness that seeks to sway us all, the ignorance as to what is really our true interest, the absorption in the things that can be seen and felt—these have betrayed, and have prevented God's will being done on earth as it is done in heaven. The wheels of the Gospel-chariot drag heavily, and wrongs that have hurt others still remain to hurt us, and some of them probably will remain to hurt generations yet to be. You say, Why does not God arise in His might, and lay all iniquity in the dust? Because He is God. That which you desire is not His method, cannot be, just because He is God. He deals with His children alike, the loyal and the rebellious, according to the nature which He has given them. He teaches, He draws, He allures from evil, and you can see the effect in the growing sensitiveness as to what we owe to our fellow-men. There are forces at work that must make for a fairer distribution of wealth; forces at work that must bring to an end the wide disparity between East and West. 4. Wrong is often done by overlooking that pain is often sanctified unto much good. Pain in itself is not an evil. Pain is but nature's cry to men to give heed to avoid what is hurtful, and to follow that which is beneficent. God doth not afflict willingly the children of men, but in order that we may be made partakers of the Divine nature. There is always an uplift in our sadness, an uplift towards God and heaven. 5. Wrong unutterable is often done by overlooking the all-transforming and all-subduing grace that is put at our disposal. The sorrow of life is too great for any one to bear alone, but no one is meant to bear it alone. God wants to carry our griefs for us; grace is revealed, grace that touches our common lot, grace that lightens our larger and our lesser griefs, grace that comes that through it we may attain even now unto the foretaste of heavenly blessedness. All things work together for good to them that love God. (*G. Gladstone.*) *A blind god wanted:*—A god or a saint that should really cast the glance of a pure eye into the conscience of the worshipper would not long be held in repute. The grass would grow again around that idol's shrine. A seeing god would not do: the idolater wants a blind god. The first cause of idolatry is a desire in an impure heart to escape from the look of the living God, and none but a dead image would serve their turn. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*)

Vers. 9, 10. **He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?**—*Evolution and design:*—These words contain the germ of all natural and moral philosophy. There are two great underlying ideas—First, the abstract argument from design that intention and purpose, not blind chance, has evolved the most wondrous mechanism of the animal frame; second, the parallelism between the laws and working of mind and of matter, proceeding from one and the same Author. Each has its laws of sequence, causes produce results, and those results intended and foreseen in both cases alike. As the ear is made for hearing and the eye for seeing, so He that gave man knowledge, or, what is the same thing, the power of acquiring knowledge, intends it to be used: and if, as in the case of the heathen, the moral light is perverted, suffering, punishment, as a necessary law or consequence must ensue. Chance is set aside, as it is now

by the student of physical science, dismissed like the older idea of fate. On the scientific doctrine of chances, the evolution of such a mechanism as the eye is, as has been shown by Professor Pritchard, almost incalculable. "Blind law," the next hypothesis, is equally insufficient. Hence some of the ablest exponents of the doctrine of evolution maintain that the circle of evolving laws or forces must certainly be ruled by some Intelligence, either inherent and immanent, or else transcendental and probably personal, guiding and superior to them all. One of the foremost living naturalists and a champion of the doctrines of evolution maintains (1) that atoms are centres of force, (2) that force is known to us as Will, (3) that the Will that governs the world is the will of higher intelligences, or of our own supreme intelligence; that we cannot account for man's physical peculiarities, much less for his consciousness, his language, his volition, or his moral sense by evolution simply, that there is a feeling, a "sense of right and wrong in our nature, antecedent to, and independent of experiences of utility" (Wallace). A "Blind Intelligence," immanent in matter or not, by no means solves the problem. "What are the core and essence of this hypothesis? Strip it naked and you stand face to face with the notion that not alone the more ignoble forms of animalculæ or animal life, not alone the noble forms of the horse and lion, not alone the exquisite mechanism of the human body, but that the human mind itself, emotion, intellect, will, and all their phenomena, were once latent in a fiery cloud." Surely the "mere statement of such a notion is more than a refutation." But when, passing beyond the notion of a blind intelligence, we accept the fact that He that made the eye could see, that there is a relation between a personal Supreme Being, and His creation; we find far fewer difficulties. There are difficulties, but the fact of the possibility of the theory is admitted by all. John Stuart Mill designated it as the most persuasive of all arguments for Theism. It explains the world; and, what is more, it does what no other theory does, it finds a first ground for all existing things. The theory of design stands undisturbed by the doctrine of evolution. No laws impressed upon matter or upon mind, banish a God from the world He has made. We do not necessarily press the idea of design in each detail, but we maintain that, throughout the universe, there is a general fitness, a correlation of function with power, which point to a prescient antecedent Intelligence. Above all is this correlation manifest in organic structures, animal and vegetable. Mind is presented to us throughout the universe. And, as evolution in the organic world, carries out the Will of a prescient Intelligence, so, in the moral world, sin or evil, by a natural consequence, entails punishment. "He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not He correct, for He knoweth?" We are here brought face to face with the greatest admitted difficulty in the world as we know it: the existence of evil, and of suffering as a consequence of evil. Nothing can be more unphilosophical than to separate the material and moral government of the world. Parallel laws rule both. The existence of man now throws light on the final cause of the animated creation. To be consistent with the plan adopted by God, it was necessary to evolve successively the long line of vertebrates from the Silurian epoch to the present day. Man's rudimentary organs are suggestive of evolution. But in his moral nature he stands apart from animals by a gap which neither observation nor philosophical reasoning has ever bridged. Nor can we conceive of any force capable of being differentiated into the Will, a power which may act in direct opposition to the forces of nature. Evolution could not by natural laws produce man. As Mr. Wallace writes, "If it be proved that some Intelligent power has guided or determined the development of man, we may see indications of that power in facts which by themselves would not seem to prove its existence." Among these he adduces the brain, with its convolutions far beyond the needs or use of the savage, the absence of hair on the back of even the lowest races, and the hand, which has all the appearance of an organ prepared beforehand for the advance and use of civilized man, and one which was indispensable to render civilization possible. But why should evil be introduced? Simply because of God's will. Man was made a moral free agent. Moral evil has been defined as the conscious abuse of means, instead of using them for the ends for which they were designed. An animal cannot be guilty because it obeys natural laws without reflecting upon them. Man can and does reflect, and uses his freewill to obey or not: but he has disobeyed. The heathen did not choose to retain God in their knowledge. Here comes in the distinctive feature of God's moral government. In all else, a gradual process is wrought out by natural laws. But moral evil has come in, and, as nature cannot always

affect a cure without external aid, so natural processes alone could not restore humanity. The impetus of evil was too strong; the natural instincts of goodness were overborne. God steps in as the physician, and by the revelation of His Son enables humanity to rise from its moral degradation. Neither out of Greek philosophy, nor out of Judaism, nor out of any other existing system could the teaching or the work of Christ have been evolved. The results have proved it. No other system has ever done for man what this has done, and is doing, in elevating the degraded. Christ's teaching of universal love and everlasting life through Himself, has done what no other religion or philosophy ever attempted. If evil be the necessary concomitant of Freewill, it is no less a recognized law of nature as a result of the struggle for existence. Pain and death are spoken of as physical evils. Let it be so. But death is a necessary accompaniment in the natural world of the struggle for existence, and pain is a necessary and benevolent provision for maintaining the instincts of self-preservation. So in the moral world, misery, the result of sin, and sin itself, or the misuse of powers and faculties, are the necessary concomitants of Freewill. Why does evil exist? Why do animals exist? Why do I exist? There is no answer except for Christianity. There is but one explanation of our existence here, and Revelation gives it. It was to render man's life here probationary in every way. The future existence of man is the only interpretation of his existence here, and the more we wait for our final redemption in patience and hope, the less shall we feel the penal character of physical evil here. And in spiritual life there is the same doctrine of development as in the natural, for what is the growth in grace but the evolution of the perfect man in Christ from the germ of the Holy Spirit's planting? That Holy Spirit and His work may be an enigma, but it is no greater enigma than the origin of physical life. For both we claim an origin, and that origin divine. And the doctrine of evolution, which deduces all natural life from the germ, on the origin of which it does not speculate, is exactly parallel to the doctrine of theology, which deduces all spiritual life from the heaven-implemented germ, and all man's spiritual future from the unfolding of that grand revelation of the Will of God, that "what the law could not do," etc. (Rom. viii. 3). (*Canon Tristram.*) *The threefold argument*:—Reverence is at the root of all religion! When the libertines of the French Revolution crowned the Goddess of Reason with garlands, they worked hard to eradicate the old reverence for God out of the hearts of men! Reverence is not superstitious fear; it is not a degrading and debasing affright at the Great Power above us, who rules the world as with an iron sceptre: it is a reverence for God as He is, the embodiment of all holiness, justice, righteousness and truth. Who, in this sense, shall not fear Thee, O God? I. THE FIRST ARGUMENT IS PHYSICAL, AND FOUNDED ON THE SENSES. Use has deadened our sense of wonder. The ear is the most wonderful harpsichord in the universe. It is exactly related to the constitution of things around us, working with ease, with pleasure, and with perpetuity, so that year after year it never requires retuning, is unaffected by variations of temperature, and is not worn out with use—all this is very, very wonderful! It has opened up to us already a most wonderful world. Myriad are the voices of creation, the whispering of the breeze, the purling of the brook, the songs of birds, the rustling of the corn, the deep bass of the breaking waves of the sea, and all the varied tones of human voices. These sensations of hearing which might have been painful, are all full of pleasure. And so wonderful is the variety of sound, that we know the tones of our own children's voices in an assembly. The prisoner knew the voice of the musician singing outside his cell. Mary knew her Master's voice after the resurrection. The sheep on Israel's mountains may hear the familiar call of Jesse's shepherd son, but God's sheep must not hear His voice! We are often told of the marvels of faith: of what men will believe. I have often longed to prepare a paper on the marvels of unbelief! With these facts of observation before us, with this present constitution of things, with man himself the great marvel of workmanship, well may we once more ponder the words, "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear?" Then think of the eye; on its soft and delicate mirror, what pictures have been reflected: they have required no porters to carry them into the picture gallery within you, and memory, with little effort and no noise, re-touches them as they hang upon the wall. And is God, who created the eye, the only Being that is not to see? Is the finite being to watch, to behold, to observe, and the Infinite One to be sightless? What a marvel of unbelief is this! We have indeed reached the ultima thule of folly's argument if we can believe this. II. THE SECOND ARGUMENT

IS HISTORICAL, AND FOUNDED ON GOD'S MORAL GOVERNMENT OF NATIONS. "He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not He correct?" God not only hears and sees, He acts. When the ungodly were exclaiming, as the psalmist says, "The Lord shall not see, the Lord shall not regard it," the Lord was seeing, regarding, judging! Had they forgotten how Pharaoh and his host were drowned in the Red Sea? Had they forgotten the heathen priests (1 Sam. v. 4-6)? Had they forgotten the judgments on the priests of the house of Ahab (2 Kings xxiii.)? We have a larger and broader background of history than they had! We have seen "joy and gladness taken away from the plentiful field, and from the land of Moab" (Jer. xlv. 32, 33), and now pastures, vineyards, villages, cities, all are waste. Yes! "Moab is spoiled and gone up out of her cities" (Jer. xlv. 15-24). We can see from ruined ramparts Bozrah desolate as Isaiah says (xxxiii. 10), "without man, without inhabitant, without beast." We can look upon the high places of Eastern Judea, and remember the words of Jeremiah, "I beheld, and lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness," etc. Yes, and far away from Judea we can walk amid the ruins of the idolatrous Egyptians, we can visit their pyramids and the remains of their stupendous temples, and we can turn to the words, "I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste and desolate, it shall be the lowest of the kingdoms, neither shall it exalt itself any more upon the nations." We can visit Nineveh, and Babylon, and find the truth of our text written there. We can go to Hebron and Kerioth, and read the words of the old Hebrew prophets (Isa. xxvii. 10; xxii. 4). "He that chastiseth the heathen, shall," etc. In the light of these facts we need no voice from the heavens to give us the audible yea! And conscience and Scripture say the same. Is it wise, then, to live the frivolous, indecent lives that so many do? to risk our high estate as immortal beings? III. THE THIRD ARGUMENT IS MENTAL, AND FOUNDED ON THE MIND OF MAN. "He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not He know?" Few study their own minds! I cannot think that they would indulge in such empty conceits about the future if they did! Any one mind is more wonderful even than a material universe! How noiselessly it works; how vast its store. Some minds, of course, illustrate this wonderfulness more than others. Historians like Hume, Macintosh, Macaulay, Lecky, must have the rich gatherings of years of study stored in their mental treasury. Let a man ponder himself, and then he will cease to be deluded by the sophistries of materialism! Two facts will be self-evident, one is personal consciousness—man is! He mingles with no other! If he is certain of anything, he can say, "I think, therefore I am." The other fact is, a receptive power, man is constantly receiving, growing alike in the extent of his knowledge and in the capacity to know. Now whilst man has this consciousness himself, it is strange that the tendency of modern science should be to do away with the idea of a personal God, and to lose Him in some generalization of force or law. The psalmist anticipates this beautifully in these words: You know, you think! How came you to do it? "He that teacheth man knowledge," etc. Yes, the teacher of knowledge knows. Let that thought comfort our hearts in all the bitter experience of grief. He knows. Many of our inner histories may be as difficult for others to interpret as Egyptian hieroglyphics. But He knows. Verily, then, there is a God that judgeth in the earth. Verily, then, there is a God that comforteth His people. Verily, then, there is a God that is able to help and willing to cast His shield over us in every time of battle and trouble. His eye is upon us, His ear is open to our cry; His judgment is not according to outward appearance, but His judgment is just and His thoughts are to us-ward: and once more the Saviour stands before us with open arms, saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." (W. M. Statham.) *Views of the Divine character*.—The argument by which the being of a God is established is one of the simplest that can be conceived. We feel that we ourselves exist; we see the world, both of intelligence and of matter, existing everywhere without us; we know that neither we ourselves, nor any other human beings, were the original causes of the existence and powers which we and they possess. Matter, we not less irresistibly conclude, could not create itself. From what we feel in ourselves and see in others, and behold in the material world, we therefore rise to some higher Being and power—to some superior mind—till we reach one that is above all—a first cause, which must be immaterial and uncreated; and this cause is God. Whoever has ears to hear, or eyes to see, or an understanding to apprehend any truth, has, in these powers of body and of mind, a constant and indisputable evidence, if he would only attend to it, of the providence and government of God. I. "HE THAT

PLANTED THE EAR, SHALL HE NOT HEAR?" The wonderful mechanism of the human ear; its exquisite adaptation to the purpose which it is intended to serve; the delicate construction of some, and the stronger texture of other parts of its organization; the one so requisite to the acute discernment of the almost infinite variety of sounds that are conveyed to it, and the other to protect it from the external injuries to which it is constantly exposed: all these circumstances bespeak the existence and influence of a Power in its formation super-eminent alike in wisdom and in goodness. He who heard the groanings of Israel in the land of Egypt, and the prayer of Daniel in the lions' den, heard also the cry of Abel's blood from the field of fratricide, and the sigh of Jonah from the bowels of the deep. And His ear is not now heavy that it cannot hear. We may be bound in the arms of sleep, and incapable of being roused by the loudest noise around us; but He never slumbers nor sleeps: His ear is ever watchful and acute. We may, through inattention or ignorance, mistake one sound for another; but nothing can weaken or injure His power of perfect and intuitive discernment. We can hear a voice only when it is comparatively near us, and when unimpeded by natural obstructions to its conveyance; but, from the very ends of the earth, and throughout every region of the universe—from the depths of a dungeon, as well as the solitude of an unpeopled wilderness—every sound that is uttered enters His ear. II. "HE THAT FORMED THE EYE, SHALL HE NOT SEE?" As, of all our senses, that of sight is the most important and valuable, so its organs are the most exquisitely and delicately constructed; presenting us, in every part, with new and most demonstrative evidence, that He who formed them must be equally almighty and all-wise. Knowledge is to God what vision is to us. When, therefore, in the figurative language of Scripture, we speak of His eyes being in every place, beholding the evil and the good; of His eyes seeing and His eyelids trying the children of men; of the darkness and the light being both alike unto Him; and of His looking not on the outward appearance, but on the heart—we speak of His universal, intuitive, and penetrating knowledge of every object, and event, and being, through every region and spot of His universe, during every day and hour and instant of time. Appearances may deceive us, but nothing can impose on Him. We may be betrayed by an illusion of our senses, but His is an eye of unerring, penetrating and infallible knowledge. III. "HE THAT TEACHETH MAN KNOWLEDGE, SHALL HE NOT KNOW?" Must not He who formed the human mind, with its wondrous complement of varied yet united, and, when in the state in which they originally came from Him, exactly balanced and harmonizing faculties, be perfectly acquainted with every movement of every one of them? He knows on what our affections are most constantly and supremely placed—whether on objects of present earthly endearment, and things that perish with the using; or on Himself and Christ, and the things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. He knows how our conscience is directed and influenced—whether by our own wayward passions, and the maxims and practice of the world around us, or by His unerring and holy will, by the dictates of His Word, and the motions of His Spirit; and whether it is insensible and hardened, sometimes roused, but again and more deeply deadened; or sensible and tender, alive and on the watch, as the monitor of His grace within us. He knows also the reception which we have given to the revelation of His mercy and will—the light in which we regard its intimations—the interest which we feel and take in its warnings and its promises—the faith which we exercise in the Saviour, whom it makes known to us—the submission which we give to His righteousness and law, or the impenitence and unbelief and disobedience with which we contemplate and think of His plan of reconciling and justifying and sanctifying grace. (*D. Dickson, D.D.*) *The Divine signature in man*.—The text is a beautiful statement of a principle which has always been held to have great argumentative force. It played a part in the mental history of the German philosopher Leibnitz. Suggested to him by a friend, who pointed one day to an open Bible, and asked, "Will not these words help you?" the words of our text became the motto and the keynote of his system, the pattern on which he constructed it, the statement in which he summarized it. We shall look at it, however, not in its philosophical, but its practical bearings, and select our illustrations accordingly. I. The eye and the ear of PERCEPTION. Simple observation, that is the thought we set out with: the power to discern, to discover, to watch, to know. And for the purpose we speak of—the purpose of mere perception—how marvellously are these instruments fitted! Take the eye: what a miracle of delicacy, adjustment, and minuteuess we have there! "Whence

is it," Sir Isaac Newton asks, "that the eyes of all sorts of living creatures are transparent to the very bottom, and the only transparent members in the body, having on the outside a hard, transparent skin, and within transparent humours, with a crystalline lens in the middle, and a pupil before the lens, all of them so finely shaped and fitted for vision that no artist can mend them? Did blind chance know that there was light and what was its refraction, and fit the eyes of all creatures, after the most curious manner, to make use of it? These and such-like considerations always have prevailed, and always will prevail, with mankind to believe that there is a Being who made all these things, and has all things in His care, and is therefore to be feared." What a power to disturb and disquiet has the human eye! There is the eye of the warder, for instance, with its vigilance. When Lafayette was imprisoned at the time of the French Revolution, part of his punishment was this: that in the door of his cell there was a slit, and at the slit there was placed an eye, never closed, never withdrawn. And it was just the portion of his punishment he felt most intolerable. Or, again, there is the eye of the child with its innocence. That man, that woman must be far gone indeed who can consciously and deliberately sin with the clear, unsuspicious eye of a child turned upon them in the act, in wonder at its character or in ignorance of its guilt. Or, again, there is the eye of the professional man with its searching. Among the heathen recipes for virtue is this one by Cato, pathetic in its half-presentation of the truth: "I conceive," he says, "that the best plan for cultivating goodness is continually to imagine the eye of some distinguished character fixed upon you." What the pagan lawgiver commended as a matter of fancy, the Bible-taught believer acknowledges as a matter of sober, solemn fact.

II. The eye and ear of APPRECIATION. What does the eye of the artist mean? It means the revelation of new sights, or rather the shedding of new glory on common and familiar sights. It means a deeper mystery in the sky, a softer shimmer on the sea, a fresher green in the woods, a richer purple on the heather, a brighter gold on the gorse, a lovelier glow in the sunset as it mirrors itself in the placid lake, or sheds itself upon Alpine snows, turning the white into orange and rose. What does the ear of the musician mean? It means a susceptibility to all sweet sounds, and these not only the strains of art, but the melodies of nature too. It means sympathy with song, whencesoever it arises—from the surge as it booms on the beach, from the rivulet as it chimes on the pebbles, from the birds as they pipe on the branches, from the wind as it harps on the pines, from the cataracts as they blow their trumpets from the steep. The eye and the ear of appreciation—this eye of the artist receptive of all fair visions, this ear of the musician receptive of all sweet tones—who gave them? And "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" He that created these faculties of appreciation, shall He not appreciate? He that bestowed these capacities of enjoyment, shall He not enjoy? He that formed the eye, in correspondence with all fair colours, shall He be blind? He that planted the ear, in responsiveness to all rich cadences, shall He be deaf? Nay, let me realize that He watches the unfolding of these colours, let me realize that He listens to the echoing of these cadences, drawing a joy out of each deeper than mine is, as the infinite is deeper than the finite—purer, too, as the absolutely and originally holy is purer than the frail, the imperfect, and the fallen.

III. THE EYE AND EAR OF AFFECTION. We may look at these two senses as symbolical of the feelings that so often inform and direct them, the instincts of love, benevolence, and compassion, to which the eye and the ear are ministers, of which the eye and the ear are interpreters. So that the argument runs, "He that inspired these instincts, so real, so deep, so powerful, in the heart of humanity around, to soothe its sorrow, to help its weaknesses, to cement its relationships, all through social and family life—He that inspired these instincts in His creatures, shall He not Himself possess them, and that too in far higher measure?" While human friendship and human love remain to us, they will be all the more welcome and all the more precious, as windows through which we see the wealth of the Eternal sympathy, stepping-stones by which we may climb to the mystery of the Eternal love. Never let that man or woman despair of the pity and helpfulness of God while there remains to him or to her the beating of one kind human heart, still interested, still loving, still hopeful, still true. So long as that heart is there, it is a witness and a pledge of the friendliness of God's heart, that great charity of His which suffers long and is kind, and which is still ready to receive you, still anxious to help you, if you will only believe Him, and go back. Yes, and when human

friendships vanish, and human ties dissolve, when we can speak of them no longer as possessions of the present, but only as memories of the past, we can learn the lesson, we can use the argument notwithstanding. The eye that brightened with welcome at the sight of our coming, or moistened with sadness at the hour of our going, may have mouldered in the dust of the grave; the ear that lent itself—oh, how readily!—to the tale of our joys and sorrows, our successes and failures, may be soiled in the dulness of decay: but He that planted the eye and the ear lives on, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, unchanged in His sympathy, His helpfulness, and His love; and when father and mother forsake, then the Lord will take up. I say all this is comfort—comfort for those who are willing to accept of it, on God's own terms, in God's own way. Recognize Him as a Father, receive Him as a Father, revealed and guaranteed in Christ. (IV. A. Gray.) *Man's powers the gifts and emblems of God*:—I. MAN'S POWERS ARE THE GIFTS OF GOD. 1. This fact should check all tendency to pride in the man of superior endowments. 2. This fact should check all tendency to envy in the man of inferior ability. II. MAN'S POWERS ARE THE EMBLEMS OF GOD. The argument implied is, that what He has given us, He has in Himself. 1. A sense of moral justice. 2. Affection for offspring. 3. Power of spontaneous action. 4. Sense of personality. In conclusion: Man I adore thy Maker. Wipe from the mirror of thy being all the pollutions of sin, that, having a pure heart, thou mayest see God Himself, and be blessed for evermore. (Homilist.) *The Planter of the ear must hear*:—I. THE NOTION THAT GOD CANNOT HEAR OR SEE IS FERNICIOUS. We perceive that men who talked in this godless fashion were proud. Hence the prayer, "Lift up Thyself, Thou Judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud." Pride is very apt to grow great when knowledge is small, and reverence is absent. Proud language usually goes with profane talk and blasphemous ideas; for it comes of the same kindred. "How long shall they utter and speak hard things? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?" "Their tongue walketh through the earth," saith David. No bounds can be set to the evil perambulations of an atheistic tongue. Not even heaven itself is free from the assaults of its pride. They slander God Himself, because they imagine that He does not hear. Nor is this the end of the mischief. When the fear of God is taken away from men, they frequently proceed to persecute His servants. "They break in pieces Thy people, O Lord, and afflict Thine heritage." If they cannot get at the leader, if they cannot smite the shepherd, they will at least worry the flock. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless." Take God away, and what a place this world would be! Without religion our earth would soon become a huge Aeldama, a field of blood. A world without God is a world without fear, without law, without order, without hope. Nofe well, that if we were persuaded that God did not hear, and did not see, there would be an end of worship. Would there not? Could you worship a deaf God? Nor is this all: it seems to me that there is, to a large extent, an end of the moral sense. If there be no God to punish sin, then every man will do as seemeth right in his own eyes; and why should he not? II. THE NOTION THAT GOD CANNOT SEE AND HEAR IS AN ABSURD NOTION. The very idea of hearing seems to me to necessitate that He who conceived the idea, was Himself able to hear. He could not have borrowed the idea, for there was no other being but Himself in the beginning: whence took He the thought, but from His own Being? He that invented the idea, also planned the way by which hearing would become possible. What an intellect was that which forged the link between matter and mind, so that the movements of particles of air, and the impression made by these upon the drum of the ear should turn into the impressions upon mind and heart! And can you believe that this marvellous instrument for hearing was made by a deaf God, or a dead God, or an impersonal power; or that it came into existence through "a fortuitous concourse of atoms"? But even if you had an ear made—and I suppose that it would be no very great difficulty to fashion, in wax, or some other substance, an exact resemblance to an ear—could you produce hearing then? God alone gives the life which hears. That particular point in which motion is translated into audible sound—where is that? There is a spiritual something—the true man, and this it is which God makes. Do you know yourself? Could you put your finger on yourself? Oh, no; that mystic being, that strange, half Godlike existence, the soul, is not within the range of our senses. He that made the soul, has He no soul? Can He not hear? III. THAT GOD HEARS HIS OWN MUST BE ESPECIALLY CERTAIN, from the very argument of the text. "Why?" say you. Why, because they have new and spiritual ears, and they have God-

given spiritual eyes; and He that planted the spiritual ear, shall He not hear? And He that formed the spiritual eye, shall He not see? Do you imagine that if God has given us the grace to hear His voice, He will not hear us when we lift up our voices to Him? Rather let us each one say, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for He will speak peace unto His people and to His saints." He has created in the minds of some of you a sense of need, and will He not pity you? You were not hungry for mercy; you were not thirsty for righteousness till His Spirit came and gave you life, and with that life the soul-hunger. Will He not satisfy the hunger He creates? Will He not fulfil the desire He has implanted? In addition to this, He makes us long after holiness; will He not work it in us? Does your child pine to be good, and can you help him to be good, and will you not do so? To the ear which God has enabled to hear His call the Lord will lend His own ear to hear prayer. He that makes us long for purity will work it in us. IV. A BELIEF THAT GOD HEARS AND SEES HAS A VERY BENEFICIAL TENDENCY UPON THOSE WHO FIRMLY HOLD IT. It works good in a thousand ways. Time would fail me to recount a tithe of them. It may suffice to take a thought or two, and turn the matter over in our minds. If we feel that God sees and hears, what an incentive it is to do right, and to be valiant for the truth! Soldiers will play the man in the presence of their prince. If our Lord looks on, what will we not do and dare? The same sense of His presence will act as a check to any and every deed of sin. We cannot indulge the thought of evil when the Lord Himself hears that thought. Does the Lord look on, and shall I sin in His Divine presence? It acts grandly as a preservative against the desire of applause and the fear of man. He who knows assuredly that God hears him will speak the truth though all the world should listen, or though no one but God should hear him. The assurance that God sees and hears is a wonderful care-killer. Why should I be anxious? If the Lord knows our soul in adversity, and if His eye is ever upon us, are we not safe? And, oh, how this will tend to promote your fellowship with God! How we love Him who heareth us always! Since He is always seeing us, we learn to see Him. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The ear*:—Among the most skilful and assiduous physiologists of our age have been those who have given their time to the examination of the ear and the study of its arches, its walls, its floor, its canals, its aqueducts, its galleries, its intricacies, its convolutions, its Divine machinery, and yet, it will take another thousand years before the world comes to any adequate appreciation of what God did when He planned and executed the infinite and overmastering architecture of the human ear. The most of it is invisible, and the microscope breaks down in the attempt at exploration. The cartilage which we call the ear is only the storm door of the great temple clear down out of sight, next door to the immortal soul. Great scientists have attempted to walk the Appian Way of the human ear, but the mysterious pathway has never been fully trodden but by two feet—the foot of sound and the foot of God. Three ears on each side the head—the external ear, the middle ear, the internal ear, but all connected by most wonderful telegraphy. The external ear in all ages adorned by precious stones or precious metals. The Temple of Jerusalem partly built by the contribution of earrings, and Homer in the "Iliad" speaks of Hera, "the three bright drops, her glittering gems suspended from the ear"; and many of the adornments of modern times were only copies of her jewels found in Pompeian museum and Etruscan vase. But while the outer ear may be adorned by human art, the middle and the internal ear are adorned and garnished only by the hand of the Lord Almighty. The stroke of a key of yonder organ sets the air vibrating, and the external air catches the undulating sound and passes it on through the bonelets of the middle ear to the internal ear, and the three thousand fibres of the human brain take up the vibration and roll the sound on into the soul. The ear so strange a contrivance that by the estimate of one scientist it can catch the sound of 73,700 vibrations in a second. The outer ear taking in all kinds of sound, whether the crash of an avalanche or the hum of a bee. The sound passing to the inner door of the outside ear halts until another mechanism, Divine mechanism, passes it on by the bonelets of the middle ear, and, coming to the inner door of that second ear, the sound has no power to come further until another Divine mechanism passes it on through into the inner ear, and then the sound comes to the rail track of the brain branchlet, and rolls on and on until it comes to sensation, and there the curtain drops, and a hundred gates shut, and the voice of God seems to say to all human inspection, "Thus far and no farther." In this vestibule of the palace

of the soul, how many kings of thought have done penance of lifelong study and got no further than the vestibule! Mysterious home of reverberation and echo. Grand Central Depot of sound. Head-quarters to which there come quick despatches, part the way by cartilages, part the way by air, part the way by bone, part the way by nerve—the slowest despatch plunging into the ear at the speed of 1,000 feet a second. Small instrument of music on which is played all the music you ever heard, from the grandeurs of an August thunderstorm to the softest breathings of a flute. Small instrument of music, only a quarter of an inch of surface and the thinness of one two-hundred-and-fiftieth part of an inch, and that thinness divided into three layers. In that ear musical staff, lines, spaces, bar, and rest. Oh, the ear, the God-honoured ear, grooved with Divine sculpture and poised with Divine gracefulness and upholstered with curtains of Divine embroidery, and corroded by Divine carpentry, and pillared with Divine architecture, and chiselled in bone of Divine masonry, and conquered by processions of Divine marshalling. The ear! A perpetual point of interrogation, asking How? A perpetual point of apostrophe appealing to God. How surpassingly sacred the human ear! You had better be careful how you let the sound of blasphemy or uncleanness step into that holy of holies. The Bible speaks of "dull ears," and of "uncircumcised ears," and of "itching ears," and of "rebellious ears," and of "open ears," and of those who have all the organs of hearing and yet who seem to be deaf, for it cries to them, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." To show how much Christ thought of the human ear, He one day met a man who was deaf, came up to him, and put a finger of the right hand into the orifice of the left ear of the patient, and put a finger of the left hand into the orifice of the right ear of the patient, and agitated the tympanum, and startled the bonelets, and, with a voice that rang clear through into the man's soul, cried, "Ephphatha!" and the polypoid growths gave way, and the inflamed auricle cooled off, and that man, who had not heard a sound for many years, that night heard the wash of the waves of Galilee against the limestone shelving. To show how much Christ thought of the human ear, when the Apostle Peter got mad and with one slash of his sword dropped the ear of Malchus into the dust, Christ created a new external ear for Malchus corresponding with the middle ear and the internal ear that no sword could clip away. And to show what God thinks of the ear we are informed of the fact that in the millennial summer which shall roseate all the earth "the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped," all the vascular growths gone—all deformation of the listening organ cured, corrected, changed. Are you ready now for the question of my text? Have you the endurance to bear its overwhelming suggestiveness? Will you take hold of some pillar and balance yourself under the semi-omnipotent stroke? "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear?" Shall the God who gives us the apparatus with which we hear the sounds of the world not be able Himself to catch up song and groan and blasphemy and worship? Does He give us a faculty which He has not Himself? Drs. Wild and Gruber and Toynbee invented the acoumeter and other instruments by which to measure and examine the ear, and do these instruments know more than the doctors who made them? "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear?" Just as sometimes an entrancing strain of music will linger in your ears for days after you have heard it, and just as a sharp cry of pain I once heard while passing through Bellevue Hospital clung to my ear for weeks, and just as a horrid blasphemy in the street sometimes haunts one's ears for days, so God not only hears, but holds the songs, the prayers, the groans, the worship, the blasphemy. How we have all wondered at the phonograph, which holds not only the words you utter but the very tone of your voice, so that a hundred years from now, that instrument turned, the very words you now utter and the very tone of your voice will be reproduced. Amazing phonograph! But more wonderful is God's power to hold, to retain. Ah! what delightful encouragement for our prayers! What an awful fright for our hard speeches! What assurance of warm-hearted sympathy for all our griefs! "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear?" (*T. De Witt Talmage*.) *The eye*:—The imperial organ of the human system is the eye. All up and down the Bible God honours it, extols it, illustrates it, or arraigns it. I've hundred and thirty-four times it is mentioned in the Bible. Omnipresence—"the eyes of the Lord are in every place." Divine care—"as the apple of the eye." The clouds—"the eyelids of the morning." Irreverence—"the eye that mocketh at his father." Pride—"Oh, how lofty are their eyes!" Inattention—"the fool's eye in the ends of the earth." Divine inspection—"wheels full of

eyes." Suddenness—"in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump." Olivetico sermon—"the light of the body is the eye." This morning's text—"He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" I. **THE HUMAN EYE.** If I refer to the physiological facts suggested by the former part of my text, it is only to bring out in plainer way the theological lessons of the latter part of my text. "He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" I suppose my text referred to the human eye, since it excels all others in structure and adaptation. Man, placed at the head of all living creatures, must have supreme equipment, while the blind fish in the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky have only an undeveloped organ of sight, an apology for the eye, which, if through some crevice in the mountain they should get into the sunlight, might be developed into positive eyesight. See how God honoured the eye before He created it. He cried until chaos was irradiated with the utterance, "Let there be light!" In other words, before He introduced man into this temple of the world He illuminated it, prepared it for the eyesight. And so, after the last human eye has been destroyed in the final demolition of the world, stars are to fall, and the sun is to cease its shining, and the moon is to turn into blood. II. **TO SHOW HOW GOD HONOURS THE EYE,** look at the two halls built for the residence of the eyes. Seven bones making the wall for each eye, the seven bones curiously wrought together. A kingly palace of ivory is considered rich, but the halls for the residence of the human eyes are richer by so much as human bone is more sacred than elephantine tusk. See how God honoured the eyes when He made a roof for them, so that the sweat of toil should not smart them; and the rain dashing against the forehead should not drip into them; the eyebrows not bending over the eye, but reaching to the right and to the left, so that the rain and the sweat should be compelled to drop upon the cheek instead of falling into this Divinely protected human eyesight. See how God honoured the eye in the fact presented by anatomists and physiologists that there are 800 contrivances in every eye. For window shutters, the eyelids opening and closing 30,000 times a day. The eyelashes so constructed that they have their selection as to what shall be admitted, saying to the dust, "Stay out," and saying to the light, "Come in." For inside curtain the iris, or pupil of the eye, according as the light is greater or less, contracting or dilating. III. **A CONTRIVANCE SO WONDERFUL THAT IT CAN SEE THE SUN NINETY-FIVE MILLIONS OF MILES AWAY, AND THE POINT OF A PIN.** Telescope and microscope in the same contrivance. The astronomer swings and moves this way and that, and adjusts and readjusts the telescope until he gets it into the right focus; the microscopist moves this way and that, and adjusts and readjusts the magnifying glass until it is prepared to do its work; but the human eye, without a touch, beholds the star and the smallest insect. The traveller among the Alps, with one glance taking in Mont Blanc and the face of his watch to see whether he has time to climb it. IV. **WHAT AN ANTHEM OF PRAISE TO GOD IS THE HUMAN EYE!** The tongue is speechless and a clumsy instrument of expression as compared with it. Have you not seen it flash with indignation or kindle with enthusiasm, or expand with devotion, or melt with sympathy, or stare with fright, or leer with villany, or droop with sadness or pale with envy, or fire with revenge, or twinkle with mirth, or beam with love? It is tragedy and comedy and pastoral and lyric in turn. V. **DIVINE INSPECTION.** Shall Herschel not know as much as his telescope? Shall Fraunhofer not know as much as his spectroscope? Shall Swammerdan not know as much as his microscope? Shall Dr. Hooke not know as much as his micrometer? Shall the thing formed know more than its master? "He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" The recoil of this question is tremendous. We stand at the centre of a vast circumference of observation. No privacy. On us, eyes of cherubim, eyes of seraphim, eyes of archangel, eyes of God. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place." "His eyelids try the children of men." "His eyes were as a flame of fire." "I will guide thee with Mine eye." Oh, the eye of God, so full of pity, so full of power, so full of love, so full of indignation, so full of compassion, so full of mercy! How it peers through the darkness! How it outshines the day! How it glares upon the offenders! How it beams on the penitent soul! Oh the eye of God. It sees our sorrows to assuage them, sees our perplexities to disentangle them, sees our wants to sympathize with them. If we fight Him back, the eye of an antagonist. If we ask His grace, the eye of an everlasting friend. VI. **THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS HIDDEN TRANSGRESSION.** A dramatic advocate in olden times, at night in a court-room, persuaded of the innocence of his client charged with murder, and of the guilt of the witness who was trying to swear the poor man's life away—

that advocate took up two bright lamps and thrust them close up to the face of the witness, and cried, "May it please the court and gentlemen of the jury—behold the murderer!" and the man, practically under that awful glare, confessed that he was the criminal instead of the man arraigned at the bar. "Oh!" you say, "my affairs are so insignificant I can't realize that God sees me and sees my affairs." Can you see the point of a pin? Can you see the eye of a needle? Can you see a mote in the sunbeam? And has God given you that power of minute observation, and does He not possess it Himself? But you say, "God is in one world, and I am in another world; He seems so far off from me I don't really think He sees what is going on in my life." Can you see the sun ninety-five millions of miles away, and do you not think God has as prolonged vision? But you say, "There are phases of my life, and there are colours—shades of colour—in my annoyances and my vexations, that I don't think God can understand." Does not God gather up all the colours, and all the shades of colour, in the rainbow? And do you suppose there is any phase or any shade in your life that He has not gathered up in His own heart? (*Ibid.*) *God hears*:—He who knows assuredly that God hears him, will speak the truth though all the world should listen, or though no one but God should hear him. We do not want applause from men, since God hears us. If the Queen were by, and a soldier performed a deed of valour, and a person were to say to him, "You did well, and you may be proud that Corporal Brown and Sergeant Smith saw you and approved of what you did." "Oh," says he, "I care nothing for corporals and other petty officers; Her Majesty herself looked at me, and said, 'Well done.' She will, with her own hands, put the Victoria Cross upon me in due time. That is the reward I seek." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 11. The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.—*God's indictment of our thoughts*:—In treatises on morals and in manuals of religion, much has been said about controlling one's thoughts. This is a difficult task to perform. I. GOD IN THE TEXT BRINGS A SEVERE CHARGE AGAINST OUR THOUGHTS. We are taught that only the blood of the Lord Jesus can cleanse them. 1. Consider what thought is, and how far and swiftly it can go. It allies us to the spirits above. It can go so far that the bounds of the infinite alone can check it; so swiftly, that it can distance an archangel in his most rapid flight. Think of its achievements! 2. This thought, so marvellous in its capacity, God charges with vanity. It is a heavy indictment. II. THERE ARE MANY PROOFS OF THE CORRECTNESS OF THE CHARGE. 1. This vanity appears in man's persistent seeking to pry into the mysteries of God. 2. It is seen in this, that when man cannot see, he proceeds to conjecture; when he cannot know then he guesses. 3. It is seen in the many ways the thoughts of men lead them into arrant nonsense.—Self-importance. Pleasures of sense, and appetite, etc. 4. It appears by a review of our past. In manhood, how foolish the thoughts of our childhood appears! We have then put away childish things. So the past period of our lives appears to us at every succeeding stage. III. TWO THINGS ARE NEEDED. 1. Purification of our thoughts. 2. Regulation of our thoughts, by—(1) Watchfulness; (2) Discipline; (3) Self-examination. (*M. Dix, D.D.*) *The true character of man's thoughts*:—Suppose a man should find a great basket by the wayside carefully packed, and, on opening it, he should find it filled with human thoughts, all the thoughts which had passed through one single brain in one year, or five years, what a medley they would make! How many would be wild and foolish, how many weak and contemptible, how many mean and vile, how many so contradictory and crooked, that they could hardly lie still in the basket! And suppose he should be told that these were all his own thoughts, children of his own brain, how amazed would he be, how little prepared to see himself as revealed in these thoughts! And how would he want to run away and hide, if all the world were to see the basket opened and see his thoughts! (*J. Todd, D.D.*)

Vers. 12-15. Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law.—*Blessed discipline*:—I. GOD'S CHILDREN ARE UNDER TUITION. Other children may run about and take holiday; they may wander into the woods, and gather the flowers, and do very much what they like; but God's own children have to go to school. This is a great privilege for them, although they do not always think so. Children are not often good judges of what is best for themselves. Note how this tuition is described in our text; the very first word con-

cerning it is "chastenest." In God's school-house the rod is still extant; with the Lord, chastening is teaching. He does not spoil His children; but chastens them, aye, even unto scourging, as the apostle puts it (Heb. xii. 6). I know that some of us have learnt much from the Lord's chastening rod. For instance, we have learnt the evil of sin. "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy Word." Our chastening teaches us the unsatisfactory nature of worldly things. We can easily become attached to the things which we possess. It is a very difficult thing to handle gold without allowing it to adhere to your fingers; and when it gets into your purse, you need much grace to prevent it getting into your heart. Do we not also learn by affliction our own frailty, and our own impatience? Ah, yes, we find how great our weakness is when first one thing is taken away, and then another. Do we not then learn also the value of prayer? And then how precious the promises become. They shine out like newly-kindled stars when we get into the night of affliction. And oh, how should we ever know the faithfulness of God if it were not for affliction? We might talk about it and theoretically understand it; but to try to prove the greatness of Jehovah's love, and the absolute certainty of His eternal faithfulness—this cometh not except by the way of affliction and trial.

II. GOD'S CHILDREN EDUCATED. "That Thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity," etc. "What!" you ask, "chastened to give us rest? It is usual for chastening to break our rest." Yes, I know that it is so with other chastenings; but in very deed this is the way in which God gives rest to His people. First, we learn to rest in the will of God. Our will is naturally very stubborn; and when we are chastened, at first we kick out, like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; but by degrees we feel that we must bear the yoke. We then go a little further, and we feel that we ought to bear it, even though God should lay upon us anything He pleases, and we should feel it very galling. By and by the yoke begins to fit our neck, and we come even to love it. We make advances in our spiritual education when we learn to rest after our afflictions. When any trouble is over, great delights often come to us. It is with us as it was with our Master; He had been with the wild beasts; worse still, He had been tempted of the devil; but angels came, and ministered unto Him. Perhaps there is no happier period of life than the state of convalescence, when the sick man is gradually recovering his former strength after a long illness. So God gives surprising peace to His people when He takes away their troubles, but He also gives them a great measure of peace in their troubles. Thus, for another lesson, we learn to rest in adversity. The Lord chastens us in order that we may learn how to stand fast, and bear up bravely while the trouble is yet upon us.

III. GOD'S CHILDREN ARE STILL DEAR TO HIM (ver. 14). First, "the Lord will not cast off His people." When you are put into the furnace, and into the greatest heat that can be obtained, it is that the Lord may take away your dross and purify you for His service. Then, further, the Lord "will not forsake His inheritance."

IV. GOD'S PEOPLE WILL BE RIGHTED IN THE END (ver. 15). Judgment has gone out of the world for a while, though it watcheth and recordeth all things. It is gone partly for our trial and testing, that we may learn to trust an absent God and Saviour. Judgment is also gone away in order that mercy may be extended to the ungodly, that they may live, and that they may turn to God; for He willeth not the death of any, but that they may turn unto Him and live. Judgment has gone up to the throne for a while until the wicked shall have completed the full measure of their sin, "until the pit be digged for the wicked." Do not be in a hurry, child of God; the Lord has timed His absence. "Judgment shall return unto righteousness." You shall hear the trumpet soon. And what then? Judgment shall be welcomed by the godly. When it comes, "all the upright in heart shall follow it." The chariot of righteousness shall lead the way, and all the people of God shall follow it in a glorious procession. Then shall they receive their Lord's commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servants." (C. H. Spurgeon.)

The Word of God taught by His providence:—I. WHY GOD CHASTISES MEN IN ORDER TO TEACH THEM OUT OF HIS WORD. The general reason is because they disregard milder modes of teaching. If men would regard the still small voice of God in His works, and read His character therein displayed, they would fly to His Word for light and instruction, without needing or feeling His chastising hand. But they will not open their eyes to see Him, nor their ears to hear Him, until they are constrained to do it by the rod of correction.

II. HOW GOD EMPLOYS CHASTISEMENTS TO TEACH MEN OUT OF HIS WORD. He makes them feel the necessity of reading, hearing, understanding and embracing the

(Gospel, and then opens their hearts to embrace it. He causes them to know the rod, and who has appointed it; and the happy fruit is the taking away of their sins. Thus He often afflicts men for the purpose of giving them saving instruction. III. THE HAPPINESS OF THOSE WHOM GOD EFFECTUALLY TEACHES THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WORD, BY MEANS OF THE AFFLICTIVE DISPENSATIONS OF HIS PROVIDENCE. 1. The knowledge men are taught through this medium affords them real comfort and consolation, though their afflictions continue. They feel a joyful confidence in the rectitude, wisdom and goodness of all His dispensations. They choose that His will should be done rather than their own; and that His glory should be promoted, rather than their own personal good should be regarded. 2. They are happy when their peculiar troubles and trials are removed. Divine instruction in adversity teaches them how to feel and act in prosperity. 3. They shall be happy for ever. IV. IMPROVEMENT. 1. If God sometimes chastens men in order to teach them out of His Word, because milder means will not produce that desirable effect, then we must conclude that they are very unwilling to receive Divine instruction. 2. If it be owing to Divine instruction that Divine chastenings do men good, then we may conclude that Divine chastenings alone will do them no good.—The natural tendency of Divine chastenings is to stir up whatever moral corruption lies in the heart; and they will produce no other effect unless God Himself teaches them to profit. 3. If God improves the time of affliction as a favourable opportunity of instructing men out of His Word in the knowledge of Divine things, then the friends of God ought to improve the same favourable season for giving religious instruction to the afflicted. 4. If God employs chastenings as the most powerful means of instructing men in the knowledge of spiritual and Divine things, then those who refuse instruction under His correcting hand have reason to fear He will say concerning them, "Let them alone," that they may perish in their ignorance. He has said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." 5. Since God oftener instructs men in a time of adversity than in a time of prosperity, they have more reason to fear prosperity than adversity. 6. Let what has been said lead all to inquire whether they have ever derived any spiritual benefit from adversity. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *The school of affliction*.—I. THE QUALITIES OF THE MAN HERE BLESSED BY THE PROPHET. 1. He is chastised of God. (1) This must teach us patience when we are wronged, injured and oppressed in any sort by evil men, because then being under them we are under God's rod. (2) It is a doctrine of singular comfort to the children of God being in the hands of their cruel and crafty adversaries, because their adversaries also are in the hands of God, as a rod in the hand of the smiter. 2. He is taught of God in His law. If in our affliction we will learn anything, we must take God's Book into our hands, and seriously peruse it. And hereby shall it appear that our afflictions have been our teachers, if by them we have felt ourselves stirred up to greater diligence, zeal, and reverence in reading and hearing the Word. 3. The lessons which affliction teacheth. (1) Those who are yet to be converted. They by their afflictions are taught this one worthy lesson, worth all the lessons in the world; namely, to convert and turn to the Lord, to repent and believe the Gospel. (2) The second kind of lessons taught by affliction is to those already converted. Concerning the right manner of bearing affliction. Concerning the right profit and holy use of afflictions. These lessons are proper to the converted, it being impossible for a man unconverted to leave either of them. II. THE BLESSEDNESS WHICH BELONGETH TO THE CHILD OF GOD. 1. The first kind of blessedness I call privative, because it consisteth in taking away of that curse which naturally cleaves to all afflictions. 2. There is also a positive blessedness in the afflictions of the godly. There is not only the absence of evil from affliction, but good also is present, in regard whereof the afflicted worthily are called and counted blessed. (1) The good from whence they have their original; namely, the love of God disposing these afflictions to us. (2) The good annexed to them, and necessarily concomitant with them. Our conformity with Christ our elder brother, who first suffered, and then entered into glory, who first wore a crown of thorns, and then of glory; who first felt the weight of His burdensome cross, and then that eternal weight of happiness (Rom. viii. 29). Our communion with Christ, who is a fellow-sufferer with us in all our afflictions, unless such wherewith we suffer as evil-doers (1 Pet. iv. 13). The powerful presence of God's Spirit, cheering and comforting us in our affliction. Blessedness is nothing else but enjoying sweet communion with God. Now, since this communion is most of all enjoyed in affliction, worthily are the afflicted counted blessed. (3) The good

confirmed to us by them. The present good is our adoption, whereof they are assured pledges and badges unto us (Heb. xii.). Good which afflictions confirm unto us is future. And that twofold. (i.) In this life, an enlargement of comforts both inward and outward, even answerable to the measure of afflictions. (ii.) In the life to come. "If we suffer with Him," etc. Thus were the martyrs blessed in their afflictions, blessed in their martyrdom, God honouring them like Elias, sending for them, as M. Bradford speaks, to heaven in a fiery chariot. Thus we see how in every respect the afflicted are to be accounted blessed. (*D. Dyke, B.D.*) *How God deals with His saints*.—We all seek happiness. Some place it in high, some in low things; some seek it in the gifts of earth, some in the thoughts of heaven; some in sensuality, some in temperance; some in gratifying themselves, some in helping others; some in the fleshpots of Egypt, some in the manna which is angels' food; but happiness we all seek, even if, at the very moment of our seeking it, we are utterly destroying its possibility. Now, does God grant what we call happiness to His saints on earth? Think you that they will complain that He slew them, though they trusted in Him? Do you imagine that had they to make their choice once more, they would say that they had been but miserably befooled, and would be ready to exchange their Saviour's service for Satan's lies? Oh, let them come forth; let them lean from the crystal battlements of heaven; and though we see them not, let them make the silence voiceful. And do they not say, "Listen ye, our brothers, who are toiling on the sea, while we have gained the shore. And know first that God in no wise deceived us. If He gave us not the things that earth counts blessings, neither did He ever promise them, but forbade us to set our heart in any way upon them. And if He gave us sorrow and sighing, and what the world accounted evil things, neither in this has He deceived us, for He warned us that we should have them. He bade us mortify the flesh; and we knew that mortification is not bliss. He told us that 'whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth'; nor were we ignorant that chastisement is not pleasant. Tradition told us that our Lord had said, 'He who is near Me is near the fire'; and no tradition, but His own words, told us (Matt. x. 25). No, our God never deceived us. Our eyes were open. We had counted well the cost." Nor is this all their answer. They bend to us from those pure sunlit heights, and we hear them saying, "And all that our God made us suffer, we knew to be for our good. We wished to be true and noble men, and at any cheaper price than this we could not be so. Not a pang we suffered, but it weaned us more wholly from the world. Not a disappointment which befell our feebleness, but it made us rest more utterly on Him. Not a garish lamp of earth which died out in fume, but it made more visible to us the living sapphires of spiritual hope. For the afflictions which were but mercies in disguise; for the flame which purged away the dross; for the furnace-heat which tried the silver; for the conflagration which burned up the straw and stubble, while the precious stones were left; for the floods which swept away the sand-built bases, to prove to us how unshakeable is that alone which is built upon a rock; for all these we thanked God then—we thank Him yet more deeply now. Yes, remember that our desires were not those of the world. All that we prayed God for was a noble heart which no earthly affection could drag down; and that He gave us, not only in, but by our sufferings. Oh, think not that we repine at these our sorrows; for we longed for one thing, and one thing only, which was to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect; and He (as with His own dear Son) so made us perfect by the things which we suffered." And once more the saints say to us, "And you who think that God dealt hardly with us His saints, ask yourselves whether others, who were not saints in any wise, escaped the sorrows which He gave to us. Selfish men, mean men, vulgar men, false, sensual, unloving men, may seem for a time to escape their cross, but does it not fall on them more crushingly at the end? If our lives seemed to fail, do not theirs? If the wicked flourish like a green bay-tree, are they not scathed sometimes by the fire from their bramble passions, and does not the axe at last swing down through the parted air upon their root? If men abused and slandered us, do bad men also escape slander and abuse? And have they any amulet against pain, sickness, loss, bereavement, and all the natural ills of life? But was there not this difference between us, that when calamity fell on us we were strong and calm and pure to bear it, but when it fell on them it was calamity meeting an accusing conscience? And when calamity meets crime, then indeed it is the thunder-cloud gathering upon the midnight, it is the dashing of the sea against the sea. And even at what they would have called the best,

did not the very world sicken them of the world? Is there not, as Bossuet said, enough of illusion in its attractions, of inconstancy in its favours, of bitterness in its rebuff, of injustice and perfidy in the dealings of men, of unevenness and capriciousness in their intractable and contradictory humours—is there not enough of all this to disgust us? Aye, and therefore better was our hunger than their satiety; better the freedom of our emancipated affections than their sick, surfeit, and passion-fettered ease." So, then, the saints would tell us that God did indeed deal hardly with them—that He did send them trials, but had forewarned them that it should be so, and He sent largely and richly His peace therewith; and if they had not been His saints, then they would have had the trials but not the peace. "The things we resigned," they say, "were mean things, and vile, and things we did not value; the things we gained were eternal. To us alone was it given to be sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; to count it all joy when we fell into divers temptations; to rejoice in tribulations; to plunge into the willing agony and to be blessed. And in choosing this lot we heard voices which you too may hear; we saw beckoning hands which you too may see. 'Come, My children,' those voices called to us, 'come and do My will. Let the hearts of others be foul with iniquity or fat as brawn—had all been such, the world had been a fen of corrupted waters, or a hell of raging strife—but ye are called to help, to raise, to inspire, to ennoble it.'" (*Dean Farrar.*) *New conceptions of truth gained through discipline*:—A friend, writing of Dr. Gunsaulus, the beloved Chicago preacher, tells us that one large factor in his later religious development has been an experience in physical suffering and nervous depletion such as is rarely the lot of any child of God. "I have suffered an inch off my leg," he said plaintively, and then he added words that sank deep into his friend's memory: "If I had to suffer it all again, and, in addition, to crawl across the continent on my hands and knees in order to get the conception of truth and life which has come to me through this discipline, I would gladly do it." What a testimony from such a man!—*The privilege of trial*:—At a meeting I attended lately for the Army Scripture Readers Society (writes a correspondent) I was greatly struck by a speech made by one of the soldiers present. In this speech he twice remarked, "It was my privilege to be wounded," when speaking of the South African War. How beautiful and how rare. If we could all only have faith like this simple untaught soldier, and receive all trials and sorrows of our everyday life as privileges because sent from our Heavenly Father to lead us to Him!

"So by our woes to be
Nearer, my God, to Thee;
Nearer to Thee."

Ver. 13. Until the pit be digged for the ungodly.—*The retributive doom of the wicked*:—I. It is **TERRIBLE**; it is a "pit"; conveying the idea—1. Of darkness; no sunlight. 2. Confinement; enclosed all around. 3. Of desolation; no society. II. It is **PREPARING**. The pit is being "digged," it is in process, not completed. Who is digging it? Not the Almighty, but the sinner himself. Deeper and deeper it becomes with every transgression he commits. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 16. Who will rise up for Me against the evil-doers! or who will stand up for Me against the workers of iniquity!—*The summons to holy work*:—It is hardly possible to read this psalm through without feeling that the inspired voice in it donounces the unbelief of the heathen world. When a man has come to a deep conviction of the Oneness of Jehovah every other worship is to him an abomination, for such worship must either be an awful rivalry to Him whose glory cannot be given to another, or must involve a total misconception of His nature and a blasphemous corruption of His name. I. **CHARACTERISTICS OF THESE EVIL-DOERS**. 1. Not more than one-seventh of the human race is even nominally Christian; and among these Christians are reckoned all the populations of Austria, France, Russia, America, and Spain; the Greeks, the Copts, and the Armenians; the priest-ridden inhabitants of Brazil and Mexico, and all the crowds of our English cities; the Sabbath-breakers, the despisers of God's love, the haters of God's law, the drunkard, the harlot, the miser, the dotard, and the fool. Verily, an accumulation of sin, a multitude of evil-doers, are to be found in so-called Christendom! But let us turn from the one-seventh to the six-sevenths of this world's population. Here, notwithstanding all our grievous imperfections, we are passing out

of Goshen into Egyptian darkness. 2. Their variety. In one place there is subtle speculation, in another gross vice; here utter indifference, there wild fanaticism; in one tribe crushing ignorance, in another daring philosophy and luxuriant imagination. Some there are who, under the stimulus of history and myth, are virtual adorers of humanity, as the Confucianist and the Northern Buddhist; others, without traditions, or love, or duty, cherish no reverence, and fear no evil. The regiments of the prince of this world wear various uniforms; the mutineers in God's army are widespread and bear divers colours: they speak a hundred dialects or tongues, and are scattered over the whole world. Amid the varieties that we have to contend against, and the sins that we know to be grieving the heart of Immanuel, let us not omit to notice the men who find in the variety of the mutineers some arguments against the legitimacy of the Great King, who give to these forms of evil-doing gentle names, who are hopeless about the work of their reduction, and give it up in despair. 3. Their organization. The differences of which we have spoken in race, position, language, religion, philosophical character, take great leading types, and have prominent characteristics. Take away caste from the Brahmin, and you deprive him of his birthright. Take away caste from the mind of the Hindu, and you take away his living God. The most acute minds, and the best educated of the native populations, fight against all that we can believe to be sacred and holy, with the desperation of men who are contending for the altar, the homesteads, the graves of their fathers. 4. Their depravity. We would not blacken our poor humanity beyond its deserts, but nowhere, not even amid the most polished provinces of India and China, can we find a righteous class, or discover anything approximating a moral elevation—a standard of excellence which can excite the faintest hope that heathenism has within itself the elements of improvement or the seeds of life. Even the few exceptions of men whose virtues have been notorious, whose temptations have been overcome, whose philosophy, whose affections, or whose patriotism have triumphed over their lust, and been mighty enough to redeem them by God's grace from the universal pollution, do after all shed the most terrible light over the corruption that is untouched, and reveal throughout the wide extent of man the presence of a power and of possibilities, of a conscience, a freedom, and a spirit in man which leave him, as the apostle says, "without excuse." II. THE COURSE WHICH GOD HAS TAKEN WITH THESE EVIL-DOERS, AND ALSO WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE APPEAL HERE UTTERED. "Who will rise up for Me against the evil-doers?" "Who is on the Lord's side?" "Whom shall we send, and who will go for us?" By these appeals to the heart of His people, God seems to tell us that He is not going to crush, or destroy, or convert, or save these evil-doers by any fiat of omnipotence, by any touch of His imperial sceptre. His method has always been to teach men by men; to uproot error by truth; to overturn and undermine evil influence by good influence; to conquer darkness by light; to drive out hatred by love. He took up the manhood of Jesus into His own Godhead, and made that great light henceforth to rule the day, and He made the reflections of His glory—as all lesser lights really are—to rule the night; and ever since the exaltation of Jesus, when He intends to reach the hearts and conquer the wills of men by His love, He calls the sons of men, the brethren of Jesus, to His help against the mighty. III. THE RESPONSE WHICH IS MADE TO THIS APPEAL. Science, commerce, luxury, a polished language and unlimited resources, have had their day and utterly failed, having miserably succumbed in revelry, suicide and hell. Never let us hope that we can save Africa with cotton, or India with railways; the Moslem is not softened by a telegraph, nor the Dyak of Borneo purified by geometry. God calls for other helpers; and lo! by the side of all these shadowy forms, an angel of light (Rev. x. 1, 2). The thunders utter their voices, and "another angel appears, having the everlasting Gospel," etc. Whosoever this power has gone it has gained victories. Every sanctuary, every log-cabin where the name of Jesus has been breathed, is a scene where a battle has been fought against evil-doers, and a victory has been won. With whatsoever individual, class, or nation it comes fairly into contact, the evil is driven out, the tendencies to good sublimed and purified. It is the Gospel which shows the only way of meeting the clamour of insulted conscience, and supplies motives strong enough to lift the soul into harmony with its own moral law. (*H. Reynolds, B.A.*) *Zeal for Christian enterprise*:—When Dr. Beecher, the father of Mr. Beecher-Stowe, lay dying, his sons said to him, "Would you rather go to heaven, or begin the battle on earth again?" The eyes of the old warrior in the cause of Christ sparkled as he replied, "Boys, if

I had the choice I would choose the battle." If all professing Christians were as eager to fight for their King against the forces of darkness, the world would soon be won to the Saviour. Alas! too many seem to think more about going to heaven than seeking to lead others there. (*The Quiver.*) *Help anywhere:*—During one of the great battles of the American Civil War a recruit who had lost his company in the tumult of strife approached General Sheridan and timidly asked where he would "step in." "Step in?" thundered Sheridan, in a voice that frightened the already terrified recruit almost as much as the roar of cannonading and musketry. "Step in anywhere; there's fighting all along the line." An accident occurred recently that very forcibly brought Sheridan's words to mind. A heavy piece of machinery was being moved into a building by means of a block and tackle. Suddenly one of the ropes parted and the machine began to slide backward. The two men who had charge of the work sprang to stay its progress, but it was more than they were capable of doing. "Give us a lift," one of them shouted to a bystander. "Where shall I take hold?" asked the man thus addressed, unmindful of the fact that both men were exerting every muscle to control the machine and that there was not a second to lose. "Grab hold anywhere!" yelled the mover. But another had already seen the necessity for instant action, and rendered the necessary assistance. It may be that we are in a field of Christian enterprise where we are unaccustomed to work, and are timidly asking where we shall "Step in." We may find our answer in the words of Sheridan, "Step in anywhere; there's fighting all along the line." (*Christian World.*)

Ver. 18. When I said, My foot slippeth; Thy mercy, O Lord, held me up.—*A common incident of the journey:*—The soul in peril can seldom say much, but that which is said is generally expressive. Take, for example, these words: they imply faith in the presence of One able to help—abhorrence of the sin to which he is tempted—and confidence in His willingness to save. This experience is a common one. All of us are, at some time, found in slippery places. I. **SOME SLIPPERY PLACES.** We are the more exposed to falling when we are brought into circumstances of—1. Poverty and want. Christ was tempted when He hungered. 2. Of annoyance and vexation. Moses smote the rock in anger. 3. Of dejection and perplexity (Ps. lxxiii. 2, 3). 4. Of sore bereavement and trial (Job). II. **SOME THINGS CONCERNING THE TRAVELLER, RENDERING THESE THE MORE PERILOUS.** 1. The absence of the staff, or negligence in its use. Learn the promises and use them. 2. The foot ill-shod. 3. Drowsiness. "Watch and pray, that," etc. 4. Carelessness. 5. The lantern untrimmed or insecure, so that it goes out or burns dimly. III. **THE SURE MEANS FOR PRESERVATION.** We have simply to cry to the Deliverer. The secret of a secure and blessed life is constant ejaculatory prayer. The moment danger is even anticipated, to ask for timely assistance. (*R. A. Griffin.*) *Upheld by Divine mercy:*—Not often has the voice of man pointed the way and brought sinners to Christ with so much of picturesque and sweet persuasiveness as did that of Dr. Bonar. What could be finer than this eccentric way of stating the Gospel: "Suppose that I, a sinner, be walking along yon golden street, passing by one angel after another. I can hear them say, as I pass through their ranks, 'A sinner! a crimson sinner!' Should my feet totter? Should my eye grow dim? No; I can say to them, 'Yes, a sinner—a crimson sinner—but a sinner brought near by a forsaken Saviour, and now a sinner who has boldness to enter into the Holiest through the blood of Christ.'"

Ver. 19. In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts delight my soul.—*Comfort amid disquieting thoughts:*—The word here translated "thoughts" means thoughts of a pensive, anxious nature—thoughts which have in them nothing bright and pleasant; thoughts which yoke themselves with cares; which perplex and disturb and depress us; and which we are not very ready to speak about, but are rather inclined to keep to ourselves. Our text speaks of the "multitude" of such "thoughts." They are not rare and exceptional. They are to be found in all. Nor do they come to us merely at great crises and emergencies of our life, when something startling wakes up within us slumbering faculties, or when something crushing evokes hidden feelings of our heart. No; such thoughts come to us all at times, now darting into our mind like a lightning flash; now floating dreamily within our consciousness on some current of ordinary reflection. And their number who will reckon? As sparks fly off from the heated iron, so do these thoughts spring up in every reflective mind. For such thoughts, the

psalmist implicitly admits there is no remedy in ourselves. From disagreeable things outside us we may protect ourselves; but who can insure himself against the influence of thoughts which arise within, and which come most easily in seasons of solitude and retirement from the world? Happy are they who learn the folly of fleeing from such thoughts; who know the wisdom of boldly fronting them with the precious thoughts of God; who are able to use the psalmist's words as the expression of their experience. "In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts have caused me to leap and dance for joy." Not only has he been able to bear the uneasy, anxious thoughts; not only has he been able to resist and overcome and quench them; but also he has experienced sensations of a directly opposite character; sensations of joy and exhilaration and comfort. Care and anxiety and grief do, by God's grace, but make more real to us the tenderness of His sympathy and the amplitude of His love. Let us particularize some of these thoughts within us which disquiet and distress us, and let us see how they are met and satisfied by the comforts of God which delight our souls. In the multitude of our disquieting thoughts will be found some concerning God and the future. "What if there were no God? What if it be true, after all, that the immortality of the soul is a delusion?" Such thoughts are very distressing. Still, let us face them calmly. It is not sinful to face and examine them when they come. They are permitted to come to us that we may not be satisfied with a traditional, superstitious, unintelligent belief. They who have passed through honest doubt without making shipwreck of their faith attain to a confidence and assurance regarding the truth of Christianity which nothing can shake or weaken. Their faith before was a sapling which had never felt a breeze, whereas now it is an oak which has been nursed into strength amid furious storms. They will feel that it was worth all the disquiet they suffered to attain to the firm peace which they now enjoy. The consolations of God were small to them formerly compared with what they are now. They never knew before the preciousness of God's thoughts as they know them now. But another, and a very different class of disquieting thoughts are to be met with in many of God's people; I mean uneasy thoughts about their temporal affairs. You remember how you trembled at the thought of things which were threatening; how you persuaded yourself that disasters were inevitable; how your spirits were depressed, your bodily health enfeebled, and yourself unfitted, in a great measure, for meeting an emergency if it arose. In such an hour, when you turned to Him whom you were dishonouring, what light fell upon your path, what consolation entered your heart, what strength was imparted to your resolution, what grace was given you to accept cheerfully whatever might come. Think yet again. In the multitude of our uneasy thoughts there will be some about our friends. God has linked us so closely to those around us that even the most selfish of us cannot always care only for ourselves. Perhaps some of the most solicitous thoughts we ever have are about those who are near and dear to us. And yet we must bury them to a large extent in our heart. They must be to each, "My thoughts within me." The careful, anxious thoughts which crowd forth from a Christian parent's heart, and cluster round his or her children, are a multitude which no man can number. Yet, amid such thoughts, what comfort a Christian parent has in God! Upon whom, save upon Him, can he roll such a load of care? To whom, save God, can he tell all that is in his heart? And mark his consolation. God is his Father. All the love and pity and care; all the solicitude and tender concern which he feels for his child, God feels for him. What confidence, what gladness, what trust that enables him to feel. His anxieties about his children are changed into arguments for faith; into unanswerable reasons for calm, unwavering trust. Once more. How many anxious, disquieting thoughts some Christians have about death. Perhaps most or all of us have them. And there is no class of thoughts men are more unwilling to utter than these. They keep them in their own heart. "My thoughts within me." And yet, when we bring them to God in prayer, how many consoling messages He brings home to our hearts from His Holy Word. What peace, what satisfaction, what comfort we experience in leaving to His loving care all that may happen! The hour of our departure is fixed by Him. Before that hour comes, nothing can take us away; after it has arrived, nothing can detain us here. "My times are in Thy hand." Not only the time, but also the place and the manner are arranged by Him. And who loves us so wisely or so well as He? Regarding it all, we need not have a single care. (W. Young, B.A.) *David's malady and remedy*.—I. THE MALADY. 1. The grief itself. "Thoughts" con-

sidered simply in themselves do not contain any matter of grief or evil, they are the proper and natural issue and emanations of the soul which comes from it with a great deal of easiness, and with a great deal of delight, but it is the exorbitancy and irregularity of them which is here intended, when they do not proceed evenly and fairly, as they ought to do, but with some kind of interruption. The finest wits are liable to the greatest distractions; and the more advantages any have of doing evil, the more occasions have they likewise of suffering evil, as the mind is capable of the greater comfort and contentment, so it is also of the greatest trouble; and look as it is in the body, that the most exquisite constitutions are liable to the greatest pains, so in the soul the most sublime and raised parts are exposed to the most disquieting thoughts. 2. The amplification of this evil from the number. "Multitude of thoughts." Thoughts crowding and thrusting in themselves in a violent and confused manner one upon another. (1) Man's mind goes from one thing to another like a bee in the change of flowers, and is never at rest; and this is a part of that vanity which is upon it; this infirmity is seen in nothing more than it is in the performance of good duties, prayer and hearing of the Word, and such religious exercises as these, wherein this multitude of thoughts does in a special manner discover itself. (2) Our thoughts are for the most part answerable to the estate we are in, and the occasions which are presented to us. Now, forasmuch as there is an alteration in them, there is also a diversity in these, suitable and agreeable thereunto. 3. The subject of this grief and distemper is David himself; from whence observe that even the children of God themselves they are sometimes troubled with anxious and solicitous thoughts, and that also in a very great multitude and plurality of them. (1) Concerning their own salvation and state in grace. (2) Concerning their own preservation and provision and state always in the world. (3) Concerning the public state and condition of the Church of God and the commonwealth. All these several heads do make up this multitude of thoughts in the Church of God. 4. The intimacy or closeness of it. "In my very heart." (1) The secrecy of this grief. (2) The settledness and radication of this evil; it was within him, and it was within his heart, that is, it was deeply rooted and fastened, and such as had a strong groundwork and foundation in him, such were these troublesome thoughts, they were got into his very inwards and bowels, and so were not easily got out again. (3) The impression which they had upon him, and the sense which he himself had of them. They were such as did grievously afflict him, and pierce him, and went near unto him, they went to his very heart, and touched him, as it were, to the quick, through the grievousness of them. II. THE REMEDY. 1. The physic itself. (1) To take it distinctly and simply in itself. "Thy comforts." He speaks here to God, and gives testimony to His comforts in this his present condition. "My thoughts," but "Thy comforts"; we may raise thoughts of ourselves, but it is God only can settle them: we may torment ourselves, but it is God only can relieve us; none can comfort but God. "Thy comforts," not only original and effective, but likewise material and objective; not only as God is the author and bestower of these comforts, but likewise as God is the object and matter of this last. If we speak properly and exactly, so all comforts are God's comforts, even those comforts which are in the creatures, and which are derived and conveyed to us in them, they are no other than His. The comforts which are in friends, estates, outward blessings, are all His comforts. They are His as giving the thing, and as giving the contentment. But these comforts here in the text are said to be His in a further consideration. "Thy comforts," that is Divine comforts, Christian comforts, spiritual comforts, comforts drawn from religion. The closer we walk with God, the more comfort we have from Him, not only hereafter in heaven, but also now at present here upon earth, which should therefore be a further spur to incite us hereunto. (2) The second is by considering them connectively in reference to what went before in the beginning of the verse, "In the multitude of my thoughts." First, here is their concomitancy, by making "in" to be as much as "cum." "In my thoughts," that is, altogether with them; and so it does imply thus much unto us, that the children of God are never wholly and absolutely disquieted and dejected in themselves; but as God does in His providences suffer them now and then to be troubled with sad thoughts, so at the very same moment and instant of time does he administer comfort more or less unto them. The second is their opportunity, "In the multitude" of distracting thoughts; that is, just when they were come to their height and extremity in me. The comforts of God are seasonable, and observe the proper time for their coming,

neither too soon, nor too late; not before, that were too soon, nor after, that were too late; but "in," that is, just in the very point and nick of time. This should teach us never to despair, but rather then to be fullest of hope, and to make perplexities to be a remedy against themselves. And so much for that second particular, to wit their opportunity. The third particular is their conveniency, and the suitability of these comforts here spoken of. This is signified in that interpretation, which renders it by the word "according." And here again are two things more. First, they are suitable to the number of the evils. And, secondly, they are suitable to the greatness of them. 2. The operation of this physic, and that we have briefly in these words, "Delight my soul." (1) For the act "delight," this is a transcendent expression, which the Holy Ghost in the pen of the prophet David comes up unto: it had been a great matter to have said, they satisfy my soul, or they quiet me, no more but so, that is the highest pitch which a perplexed spirit can wish to itself. Those which are in great pain, they would be glad if they might have but ease, they cannot aspire so high as pleasure and delight; this is more than can be expected by them; but see here now the notable efficacy of these Divine comforts, they do not only pacify the mind, but they joy it; they do not only satisfy it, but ravish it; they do not only quiet it, but delight it. (2) The second is the object, and that is my soul. We showed before how the grief was in the mind, and therefore the comfort must be so also, that the remedy may answer the malady. Bodily comforts will not allay spiritual troubles, but spiritual comforts will make very great amends in bodily infirmities. A good heart it will do good, as a medicine, as Solomon speaks; and it will give marrow and fatness to the bones. (*T. Horton, D.D.*) *Unruly thoughts quieted by Divine consolations*.—I. IN EVIL TIMES THE MISERY OF THE SAINTS OF GOD IS MORE FROM THOUGHTS WITHIN THAN FROM TROUBLES WITHOUT. 1. The best men they are not freed, while they live here, from unruly, unsubdued thoughts. (1) From the corruptions of the unregenerate part, the remainder of a corruption in the best men, it is like fire in an oven (Hos. vii. 4, 5), and he hath violent irruptions. (2) From the invasion of some enticing creature-objects amongst them, as David saw Bathsheba: Achan saw, and he desired; considered and desired: so likewise it is said in 1 John ii. 6. (3) From the injections of Satan: for what are unruly thoughts? It is Satan doth himself many times immediately inject: so the devil put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ. 2. In times of trouble, these thoughts come in by multitudes: a man's thoughts are never so tumultuous as in troublesome times. (1) Because in troublesome times the souls of men are awake. In times of prosperity and peace there is usually a spirit of slumber upon men; but when God empties a man from vessel to vessel, then how full of projects is the heart of man? never brought into danger, but the man his thoughts rise. Oh, how shall I escape? what shall I do? and how shall I make provision for myself? (2) Satan takes special care to assail the hearts of men with thoughts in an evil time. 3. The great part of afflictions doth lie more in these tumultuous and unruly thoughts within, than in all a man's troubles and afflictions without: winds without do not cause an earthquake, but wind within. II. GOD DOTH PROVIDE FOR HIS PEOPLE CONSOLATIONS IN AND ANSWERABLE TO THEIR AFFLICTIONS. Consider, first, there is no affliction that ever the people of God are cast into that He leaves destitute of consolation. It is never pure darkness (Gen. xv. 17), even when the Church of God was as a sacrifice cut in pieces, yet notwithstanding there was a light passed between the pieces; it is never pure darkness, but yet notwithstanding it may be many times darkness in reference to creature-comforts, they may have no comforts they can look at here below. And this consolation that God gives them is a seasonable consolation, "In the multitude of my thoughts": in the very time when I am most perplexed, then doth God bring in His consolations. Nay, not only in the affliction, but according unto the affliction, so shall the consolation be, and therefore Jerome reads it, "According to the multitude of my thoughts": so were the multitude of God's consolations; God will give it in the time and the season of it; but, withal, the Lord will give it according unto the measure; when He doth bring great afflictions, He provideth for you strong consolations, that as the affliction aboundeth, so the consolations shall abound; the Lord tells you, that His rewards shall be according to the measure of His mercies: it is an admirable expression in Hos. x. 12. (*W. Strong.*) *Religion the best support under the troubles of life*.—I. RELIGION moderates our love of the world, restrains our affections from the eager pursuit of its enjoyments, and thereby enables us to bear with greater patience its evils

and afflictions, and prevents immoderate sorrow and dejection under them. II. RELIGION affords such immediate delight and pleasure, as in a great measure supplies the want of any outward enjoyment, and allays the pain of any worldly distress. III. RELIGION, as it teaches that all things are ordered by the most perfect wisdom and goodness, so it particularly assures every good man that all things shall work together for his real interest. IV. RELIGION gives us the blessed prospect of a happy end to all our sorrows, and of rest from all our labours in the life which is to come. V. RELIGION entitles us to the gracious influences of the Spirit of God, by which we are enabled to apply all these things to our comfort, and to rejoice in the Lord always. (*F. Carmichael.*) *Divine comforts in the world of thought*:—I. MAN'S REAL WORLD IS IN HIS THOUGHTS. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." The universe and God are to a man according to his thoughts. Those thoughts are very multitudinous. "The multitude of my thoughts." Who can count the thoughts of one man, even during one day? They flow through the soul as wavelets on the rapid stream. II. MAN'S REAL HAPPINESS IS IN HIS GOD. "Thy comforts delight my soul." Thy unchangeableness amidst the mutations, Thy paternal providence amidst the solitudes, Thy pardoning mercy amidst the remorse, Thy promises of immortality amidst the forebodings—all these "delight my soul." (*Homilist.*) *God's comforts greater than our troubles*:—God's comforts are not like melting vapours and summer brooks. They are "rivers of pleasures," and "wells of salvation." We stoop down to drink where Abraham bent the knee. We draw water where David assuaged his thirst. Jesus talks to us of the living water which shall be "in us a well of water." If the toils, and cares, and troubles which exercised the pious soul of the writer of this psalm should come in on us in all their multitude, and with all their tumult, like the noise of many waters, the "comforts" of our God, fuller, deeper, and more abiding, will come flowing in to still them, and to fill all the soul with their own sweet delights. I. SUPPOSE THAT THE TROUBLE ARISES DIRECTLY OUT OF THE HEART. The multitude of the thoughts in this case are all tinged with self-accusation. Sin revives, the better self seems dead. Where is the comfort for such a state? In the whole Gospel. In all the fulness of Jesus Christ—His cleansing blood, His purifying Spirit, His tender love, His power to save to the uttermost. II. Suppose that the trouble arises, not out of the heart directly, BUT OUT OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES. There are some who have not habitually many fears within, but who have often or constantly great fightings without. Martha still lives her busy, toilsome life. "Careful and troubled about many things" is written on many a face. The comforts God has for such a state are manifold, and they sometimes break upon the man suddenly, like stars through clouds. "Ebenezer!" That seals and keeps all the past, so that now you cannot lose it. It will be a fact for evermore, and I trust to you a blessed memory, that the Lord has helped you through all that past. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want!" Is not that a plentiful provision for the present hour? And there are some texts with still more tenderness in them (*Matt. vi. 8; Phil. iv. 19; 1 Pet. v. 7*). III. Or suppose that the trouble arises in some way OUT OF THE STRANGENESS AND THE STRENGTH OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE. Every man with a will, with a plan, with any great and generous purpose, is sure to be at some time so thwarted as greatly to need the comforts of God. Then take these comforts, these two:—The first is this, that undoubtedly the supreme and perfect will of God has been working in all. And as soon as there is a devout recognition of that will, there will be some beginning of rest, some influx of a holy calm. But there is another. Because another is needed to make the comfort full. For the man might still say, "Then all I have been working for is pure loss—loss of energy, loss of affection, loss of time—mere ruin in God's universe. God does not need ruins to build with. How much better, therefore, it would have been if I could have discovered the perfect will earlier, so as to save all that bootless toil and useless waste." Not so. For here is the second comfort:—"All things work together for good to them that love God." IV. A devout Christian LOOKING AT THE WHOLE CHURCH may well have a "multitude of thoughts within him." This whole Church is the one body of Christ, and "every one members one of another"; and yet what divisions, what conflicts there are among the parts and sections! But here also God's comforts come in. The Lord reigneth. He will heal the distractions of His Church. He will give "the same mind and the same judgment." He will give one heart and one soul. He will pour out His Spirit as a spirit of love and power and of a sound mind. He will restore the waste places.

the ruins of many generations. He will bring again Zion. He will establish and make Jerusalem a praise in all the earth. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *Deliverance from danger; delight in distress*.—I. **THE SOUL'S DANGER AND DISTRESS.** 1. The danger arose, not from any impotency in the man, but from the slippery or rough state of the road. Your horse may be quite sure-footed, but if you drive him over a rough or ice-covered road he may stumble. This good man was both sound and strong. He believed that the man was blessed whom the Lord chastened. But just at this point the path became very slippery, and for the moment he felt confused, excited, and troubled, so that he was almost falling. Now, a much-needed lesson springs out of this circumstance. We are taught to guard ourselves against a spirit of self-sufficiency, and also to sympathize with our stumbling brethren, who are quite as sound and strong as ourselves, but who slip because of the stronger temptations they have to encounter. 2. But connected with this danger there is distress. As a rule distress follows in the wake of danger, even though the threatened danger has been averted. People who have experienced what seemed miraculous escapes have afterwards been visited by the greatest distress of mind. They are intensely thankful that they did escape, but the danger, that was so dreadful and imminent, takes such hold of their mind, that, though saved from it in a physical sense, they, nevertheless, go through it again and again in their imagination, and the process is one of the most acute pain. Deliverance from evil does not, as a rule, leave the mind full of pure joy and gratitude; the thought of the other alternative—what might have been—fixes itself like a barbed arrow in the breast. II. **DELIVERANCE AND DELIGHT.** Observe the nature of the deliverance. He was held up, not lifted and carried away. His surroundings remain the same. The slippery path is before him as well as behind him. God simply sustains him. Thus it is that His mercy is often vouchsafed. He takes not away the burden; but He enables us to bear it. He changes not the scene from war to peace, but arrays us in the armour and strengthens us with the might that will ensure for us a glorious victory. He makes not the path less rough or slippery, but takes us by the hand, and so helps us on. And just as the danger is followed by distress, so the deliverance is followed by delight. "Thy comforts delight my soul." The feet are not only firmly established, but a new song is put into the mouth. The heart's agitation is calmed. The shock is allayed. The troubled mind finds peace. Its darkness is turned into day, and its motions are no more those of fear, but the ecstasies of pure delight. III. **THE SOUL'S ACCESS TO THESE BLESSINGS.** "When I said." The confession and the salvation are connected—the one leads to the other. And what of the confession? It is that of a trembling, humble soul that mistrusts itself; but though perplexed still, trusts in the living God, and so, in answer to its call, deliverance comes. What a difference there is, then, between confession and profession (*Matt. xxvi. 33, 34.*) (*Adam Scott.*) *Medicine for the distracted*.—Good people are a thoughtful people. They are none the less so because they are men of faith. Christ's words, "Take no thought for the morrow," meant only take no carking care, no anxious thought: it was anxiety, not prudence, which He condemned. They take much account of their thoughts. Other men are scarcely alarmed at their actions unless they be very glaring, but the saint trembles when an impure thought defiles his soul. For thought makes character: "As a man thinketh, so is he." We must, then, look well to our thoughts and keep our heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. Happy shall we be if we can say as the psalmist, "In the multitude," etc. Note—I. **THE PSALMIST'S DECLARATION.** It means—1. That, when passing many subjects in review before him, he selected the joys of true religion, or the comforts of God, as the subjects which he preferred before all others. He knew the joys of quiet meditation. He was a man whose contemplations would take a wide range. He had lived a country life, he knew much of the beauties of nature, of the glories of the heavens, and he could unite his thoughts about them to fit words. Of all purely intellectual joys there is, surely, none greater than to be able to pour forth sublime truths in fitting words. But he knew also the delights of active life, and they are not a few to a man who is in vigorous health and mental force. Also he knew the splendours of a court. Yet, reviewing all his life thoughts, he makes this declaration, "In the multitude," etc. Should not this be the assertion of every Christian? 2. The text means, also, that when he was exercised with many cares in life, he found his solace in the comforts of his God. He had many reasons for care. At court, when persecuted; "but," we read, "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." This what we should

do. Then—3. When oppressed with evil thoughts he found his shelter in God. Such thoughts do come into the holiest minds. How horrible they are, and how desperate is the conflict of a gracious soul when it is tortured with them. But at such times the only consolation is to fall back upon God. 4. When the mind is worried with thoughts which cannot be dissipated, it is well to turn unto the Lord. Men will have periods in which they do not seem so much to have a subject for thought as to be prisoners of care to ten thousand subjects at once. They are hurried away as with a flood. What nights of weary watchings and longings for rest that will not come do they cause! Now, there is no sleeping draught that I know of like contemplation of the love of God. 5. If ever we are beset with a multitude of thoughts of a doubting kind, we shall find our best solace in flying to our God. Francis Quarles, in his quaint "Emblems," represents a man with a flail, who is dealing heavy blows all around, and the only one who escapes is a person who, with much daring, comes close to him; the way to escape the heavy blows of Providence is to close in with Him who wields the rod, for the further off the heavier the blow. In all dark times run home. Return unto your rest. If you cannot come to the Lord as a saint, come as a sinner. II. WHAT IS THIS SUBJECT UPON WHICH DAVID LAYS SUCH STRESS? He says, "Thy comforts delight my soul." What are God's comforts? They are the truths which surround the person and work of God. First there is the Father. What comfort that He is our Father! Then comes Jesus, the Son of God, our very brother, man, our perfect atonement, and He who has perfumed the grave in which we shall sleep, and then removed its door. And then the Holy Spirit, for He helpeth our infirmities. But these consolations spring from the whole work and system of Divine grace; from the attributes and from the promises of God. The Bible is a great honeycomb, and it drips with honey. Conclusion:—The way to comfort is the way which leads thee to thy God. And oh, poor sinner, the same way is open to you. Do not look within for comfort, for you will find none. As well go to the Arctic regions, and pierce icebergs to discover warmth, as look to yourselves for consolation. Away then to Him who has said, "Whosoever cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Multitudinous thoughts and sacred comforts*:—If a man were a mere animal he would not need the comfort which thought may bring, outward things would be enough. Let but the trough be full and the swine are happy; the pasture abundant and the sheep are content. But man needs far more. His greatest joy or misery must proceed from inner springs. Hence the importance, but also the labour and difficulty of guarding our thoughts, for they are unstable, unruly, fickle, swift, impetuous, changeable as the clouds of heaven. How then shall we do this? Let the text tell us. It speaks—I. OF MULTITUDINOUS THOUGHTS AND SACRED COMFORTS. None of these thoughts, then, are those which are tumultuous in the night of trial. At such times it is a great blessing if God's comforts are, as they may be, our stay and holdfast. They were so to David (vers. 9, 12, 14). And he calls to mind his own experience. "Unless the Lord had been my help," etc. "Thy mercy, O Lord, held me up." Such thoughts as these in times of tumult will not merely console, but delight the soul. Perplexing thoughts and periods of dilemma. It is with some as with Israel at the Red Sea. The sea before them, the rocks on either hand, and the cruel Egyptians in the rear. In such cases there is nothing for it but to "stand still and see the salvation of God." Remember that often all thy way is ordered by a higher power than thine. Our Pilot never sleeps, and His hand never relaxes its grasp. Remorseful thoughts in the hour of recollection. Who can be without these when he passes his life in review? Can there be forgiveness for all these? Then the comforts of God come to us in Jesus. Thoughts of heart-searching in seasons of spiritual anxiety. And of foreboding in days of depression. Lift high the banner, "Jehovah Jireh." It must be well with us, it cannot be ill. Occasionally we have thoughts profound in times of meditation. There are many great mysteries in the Word of God, and foolish persons utterly befog themselves with them; some minds seem never to be satisfied until they find something which they cannot comprehend, and then they are ready to give up the Bible altogether; they act like one who should come in to a feast, and after turning over all the good things, should at last find a bone with no meat upon it, and should insist upon it that he would not eat a morsel until he could digest that particular bone. But I bless God for a religion which I cannot perfectly understand. II. VIEW THESE SACRED COMFORTS. View them in their nature. They are connected with God—the Father, Son, Holy Ghost.

When Archbishop Whately was dying, a friend said to him, "Sir, you are great in death as well as in life." The good man shook his head and replied, "I am dying, as I have lived, a simple believer in Jesus Christ." "But what a blessing it is," said the other, "that your glorious intellect does not fail you at the last." "There is nothing glorious," said he, "but Jesus Christ." "Still," said the other, "your grand endurance is a great support to you." "I have no support but faith in the crucified Saviour," said he. Comfort comes from the Lord alone. And these comforts have stability. Many consolations are like the life-buoys heard of a while ago, which are exceedingly useful on dry land, but of no service whatever when once a man trusts his life to them in the sea. But not so God's comforts. And they are efficient. They delight "my soul," my very self. And they delight, not merely sustain and quiet the soul. III. A CONTRAST. For many never think at all. Their thoughts, if they have any, are like a swarm of gnats, volatile, dancing up and down, light, useless. Oh, that men would think! Once there was a canoe afloat on Niagara, but some miles off the fall. As the current carried it on, people on the bank could see that the paddle was shipped and an Indian lying in the canoe fast asleep. They shouted as loud as they could to awake him, for they well knew what dread peril he was in. They ran along the bank shouting and calling to him, but it was of no use. He had either been drinking or was so fatigued that his slumber was most profound, and the canoe went on, continually increasing its pace. It dashed at last against a headland, and spun round in the torrent, and they said one to another, "He is safe; the man will be awakened. Such a start as that must rouse him up, and he will paddle out of danger." But no, he went right on till the roaring of the fall was near, and then the course of the boat was so rapid that none could keep up with it, and it went whirling on faster and faster. So profound was the Indian's sleep, that for a while even the roar of the fall did not awaken him, but at last he was aroused, and then he grasped his paddle; but it was all too late; he was borne onward, and the last that was seen of him was his standing bolt upright in the boat as it plunged over the abyss, and was never seen or heard of more. Ah! how like is this to those of you who are asleep, and are borne onward by the treacherous current. That fever, that sick-bed, like a headland jutting into the stream, methought it would have made you think. That frail bark of thine was twisted round and round. O that thy soul had been but aroused from its slumber. The noise of hell may well be in thy ears, and the sound that cometh up from the abyss of terror may well arouse thee; but alas, I fear, thou wilt sleep on until escape be no longer possible. But may God forbid. (*Ibid.*) *Man's comfort*:—Here is a twofold army, one marching against another, an insurrection and a debellation; a tumult and its appeasement; a band of thoughts assailing, and a host of comforts repelling, resisting, protecting. There is a multitude of those thoughts, and no less is the number of these comforts. These troublous thoughts have got into the citadel of the heart, within me; and these consolatory forces have entered as far, even into the soul; "they delight my soul." Those thoughts fight under the colours of flesh and blood, but these comforts under the banner of God; they are "my" thoughts, but "Thy" comforts; the cogitations of man, but the consolations of Jesus Christ. I. OUR FOES. 1. The rebels are thoughts. As the world produceth vipers, and serpents, and venomous creatures, worms and caterpillars that would devour their parent, so the soul breeds noxious and mutinous thoughts, that are like an earthquake in her bowels; and while they maintain civil broils and factions one against another, she feels the smart of all. 2. The number of them is a multitude. Thought calls to thought, jealousy to fear, fear to sorrow, sorrow to despair; and these furies leap upon the heart as a stage, beginning to act their tragical parts. Man hath more wheels moving in him than a clock; only the difference is, that the wheels of a clock move all one way, whereas his faculties, like the epicycles, have a rapt motion. His sensitive appetite gives him one motion, his fantasy another, his reason a third, and his imperious, impetuous will crosseth them all, driving the chariot of his affections with the fury of Jéhu. He desires and thinks, and chooseth, argues, consents, and dislikes, and makes more business than time itself. There are not so many hours in one year as there may be thoughts in an hour. 3. The captain of this troublesome soul is himself; "my" thoughts. From what suggestion soever our thoughts come, we call them our own; as whosoever begot the babe, the mother calls it her own child. Indeed, the praise and propriety of good motives we ascribe only to God, without whom we cannot so much as think a good thought; as the channel

may gather filth of itself, but it cannot have a drop of pure water but from the fountain. Bad suggestions, though they proceed from Satan, we call them our own, because they are bred in the womb of our natural corruption; stubble is blown by the wind into the fire, and, being inflamed, it becomes fire. 4. The field where the skirmish is fought; "within me." It is unhappy when soldiers march over the palaces of peace and seats of justice, where the councillors and senators used to sit. If there must be war, let it be in foreign countries, or if it will be in our own land, yet let it proceed no further than the borders; but when it is gotten into the chief city, though it be subdued, it will cost a dear victory. II. OUR FRIENDS. 1. They are "comforts"; not presumptions, nor promises, nor mere hopes; but solid and sensible comforts. 2. There is a plurality of them: "many comforts." Are we troubled with the wants and miseries of this life? We have a comfort for that: "The Lord is my portion; He is my shepherd. I shall lack nothing." Do we sink under the burden of our transgressions? We have a comfort for that. Mary Magdalene heard it to quiet all her storms: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Are we haunted with temptations, hurried with persecutions? We have a comfort for that: "I will be with thee in trouble," saith the Lord. Our comforts vie with the number of our sorrows, and win the game. The mercies of God passed over in a gross sum breed no admiration; but cast up the particulars, and then arithmetic is too dull an art to number them. As many dusts as a man's hands can hold is but his handful of so many dusts; but tell them one by one, and they exceed all numeration. 3. "Thy comforts." Troubles may be of our own begetting; but true comforts come only from that infinite fountain, the God of consolation; for so He hath styled Himself. The eagle, at her highest flight, will not lose sight of her young ones; if she perceive any danger approaching, down she comes again to their defence. Christ is indeed ascended up on high, yet He hath a favourable eye to His servants below. 4. "Delight the soul," which is the last circumstance; the effect of all. All God's war is for peace. We should never have had such a conflict, if God had not intended us for such a conquest. If here were nothing but sorrows, earth would be thought hell; if nothing but comforts, it would be thought heaven. But that we may know it to be, as indeed it is, neither heaven nor hell, but between both, and the way to either, we have a vicissitude of troubles and delights. In calamity, good nourishments are comfortable, good words are comfortable, good friends are comfortable, the physician is comfortable, a good spouse is specially comfortable; but in respect of these comforts, which do nevertheless pass all understanding, we may say of them, as Job did to his visitant friends, "Miserable comforters are ye all." But blessed are the souls upon whom this Sun of comfort shineth; and happy are those showers of tears and sorrows that shall be dried up with such beams of comfort. (T. Adams.) *Thought of God should be continuous*:—Life is but a dreary stretch of wilderness unless all through it there be dotted, like a chain of ponds in a desert, those moments in which the mind fixes itself upon God, and loses sorrows and sins and weaknesses and all other sadnesses in the calm and blessed contemplation of His sweetness and sufficiency. The very heavens are bare and lacking in the highest beauty unless there stretch across them the long lines of rosy-tinted clouds. And so across our skies let us cast a continuous chain of thoughts of God; and as we go about our daily work, let us try to have our minds ever recurring to Him like the linked pools that mirror heaven in the midst of the barren desert, and bring a reflection of life into the midst of death. (A. Maclaren, D.D.) *Divine comfort alone sufficeth*:—In all the comforts we have it is good to consider from whence it comes; is it God's comfort or a fancy of our own? A comfort that is made up of our fancies is like a spider's web that is weaved out of its bowels, and is gone and swept away with the turn of a besom. (T. Manton, D.D.) *The thoughts of man multitudinous*:—The thoughts of a man's heart—what millions are there of them in a day! The twinkling of the eye is not so sudden a thing as the thinking of a thought, yet those thousands and thousands of thoughts which pass from thee, that thou canst not reckon—they are all known to God. (A. Burgess.)

Ver. 20. **Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with Thee, which frameth mischief by a law?**—*Wrong legalized*:—I. INIQUITY HAS A "THRONE" ON EARTH. It is a ruling power, it has the sway everywhere. Wrong is an imperial power. II. The "throne" of iniquity is INCOMPATIBLE WITH GOD. "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with Thee?" Impossible. It is eternally antagonistic to

the Divine nature, law, and procedure. III. The "throne" of iniquity LEGALIZES WRONG. "Which frameth mischief by a law." In England wrong is legalized. What is war but legalized murder, monopoly but legalized dishonesty, unrestrained accumulation of wealth but legalized greed? What wrongs, alas, our fathers have legalized, from which we are suffering to-day. (*Homilist.*) *A startling inquiry*:—I. WHAT IS THE THRONE OF INIQUITY? Any government that upholds and protects wrong-doing, or that does not protect the people from the workers of iniquity, is a throne of iniquity. It frames mischief into law:—1. When it protects that which is morally wrong by legal enactments, and enables men to defend their bad conduct by saying, "I have a government licence." 2. When it patronizes that which is evil by using it as a source of revenue. II. SUCH A THRONE HAS NO FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD. 1. Because God's throne, God's government, is upright, righteous. 2. He never makes a law to protect that which is wrong, nor to regulate evil. 3. He condemns, denounces, and prohibits all evil, both in the person and the state. He has no fellowship with the workers of iniquity. III. APPLY THIS TO THE LIQUOR-TRAFFIC. 1. The manufacture, importation, exportation, transportation, and traffic in intoxicating liquors, for drinking purposes, is a great wrong. 2. Those who pass enactments to regulate or protect such an evil frame mischief into law. 3. To vote for such laws, or to suffer them to exist if we can prevent it, is to sustain "the throne of iniquity." 4. Licence laws do not make the liquor-traffic right, but they do make those who enact them accomplices in the crime of the liquor-seller. (*D. C. Babcock.*)

PSALM XCV.

VERS. 1-11. O come, let us sing unto the Lord.—*The grandest of creature services*:—I. It is the most RIGHTEOUS. Adoration rendered to—1. The greatest Being. (1) Great in Himself (ver. 3). (2) Great in His possessions (ver. 4). 2. The kindest Being. (1) He made us. Possessing reason, imagination, conscience, freedom, etc. (2) He supports us—provides for our necessities, watches over us, guides us through intricacies, and guards us from perils. (3) He delivers us. "The rock of our salvation." The strong ground of our confidence, the foundation on which our safety rests. Who will say then that this service is not the most righteous,—to adore most the most adorable, to thank most the supremely kind? II. It is the most DELIGHTFUL. "Joyful noise." Worship is the only service that ensures happiness. 1. It accords with the highest dictates of conscience. 2. It gratifies our highest love. 3. It engages our highest powers. III. It is the most URGENT (vers. 7, 8). 1. The neglect of this service is the hardening of the heart. 2. The hardening of the heart leads to procrastination. 3. This procrastination involves most calamitous results. (1) It provokes the Almighty (ver. 8). (2) It leads to ruin (ver. 11). (*Homilist.*) *The Venite*:—I. A CALL TO PRAISE (vers. 1, 2, 6). Our call to praise and thanksgiving leads on, as we should expect such an one as David to teach us, to prayer. We praise for evidences of His nature, and such praise must lead us to pray that His attributes may find their exercise towards us; that He will deal with us as His perfect nature has dealt with other generations and other people. We offer thanks for the past, and every past mercy is ground of prayer for future mercies; every received mercy is a ground of hope upon which we build our prayers for new mercies. II. THE CAUSES WHICH DEMAND OUR PRAISE. 1. He is not only the Author of our salvation, but He has made it strong, firm, immovable, resting upon Him, the Rock of Ages (vers. 1, 2). 2. We praise God for permitting us to observe His greatness; for the power to know Him in His works. It is not until we begin to examine the details of Creation—plants, birds, insects—to use the telescope upon the heavens, or the microscope upon invisible objects—that every single work, in itself a wonder, helps us to look up awestruck to the One Mind which made and which sustains all. 3. His individual care for each of us (ver. 7). III. A CAUTION AGAINST THE LOSS OF THE ACCEPTED TIME (vers. 7-10). Alas! we have daily teaching like the men in the wilderness, that the chastened may only harden themselves against the hand of love which chastens! And poverty and sickness, by which God seeks to draw His children to Him, and to purify them for Himself, are made the very grounds for

neglecting and disobeying Him! IV. REJECTION COULD NOT FINALLY PASS UNPUNISHED. There was a sentence upon those despisers (ver. 11). God's truth requires that His promises should be as sure to His opposers as to His followers and friends; and the sentence will follow. They could not enter into God's offered rest, as Paul explains to the Romans, on account of unbelief. (*D. Laing, M.A.*) *The genesis of praise*:—This has been called the Invitatory Psalm. The Temple at Jerusalem had been restored. Its doors were again open for worship. And the psalmist sought to allure the people to a worship long neglected in the time of their exile. From the earliest times this psalm has filled a somewhat similar place in the services of the Western Church. It is the first note of praise in the order for morning prayer. I. THE SPONTANEITY OF SONG. Jehovah did not say: "Sing unto Me," but men said one to another: "O come, let us sing unto the Lord!" Men sang because they could not help but sing. There are some things so natural to men that no Divine command is needed. Song is one of these. It grows naturally out of the emotions of a godly heart. The deepest feelings of the race have always found their fullest expression in poetry, and poetry reaches its highest utterance when wedded to music, on whose wings it soars to heaven. II. THE RELIGIOUS INSPIRATION OF SONG. Love is the great kindler of song, and takes on its noblest, purest forms as it goes out to God. And hence it will be found that in proportion to the strength of love in any religion is the place and power of its song. To the lovelessness of most of the pagan and heathen religions is due the poverty and even absence of song in their worship. To all intents and purposes the Hebrew and its successor, the Christian, faith are the only ones in which song prevails. And it will be found, if you look into the history, that as their conception of God grew in depth and tenderness, the more lovable He was seen to be, so their song grew in volume and worth. The theology of each age is reflected in its hymnody. III. THE RELIGIOUS OCCASION OF SONG. The psalm before us probably sprang out of joy at the reopened temple at Jerusalem, that the feet of Israel could once more stand within the gates of Zion. Every lofty hymn has a sacred history. And thus the experience of elect souls is made to help other souls to higher levels of thought and feeling. They are like climbers who have reached the mountain summit, and beckon those in the valley to share with them the grand outlook to which their eye has reached. It is for us to respond to their call, so that as we sing we may be drawn upwards from the mists of earth to those. Goethe once advised, "as a means of making life less commonplace, that we should every day, at least, hear or read a good poem." Better still would it be if we allowed no day to pass without joining in a hymn of praise. Marvellous has been the influence of song in the furtherance of religion in the days that are past. The Arians were among the first to discover its power. They organized singing processions to propagate their doctrine. Then the orthodox party followed their example. When Ambrose, the good Bishop of Milau, was ordered to give up one of his churches for Arian worship, he refused, and his devoted followers surrounded his house day and night to protect him from the troops of the Emperor. He arranged for his defenders hymns for every hour of the day and night. It was a charge against Luther that he was singing the whole German people into the Reformation doctrine. The Lollards gained their name from their custom of "lulling"—that is, singing softly. The Methodist Revival owed quite as much to the hymns of Charles Wesley as to the preaching of his saintly brother. The Oxford Movement owed its success not only to the "Tracts for the Times" and the sermons of Newman, but to "The Christian Year" of Keble. Where would the Moody and Sankey movement have been but for the "Sacred Songs and Solos"? The Salvation Army could not carry on its work without its rough but inspiring music. And my own conviction is that holy song will be one means of bringing to the Church a deeper unity. Through it the heart is permitted to speak, and by means of the heart, rather than the intellect, Christian people are drawn closer together. Theology has too often proved a dividing influence. Song usually tends to unity. (*W. G. Horder.*) *Psalmody*:—I. THE PRACTICE OF SINGING. Old Testament saints, as well as New, seem never weary of celebrating the praises of their Lord and Saviour; because He was made an offering for their sins, dead, risen, and ascended to His throne. And this is still the sweetest subject in the Church of Christ; for happy are they who have the Lord for their God—yea, thrice happy they who have "the kingdom of God" set up within them, which "is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." II. THE OBJECT OF SINGING PSALMS. The object of singing is, we see distinctly, the praise of Jesus. It is

very important for you to notice that; for as the joy of the believer arises from his conscious standing in Jesus, so this joy is expressed in celebrating the praises of the glorious person and redeeming work of Jesus—for "God would have all men to honour the Son even as they honour the Father." Singing is the outward expression of inward joy; and this is no doubt why the Holy Ghost has enjoined it on believers. It shows their sense of the infinite love of God in Christ Jesus. But at the same time that believers find joy in singing the praises of Jesus, as they are set forth in the Book of Psalms, they may also as they sing learn lessons for the practice of daily life. They have an interest not only in all Jesus was, but also in what Jesus is. Do they see that His trust in God was unshaken? They trust Him to make theirs steadfast also. Again: was His walk "holy, and harmless, and undefiled," so that He could say in truth, "I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved"? Then they depend upon Him for strength to tread in His steps. Were His tempers perfectly holy, so that He could say, "Thou hast proved Mine heart; Thou hast visited Me in the night; Thou hast tried Me, and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that My mouth shall not transgress"?—when, I say, they sing of this, they admire His example, and through His Spirit they strive daily to "put off the old man" and to "put on the new." Again: was He carried through the greatest sufferings in perfect resignation, so that He could say, "Not My will, but Thine, O Lord, be done"? Then may they look up to Him in every trial for His promised support. Have the "everlasting gates" been opened, and "the King of glory" gone in? It is promised to them that they shall "see the King in His beauty"—yea, that they shall partake of that very glory. III. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH WE ARE TO SING. Two things are necessary—that a man should sing spiritually, and that he should sing intelligently—that he should know what he has to thank God for, otherwise he cannot do it intelligently. Have we not mercies to thank God for? Why not, then, join the Church of Christ in thanking Him for them? The believer should live as he sings; his life should be in harmony with his principles. (*J. W. Reeve, M.A.*) *Praise the outcome of Divine influence:*—The whole of Glasgow is supplied with water from Loch Katrine. It is brought through the intervening country, and is distributed in pipes along every street, and from the palaces above Kelvin Grove to the wretched flats in the Saltmarket it tells, to those who have ears to hear, sweet stories of lofty peaks, wooded slopes, cataracts, and sparkling rivulets in its Highland home. Embosomed in the Mountains of Eternity, and reflecting in its placid sweep the magnificent devices of uncreated wisdom, we see the vast unfathomable ocean of Divine love. From that ocean a bountiful outflow of holy influence has come down into the human mind, and been divided into little rills known as "psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs." Not to the rich only do they ripple, but also to the poor; labour forgets its weariness while taking in or giving out their sacred words, and the widow mingles their sweetness with her scanty food, and even the little child sends forth a triumph caught from their melody. *Inciting one another to praise God:*—You know how the birds stir up each other to sing. One bird in a cage will excite its fellow, who looks at him and seems to say, "You shall not outstrip me: I will sing with you," till all the little minstrels quiver with an ecstasy of song, and form a choir of emulating songsters. Hark how the early morning of the spring is rendered musical by the full orchestra of birds. One songster begins the tune, and the rest hasten to swell the music. Let us be like the blessed birds. Bless the Lord till you set the fashion, and others bless Him with you. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **The Rock of our salvation.**—*Christ the Rock of our salvation:*—The shipwrecked mariner, hoping for safety on the sea-girt rock; the hunted fugitive, flying for a refuge to the cliff on the plain; the fainting traveller, throwing himself down in the shade of rock in the desert; the steep and precipitous hill, with its encircling stream, forming the site of a mighty fortress: each of these pictures tells us of weakness finding comfort and aid, each sets forth the value of the redeeming work, and the mighty mission of Christ our Lord. For the very idea of a rock is that of stability and strength, that which cannot be moved, that on which we may rest secure. "For us and our salvation" Christ died, says the noble language of our Creed. He is the great example of self-sacrifice, and of the One who devoted Himself to death and suffering for the benefit of "the many." But how shall we apply to our own selves the benefit of Christ's work? How shall we find a refuge in the Rock of our salvation? By a humble and faithful realization of what He has done for us. (*J. W. Hardman, LL.D.*)

Ver. 8. **For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.**—*On the existence, greatness, and government of God*:—I. **THE TRANSCENDENT GREATNESS OF THE PSALMIST'S GOD.** 1. He is great in the eternity of His existence. God "only hath immortality." Finite beings are always going forward to further immortality; but God possesses it in the most absolute sense. Other beings depend for their immortality on the will of their Maker, and flow of their duration; but He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." And as He is infinite in essence, He must necessarily be indestructible in the nature of His existence; for the power that destroys must always be greater than what is destroyed. 2. He is great in the immateriality, unity, and immensity of His existence. These are all necessarily implied in His eternity. 3. He is great in Omnipotence. Creation, in all its works of greatness and grandeur, falls infinitely short of a full exhibition of omnipotent power. For no finite substances, however multiplied and extended, could ever fill boundless space, or circumscribe the efforts of God Omnipotent. Here we might contemplatively roam after the ways and works of the Almighty Architect, until we were bewildered and lost in the magnitudes, mazes, and mysteries of creation. His power is also manifested in upholding all things created. He commands all the suns, systems, and planetary orbs, and they move in obedience to His sovereign pleasure. 4. He is boundless in love. Our first parents proved His goodness in the Garden of Eden, where His benevolence lavished around them every charm. There the "Tree of Life," in grand and conspicuous pre-eminence, unfolded its verdant glories, and invited the human pair to partake of its immortality. The redemption of this fallen world is another proof of Divine love—into which angels desire to look, and in which we are everlastingly interested. 5. He is gloriously great in holiness. All the works of His creation, holiness of His laws, dispensations of His providence, influences of His Spirit, and condemnation and overthrow of wicked men and devils, proclaim that He is holy. And "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty," will be the sublimest song that immortal millions can endlessly sing in the heaven of heavens. 6. He is incomprehensibly great in omniscience. II. **HE IS A "GREAT KING ABOVE ALL GODS."** 1. His right to the empire. (1) Right of eternal priority. As there can be but one absolute and endless monarchy, so there is but one supreme and independent King. (2) Right of eternal sufficiency. His "throne is for ever and ever." It is founded in infinite wisdom, and upheld by everlasting strength. Amidst the revolutions of ages it stands the same. (3) Right of universal inheritance. In His administration no law can be defective, no faithful subject go unprotected, and no enemy be triumphant. The thunders of the throne shall prevent all invasion, and His omnipotence defy all usurpation, until His right to reign shall be indisputably acknowledged, and the God of everlasting sovereignty be gloriously magnified. 2. His extensive empire. (1) He reigns in the Kingdom of Nature. He reigns over inanimate nature by those fixed laws which regulate and revolve all matter; and carries forward as undeviatingly His superintendence over an atom as over a magnificent world. He reigns over animate irrational nature by instinct. He reigns over man by reason, conscience, and revelation. (2) He reigns in the kingdom of providence. (3) He reigns in the kingdom of darkness and damnation. (4) He reigns in the kingdom of grace, for the protection and complete triumph of His Church. (5) He reigns in the kingdom of glory—the heaven of heavens, the home of all the saints. (*W. Barnes.*) **GOD OF GODS**:—I. **THE DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY IN THE PHYSICAL REALM.** Nature is full of the manifestations of a great intelligence, full of remarkable adjustments and adaptations, full of ordered sequences and wise contrivances. In other words, Nature, through all her domain, from those gleaming stars which shoot their rays through vast and interminable spaces down to those invisible and primordial atoms of which all substances are composed, and which maintain their ceaseless movements to and fro, is subject to a high and beneficent power. Everywhere there is manifest the sovereignty of law, and the sovereignty of law is the sovereignty of God. In most great cities they have a mansion house, or some similar building, which is a symbol and centre of that civic authority which rules over the whole of the area comprised in the civic boundary; and so this physical universe is the mansion house of creation's God—not a house empty and tenantless, so far as the Creator's presence is concerned, but occupied and inhabited throughout with that same creative spirit which in the beginning created all things, and which ever since has sustained and controlled all things. II. **THE DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY IN THE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL REALM.** The kingdom of grace is the extension of the kingdom of

nature, and the laws and principles which operate in the one operate in the other. 1. There is the prominence given to beauty. One might almost say that the object of the Creator was the creation of beauty, and that the great Designer had set His heart upon producing a picture of surpassing loveliness. And the object of God in redemption is clearly the creation or the re-creation of beauty, not outward beauty merely, but inward—beauty of character, beauty of soul. 2. There is the insistence of the Divine constancy and faithfulness. Banks fail, governments are overturned, empires break up and pass away, but the sun never refuses to shine, and the earth never declines to bring forth the vintage of her fruits and the harvest of her flowers. And this characteristic of faithfulness belongs as truly to the sphere of grace as of nature. The promises of God are all "yea and amen." 3. There is the recognition of the value of the individual. Nature cares for the whole, and she cares not less for the individual parts of which the whole is composed. There is not a cowslip in the meadow, nor yet a blade of grass which catches its little drop of crystal and holds it suspended in the early sunlight but witnesses to the care and providence of God, and to the individualizing character of that providence. And the same is true of the grace which bringeth salvation. The disciples were all chosen and called separately and individually. There is not one of us, down to the least and the youngest, whose name is not written in Creation's book, and for whom there is not a place reserved in Redemption's record! (T. Sanderson.)

Ver. 4. **The strength of the hills is His also.**—*The strength of the hills:*—The characteristics of the things made are characteristic of their Maker. What, therefore, I find suggestive in the hills I find suggestive of God. What is the strength of the hills? It is not mere bulk, size, hugeness of form, massiveness of outline. Strength is not one characteristic; it is a combination of characteristics. Strength is a harmony of various elements. I. **BEAUTY.** To see their green slopes speckled thin with sheep; the grey crag peeping out here and there like a hoary battlement; the purple heather making a feast of colour; the huge boulder, poised upon some dizzy eminence, seeming to threaten destruction to the venturesome climber; the cloud-shadows passing like swift and silent ghosts along the frowning steep; is not all this an impressive exhibition in the picture-gallery of nature, open every day, and free of charge? And the thought of the psalmist is this,—that the beauty of the hills is in reality a beauty of God; that all this panorama of living loveliness is an indication of the loveliness of the Divine character. II. **PERMANENCE.** Who that has looked thoughtfully upon the mountains could imagine anything more typical of the immovable? Their sunless pillars are sunk so deep in earth that we cannot dream of their being moved out of their place; the idea of the fugitive and the transient is excluded as we contemplate the fixity of the hills. An Old Testament writer, indeed, has made them an image of permanence when he says that sooner than imagine that the kindness of God can pass away, or that the mercy of the Eternal can cease, the very mountains shall pass and the hills be removed. But even as he regards the one impossible, so he is sure that the character of God is fixed and unchangeable for ever. In this way does Nature become one of our best religious teachers. The hills speak to us of the permanence of the Divine. A fickle God would be worse than none at all. A God whose principles of action were continually changing would be the terror, and not the inspiration of his worshippers. Jesus Christ has given me a greater sense of trustworthiness and permanence than any one I know, and I think the reason is that He is the express image of the person of God. There is only one thing that abides—and it is character. There is only one thing that can make character—and it is love. There is but one man who lasts and keeps young throughout the centuries—"he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." III. **ATMOSPHERE.** Why did your doctor send you away to the hills? It was to get change of air. He wanted you to get some of that mountain breeze into your wasted lungs; he knew that if he could get you away into that bracing ozone it would be better than all the pills and mixtures as before. The air of the hills is a tonic. The atmosphere ought to be an element in your religion. A religion without atmosphere is like a picture without perspective, dull, flat, uninteresting because unnatural. We are afraid to be natural in our religious life. Why is it that so many Christian people seem to be so bloodless, lifeless, atrophied in their character? It is simply want of air. They have no mountains in their creed. We shall never make much impression upon the world until we are less afraid of our own honest thought, and less bound by the rigid

rule-of-thumb religion of society. Christ came to be to us the Truth, and to be the Truth that makes us free—free from our own ignorance, and sin, and unbelief, and fear—free to do the will of the Father by ministering health and kindness to our brethren. To be whole, holy, complete; to be like Christ, is at once the noblest, freest, hardest thing in the world, the one desirable attainment, the sole way to happiness; yes, to more than happiness, to blessedness; and the only way to reach this end is to live in the strengthening atmosphere of Christ's love, and to avail ourselves of all the manifold riches of His grace. IV. OUTLOOK. What is it that makes you so anxious to climb the hill? The view. To see the landscape lying outspread before the eye; to see the country stretching away to the distant horizon; to realize the sense of vastness; to revel in the subtle poetry of distance; this is enough to make you toil up the steep path, and scale the rugged crag, and for a moment call the spreading scene your own. And it is this sense of outlook we need to get into our religion if we would obtain from it the best it has to give us. There is no faith which gives to man such a sense of vastness as the faith of Jesus Christ. The outlook He gives is so commanding and so rich that the eye cannot take it all in, and the mind reels as it tries to grasp it. But the heart is satisfied with that outlook, and pronounces it very good. Do not allow your outlook to be bounded by the grave; stand by the side of the Saviour, and look beyond into the eternal city. (*A. Murrell.*) *The strength of the hills*:—I. THE IMMENSE POWER INVOLVED. We read of the hanging gardens of Babylon and count them among the wonders of the world. Yet in magnitude they were insignificant compared to the everlasting hills. We climb a range of mountains and find building material sufficient for a hundred cities. It exceeds the power of arithmetic to calculate, and it surpasses the power of language to describe, the colossal greatness, power and wealth of which they are the embodiment. How easy are miracles to Him who built the hills! How terrible to live in a world of such energies, unless we are loyally obedient to Him who can create and can destroy, and who is as wise and benign as He is omnipotent! II. THE DAINTY AND MARVELLOUS BEAUTY OF THE HILLS. Their loveliness images the beauty which exists in the mind of the Builder. In form, and outline, and altitude, here in round or undulating lines, there in abrupt and jagged peaks, here lofty and there in lowly elevations, there is constant variety. So, too, in the relation the mountains bear to each other. Some stretch along in terraces and some in continental ranges or chains; some tower up apart and alone; still others tumbled together in confusion, but everywhere bringing refreshment to the vision of the beholder, who is alternately awed and delighted. The verdure that covers their slopes, from the beech and birch below to the evergreen of the higher slopes, with the wild flowers between the splintered crags or the mosses and lichens that cling to them, and the changing colour of the verdure as autumn touches it with brilliant hues—all teach us God's wonderful and eternal love of beauty and lift our thoughts to that city above which He is to make the crown and consummation of beauty eternal. III. THE UTILITY AND THE HELPFULNESS OF THE HILLS. They are rich in their stony or metallic materials, and in the forests that clothe them. Mountains influence the temperature, cooling in summer and protecting us from the rigour of winter. They are great hospitals for the sick, for some diseases cannot exist 2,000 feet above the sea. The springs that run among the hills unite to form the rivers that in turn pour their waters into the sea. There are moral as well as physical benefactions. The mountains teach us to face difficulties and to overcome them, inspiring strength to labour, perseverance and patience in toil and trial. The hills are helpful in stimulating the love of liberty, quickening great thoughts and poetic inspirations. The mountains have sheltered the persecuted people of God, and there the bones of His slaughtered saints have been sometimes laid. It was to the mountain Christ retired to pray; it was on a mountain He was transfigured; it was on a mountain He delivered that matchless discourse which will inspire men as long as time lasts. It was into "a great and high mountain" that John was carried, in the spirit, from which he saw Holy Jerusalem. Mountains are earth's spires. We build spires a hundred feet or more, but these spires are lifted up miles in height toward heaven, pointing to Himself and clothed with pure, white, awful majesty, as if to remind us of the great white throne of judgment which is to be revealed. IV. THE LITTLENES OF MAN IS ANOTHER LESSON OF THE HILLS. Men may tunnel the earth and lift magnificent bridges, but with all their wealth and force they can neither build nor level the Alleghanies and the Sierras. God alone has reared them, and at His word they will vanish as a dream when one awaketh. "What is man that Thou

art mindful of him!" V. How beautiful is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ! THE MOUNTAINS TELL US NOTHING OF HIS MERCY AND GRACE TOWARD SINFUL MEN. They tell of inexorable power, but not of forgiveness. It is in Christ alone we learn this: He who built the mountain opened the eyes of the blind, and blessed the little children. The Bible is the great moral mountain of the world. Why is it that men are unwilling to receive it? (R. S. Storrs, D.D.)

Ver. 5. **The sea is His, and He made it.**—*Considerations on the sea:*—When we place ourselves upon the shore, and from thence behold that immense body of waters, stretching away on all sides, far as the eye can reach; and when we consider how large a portion of the globe is covered in like manner; what a noble idea are we hereby enabled to form of the immensity of that Being who is said not only to weigh the mountains in a balance, but to take up the sea in the hollow of His hand! In whose sight the hills are but as dust, the ocean is no more than a drop. The immeasurable breadth of the sea may remind us of God's boundless mercy; its unfathomable depth holds forth an image of His unsearchable judgments. When we see a mass of water rising up by a gradual ascent, till the sky seems, as it were, to descend and close upon it, a thought immediately strikes us—what is it which prevents these waters from breaking in upon and overflowing the land, as they appear in heaps so much above it? Let us adore that unseen power which, by a perpetual decree, keeps them in their proper place, nor suffers them to intrude themselves into one which is not theirs. Hear attentively the noise of the sea—how grand and awful the sound, even as the voice of the Almighty God when He speaketh! And is not this what the waves always say,—praise the Lord—praise Him with your voices, as we constantly do with ours, while we thus intelligibly proclaim aloud the might of His power and the glory of His majesty! Nor is the sea more wonderful in itself than it is beneficial to mankind. From its surface vapours are continually arising, drawn upwards by the heat of the sun, which, by degrees formed into clouds, drop fatness on our fields and gardens, causing even the wilderness to smile, and the valleys, covered over with corn, to laugh and sing. Thus the prayers of the faithful servants of God, daily ascending from all parts of the earth, return in large effusions of grace and blessing from heaven. But we are indebted to the ocean not only for the vapours sent up from its surface, but likewise for many springs, which have their origin from the great deep beneath, with which the sea communicates. These, arising in vapour through the lower parts of the earth, break forth and issue in streams, many of which joined form rivers, and so go back again to the place from whence they came; as the blood in the human body flows in streams from the heart, through the arteries, and returns to it again, in rivers, by the veins, which grow larger as they approach and are about to empty themselves into the great reservoir. In the greater, as well as the lesser world, there is a constant circulation maintained. The income is proportioned to the expense, and nothing is wasted. All rivers, saith Solomon, run to the sea, yet the sea is not full, or, does not overflow; to the place from whence the rivets come, thither do they return again; but not till, by their innumerable turnings and windings, they have refreshed and enriched large tracts of country in their passage. So Divine grace springs up in the heart of a Christian man, as water doth in a fountain, supplied from an invisible and inexhaustible storehouse. It flows forth in his words and action, doing good to all around it in its course, and is finally swallowed up and lost in the boundless ocean of infinite perfection. (Bp. Horne.) *God's ownership of the sea:*—God has given the land to man, but the sea He has reserved to Himself: "the sea is His, and He made it." He has given man "no inheritance in it; no, not so much as to set his foot on." If he enters its domain, he enters it as a pilgrim and a stranger. He may pass over it, but he can have no abiding place upon it. He cannot build his house, nor so much as pitch his tent within it. He cannot mark it with his lines, nor subdue it to his uses, nor rear his monuments upon it. If he has done any brilliant exploit upon its surface, he cannot perpetuate the memory of it by erecting so much as an arch or a pillar. It steadfastly refuses to own him as lord. And with this is connected that other feature of the sea which marks its reservation to God: I mean its loneliness. There are spaces measured by thousands and thousands of miles over which no ship has ever passed. The idea of a nation's commerce whitening every sea is the wildest fancy. If all the ships that have ever been built were brought together into a single fleet, they would fill but a hand-breadth of the ocean. The space, therefore, that man and his works occupy on the sea is as small in extent as the hold he has

on it by his power is slight and superficial. Both together are as nothing. The ocean covers three-fourths of the surface of the globe, and by far the greatest part of this vast expanse is and ever has been entirely free from his presence and visitation. And it is this vastness, this loneliness, and this impossibility of subjugation by man, that set it apart from the secular aspect that belongs to the rest of the world, and consecrate it as the peculiar possession and dwelling-place of the Most High. Like some vast builded temple, it perpetually speaks of Him and for Him. It bodies forth His immensity. It represents eternity. Its vastness, its omnipresence, and its separation from the presence and power of man, set it apart as the symbol of God, the temple of His abode, and the place of His special manifestation. We can walk down to the shore and lay our hand upon its waters; and when we do so, we feel as if we touched the feet of Jehovah; as if we saw the very fields of immensity and eternity, and held within our grasp the lines that bound us to another life. And it is this which gives the sea its mystery and might; that it is fraught with these Divine elements; that it is charged with these spiritual suggestions; that it is the symbol of eternity and infinity, and crowds upon us, with irresistible majesty, the vision of that life unseen, and those worlds unknown, for which our souls are made, and to which the feet of every one of us are swiftly and irreversibly travelling. (*L. Swain, D.D.*) *The wonders of the sea*:—I. ITS EXTENT. The surface of the globe is said to be two hundred millions of square miles, and of these more than two-thirds are supposed to be water; so that the surface of the sea may be one hundred and forty millions of miles. And then, with regard to its depth, it is beyond all calculation. The depth may, in some parts, be sounded; but a great portion is unfathomable. It is, therefore, a fit emblem of the immensity of its Maker, of whom it is said, "Who by searching can find God, who can find out the Almighty to perfection?" It may be considered also as an emblem of eternity, that vast eternity to which we are all hastening, and into which we must ere long be launched. II. ITS BOUNDS AND LIMITS APPOINTED BY GOD (*Jer. v. 22; Isa. xl. 12*). Shall such a God be forgotten? Shall He be insulted by profane oaths, drunkenness, etc.? III. ITS INHABITANTS. Although the surface of the sea presents only a barren prospect, having no hills nor trees to adorn it, yet it contains a multitude which no man can number of living creatures, far more numerous than all the tribes of animals which inhabit the land. IV. ITS UTILITY. But when we speak of the great advantages which the world has derived from the sea, there is one which as much surpasses all the rest as the brilliant sun in the firmament exceeds all the twinkling stars of the night—it is "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God," which must have been brought to our country by a ship; and it is supposed as early as in the days of the apostles, and most probably by some British princes and nobles who had been prisoners in Rome, where it is thought they were converted by the ministry of St. Paul. To the Gospel we owe the great and innumerable improvements gradually introduced; which have at length rendered England the glory of all lands, and have made us superior in religion, arts, and arms to every nation under the sun. (*Anon.*)

Vers. 6, 7. **O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.**—*Congregational worship*:—I. ITS PRINCIPLE. God made each, and God rules all; and while of each is demanded individual acknowledgment and homage—"Stand in awe and sin not, commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still,"—"enter into thy closet, and shut thy door, and pray to thy Father which is in secret,"—yet of all is required, that they should acknowledge a common origin, recognize a common supremacy, confess a common necessity, deprecate a common peril, avail themselves of a common salvation. II. THE FORM. We are enjoined in the text to "worship and bow down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker." III. THE BENEFITS. We thus realize by faith the presence of an unseen Deity. We thus recognize the moral supremacy of the God who will be our Judge. We feel the precariousness of life, and are thus made to improve its remaining opportunities. The act of coming hither is the confession that we have a soul; and the act of uniting in what is here transacted is a cultivation of the soul for immortality. (*T. Dale, M.A.*) *Worship*:—Our modern word "worship" is the old Saxon "worth-ship"—that is, in its application, the adequate recognition of God's "worth" or due, and the creature's loyal payment of his debt. In the Bible the word signifies generally an act of respect or of homage. Sometimes it is used of the deference which one man pays to another—as, for example, the case of Nebuchadnezzar, who "worshipped" Daniel. Some-

times it is used to express the spurious devotion which men of old paid to idols. But most frequently it is used to indicate the highest homage that man can pay to his Maker, *i. e.* adoration. It is only moral intelligence that can appreciate the worth and due of God, and that is capable of offering to Him the sublimest adoration. Now, man is involved in a threefold relationship—a personal one, a family one, and a public one. From none of these will God consent to be excluded, nor is it right that He should be. We cannot dismiss Him from our personal lives, for He so encompasses us that to be rid of God means that we cease to exist. We may not close the door of the family against Him, for the family is peculiarly His institution, over which He has the right of perpetual superintendence. And if public life advances without God as its Captain, it must, as all history demonstrates, finally land in the bog of despair and ruin. But it is not sufficient that God be not excluded from the threefold life of man. He must be actively welcomed into each sphere, and His "worship" be recognized therein. Undoubtedly, the most important thing of all is the worship of God in the personal life of each man. As individuals we must recognize and love God. We cannot in this matter lose ourselves in the crowd. Next in importance to personal life is the life of the family and the worship of God there. With every fibre of my being I say to you, guard your families. Do not let your children grow up little better than heathens—teach them the Fatherhood of God and His right to their love and service. But now let us give all our attention to the matter of the public acknowledgment of the worship of God. The New Testament throughout assumes the necessity of public worship, while in several places it commands it (Heb. x. 25; Matt. xviii. 20; 1 Cor. xiv. 40). And there is the example of Christ (Luke iv. 16). But these commands and assumptions are not arbitrary; they simply voice the Divine instinct within us, that gregarious instinct which results in public gatherings. It is this instinct that makes public worship a necessity, for in it we express our common belief, our common prayers, and our common thanksgivings. Each of us is bound to a common Creator by a common bond, and each creature is bound to every other creature by virtue of the bond which binds all to God, and this common bond must receive common recognition. How shall this recognition be best set forth so as to employ the whole of our faculties in the exercise? Our public worship should be a service common to all. It is impossible for any minister to pray so as to comprehend all the needs of his people; at best he can only touch the surface, and it is inconvenient and might be indecorous for each person to state his own case in public. But there are certain thanksgivings and prayers which touch every nature, and in public worship these should be stated. Christ taught His disciples a form of prayer in which they were to say, "Our Father," "Give us," "Our trespasses"—a prayer common to all. But for thanksgiving and prayer to be common they must be responsive—this is demanded by the necessity of the case. The Bible patterns of worship are responsive. Read the accounts of worship in Rev. v., xix. And that great Temple book—the Psalter—was composed for responsive worship. This, you perceive, brings us at once to the question of a liturgy. Might we not have a series of liturgies, compiled, if you will, from the Bible only, so arranged as to promote unity of thought? (*F. C. Spurr.*) *Adoration*:—The psalm contains two strophes or stanzas: the first consisting of five verses and the second of six. Each of these stanzas opens with an invitation. The first is an invitation to praise offered loudly with the voice. "O come, let us shout joyfully to the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation; let us go forth to meet Him with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him with hymns." And the second stanza begins with an invitation to something altogether different,—to worship, or as we had better render it, to adoration. "O come, let us prostrate ourselves, let us bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." The word which is rendered "worship" means prostration, literally nothing less than prostration. The two words which follow mean something less emphatic—the first, the bending of the body while the worshipper still stands, the second kneeling. Nothing changes in the East so far as habit is concerned, and you cannot to-day enter a mosque without seeing each of these three words literally acted on. Sometimes the worshipper bends his head and shoulders, then he kneels, then he prostrates himself entirely, touching the ground with his forehead. This, so far as the outward posture goes, is undoubtedly what the psalmist meant to invite the congregation of Israel to do, as being the outward expression of adoration. But adoration is an inward act of the soul which corresponds with those postures of the body which have just been described. It is the soul recog-

nizing its nothingness before the magnificence of God, its sin before His purity, its ignorance before His omniscience, its feebleness before His power. It is the creature lying in the dust and understanding, as by a flash of light from heaven, what it is to have a Creator and to be alive in His presence. It is sinful man emptying himself of self-assertion before the Being who made him, knowing himself, or almost knowing himself as he is known, crying: "Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord," etc. When we assemble and meet together in church, it is to "render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at God's hands, to set forth His most worthy praise, to hear His most holy Word, and to ask those things which are requisite and necessary as well for the body as the soul." Of these four objects of assembling together in church, that of hearing God's Word, whether read or preached, is not now in question. But what is the relation of the other three, thanksgiving, praise, and prayer for blessings, to adoration? They all three differ from adoration in this, that in each of them the soul is less prostrate, more able to bear the thought of self, than in pure and simple adoration. Certainly, in praise we seem to forget self more easily than in thanksgiving or prayer, since thanksgiving carries the mind back to something which we have received, and by which presumably we have profited, and prayer, in the narrower sense of the word, asks for new blessings, whether for the body or soul. Pure adoration has no heart for self; it lies there silent at the foot of the throne, conscious only of two things, the insignificance of self and the greatness of God. And yet adoration must be the basis, so to put it, of true thanksgiving, and praise, and prayer; it is the fitting acknowledgment of our real relations with God, which should precede them. It sometimes does, indeed, imply so paralyzing a sense of this our nothingness before God that left to itself it would make praise, thanksgiving, and prayer impossible. But here, as we lie in the dust, the one Mediator between God and man bids us take heart as He utters that most consoling sentence: "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." He bids us, as it were, take His hand, and thus, with Him and by Him, not merely adore God, but praise Him, thank Him, pray to Him. Let us, then, briefly remind ourselves of some leading benefits of worship, which explain the importance which is assigned to it by the Church of Christ. First of all, it places us, both as individuals and as a body of men, in our true place before God our Creator. Unless, or until, we believe that one Being exists to whom we stand in a relation utterly different from that in which we stand to any other—namely, that of owing our very existence to Him—worship is impossible. Worship only begins when faith acknowledges the Almighty Creator: it dies away as faith in Him decays; it dies away as He gives place in thought to some purely human imagination respecting how the universe came to be what it actually is. But even where there is no difficulty in believing in God the Creator, and no disposition to question His existence or His power, we sometimes observe that this great belief has no practical effect whatever upon life and thought. Many men practically live as though it were not true that it is God who has made us and not we ourselves. Now, the corrective to this—which is a practical failure, after all, rather than an intellectual mistake—the corrective to this is worship. Worship places us face to face with the greatness of the Creator. The very first effort of worship implies that God is resuming, has resumed, His true place in our thoughts, that He is no longer jostled out of our mental life by a hundred puny worthless rivals belonging to the world of sense. Worship, too, obliges us to think that we are ourselves. It is one thing to hold the immortality of man as an abstract tenet; it is another to be looking forward with a steady, practical aim to a life to come. Worship, depend upon it, is the great preparation for another life—a waste of time, no doubt, if the soul dies with the perishing body, if decay be succeeded by no resurrection, but a use of time than which none can be more sensible, more legitimate, if there be a most certain hereafter, and if, while "the things that are seen are temporal, the things that are not seen are eternal." And thus, lastly, worship is a stimulus to action when—and, of course, only when—it is sincere. If it be true that "to work is to pray," it is also true that to pray is to work. Prayer is, in fact, work, since it makes a large demand upon the energies of the soul, and it creates and trains in us capacity for other kinds of work than itself. It not only illuminates the understanding and kindles the affection, it braces, it invigorates the will. In worship we are in contact with the most real of all beings; with Him on whose will all else that is strictly depends, and in comparison with whom the most solid matter in His universe is but as an unsubstantial shadow. This contact with the highest reality cannot but brace us, and

accordingly we find in all ages that the noblest resolves to act or to suffer have again and again been formed as though in obedience to what seems a sudden overpowering flash of light during worship. So it was with Isaiah when he saw the vision in the temple. "Then said I, Here am I; send me." So it has been with more than one enterprise of our own day; the original resolution to make the venture has dated from the half hour of sincere worship, in which the energies of a single character have been lifted altogether above their average level, so that it became natural and easy to remove the mountains of obstacles around that had before barred the way to action. In another world we shall probably look back upon the way in which we have spent much of our time here with deep, although unavailing, regret; but we may be sure that no such regret will ever be felt on account of any time that has been devoted to the worship of our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. (*Canon Liddon.*) *The duty of external worship:*—External adoration may be considered as—I. A PART OF THAT NATURAL HOMAGE WHICH THE WHOLE MAN, SOUL AND BODY, OWES TO GOD, UPON THE ACCOUNT OF HIS CREATION AND PRESERVATION OF US, AND HIS SOVEREIGN DOMINION OVER US. We all look for the glorification, not only of our souls, but bodies, in the life to come. Now, a reward supposeth a work; it is meet and right, therefore, that we should worship and glorify God in this life with the body as well as the soul, if so be we expect that God should glorify "both our bodies and souls in another." II. A HELP AND ASSISTANCE TOWARDS PROMOTING THE SPIRITUAL WORSHIP OF OUR SOULS. There is so close a connection between the mind and its organs, that they act, as it were, by consent; and the motions of the one do commonly, and in some degree, pass into the other. And this natural sympathy shows itself nowhere more remarkably than in acts of devotion. We usually blame the body to a high degree, as the great clog and hindrance of the soul. And so it often is. But here it may be made to draw equally in the yoke of duty; nay, even to give wings to the mind, which it presseth down, and overwhelms on many other occasions. Nor is the body more beholden to the soul, for the beginning of its motions, than the soul afterwards is to the body, for the increase of hers. III. A SIGN BY WHICH WE EXPRESS TO OTHERS THE RELIGIOUS ESTEEM AND VENERATION THAT DWELLS IN US. Great are the advantages which the people of God, when they are met together, do mutually receive from it. The cold and remiss worshipper is, at the sight of an exemplary piety, kindled into some degrees of holy warmth; the fervent and devout in the presence of it becomes yet more inflamed. A religious emulation rises then in the breast of the faithful, a holy strife and desire of excelling. But believers are not the only persons that receive benefit by it; unbelievers, too, though unwillingly, have their share. The profane scoffer, who dares encounter a single Christian without shame or fear of reproof has here an answer to his bold scoffs, in that still and powerful argument, which arises from the behaviour of a devout multitude, worshipping God in the beauty of holiness: such an argument as will destroy all its unreasonable suspicions, and convince him of the sincerity of men's hearts towards God, by the natural unaffected signs of it, which are shown in his service: such as will put him in mind of the numbers of devout and good men against which he engages; lead him on from the thought of the present congregation to those of the same kind that are spread over the face of the earth; and make him sit down and consider whether with such a small strength (his own, and that of a few more) he can encounter so many thousands, even the united wisdom and practice of mankind (1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25). (*Bp. Atterbury.*) *Spiritual worship:*—Whatever other ends are secured by sanctuary service,—the education of thought, the quickening of sensibility, and the deepening of religious trust,—this is one main end, the worship of God. We bow before God because He is infinitely just, and true, and pure, and good,—worthy of all our reverence and love; and the song of redemption, as it is celebrated in heaven, fixes our attention upon the glory of the Saviour's nature, as well as the merit of the Saviour's work. I. EVERYTHING IN A CHRISTIAN SERVICE SHOULD BE REGULATED SO AS TO ADVANCE SPIRITUAL LIFE. The instincts of a fervent Christian man will resent all that is showy and formal, and will rejoice in all that lifts his heart and his thoughts into communion with the living God. II. IF THAT SPIRITUAL WORSHIP BE PRESENT THERE WILL BE NO CRY FOR FORMS OF PRAYER. To enjoy prayer is one of the marks of true devoutness, and when there is delight in approaching God, the soul will choose its own simplest forms of speech. They will be touched with a broken spirit and a contrite heart. Meditation is prayer in preparation, and prayer is preparation spoken. III. IN THE PRESERVATION OF SPIRITUAL DEVOUTNESS THE WORSHIPPERS HAVE MUCH TO DO.

Remember this: that worship must be in harmony with our life, and not a brilliant exception to it. True prayer is connected with the continuous life of God in the soul. It is not the lifting up into a region we are strangers to, a kind of Alpine summit situation to which we have painfully climbed, but rather the enjoyment of an air which is the common breath of our souls. Then the worshipper can afford his earnest and hearty Amen! This he ought to do, this God wishes him to do: "Let all the people say, Amen." IV. IN SUCH SPIRITUAL WORSHIP, PRAISE TAKES ITS APPROPRIATE PLACE. We desiderate united praise. It is not loudness we want; shouting, either in preaching, praise, or prayer, is not power; but we do want the united service of all voices and hearts, as they are touched with the Spirit of the living God. Nothing is so painful as a kind of languid indifference, or a listless mannerism, as though we had little at all to do with the service. Every man, woman, and child in the sanctuary ought to sing, ought to be in earnest about it, and ought to do their best at it. V. IN SUCH SPIRITUAL SERVICE WE ARE TYPING AND TASTING THE WORSHIP OF HEAVEN. That worship we may well believe will be all that is deepest in reverence, all that is sweetest in melody, all that is purest in love. (W. M. Statham.) *Divine worship*:—I. THE COMPONENT ELEMENTS OF TRUE WORSHIP. As it is the chief fact with regard to man, so it is of the highest consequence. 1. It has its inward principles. Its root is in the soul. "God is a Spirit," etc. There must be—(1) Profound reverence. This is the basis of religious excellence, and is inspired by the contemplation of God and of ourselves in His sight. (2) Humility. (3) Submissive trust and love. (4) Humble hope. 2. It has its proper external acts. As the face is the index of the emotions, so outward acts are the index of the spiritual feelings within. There must be—(1) Appropriate postures and demeanour. (2) Appropriate times. (3) Appropriate acts and places. "Splendour of churches is only blameable when it interferes with charity; God, who requireth charity as necessary, accepteth the other also as being an honourable work." II. THE REASONS RENDERING DIVINE WORSHIP OBLIGATORY. 1. It is based upon our relations to God and the constitution and nature of the human mind. 2. It is a Divine institution. In the Old Testament it is abundantly commanded; taken for granted in the New Testament. 3. It is of supreme importance to the mental and spiritual welfare of the world. (1) Its importance to ourselves is great. It maintains a sense of religion in the soul. (2) To others the value is great. Without our days, and acts, and places of worship, men would become entirely abandoned to a worldly and irreligious life. The maintenance of worship is the proclamation of the fundamental truths of religion, which bring blessedness to the individual soul, and peace and prosperity to society. Seek to attain the highest ends of worship in yourselves. Make your life one act of worship, "one great psalm." (James Foster, B.A.) *Humility in approaching God*:—"Shall we presume," says Thoreau, "to alter the angle at which God chooses to be worshipped—kneel before the Lord our Maker?"

Vers. 7, 8. *To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation.*—*To-day*:—I. THE TIME SPECIFIED—"To-day if ye will hear His voice." This is the uniform time and tense of the Holy Ghost's exhortations. "Consecrate yourselves to-day to the Lord." "I command thee this thing to-day." "Son, go work to-day in My vineyard." Therefore, "To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart." 1. "To-day" is a time of obligation. Every man is under a present necessity as a subject of God to obey his Lord to-day, and having rebelled against his God, every sinner is under law to repent of sin to-day. 2. Remember, also, that to-day is a time of opportunity. There is this day set before us an open door of approach to God. This is a very favoured day, for it is the Lord's day, the day of rest, consecrated to works of grace. To-day our Lord Jesus rose and left the dead that He might declare the justification of His people. This is a day of good tidings, therefore I pray you to seize the golden moments. 3. Remember that it is a time limited (Heb. iv. 7). To-day will not last for ever; a day is but a day. When days are longest, shadows fall at last and night comes on. The longest life soon wanes into the evening of old age, and old age hastens to the sunset of the tomb. 4. A word of encouragement: it is a time of promise, for when God says to a man, Come to Me at such a time, He by that very word makes an engagement to meet him. He has made no appointment with thee to meet with thee to-morrow, but He has engaged to speak with thee to-day, if thou wilt hear His voice. Never shall one wait and say, like young Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth," without God's speaking in words of love

era long. II. THE VOICE TO BE REGARDED. "His." 1. Remember that the voice of God is the voice of authority. God has a right to speak to you; shall the creature refuse to hear the Creator? Shall those who are nourished and fed by Him turn a deaf ear to the Preserver of men? When He saith "to-day," who among us shall dare to say that he will not hearken to-day, but by and by? 2. It is the voice of love. How wooing are its tones! 3. It is the voice of power. Old man, the Holy Ghost saith still, "To-day, to-day"; and He that saith "to-day" can make to-day for thee a day of tenderness and melting, till you will be no longer like a stone. 4. It is a pledging voice. When He saith, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found," He doth, as it were, covenant that He will be found of you. Listen, then, to His promising voice, His cheering voice; it will cast all unbelieving fear out of you, and drive away Satan better than David's harp drove the evil spirit out of Saul. God help you so to do. 5. The voice of God should be easy to hear; for "the voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of majesty." III. THE EVIL TO BE DREADED. "Harden not your heart." 1. It will be a serious evil if you do. Under the sound of love's entreaties, within ear-shot of mercy's imploring tones, the sinner is hardening his heart. Sad work to harden one's heart against one's own welfare! Shall any man do this and go unpunished? What think you? 2. It is a greater sin in some than in others, for the Scripture quotes the instance of Israel (Heb. iii. 8). Some of you are the highly privileged as compared with others. 3. This dreadful sin can be committed in a great many ways. Some harden their hearts by a resolution not to feel, some by wishing to wait, some by getting into evil company. 4. This sin will bring with it the most fearful consequences. "He sware in His wrath, they shall not enter into My rest!" You wish to rest at last, you long to rest even now. But it cannot be till you yield to God. You are not at peace now, and you never will be if you harden your hearts. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Sinners entreated to hear God's voice*:—I would press the importance, the necessity, of immediately becoming religious—I. BECAUSE OF THE SHORTNESS AND UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE. You are mortal; it is appointed to all men once to die. You are frail, and may die soon and suddenly. You stake your soul without any equivalent; for if life should be spared you gain nothing; but should it be cut short, you lose all, you are ruined for eternity. II. BECAUSE YOU CANNOT PROPERLY, OR EVEN LAWFULLY, PROMISE TO GIVE WHAT IS NOT YOUR OWN. To-morrow is not yours; and it is yet uncertain whether it ever will be. To-day is the only time which you can properly give to God. III. BECAUSE IF YOU DEFER THE COMMENCEMENT OF A RELIGIOUS LIFE, THOUGH BUT TILL TO-MORROW, YOU MUST HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AGAINST THE VOICE OF GOD. God commands and exhorts you to commence a religious life immediately. If you do not comply, you must refuse, for there is no medium. If you disobey, you must assign some excuse to justify your disobedience, or your consciences will reproach you and render you uneasy; if no plausible excuse occurs, you will seek one; if none can readily be found, you will invent one. This tends most powerfully to harden the heart. IV. IF YOU DO NOT COMMENCE A RELIGIOUS LIFE TO-DAY, THERE IS GREAT REASON TO FEAR THAT YOU WILL NEVER COMMENCE IT. The very causes which induce you to defer its commencement render it highly improbable that you will ever become religious. Every day's delay will render it more difficult. V. BECAUSE, AFTER A TIME, GOD CEASES TO STRIVE WITH SINNERS AND TO AFFORD THEM THE ASSISTANCE OF HIS GRACE. He gives them up to a blinded mind, a seared conscience, and a hard heart. Thus He dealt with the old world; the wicked sons of Eli; the Jews in the time of Isaiah (vi. 9, 10); and the inhabitants of Jerusalem in our Saviour's time (Luke xix. 41, 42). VI. BECAUSE YOU ARE, WHILE YOU DELAY, CONSTANTLY MAKING WORK FOR REPENTANCE; YOU ARE DOING WHAT YOU MEAN TO BE SORRY FOR; YOU ARE BUILDING UP TO-DAY WHAT YOU MEAN TO THROW DOWN TO-MORROW. How irrational and absurd is this! I will not now hear God's voice, but I mean to mourn, to be grieved for it hereafter. Could you say this to your fellow-creatures without blushing? VII. BECAUSE IT IS THE EXPRESS COMMAND OF GOD. "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." And the Holy Ghost saith, Obey God's command, hear His voice to-day, and do not harden your hearts against it. Dare any of you trample on a known command of God? (E. Payson, D.D.) *Hardening process*:—In the winter evening, when the frost is setting in with growing intensity, and when the sun is far past the meridian glory, and gradually sinking in the western sky, there is a two-fold reason why the ground grows every moment harder and more impenetrable. In the first place, the frost, with increasing intensity, is indurating the stiffening clods; on the other hand, the genial rays of the sun, which

alone can soften them, are every moment withdrawing and losing their enlivening power. As long as the sinner remains unconverted, he is under a double process of hardening. The frosts of eternal night are settling down upon his soul, and the Sun of righteousness is withdrawing His powerful beams for evermore. If grace do not penetrate the heart to-day, there will be less chance of it to-morrow (*R. Venting.*)

Vers. 10, 11. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation.—*Israel's provocation against God, and the punishment inflicted on them.*—I. **THE CONDUCT OF ISRAEL.** Their conduct was marked by ignorance and error. "They have not known My ways," and they "do err in their hearts." 1. Ignorance is not always criminal. Some things we cannot know, through the limited nature of our faculties; other things God does not choose for us to know (*Deut. xxix. 29*); and others it is not our interest to know. God will never impute blame for unavoidable ignorance. 2. When the most important subjects are presented to us, and the most favourable means offered for knowing them, then ignorance is highly criminal. This was Israel's case. Does not our conduct too nearly resemble theirs? 3. Error was another of their crimes. Ignorance produces error (*Matt. xxiii. 29*). Errors are of two sorts,—of judgment, and of heart. Errors of judgment may consist with rectitude of heart; the heart may be right with God, where erroneous opinions warp the judgment. But errors of heart are the most deadly and destructive that exist upon earth; when the affections are perverted and the heart wanders from God. This was Israel's error (*Isa. v. 20; xxix. 13*). And this error in heart gave birth to error in the life (*Isa. xxviii. 7*). II. **THE EFFECT PRODUCED BY THIS CONDUCT.** "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation," etc. 1. God takes cognizance of human conduct. He sees all our actions, whether in the broad daylight, or amidst impenetrable darkness, for the darkness and the light are both alike to Him: and He sees them as they are. 2. The ignorant and erroneous conduct of men is highly offensive to God. His is the grief of a Father whose bowels yearn over the miseries of a child (*Jer. xxxi. 20; Hos. xi. 8*). 3. God exercises long patience with His creatures (*Acts xiii. 18*). III. **THE PUNISHMENT WHICH THIS CONDUCT MERITED.** "Unto whom I swear in My wrath," etc. 1. Whatever forbearance God may exercise towards His creatures, yet a continuance of crime must ultimately produce the infliction of punishment. 2. Israel's punishment was a deprivation of rest; "They should not enter into My rest." This threatening primarily referred to the exclusion of Israel from the land of Canaan (*Num. xiv. 22, 23*). This was a land of rest, compared with the toils and perils of the wilderness (*Exod. xxxiii. 14*). But Canaan was typically representative of heaven (*Heb. iv. 11*). They shall not enter into it—they have no preparation for it, and no promise of possession. 3. The awfully affecting language in which the threatening is expressed leads us to reflect on the terrible doom of its subjects; "I swear in My wrath." Illustrated by *Num. xiv. 28, 29, 35*. IV. **INFERENCES.** 1. Learn what ideas we ought to entertain of sin. 2. That ignorance and error which some deem perfectly innocent expose men to the wrath of God. 3. That sin in the professing people of God is attended with peculiar aggravations. 4. That the doom of impenitent sinners is certain and irreparable. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*)

Ver. 11. Unto whom I swear in My wrath, that they should not enter into My rest.—*Obstinate sinners doomed to eternal perdition.*—I. **THE WAYS BY WHICH GOD USUALLY PREPARES AND RIPENS A SINNER FOR CERTAIN DESTRUCTION.** 1. By withholding the virtue and power of His ordinances; and when God seals up the influences of these conduits, no wonder if the soul withers and dies with drought. For, alas! what is a conduit by which nothing is conveyed! That which God uses as an instrument to save, meeting with the corruption of some obdurate hearts, is made a means to ruin: as it softens some, so it hardens others. As the same rain that, falling upon a tree or plant, makes it grow and flourish: falling upon wood cut down and dried, makes it rot and decay. He whom the very means of salvation did not save must needs perish. 2. By restraining the convincing power of His providences. (1) Common calamities. (2) Particular judgments. (3) Unexpected deliverances. 3. By delivering up the sinner to a stupidity or seariness of conscience. This hardness growing upon the conscience, is like a film growing upon the eyes: it blinds them. And that which makes the conscience blind to discern its duty makes it bold to venture upon sin. II. **WHAT SORT OF OBSTINATE SINNERS THOSE ARE THAT GOD DEALS WITH IN THIS MANNER.** 1. Such as sin against clear

and notable warnings from God. God sometimes hedges in a sinner's way, so that it is really very difficult for him to proceed, and not only more safe, but also more easy for him to return. How many men have gone to church with their hearts fully engaged in a resolution to pursue some secret, beloved sin; and there have been strongly arrested with the convincing force of some word, so seasonably and, as it were, purposely directed against that sin, that they have thought the preacher to have looked into their very hearts, and to have been as privy to their most inward thoughts and designs as their own consciences! Now, this is a manifest admonition and caution, cast in by God Himself; which, to baulk or break through, greatly enhances the sinner's guilt. Sometimes God warns a sinner from his course, by making strong impressions upon his mind of its unlawfulness and contrariety to the Divine will: which impressions are so strong and cogent that they overbear all the shifts and carnal reasonings that the subtlety of a wicked heart can make in the behalf of it. Again, sometimes God meets the sinner with some heavy threatening sickness, lays him upon the bed of pain and languishing, and scares him with the fears of an approaching death, and the weight of an endless confusion. 2. The other sort of sinners are such as sin against special renewed vows and promises of obedience made to God. The violation of these is more than ordinary sinful; not only from the necessity of the matter to which they oblige, but also from the occasion upon which they were made. For men seldom make such vows but upon extraordinary cases; as upon the receipt of some great endearing mercy, or some notable deliverance; which causes them, by way of gratitude, to bind themselves to God in closer and stricter bonds of obedience. Whereupon, such as make a custom of affronting God, by a frequent and familiar breach of these, are justly very odious to Him, and, from odious, quickly become unsupportable. III. TWO QUESTIONS THAT MAY ARISE FROM THE FOREGOING PARTICULARS. 1. Whether the purpose of God passed upon an obstinate sinner (here expressed to us by God's swearing against him) be absolutely irrevocable. This is most certain; that both these propositions may, and are, and must be unalterably true; namely, That whosoever repents, and leaves his sins, shall be saved; and yet that he whosoever God has sworn shall never enter into His rest can never enter into it; and all pretences to the contrary are but harangue and declamation, and fit to move none but such as understand not the strength of arguments or the force of propositions. 2. Whether a man may know such a purpose to have passed upon him antecedently to its execution. Now, if any will pretend to gather the knowledge of such a purpose of God against him, it must be from some effects of it. Such, as I show, were God's withdrawing His grace, and that secret convincing power that operates in His word and in His providences; but this cannot immediately be known by any man; since it is (as we here suppose it to be) altogether secret. Or, further, he must gather this knowledge from some qualifications, or signs, accompanying those persons that are in such a wretched condition. Such, as I show, were sinning against particular warnings and admonitions from God; as also against frequently renewed vows and promises of amendment and obedience. But these I mentioned not as certain, infallible marks of such a forlorn estate, but only as shrewd signs of it. For besides that the Scripture declares no man absolutely and finally lost, as soon as these qualifications are found upon him, unless they continue so till his death; so it is further manifest that the grace of God is so strange and various in its working upon the heart of men that it sometimes fastens upon and converts old overgrown sinners, such as, to the eye of reason, were going apace to hell, and almost at their journey's end. From all which it follows, that no man, in this life, can pass any certain judgment concerning the will of God in reference to his own final estate; but ought, with fear and trembling, to attend God's precept and revealed will; and so gathering the best evidence he can of his condition from his obedience, with all humility to expect the issue of God's great counsels and intentions. IV. USES. 1. To exhort and persuade all such as know how to value the great things that concern their peace, to beware of sinning under sin-aggravating circumstances. 2. To convince us of the great and fearful danger of a daring continuance in a course of sin. Who knows what a day may bring forth, and what may be the danger of one hour's delay? This is most sure, that every particular repeated act of sin sets us one advance nearer to hell. And while we are sinning obstinately, and going on audaciously in a rebellious course, how can we tell but God may "swear in His wrath" against us and register our names in the black rolls of damnation? (R. South, D.D.)

PSALM XCVI.

VERS. 1-18. **O sing unto the Lord a new song : sing unto the Lord, all the earth.**—*A supreme existence and a supreme service.*—I. A SUPREME EXISTENCE. 1. Great in His nature—in power, intellect, heart. 2. Great in His work. "Made the heavens." 3. Great in His character. 4. Great in His government. II. A SUPREME SERVICE. 1. Joyous. 2. Fresh. "A new song." The song of yesterday will not do for to-day, for there are fresh motives, fresh mercies, fresh needs. 3. Constant. Worship as an occasional service is worthless, it is only worship as it becomes an all-pervading spirit, a permeating, dominating inspiration. "From day to day." 4. Universal. "All the earth." "Ye kindreds of the people." This service is confined to no tribe or class of men, all sustain the same relation to the Supreme Existence, and out of the same relationship the same common obligations spring. 5. Practical. (1) Acknowledgment of God's claims. (2) Proclamation of God's glory to the world. (*Homilist.*) *The new song and the old story.*—There are mighty passions of the human soul which seek vent, and can get no relief until they find it in expression. Grief, acute, but silent, has often destroyed the mind, because it has not been able to weep itself away in tears. The glow of passion, fond of enterprise and full of enthusiasm, has often seemed to rend the very fabric of manhood when unable either to attain its end or to utter its strong desires. So it is in true religion. It not only lays hold upon our intellectual nature with appeals to our judgment and our understanding, but at the same time it engages our affections, brings our passions into play, and fires them with a holy zeal, producing a mighty fire; so that when this spell is on a man, and the Spirit of God thoroughly possesses him, he must express his vehement emotions. Our purpose is to suggest two modes of expressing your consecration to God and your devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. These two methods are to sing about and to talk about the good things the Lord has done for you, and the great things He has made known to you. Let song take the lead—"O sing unto the Lord a new song : sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless His name." Then let discourse engage you; be it in public sermons or in private conversations—"Show forth His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among all people." We begin with the voice of melody. All ye that love the Lord, give vent to your heart's emotion by song, and take care that it be sung to the Lord alone. As ye stand up to sing, there should be a fixed intent of the soul, a positive volition of the mind, an absolute determination of the heart, that all the flame which kindles in thy breast, and all the melody that breaks from thy tongue, and all the sacred swell of grateful song shall be unto the Lord, and unto the Lord alone. And if you would sing unto the Lord, let me recommend you to flavour your mouth with the Gospel doctrines which savour most of grace unmerited and free. Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, who provides for us, educates us, instructs us, leads and guides us, and will bring us by and by to the many mansions in His own house. Sing ye also unto the Son. Adore the Lamb slain. Kneel at the Cross foot, and praise each wound, and magnify the immortal who became mortal for our sakes. And, then, sing ye to the Holy Spirit. Oh, how our hearts are bound reverently to worship the Divine Indweller who, according to His abundant mercy, hath made our bodies to be His temples wherein He deigns to dwell. "Sing unto the Lord a new song." Let the freshness of your joy and the fulness of your thanks be perennial as the days of heaven. This song, according to our text, is designed to be universal. "Sing unto the Lord, all the earth." Let sires and sons mingle in its strains. There is not one of us but has cause for song, and certainly not one saint but ought especially to praise Him. In three ways, methinks, it becomes us to sing God's praises. We ought to sing with the voice. Angel harp and human voice! If the angel harp be more skilful, surely the human voice is more grateful. We are like a bird that has only one wing. There is much prayer, but there is little praise. "Sing unto the Lord." To sing with the heart is the very essence of song. Though the tongue may not be able to express the language of the soul, the heart is glad. Oh, to have a cheerful spirit—not the levity of the thoughtless, nor the gaiety of the foolish, nor even the mirth of the healthy—there is a cheerful spirit which is the gift of grace, that can and does rejoice evermore. Then when troubles come we bear them cheerfully; let fortune smile, we receive it

with equanimity; or let losses befall us, we endure them with resignation, being willing, so long as God is glorified, to accept anything at His hands. These are the people to recommend Christianity. Their cheerful conversation attracts others to Christ. In the second place, then, let me stir you up to such daily conversation and such habitual discourse as shall be fitted to spread the Gospel which you love. Our text admonishes you to "show forth His salvation." You believe in the salvation of God—a salvation of grace from first to last. You have seen it; you have received it; you have experienced it. Well, now, show it forth. "Declare His glory among the heathen." Show them the justice of the great substitution, and the mercy of it. Show them the wisdom which devised the plan whereby, without a violation of the law, God could yet pardon rebellious sinners. Impress upon those that you talk with that the Gospel you have to tell them of is no commonplace system of expediency, but really it is a glorious revelation of divinity. A third expression is used here. "Declare His wonders among all people." Our Gospel is a Gospel of wonders. It deals with wonderful sin in a wonderful way. It presents to us a wonderful Saviour, and tells us of His wonderful complex person. It points us to His wonderful atonement, and it takes the blackest sinner and makes him wonderfully clean. The wonders of grace far exceed the wonders of nature; there are no miracles so matchless in wonder as the miracles of grace in the heart of man. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 4. For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised.—God's praise:—The greatness or majesty of God is the prominent thing dwelt on in this psalm; but it may be dealt with in a larger and more comprehensive way. I. **THE DUTY OF PRAISE.** The psalmist calls upon us to sing. It honours God not only that we should speak to others about Him, and preach to others His truth, but that we should sing His praise, finding thus expression for our joyous and loving thoughts of Him who is worthy to receive glory and honour for ever and ever. Impress that joining in the songs and praises of the great congregation is still our way of honouring God. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Him." II. **WHERE SHOULD WE PRAISE?** (ver. 6). "In His sanctuary." The place of worship, the consecrated place, rich with the associations of years of worship. Show how strongly urged is the duty of joining in public services; and how important the duty of forming, in this respect, good early habits. III. **WHAT SHOULD WE PRAISE?** We may praise God for what He has done; in creation, providence, and grace; and for what He has done directly for us. The psalmist rises to a nobler height, and sets us the example of praising God for what He is, for the greatness, and majesty, and strength, and honour that belong to Him. IV. **BEFORE WHOM SHOULD WE PRAISE?** Before those who do not know God, or who sadly neglect Him. Our praise is to be a witness to them; an example for them; and a persuasion of them. Our acts of worship and our godly habits are to say to them, "Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." V. **WHO SHOULD JOIN US IN PRAISE?** Note the poetic sentiment of vers. 11–13; all nature joins man in praise. But man should be the leader of the choir. (*Robert Tuck, B.A.*)

Ver. 6. Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.—Strength and beauty:—Christianity alone has combined the two ideals of the world. Strength and beauty are diverse, but not contradictory. Yet we seldom find them united in the national ideals of ancient or modern times. "Thy sons, O Zion!" cried one of the Hebrew prophets, "against thy sons, O Greece"—the nation which stood for moral strength inexorably opposed to the nation whose ruling passion was beauty. To the Hebrew beauty was a secondary and an inconsiderable ideal compared with the strength of moral restraint and attainment. Strength was for men, and beauty perhaps was good enough for women. But the point of our text is that it combines strength and beauty into one harmony of character, which both men and women should seek to acquire.

"Not like to like, but like in difference—
Yet in the long years liker must they grow;
The man be more of woman, she of man;
He gain in sweetness and in moral height,
Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world;
She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,
Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind."

Aaron's rod was the symbol of authority, the strength of the High Priest's office, but Aaron's rod it was that budded, and there you have the beauty. Our text, then, points out that there is no character complete which does not possess both strength and beauty. But, more than that, it shows that true strength and beauty are found only in God's sanctuary—that is, in genuine relationship with God. A very little thought will suffice to satisfy us how closely this corresponds with the facts. For if there is anything which our experience makes clear, it is this: that sin's tendency is to weaken, to soften the moral fibre of our natures, and to throw us open to the germs of all spiritual diseases. You all know how sins of sensuality bring their terrible revenge upon the body, and how nature exacts the uttermost farthing. In precisely similar fashion the soul is weakened by the transgression of the laws of moral and spiritual health. To commit any sin is to make oneself less able to resist it in the future. One falsehood leads almost necessarily to more. Where is the boasted strength and liberty of the sinner? Liberty to destroy oneself? Strength enough to take away by an act of moral suicide one's spiritual life? Yes, but no strength to live purely and nobly, no power to aspire, no courage to battle with the incursions of evil; is it not a mockery to say that there is strength in the pursuit of sin? Strength is in God's sanctuary, for He alone enables men to trample under foot the weakening influences of sin through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. What, then, are the nature and value of that strength which is to be found in Christ? What end does it serve and to what attainment does it lead? For one thing, it enables a man to cleave fast to the highest that he knows though all the world deride. No one can doubt how tremendous is the pressure of public opinion in these days, and how strong (one might almost say obstinate) a man must be who is to set himself to resist it. We talk of the pressure of the atmosphere upon the human body, and no doubt it is vast; but we do not feel it because our frame has been made equal to the strain. For our moral frame, however, we must win the protecting armour of God's grace, and until we are safely clad in it, the pressure is grievous to be borne. In every line of life there are practices which have grown common and are sanctioned by custom, yet your conscience tells you they are wrong. "I do not think," said President Garfield, "what others may think or say concerning me, but there is one man's opinion concerning me which I very much value, that is the opinion of James Garfield; others I need not think about. I can get away from them, but I have to be with him all the time. . . . It makes a great difference whether he thinks well of me or not." These are noble words, and they show us the sort of strength we need—strength to be faithful to what we know as the best and highest that a man can set up within his soul. From that tribunal we may not escape judgment, and if we are acquitted there our hearts are at peace. The same thing is true of all manner of temptation. We do not escape the snares of the tempter by running away. To these we must offer a constant and pitiless antagonism. There is an old tower on the Continent where in one of the dungeons the walls have graven upon them again and again the word "Resist." It is said a Protestant woman was kept in those dark recesses for forty years, and all the time she spent in graving with a piece of iron for all who might come after her that solemn and courageous word. Oh! we need it graven upon our hearts. Strength is in God's sanctuary—strength for bestowal—and you may have it if you will reach forth your hand. It is useless to say, "Be strong," but it is wisdom to say, "Be strong in the Lord." And then we should seek strength for the sake of others, so as to impart to them help and encouragement. "Briefly," says Ruskin, "the constant duty of every man to his fellows is to ascertain his own powers and special gifts, and to strengthen them for the help of others." Our moral strength also is not for ourselves alone. It is intended that by example of words and deeds, by patient endurance and active courage, we should inspire our fellows and make them also strong. The greater your spiritual strength in face of temptation, the braver your courage against all foes of the soul, the more you will help your fellow men to subdue their enemies and to go on from strength to strength. But a character which has strength alone without beauty lacks the perfect round of the Christian ideal. If we would see an instance of such defective character, let us think of the Puritans, who three centuries ago in England stood for righteousness and integrity and the fear of God. But there was little in their lives which could be termed the "beauty of holiness." They were upright and they were true; but they had trained themselves to a stern, hard, rugged strength, without polish, without beauty, and with-

out the adornment (though doubtless not without the reality) of love. We see in them the need of those softer and more attractive virtues which fill in the stature of the perfect man. Not only strength, but beauty, is to be found in God's sanctuary. Nor can true beauty be won save in Him. Just as sin is weakness, so sin is ugliness. It does not always seem so. The siren voices are sweet and their song is fairest music. The form of sin is often beautiful to the eye, and men long to embrace it. But when the sinner clutches it, the lovely form changes to a hideous skeleton that grins and chatters in his face. As George Eliot says of one among her gallery of human characters: "He had no idea of a moral repulsion, and could not have believed, if he had been told it, that there may be a resentment and disgust which will gradually make beauty more detestable than ugliness, through exasperation at that outward virtue in which hateful things can flaunt themselves or find a supercilious advantage." Yes, brethren, beauty in its essence is the form of the true and the good, and there is no beauty without goodness. It is a false antagonism to say that one seeks the beautiful rather than the good. There is nothing really beautiful except what is good. "The true beautiful," says a modern prophet, "differs from the false as heaven does from Vauxhall." Let us, then, get rid of the notion that beauty is not to be sought. Every fresh soul that enters the world instinctively claims a share of the light and joy which this world's beauty brings; and God forbid that Christians should shut the door upon the beautiful. "The instinct," says some one, with truth, "even in its lowest forms, is divine. It is the commentary on the text that man shall not live by bread alone." And so far is Christianity from excluding the beautiful from its scheme that it actually recommends the softer and more attractive virtues as no other religion has done. The highest type of Christian character is the most truly beautiful this world has seen. We cannot hear of self-renunciation, or forgiveness, or kindness, or gracious love without exclaiming, How beautiful! And these are the graces which Christ bestows. Strength and beauty, then, make up the perfect character. But where do we find them perfectly combined? Nowhere, save in Jesus Christ. In what wonderful harmony they are blended there! How constantly in His life do we see strength and beauty, in perfect balance and poise, shining forth from His acts and words! In the garden of agony, faced by cruel and murderous men, He stands erect, calmly repeating to His enemies, "I have told you that I am He"—there is strength; but mark the tender beauty of what follows: "If ye seek Me, let these go their way"—solicitude for His faint-hearted followers mingling with His fortitude. As one has truly said: "The eyes that wept beside the grave of Lazarus were eyes that were like a flame of fire." And so Christian character holds the field, combining the two necessary elements of strength and beauty. That is why Christ appeals to men as well as women. And that is why we cannot but deplore the folly which keeps so many men aloof from active profession of the faith of Christ, because, forsooth, they count it an unmanly thing. Oh! brethren, there is strength as well as beauty in the service of Christ, and nowhere else can you find strength worthy of the name. There is beauty as well as strength, and nowhere else can you find beauty that will last and increase as the years go by. Strength and beauty are in God's sanctuary; and the sanctuary is the holy place—the place where God and man come nigh, where God's cleansing and strengthening flow down to men, and where man's service is rendered up to God. (*J. Waddell, B.A.*) *The sacred union of strength and beauty.*—I. TRUE OF NATURE AS A TEMPLE. In nature as a whole,—as one vast cathedral,—and in different scenes, it is as so many aisles and courts and chapels, in it there is strength and beauty. For example, in the forest there is the strength of the gnarled tree, with sinewy and majestic trunk, and the beauty of exquisite foliage and delicate moss and wild flower. II. TRUE OF THE HEBREW SANCTUARIES. In the tabernacle were stout poles and coverings of skin for strength, and finely spun, delicately woven embroidery for beauty. In the temple, what massive and majestic stone for strength! what gleaming of precious and wondrous tapestry for beauty! There were in those sacred structures not only richest harmonies for the ear, but beauties for the eye as well, that so all nature should be toned and tuned to good impressions. III. TRUE OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP. There may well be Puritan earnestness of spirit, distinctiveness of doctrine, directness of rebuke, fixedness of faith, and at the same time æsthetic refinement of demeanour and tone and thought. Does not "worship in the beauty of holiness" involve obedience to the precept, "Let all things be done decently and in order"? IV. TRUE OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. That is the most perfect sphere of Divine

worship; for to Christly men it is infallibly said, "Ye are the temple of the Holy Ghost." There must be in such character "virtue," the strength of manliness. By which is surely meant honesty, truth, courage, fidelity. But what does St. Peter teach us is to be added to virtue? Clearly, all moral beauty. Our character is to be a sanctuary with solid foundations, but adorned with finely wrought gold; our work is to be a war, but with chivalry. (*U. R. Thomas.*) *Strength and beauty*:—Strength and beauty are not always found in company, either in the works of God or of man. The lily is beautiful, but a child's foot may crush it; the gale is mighty, but it is the opposite of loveliness. In the works of man beauty is often allied to the fragile, and strength to the coarse and ungainly. But in the sanctuary of God they meet in undivided perfection. I. THE STRENGTH AND BEAUTY OF ATTRACTION. Here is found an attraction mightier than the magnet: it is not a law which acts upon matter, but a life which acts upon mind; a life which enlightens our darkness, quickens the conscience, sways the will, gives hope to the heart, bounding pleasure to the affections. II. THE STRENGTH AND BEAUTY OF AN UNFLINCHING PURPOSE—to reign, to save, to judge (vers. 2, 10). This golden chain has never been broken, never been damaged, never been seen, by the enemy. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him," etc. III. THE STRENGTH AND BEAUTY OF A PERFECT ORGANIZATION. It does not grow old; it is a stranger to decay; there is no friction, no loss of power. It is sublimely perfect, and immortal as the years of the Most High. IV. THE STRENGTH AND BEAUTY OF IMPARTED CHARACTER. The true worshipper comes not only to admire, but to imbibe, be assimilated to the Father; justification is imputed, sanctification is imparted; under the robe of righteousness there must be the holy body, and beneath the manners and bearing of the outward man there must be enshrined, enthroned, the Lord and Saviour of the soul (Ps. c. 4). (*H. T. Miller.*) *Strength and beauty*:—Had the psalmist set himself to give an "inventory," if I may so say, of the things to be found in God's sanctuary, he would have involved himself in the construction of a very long catalogue. Had he attempted even a somewhat general description, it would have been much the same. For moral impression he does better than either. He passes his eye quickly but reverently round the whole, and feeling that amid all the multiplicity of objects there were two qualities or elements always to be found, sometimes apart, though never far apart, and generally passing into each other and blending together, he seizes upon these as in reality constituting all that was there, and, consequently, all of good that could be anywhere, and thus, with that graphic brevity which is to be found only in Scripture, gives us the whole nature and meaning of religion at a stroke—"Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary." The union of strength and beauty in nature is obvious. Some things, indeed, are distinctively strong, and some are distinctively beautiful, but the strongest things are not without beauty, and the most beautiful things are not without strength. Thus "order" is the all-pervading principle of nature, and as implying security against confusion, collision, and all such things as might lead to these, manifests itself as the very strength of the universe—the invisible cord on which God hangs His material creation. But out of this order comes all the beauty of adaptation, mutual dependence, mutual helpfulness, the succession of seasons—weaving a many-coloured robe for the year—and that felt though hidden harmony which led heathen philosophers to speak of the music of the spheres. So is it also in the sanctuary of home. God "setteth us in families," and in these He has a sanctuary, which is as plainly as any other inscribed with the characteristics of strength and beauty. There is the strong arm to work and the loving heart to feel. But the sanctuary here referred to is different from that of nature and of home. It is God's sanctuary proper—in its first sense, the scene of His worship, of which He has said, "I will place salvation in Zion for Israel My glory"—Zion, so strong that it cannot be moved—the "mountain of the Lord's house"; and yet Zion, so fair that out of it, as "the perfection of beauty," God hath shined. In the further sense, all that belongs to God's redemption-work is included in it. Take the character and teaching of Him who is its "Author and Finisher," Jesus, the Son of God, on whom the execution of the work was laid, and who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity. In Him was the strength of holiness, as a necessity; for He was God, "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person." But He was God in human nature and in human relations, and this brought Him within the sphere of human observation, and made His life on the earth the visible image of man in his ideal perfection. The trying and every-varying circumstances in which He

was placed served to bring out the strength and beauty alike which were enshrined in this "sanctuary" of God; for the strength of His purity never passed into hardness, and the beauty of His compassion never sank into weakness. He was both a merciful and a faithful High Priest. This example His people must follow. The spirit of Christ must be their spirit too. The strength of holiness must be conspicuous in them; the strength of obedience even unto death; the strength of a firm and resolute will in the direction of all that is true and just. But this must not be without beauty in their case, any more than it was in His: the beauty of tenderness mingling with their fidelity; the beauty of meekness, gentleness, pity,—knowing, like Him, to have compassion on the ignorant and them that are out of the way. And so also with the services of the sanctuary. In these there must be first, and mainly, the strength of truth, in the reading of the Scriptures and the preaching of the pure and simple Gospel of grace and love. Without this, services are a delusion, "clouds without water, carried about of winds, trees whose fruit withereth." And yet they are not to consist entirely in the enunciation of doctrine, but must rise out of that into the beauty of emotional feeling, and find expression in the broken accents of prayer and the uplifted melody of psalms and hymns and songs of praise. In conclusion: this brief sentence might be expanded indefinitely. It passes round and appropriates all that belongs to a religious character and life, and it holds in it many words of counsel and caution. It forbids us to be harsh for the sake of faithfulness, or to be weakly compliant for the sake of tenderness. It takes the two staves of the prophet—Beauty and Bands—and binds them together in the laws and principles of God's house and service, and in the whole character and life of His people, even as they are bound together in the nature of God Himself, and were so wondrously exemplified at every step by Him who achieved our redemption in all the strength of His immaculate holiness, and in all the beauty of His immeasurable love. (*A. L. Simpson, D.D.*) *Strength and beauty*:—It is a common observation that the finest and most impressive effects are often produced by the combination of things that are unlike each other. The painter recognizes this principle when he brings his darkest shadows to heighten the effect of his clearest lights, or contrasts the peaceful life of some humble cottage home with the stately magnificence of the stern mountains that surround it. The architect appeals to the same principle when he crowns his columns with beautiful capitals, and relieves the massive masonry of his walls with delicate tracery and forms of sculptured beauty. In such cases two ideas entirely different from each other are brought together. The massive wall and the marble column suggest the thought of strength; while the delicate carvings and the sculptured friezes appeal to the sense of beauty. The thought which lies deep in the artist's mind, and to which he strives to give expression in his work, is that there is a natural alliance between strength and beauty. We see illustrations of this truth in—I. THE WORKS OF GOD. All the strong things in nature are beautiful: all the beautiful things are exhibitions of strength. The dewdrop that glitters on the rose-leaf—we all know the perfection of its beauty; but how little do we understand the mystery of the strength by which that beauty is secured! That little drop of water is composed of elements which are held together by electric forces sufficient to form a flash of lightning that would rend the rocks of the mountain or blast the stoutest oak of the forest. All that mighty thunder of power lies sleeping in the crystal sphere of a tiny dewdrop. Each day is enlarging the sphere of our knowledge of the natural world; and every fresh discovery brings a new gleam of light to kindle up afresh the brilliancy of the illuminated scroll, "Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary." II. THE REVEALED CHARACTER OF GOD. Strength and beauty are before Him—the strength of an infinite majesty, the thunder of an almighty power, the calm serenity of an eternal righteousness. And these, when seen alone, apart from those other attributes of His nature which are their gracious complement, can bring no peace to the troubled conscience or rest to wearied hearts. They can bring us trembling and awe-stricken into that majestic presence; but they know not the secret of transforming the shrinking terror of the criminal and the slave into the holy reverence and the joyous freedom of the son. Strength and beauty—the beauty of tenderness, the graciousness of Divine condescension, the winning aspects of a love that "beareth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things, hopeth all things." III. THE PERSON OF CHRIST. IV. THE VARIOUS REVELATIONS OF DIVINE TRUTH TO THE WORLD, AND THE ORDER OF THEIR SUCCESSION. The law precedes the Gospel: and law is to the Gospel as strength to beauty. We speak and think of the severe aspects of the law, its

"shalt" and "shalt not," its stern repressions and its calm, passionate sentences. But it had its softer side, its gracious and tender aspects for those who had the heart and the eye to see them. To men like David it was given to rejoice in the thought that the law has its seat in the bosom of the God of Love. The Ritual of Judaism had deeper meanings for the spiritual worshipper, and its law brought him to Christ. The man who had the clearest vision of the strength and majesty of the law was the man who rejoiced most deeply in the everlasting mercy of the Lord. The law had its profigurement of the Gospel, just as the Gospel had its undying reminiscence of the law. V. HUMAN CHARACTER. There is danger in opposite directions. Some Christians are content with the strength, and care little for the beauty, of the Christian life. They are stern in their adhesion to principle, careless of the lesser charities of life, apt to be harsh in their condemnation of error and sin. Every one knows their worth, believes in their honesty, would trust implicitly to their integrity. But they do not win love by their gracious bearing, their kind words, their charitable construction of men and things. They have the strength, but they lack something of the beauty of the Christian character. Others are in danger from the opposite tendency. They would sacrifice something of the severity of perfect uprightness to the graces of life. They must have peace at any price. It is the emotional side of religion that has the chief attraction for them. They are in love with the beauty of religion, but they are not good specimens of its strength and steadfastness. The text has a message for each. Strength and beauty. This is the ideal of a complete Christian character. The one is the framework, the other is the covering, of the man of full spiritual stature. In matters of principle, in the sphere of actions that touch the conscience, remember the call for strength. "Be strong in the Lord." But remember the other element, and cultivate the spirit and the practice of "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ." Give wide interpretation to the prayer of the psalmist, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." (*W. Cameron, D.D.*) *Strength and beauty*.—A subject of never-waning interest to the student of comparative religions is the influence upon the character of a nation in its conception of God. It is sometimes asserted, in somewhat too sweeping a fashion, that a people will be as is its idea of God. In qualification of that proposition it has to be said that not all people hold themselves pledged to the imitation of God. Many, indeed, would argue that such a thought is little short of presumptuous folly. Moreover, even when the imitation of God is regarded as man's chief and proper endeavour, the fact remains that a nation's character is determined not by certain merely traditional and abstract ideas of Deity, but by the quality of its faith in the reality of God. With these qualifications, it may be generally admitted that the character of every people tends to be influenced by the character of its God or gods. It is impossible to maintain that the old popular mythologies of Greece and Rome had no influence upon the common lives of men. The weaknesses, follies, passions, and vices of the immortals became in the nature of a justification for similar failings and excesses among mortals; and it can never have been easy of belief that what is right in God is wrong in man. No doubt it was a favourable maxim of the Stuart dynasty, "Do you not know that I am above the law?"; and apologists were wont to maintain in very old times that gods and goddesses could no more than earthly autocrats be subjected to the laws of ordinary human morality. But example tells when the subtlest casuistry fails; and, save where unbelief has relaxed or destroyed the sanctions of religion, the character of the God it worships tends to impress itself upon the character of the worshipping people; and insensibly, if not of settled aspiration, the nation does tend to an imitation of God. We are on surer ground, however, when we turn from that heterogeneous multitude of people we call a nation to a consideration of the individual life. The stronger a man's faith in God, the more will he realize in his own character those qualities which occupy the largest place in his conception of God. The degree of his imitation of God will be proportionate to the intensity of his belief in God. Now, the psalmist, in this lyrical outburst of adoration, professes to have discovered two qualities which are revealed in combination in the character of God, and which, such is the suggestion, He will Himself communicate to devout, worshipful, and aspiring souls. These two qualities are strength and beauty. Neither quality is of itself uncommon; it is their combination that is so rare. Somehow in this world the strong is not usually the beautiful, and the beautiful is not the strong. We think of the beautiful in Nature as the fragile, the delicate, the evanescent. We think of the strong, and with its massive solidity it is difficult to associate any thought of

grace and loveliness. But this psalm was a hymn for the Temple; and if it be true, as we suppose, that there are yet remaining many of the glorious pillars which adorned that magnificent structure, it is conceivable that they suggested to the psalmist's mind this rare combination of qualities. For these pillars of the Temple were of radiant marble, stately and splendid in themselves, and with the added decoration of capitals nobly carved in all manners of exquisite device. And not the pillars alone, but the whole majestic pile itself, was it not the standing witness to the truth that the God whom it represented to men was at once strong and beautiful? For its durability and solidity was only equalled by its magnificence; the strength of its stone by the beauty of its colouring and the glory of its decoration. The architects of that ancient cathedral seem to have derived their ideas from Nature and to have seen that He who laid the enduring foundations of the earth, decorated the world, He made with the gold of the orocus, the crimson of the field-lily, or the blue of the gentian and the harebell; and they built for Him a fane which, like the world He built for them, was strong and beautiful, massive, but full of delicate colour. As was this temple of their God, so was the God of the Temple—in His Divine Being they felt there must be this glorious combination of strength and beauty. If, then, the religious life be the imitation of God, the man of God will manifest to the world a character in which strength and beauty are found in combination. (*C. S. Horne, M.A.*) *Strength and beauty*:—It does not admit of question that not only the Hebrew ideal embraced them both, but the creed of ancient art in its noblest era associated the perfection of beauty with the perfection of strength. The sculptor honoured magnificence and majesty in the human frame; he revealed the beauty that lay in limbs that denoted a sense of power. It is only later on that we begin to see ideals contrasting themselves. One painter worships soft loveliness, and his imagination riots in luxuriance of colouring; but another still upholds the ideal of the majestic, and about his work there is a restraint and even austerity. That is how the ideals of Raphael and Michael Angelo perpetually contrast themselves. And the pre-eminence of the latter is just this: that he never wearies of insisting that strength is inseparable from the highest beauty. (*Ibid.*) *The highest beauty is strong, noble magnificent*:—You remember how Mr. Ruskin enforced the truth in his teaching about architecture. In the rudest forms of building, a strong arch was constructed by laying a huge square stone slab across two huge square upright pillars. When it was complete it had certainly the aspect of durability. Plain it was, and ugly, but surely, said the builder, it could not at any rate be stronger. On the contrary, arches did not become strong until they became beautiful. It was only when the curved line of beauty was discovered that the secret of strength was discovered too. . . . Or, again, you will remember how the old pillars of the ancient temples were made thick and square, and squat and ugly. But then came the discovery that you did not detract from strength if you built a more tapering pillar and adorned it with carved capitals, or fluted it from base to summit. There is no antagonism between strength and beauty. This psalmist is in agreement with the thought of the apostle who wrote, "I will make thee a pillar in the temple of my God." (*Ibid.*) *The supremacy of love in strength and beauty*:—Without reverence there is no beauty of manhood; nay, and without love, none, none. I know that to-day men praise the strength of will, of energy, and I have no dispraise for that, until it becomes one of the "idols" of the market-place. Mere strength of will is not by any means always beautiful: it is not seldom hard and brutal. Love is the stronger force when all is said, and love is beautiful. Matthew Arnold's lines contain a haunting truth.

"I, too, have longed for trenchant force
And will, like a dividing spear;
Have praised the keen, unscrupulous course
Which knows no doubt, which feels no fear.
But in the world I learnt what there
Thou, too, wilt surely one day prove:
That will, that energy, though rare,
Are yet far, far less rare than love." (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 8, 9. **Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name; bring an offering, and come into His courts.**—*Public worship*:—I. PRAYER. As we all have religious feelings to express, sins to acknowledge, mercies temporal and spiritual for which to

give thanks, evils to feel or fear, with regard to ourselves and others, it highly becomes us to join together, and to lift up our hearts with one accord, in a public and social manner, to the hearer of prayer, and thus to offer unto Him our united homage and supplication with thanksgiving. Prayer is not only a duty, it is a high privilege and honour; the nearest approach to God, and the highest enjoyment of Him which we are capable of in this world. II. PRAISE. The saints on high, and the angels around the throne, praise God in the highest, and well does it become men upon earth to join their humble notes of praise to the anthem of the heavenly choirs, in exalting together His great and glorious name. All the works of God praise Him, from the heights of heaven to the depths of the earth; the angels around the throne praise Him; the sun, and moon, and stars of light praise Him in their courses; the mountains, and valleys, and woods, and fields, and seas, and streams of water praise Him; the elements of nature praise Him and obey His Word. III. THE PREACHING AND HEARING OF THE WORD. Both the ministers and the hearers of the Word should watch over themselves, that they may have singleness of eye and heart to the glory of God, more desirous of the Divine approbation than of human applause, avoiding all vain and vexatious questions, which profit not, but engender strife and ungodliness, and which violate that heavenly charity without which all our services are hateful in the sight of God. IV. THE GIVING AND RECEIVING OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER. We should consider the "nature and design of the Lord's Supper," the dispositions which are required for an acceptable participation, and the graces which it is calculated to cherish. The Lord's Supper thus observed would be attended with the happiest and most beneficial effects on our hearts and lives, in confirming our faith, enlivening our hope and charity, and in promoting our progress in holiness, and in meetness for the pure and perfect service of heaven. (*J. Wightman, D.D.*) *Worship*:—Worship may be called the flower of the religious life. It will be absent where there is no religion at all; it will be scanty or poor when one's religion is feeble; it blossoms into beauty and perfection only when godliness is assiduously cultivated in daily practice and the soul is accustomed to dwell habitually under the shadow of the Almighty. Here, then, you have a very useful test by which to judge of your real religious condition. Is worship irksome? Do you find your affections generally cold, your desires languid, or your thoughts wandering when you come to church? Search within for the cause; see if there be not a negligent state of the soul behind this undevout frame of yours; inquire into your daily habits of obedience, your vigilance against known sin, your study of God's will and mind, your practice of repentance, and of faith in the Saviour. As a Christian lives well or ill so will he worship. Again, his worship, if it be hearty and constant, must feed and purify his spiritual life. And here let me speak a little on the utterances which the devout mind finds for its feelings towards God; because it should be recollected that although worship begins in a state of the heart it does not stop there—to feel penitence, or gratitude, or adoration is not just the same thing as to worship; worship or homage begins when the hidden emotions of a devout mind, stirred up at the thought of God, run out into some form of utterance. The utterance may, no doubt, be secret and silent—no voice—hardly even the lips moving, like pious Hannah's, the soul talking only to its God. This is how people commonly worship when they are alone. No matter; there is none the less real outflow and utterance of the man. An outflow of the heart towards the Most High there must be, perfectly well understood by Him whether discernible to men or not—then the soul worships. Now, of what nature is this outflow from the religious heart? Briefly, it is of the nature of an offering of a sacrifice. Foremost of all, that of which it is expressly said, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit," etc. Next comes the offering of our grateful and joyous praise for Him who hath been sent among us to heal the broken-hearted; I mean the words of our lips giving thanks to His name in song and audible confession of His mercy, for "with such sacrifices," likewise, "God is well pleased." One other offering alone I shall name which we ought to bring within His courts—it is that which the apostle has described as a service reasonable on our part and acceptable to God—I mean the dedication to His service of ourselves. Christian homage to the Redeemer finds its supreme utterance here in the recognition of the fact that we are no longer our own, at our own bidding and disposal, but are His who bought us with a price, willingly devoted, separated of our own choice, to the service and honour of our Redeemer, living and dying body and soul the Lord's. (*J. O. Dykes, D.D.*) *The duty of prayer*:—1. The primary foundation of this duty is the soul's relation to God. Every consideration by which

we commend filial piety towards earthly parents holds still more forcibly in reference to our heavenly Father. How unnatural the child that never asked his father for anything, that never made his mother the confidante of his troubles and difficulties, that could drink the cup of enjoyment and success, and never ask his parents to share it, or that never poured into their hungering ears the expressions of affection and honour. What opportunities the wants, troubles, and enjoyments of childhood afford for intercourse between parent and child, for the moulding influence of the parent to exert itself upon the child's character, for the play of mutual affection and delight. Judging from human analogy, it would seem quite sufficient reason for God's making the bestowment of His best blessings to depend upon their being sought in prayer, that "communications concerning giving and receiving" send themselves so directly to the expression and strengthening of love. 2. Prayer is a duty we owe to God's name, an offering which we ought to make to Him of His blessedness. "God is love," and love has its expectations, its satisfactions, its dues, its delights. "Will a man rob God?" the prophet asks. Ah, we have robbed Him of dearer treasure than tithes and offerings. Where is the husband or wife, the father or daughter, who would not account the withholding of the affection that was their just expectation a more grievous wrong than any passing injury or lapse of material gifts? Our obligation as Christians to live in communion with God is all the stronger that in these last days He hath spoken unto us by His Son. 3. Public worship is a duty we owe to God as witnesses to His existence, authority, and grace. The maintenance of this testimony is a most efficient means of advancing His kingdom in the world. When we render it, we are doing in a humble way the work of such men as Elijah and Daniel. This is one important use of public worship. Such worship, by uniting many suppliants in one request, calls forth more abundant praise when it is granted; it provides, also, a fuller expression of adoration than the individual soul can compass, and therefore intensifies and exalts its feeling; further, it exhibits the sympathy and concord of human beings in the loftiest employment of their powers; but beyond all this, it lifts up a clear and striking testimony to the reality of God's authority and grace, and bids men everywhere bow down before their Maker. 4. The neglect of prayer indicates a general indifference to duty. Since we are really dependent upon the inspiration and guidance of God for the power to serve Him acceptably, to neglect the means of obtaining these is to be careless where we ought to be most careful. If out of the heart are the issues of life, and prayer is the chief instrument of heart culture, how blamable our want of diligence in it. To neglect prayer is to leave our loyalty open to every hostile temptation, to burn our lamp and make no provision to replace the exhausted oil. (E. W. Shalders, B.A.) **Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.**—*The Church's worship in the beauty of holiness*.—Slightly changing the order of the psalmist's biddings, I will invite you to lend to him your attentive ears, first, as he says to you and to all, "Worship the Lord," and that "in the beauty of holiness"; and then, as he summons you to one duty, or rather one privilege, more, "Bring presents, and come into His courts." And first, as he says to you, "Worship the Lord," this house being first and chiefly a house of prayer, according to that word of the prophet, afterwards made His own by Christ the Lord, "My house shall be called a house of prayer." "Seek ye My face," He says to each that enters its gates. They only enter those gates with profit, they only carry away a blessing, who make answer from the heart, "Thy face, Lord, will we seek." But this worship, how shall it be offered, and with what accompaniments? "In the beauty of holiness." Other beauty is good in its place and its degree; has its worth, although that altogether a subordinate worth. The outward apparel of the king's daughter may be of wrought gold (and who would grudge her this, where it may be fitly had?) but she must be "all glorious within," glorious with the inward graces of faith and love, humility and holiness, if that Lord for whom she adorns herself is indeed to delight Himself in her or to behold any beauty in her, that He should desire it. But how worship Him "in the beauty of holiness"? We unholy, we defiled, our souls not beautiful, but ugly with sin, how shall we fulfil the condition which the psalmist requires? First, then, I reply, or rather the Word of God replies, he only who has his conscience purged from dead works through the blood of sprinkling can do this. And the second condition is like to it, that we, as the true Israel, worship God in the spirit, praying in the Holy Ghost. But what else does the psalmist say? "Bring presents, and come into His courts." And first, lest there should be any mistake here, let me remind you of that without which every other present will be worthless in the sight of Him

who does not weigh what we give, but with what spirit we give it. See, then, that you offer first and chiefly yourselves, your souls and bodies, acceptable through Christ, washed with His blood, sanctified by His Spirit. Give, and that without keeping anything back, yourselves to God. But, this done, bring other presents, other gifts; they will all, indeed, have been included in this all-embracing one, to Him. If you have leisure, leave not your clergy to cope single-handed with the ignorance, the vice, and the misery around them; range yourselves among their helpers; give them some of that lay assistance which is so invaluable to them. If you have means, suffer not the Church's charities at home, her missions abroad, to be starved and stunted through contributions by you withheld altogether, or doled out with a niggard hand. If you have any special talent, see if it cannot be enlisted in the service of God, and find its highest consecration there. (*Abp. Trench.*)

Worship:—I. ITS NATURE. It consists in devout exercises of the soul, whether in meditation, adoration, admiration, or supplication. It is the spirit disentangled from the sensuous and engaged in fellowship with the Invisible and Divine. 1. Worship is a necessity of man's nature. He is no mere machine, or thinker, or theorist; he is pre-eminently a worshipper, distinctively moral in his make, religious in his proclivities, akin in the great spiritual invisibilities of his nature to the all-glorious Creator. 2. Worship is an evidence of man's greatness. The existence of moral intuitions amid the sad wreck of the soul by sin proclaims a fallen nobility, a crownless royalty: yea, tells it even now to be—"Sublime in ruins and grand in woe." 3. In worship man finds his native element. Like the bird which has been engaged for weary months, that breaks through the wires of its prison and escapes on swift wing, pealing forth its song of freedom as it finds its native element, so the believer, escaping from the din and turmoil of the world, or of business, and entering into the hallowed retreat of the closet, or "the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High," hears amid its hush and stillness angelic voices whispering, "The Lord is in His holy Temple," and finds in His presence the society for which he was made, and the fellowship for which he pants. There is a kinship of soul, an affinity of sympathy, a unity of will, a oneness of spirit, a reciprocity of affection. II. **ITS OBJECT.** "Worship the Lord." 1. He should be worshipped in His sovereign and paternal relationship to us. 2. He should be worshipped in the Tri-unity of His nature. Though it be impossible to give a "positive definition of the distinction between Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit, yet this is no sufficient reason for denying the distinction itself, of which the Bible assures us; for reason, when left to herself, sets before us objects concerning which we, indeed, know that they exist, but concerning whose nature we have no positive knowledge. We can only distinguish between them and some false representations, or determine what they are not; but of their intrinsic nature, how they are we have not the slightest knowledge." 3. Man becomes assimilated to the object of his worship. How vastly important, then, that our knowledge of God should be intelligent, correct, scriptural, and true. III. **ITS SPIRIT.** "In the beauty of holiness." 1. Reality. 2. Simplicity. (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*)

Beauty of soul:—Why do we think that nature is beautiful? Because it is the external world formed by the same hand that made us. We, partakers of the likeness of God, naturally admire our Father's works. We see beauty and divinity in them, and if He hath made the external world beautiful He hath made the human soul also, and devised that it shall be beautiful, like a great and beautiful temple, full of costly and beautiful things, a soul in harmony with itself, a soul in harmony with other souls that seek with it to do God's will, a soul filled with purity, light, gladness, charity, a soul overflowing with the love of God, with love of our fellow men, with the earnest desire to do always the things that are pure and virtuous. Look into such a soul and see how beautiful it is, the marvellous symmetry in the human soul, the marvellous colours, divinely gifted, in the human soul, the marvellous possibilities in the human soul. It is God's wonderful picture, His wonderful dream. God made the human soul, and the beauty of God, the beauty of the Divine conception that was in God's mind is expressed there. What a wonder is a beautiful soul! The soul that has been recognized in this world as transcendently beautiful is the soul of Jesus Christ. It has drawn other souls that had been contaminated with sin, drawn them to itself and transformed them to the glorious image; it has influenced more than anything else that we know the whole mind, the whole movement of the human family. The beauty of the soul of Christ—transcendent, heavenly, bewitching—we gaze upon it, and we say, "whatever divinity may be we cannot tell, but this is divine enough, it is the

summation of divinest ideals for us." And gazing thus on the beautiful soul of the Christ, we are drawn up and beautified, filled with His love, transformed to His likeness, made more and more divine in the excellence of that grace which He gives to those souls that seek, for His sweet sake, that love to forsake evil, to put away the deformity, the debasement and the ugliness of vice, and to lay a hold of the Divine ideal, the beauty of Christ, and to worship God through Him and in His likeness, laying our noblest and our best, our best thoughts and our best feelings, and our noblest actions on the high altar of dedication to Him who has invited us in the old words of the psalm to worship Him "in the beauty of holiness." (*A. Bennie, B.D.*) *Holiness*.—What is this "holiness" which is so beautiful? It is not justice—though it must include justice and have its root in strong integrity. It is not charity—though it must make man charitable with that finer love which not so much denies itself as simply forgets itself. It is not purity, but it is only in the pure soul that holiness can live; and purity which may be as cold as marble, touched by holiness takes on a glow as warm and radiant as the light of heaven. And it is no fancy of mine to make holiness include these things. Do you remember that "holiness" in its original derivation is simply "wholeness," though the words have grown so curiously out of likeness in the spelling? Wholeness—the wholeness and completeness of character! Do you note the great, far-reaching meaning of this? I might figure the complete whole of human character as a pyramid: broad based in bodily power and aptitudes of strength or skill for life's basal work; then, above this the various grades of intellectual faculty; above these, again, the moral with the lofty sense of conscience and right, and, still in these higher reaches of character, those human affections which give a tenderer grace to mere rigid morality; and, then, rising highest of all, capping and crowning all, the apex to the pyramid—religion. As a fact, holiness has come to mean, not all this wholeness, but especially that crowning and completing religious element which makes life "whole" at the higher end of it. And I do not want it taken away from that meaning, but it does want recognizing that the other is included, that for real holiness there must be wholeness; that holiness is not just a little religious element up in the heights of soul, and which may have nothing underneath it, but that it must have strong, full manliness or womanliness underneath it. The holiness that is not based on manly wholeness is not what the world wants. Man's being, in this common work-a-day world, has to be based on capable manhood; man has to have his feet firm on the solid earth. But now the other side of all this wants recognizing also. For that strong manly wholeness to come to any fine worth, there has to be this crowning element of holiness. The manhood that stops at strength, ability, or even intellect; the manhood that is not adding to these some crowning grace of earnest religiousness, is a poor truncated manhood. That is the most common trouble to-day. Men—men especially—are too content in life's lower levels. They are strong, busy, capable there, but there they are content to stop. Life never was stronger at its base, but there is too little effort to build it up towards that finest manhood which is "made whole" by genuine, unashamed religion. And life loses immeasurably by this. It loses its highest outlook, its loftiest hopes, and all its noblest spring and power. Life wants to be made whole at the top. (*B. Herford, D.D.*)

Ver. 10. Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth.—*The message to the heathen world*.—I. ITS MEANING. 1. As the utterance of Jewish faith and joy. (1) The supremacy of Jehovah above all others called gods and worshipped. (2) His dominion over all the elements and agencies of nature. (3) His supreme authority over the moral world. In the procedure of the Divine government there might be much dark to men, but on the principles regulating it they might calmly rely. Its reasons were often concealed; its designs appeared different to what its subjects would have chosen. Confusion and disorder not infrequently seemed to prevail, but the Lord on high was King. He sat on the throne, doing right. Over all lands, through all ages, by all agencies, in all things, He ruled absolutely, as not under the power of Fate, righteously as ever doing well. 2. In the announcement of this text by the Christian teacher there is all this and much more. God's revelation of Himself and of His government has been gradual. The fullest is that made to us in Christ. To us who bow before Christ as Lord of all, the assertion that He reigns means "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life"—it means that sin shall not reign in those who submit to Him—it means

that He has received power to forgive sin, having suffered the just for the unjust to bring us to God—it means that He can impart a Spirit that shall root out the love of sin, and infuse strength to subdue the power of it, and gain more than victory over that death which was entailed as its curse. II. ITS PROCLAMATION. Tell it out among the heathen, the people outside the Church, all the nations beyond the covenanted people—"The Lord reigneth." Why so? 1. The kingdom of heaven upon earth, into which men are received to be blessed, has never been proclaimed, much less established amongst them; and the people are perishing from lack of knowledge. They must know it to become partakers of its blessings. Many blessings the whole family of man partake of through the bounty of God and the mediation of Christ, though they know nothing of either of them; but the great blessings of redemption from sin, deliverance from the kingdom of darkness, life eternal, are given to those who believe (Rom. x. 14). 2. We have the command, and it is important to us that we obey it. Objections—(1) "I can do but little. I could not speak in a language the heathen understand. I cannot leave my home and duties here to teach them." Very true. The Church must find its messengers, as the nation finds its soldiers. Every one may not go out to the battle, but all the nation take part in it. (2) "I must think of heathen at home." Doubtless. They are many, and they need to know all about these great things as much as the heathen abroad. They have been much more thought of, and taught Divine truth, since men have been more interested in those of other lands. Attempts to enlighten others will never excuse your neglect of these. (3) "I do not think it is much good to preach to the heathen. They are unfit to receive it. You do no good by it." "Civilize them first," say some, "by education, by commerce." Great agencies, doubtless, the one in destroying superstitions and making infidels, the other in circulating spirits and gunpowder, and showing men that many think gain is godliness. Alone they have not done much else. (4) "You increase the responsibility of those who refuse to receive the truth." Truly, so we do whenever we teach the truth at home; so we do in educating our children if they use not education aright; so you do in warning a criminal charged with a first offence if he should do wrong again; but what then? We are to obey, do good, and communicate, and leave the results with God. (5) "We shall not do much till Christ come." Will it not be well to be found doing the Master's work when He comes? (*John Trafford, M.A.*) *Proclaiming Christ's reign to the heathen*:—The Rev. E. P. Scott, while labouring as a missionary in India, saw in the street one of the strangest-looking heathens his eyes had ever lit upon. Upon inquiry, he found that he was a representative of the inland tribes that lived in the mountain districts, and which came down once a year to trade. Upon further investigation he found that the Gospel had never been preached to them, and that it was hazardous to venture among them because of their murderous propensities. He went to his lodging-place and pleaded for Divine direction. Arising from his knees, he packed his handbag, took his violin, with which he was accustomed to sing, and started in the direction of the tribe. As he bade his fellow-missionaries farewell, they said, "We shall never see you again; it is madness for you to go." But he said, "I must preach Jesus to them." For two days he travelled without scarcely meeting a human being, until at last he found himself in the mountains and suddenly surrounded by a crowd of savages. Every spear was instantly pointed at his heart. He expected that every moment would be his last. Not knowing of any other resource he tried the power of singing the name of Jesus to them. Drawing forth his violin, he began with closed eyes to sing and pray,

"All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all."

On commencing the third verse he opened his eyes to see what they were going to do, when lo! the spears had dropped from their hands, and the big tears were falling from their eyes. They afterwards invited him to their homes. He spent two and a half years among them. His labours were so richly rewarded that when he was compelled to leave them because of impaired health to return home, they followed him for thirty miles. "Oh, missionary," they said, "come back to us again!" After visiting America, he went back again to continue his labours till he sank into the grave among them.

Ver. 13. **Then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord.**—*A summer homily on the trees:*—I. THE LESSONS FROM THE CHARACTERISTICS COMMON TO ALL TREES. 1. This is the first thing we learn from the trees of the wood: life, growth, effort after perfection, suggesting to us what we are here for. 2. Productiveness, fruitfulness, manifestation and justification of the profession of life by fruit; that great characteristic of all trees whereby they produce the bud, the blossom, the fruit, without which they have not accomplished the end for which they exist; without which, at the right time, all professions of life are vain. 3. Beauty, gracefulness, symmetry of parts, proportion. There are Christian men and women not a few whose lives can only best be characterized when we call them lovely; so full of harmony they are, so free in obedience to highest law. We are drawn to them by an instinct we cannot resist; in them and upon them we see the beauty of the Lord. These are the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord by which He is glorified. II. THE LESSONS FROM THE CHARACTERISTICS PECULIAR TO SOME TREES. 1. This one to begin with, for example, that every tree has its own peculiar quality, in virtue of which it differs from every other: that every individual Christian, every man, has his own peculiar quality in virtue of which he differs, is meant to differ, from every other. If we have been endowed with special gifts and graces it is that these may come out in special work; if we have what nobody else has, it is that we may do what nobody else can. Generally true as it is that trees in the mass are of great use in the economy of nature; in the modification of climate, for example, or in their effect upon animal existence: it is also specially true that individual trees have their own peculiar ways of producing these results. A very special quality of the pine tree is to send its roots not downwards as others that require depth of earth, but obliquely, where if it but get a hold it will live. But in this special quality there is the special work: to be a covert, a protection to the rich harvests that are to be reaped behind their friendly shade. And so in the forest of God there is special work for special gifts. Some are more fitted for the maintenance and defence of moral purity and sound doctrine, others for the more private comforting and building up of weak or wavering seekers after God, and others still for the promotion of true piety among the young. Each has his gift; each his work. 3. The lesson of true worship,—the homage of the creature to the great Creator of all. To the Hebrew the stars rayed forth the glory of the Lord, and the everlasting hills bowed themselves down before the God of the whole earth; the voice of the Lord was upon the waters, His way in the deep, and His path in the mighty waters; the trees of the field rejoiced before Him! And why all this, and for what spiritual end in the upward progress of man? Surely to attune his heart and mind to that spirit of worship, that reverential homage, that glad rejoicing before the Lord for which he, of all the creatures He has made, is most fitted. (*Peter Rutherford.*) **For He cometh to judge the earth.**—*The advent of the Lord:*—No insinuation is more unfair than this—which is not seldom thrown against the Jews of old—that their conception of Jehovah was that of a local God, who concerned Himself with the affairs of Palestine, but was indifferent to those of the world at large. On the contrary, the marvel is that a people dwelling like the Jews in an obscure corner of the globe, and planted in a district about as large as three or four English counties, should have had such magnificent conceptions of their destiny, and so deep-rooted a conviction of the destined universality of their faith. Not only, however, was it given to Israel of old to see in the truest spirit of prophecy that the earth should be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, the God of Israel, as the waters cover the sea, but with a foresight no less marvellous, and a wisdom very far in advance of the age, it was given to that nation, and to that alone, to perceive that there was an aspect of the Divine judgment in which it would become the object of exulting and triumphant joy. Minos and Rhadamanthus and their attendant horrors were the dream of heathen Greece. The glory of the Divine light which fell upon the hills of Palestine had revealed a more joyous prospect: it was that of all nature singing aloud and clapping her hands for joy at the advent of the Lord of hosts as the recognized judge of all the earth. What a glorious thought it is! Whose heart does not leap up within him when he sees the fields rejoicing in their waving crops as they sway to and fro in the summer breeze? What prospect is more glorious than that of the distant wood, gay with the delicate foliage of returning spring, and glimmering in the sunlight, or dashed with a thousand hues that may vie in brilliancy with those of the garden in her splendour, and which have no counterpart in the autumn tints of England, golden

and glorious as they are? These are all sights and sounds more or less familiar to all of us, and the associations they awaken are in the highest degree pleasurable; but whoever associates these images, as the Hebrew poet did, with the thought of the Lord of the whole earth coming to judge the world which He made so fair? And yet why not? Are these sights and sounds of nature out of harmony with God or produced in obedience to His will? If we are strictly in harmony with nature, shall we be in harmony with God, or the reverse? We want the triumph of justice, and truth, and right: nothing less will give free scope to the repressed and stifled voices of praise which this sin-burdened, but otherwise beautiful and glorious earth, longs to raise. We want the abolition of crime and poverty, oppression and ignorance. We want the extinction of selfishness, and of selfish, thoughtless, sinful, God-forgetting luxury. This, and much more than this, is what we want, but we cannot gain or recover it for ourselves. It is not in the power of society at large to give to itself what every separate member of society in his degree feels the want of. There is something wrong here, and that which is wrong here cannot be rectified by the combined efforts of others, not one of whom is free from the same radical defect. What is wanted is for the Lord to come to judgment. When the truth of Christ has free course and is glorified in the heart of man, it is the advent of Christ to judgment. He casts down the proud and lofty, He lifts up the low and humble, He makes the crooked straight, and the rough places plain; He casts out what is base and trivial, and brings in what is pure, and true, and noble. There can be no joy like that which arises in the heart, when for the first time and in truth every thought has been brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, when He, and He alone, is recognized as the Judge and Lord of all. That is, indeed, the foretaste and the earnest of a greater advent to come, an advent which cannot be delayed, and which can alone be hastened by each individual heart being subdued to Christ. But whatever may be the apparent prospects of this future advent—of the coming of this mighty One, whose advent shall be the signal for the bursting forth of the manifold chorus of universal nature—there can be no question as to its ultimate destiny (Isa. xl. 5). Be it ours, then, to set forward and promote the advent of this great and glorious time, each in his sphere, vocation, and duty. That is the mission of the Christian, to exhibit in himself the operation of a law which is destined to universal recognition, which is even now recognized in a greater or less degree wherever truth, justice, and equity are accepted as the guiding principles of life, and the recognition of which, when it is commensurate with human society and the limits of the human race, will be the mark of the accomplishment of the Divine purposes in the regeneration of the world. (*Stanley Leathes, D.D.*)

PSALM XCII.

VERS. 1-12. The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice.—*The reign of God over the world*.—I. THE REIGN OF GOD OVER THE WORLD (ver. 1). 1. His laws are righteous. 2. His purpose is benevolent. II. THE PROVIDENTIAL PROCEDURE OF GOD IN THE WORLD. 1. It is inscrutable. "Clouds and darkness." 2. It is righteous. 3. It is terrible (vers. 3, 4). III. THE MORAL TRIUMPHS OF GOD IN THE WORLD (vers. 6-11). 1. The false are confounded (ver. 7). Idolatry is crushed. 2. The true are blessed (ver. 8). Why glad? (1) Because their God is exalted (ver. 9). (2) Because they are delivered (ver. 10). (3) Because their happiness must progress (ver. 11). (*Homilist.*) *The Lord reigneth*.—"The Lord reigneth." Where shall we put the emphasis? Shall we put it here—"The Lord reigneth"? Yes, let the emphasis be first placed upon the lordship of God. Whatever appearances may seem to dictate, and, in spite of all evidence which suggests the sovereignty of the devil, the Lord is upon the throne. Where, again, shall we place the emphasis? Shall we place it here—"The Lord reigneth"? Yes, let us vary the music by changing the emphasis. *The Lord reigneth*; He does not hold the sceptre loosely, giving part of His sovereignty to another; He never relaxes His hold of dominion, and, amid all the changing seasons, He pursues His sovereign

will. Now, what kind of man should this great evangel make of me? What ought to be the tone and disposition of my life? I think the psalmist proceeds to give the answer. "Let the earth rejoice." The word rejoice is significant of movement, of nimble movement, of dancing, of a certain busy activity of limb. It suggests the busy habits of birds on a bright spring morning. "A bit of sunshine makes all the difference." And here in my text the sun is up and shining; "the Lord reigneth," and we His children are to be as busy as His birds on the bright spring day. "Let the multitude of isles be glad." The soul must not only be vigorous; its vigour must be set to music. And now I am startled by the succession of the psalm. The fact of the sovereignty of God should make me blithe and busy as a bird. But all this seems to be challenged by the words which immediately succeed. Why should the psalmist introduce the ministry of the cloud? He knew that joy that is not touched with reverence is superficial or unreal. Joy is never at its sweetest until it is touched by awe. And, therefore, the suggestion of the mysterious dispensations of God is not intended to smother the song, but rather to deepen and enrich it. Every grace needs the accompaniment of reverence if it is to be perfected. But now, in order that the gathering cloud and darkness may not paralyze men, something is told us as to what dwells in their innermost place. "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne." The darkness may throw men into perplexity, and yet the darkness itself is regulated by the Lord of the noonday. In the very midst of the cloud and the darkness there is the throne of righteousness and judgment. Therefore must my reverence be inspired with confidence, and not be stricken with cringing fear. "A fire goeth before Him and burneth up His enemies." We need the pure flame of His presence; we need the ever-burning atmosphere in which all defilement is consumed. And now the psalmist turns away to retrospect. He has proclaimed the sovereignty of God, and now he turns to the things of yesterday to find the evangel confirmed. "His lightnings lightened the world." Who does not know the lightning interposition of God? He flashes upon us unexpectedly; the Divine is obtruded when we least expect it. We had almost forgotten the Divine. The nearness and the depression of the cloud had caused us almost to forget Him. Or we were wondering if He would ever return. And suddenly He appeared! "The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord." The Divine suddenly interposes and the obstacles melt away. Have we not known the experience? The difficulties towered in front of us like gigantic hills, and we saw no way over the tremendous heights. And then suddenly, half-unexpectedly, the hills melted, and the difficulties vanished away. Missionary literature abounds in such experience. Every Christian could produce confirmatory witness. God has suddenly interposed, and the difficulty has withered away, and the "outsiders" have seen the glory of the Lord, and His leadership and righteousness have been declared. It is the lightning interposition which confounds the ungodly. They are turned pale by the passing of the hills, and by the triumph of the meek and lowly in heart. "But Zion heard and was glad." Now, in the face of this evangel, "The Lord reigneth," and with this corroboration from the witness of experience, what shall we do? The psalmist supplies the answer. "Ye that love the Lord hate evil." This is the foundation of everything. And what shall be our reward if we are possessed by this love-hatred, this twin ministry, this mortifying grace? "He preserveth the souls of His saints." We shall be kept by God. He will erect fences to guard us from peril. "Light is sown for the righteous." We are not only to be preserved, we are to be illumined. God will give to us the light we need. "And gladness for the upright in heart." Then my light is not only to be sure, it is to be glad light, sunlight! It is to minister to the warmth of my heart as well as to the illumination of my mind. It is to comfort me as well as lead me. It will be a genial presence as well as a counsellor. (J. H. Jowett, M.A.) *Jehovah is King*:—I. EARTHLY DOMINION IS THE GIFT OF GOD. David and Solomon were the ideal kings of the Israelites. They did not only represent the Divine power, but also Divine righteousness. We apply the title of "majesty" to earthly monarchs, though, strictly speaking, it is an attribute which can only be ascribed to God. The grandeur of the going forth of earthly monarchs is but a feeble and material imitation of the going forth of God so eloquently described in this psalm. II. GOD RULES OVER ALL SPIRITUAL POWERS. It was at first the belief of the Hebrews that there were "gods many and lords many." They would have been no more tempted to worship them, if they had been convinced that they had no real existence, than we should be

tempted to worship Juggernaut. The Assyrians thought Akshur the most powerful god, who alone could give victory in battle; hence they worshipped him. Croesus sent to the oracles of all the gods to inquire what he should be doing on a certain day; and he worshipped the god whose oracle declared most accurately the future. Israel worshipped Jehovah, not only because He possessed power and foreknowledge, but most of all for His character. He was exalted above the other gods by His righteousness. III. THE CONSIDERATION OF THESE FACTS A CAUSE OF JOY TO THE BELIEVER. It is the conviction that a wise and loving power is at the back of all we see around us, and working through all history to accomplish gracious purposes, which made Israel the greatest of all the ancient peoples—great, not in having the best soldiers and lawgivers, like the Romans, or the wisest philosophers, like the Greeks, but the noblest, truest, and best men. That faith which made the nation immortal will also make the individual immortal. God is on the side of our holiest aspirations and deepest yearnings, and against that which is base and miserable and sinful. Every desire must be brought into subjection, and God be all in all. (R. C. Ford, M.A.) *The reign of God*:—I. THE SUBJECTS OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT. We speak now of God's moral government only. And beneath it are angels, devils, man, as a race, as nations, as individuals. II. CERTAIN CHARACTERS WHICH MARK HIS ADMINISTRATION. 1. It is sovereign and uncontrolled. 2. It does not interfere with human liberty. 3. Is in the hands of a Mediator. Jesus governs the world with reference to the interests of His religion. III. PROOFS OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TEXT which late occurrences have furnished. 1. The great evils of bigotry and opposition to the rights of conscience have been permitted to display themselves. Also—2. Infidelity has shown its full character for the warning and instruction of mankind. 3. See what God has done. He has preserved our country from invasion, punished persecuting and wicked nations: France and Napoleon especially have been overthrown, and God has made us the principal agent in accomplishing this. (R. Watson.) *The Divine government of the universe*:—I. THE FACT. 1. The sacred singer here speaks of a God who exercises a personal agency in the universe. The Lord "reigneth." That implies power. All energy that has play anywhere is in a true sense His. Gravitation, electricity, heat, what are these but names which we have given to the operations of the everywhere-present Deity? Even that force of will, and nerve, and muscle which we and other creatures exert is from Him "in whom we live, and move, and have our being." 2. This personal agency of God is carried on in a regular and orderly way. The history of the universe is the development of His plan. He sits at the great loom, and, while the shuttles that carry the threads move, so to speak, consciously and of purpose, it is God who weaves the broad result, fabric and design being His. He reigns over beings who have not respect for His will, but are opposed to it, by working out, in His superior wisdom, His plans by means of their very opposition. II. ITS MYSTERY AND AWFULNESS (ver. 2). The symbol here expresses three ideas. 1. The majesty of the Divine government. Great clouds and darkness are ever suggestive of the sublime. And God's is a lofty and glorious rule. When we try, by the aid of astronomy, to realize the extent in space of God's material universe, and by the aid of geology to conceive of its past duration; when we think of the different generations of the human race which have existed, and of all the higher intelligences; and when we try by imagination to explore the eternal future, with its ever-opening vistas of life and crowding events which are to form history as real as that of the days that are gone by, we feel a necessity of adoration to relieve our hearts of the burden of their awe. 2. The incomprehensibility of the Divine government. God is within the "cloud and darkness." We do not see Him at all. His rule in every department is to us a thing of faith. Philosophers cannot tell what is the connection between cause and effect in the material world. And how, in the moral world, God works out His purposes by means of the free action of His rational creatures, and makes "His people willing in the day of His power," while their wills are still theirs, we cannot comprehend. But such are the facts. God does rule in these ways, as the unfoldings of history show. 3. There is the idea of the Divine government being characterized by judgments. Out of the "clouds and darkness" proceed "hailstones and coals of fire." "A fire goeth before Him, and burneth up His enemies round about." I, for my part, could not understand God's dealings with the world if I did not recognize the fact of there being sin in it, which leads to the expression of the Divine displeasure, and also to the use of the means of discipline. III. ITS MORAL EXCELLENCE

(ver. 2). This "King" can "do no wrong." It is impossible from His very nature. That nature gloriously necessitates the working of righteousness. To a properly constituted mind there is no sight more sad than that of an unjust judge, an unrighteous government. The world has not been, and unhappily is not now, free from the baleful presence of such mis-called governments. But it is consolation, in view of them, that "justice and judgment are the habitation of God's throne." (*W. Morrison, D.D.*) *How may our belief of God's governing the world support us in all worldly distractions!*—I. WHAT IS GOVERNMENT? It is the exerting or putting forth of that power which any one is justly clothed with, for the ordering and directing of persons and things to their right and proper ends. 1. In all government there is an end fixed and aimed at; which end is either supreme and ultimate, or inferior and subordinate. (1) The supreme and ultimate end is, and ought and deserves to be, the glory of God, the exalting of His name, the preserving, securing, and enlarging of His interest, the maintaining and promoting of religion and godliness. (2) The inferior and subordinate end is the good of the communities, the happiness and welfare of the whole country, the peace, comfort, and prosperity of all the people, over whom governors are set. 2. In all government there is supposed a power sufficient for the ordering of things unto these ends. Not only natural power, but also moral authority, lawfully come by; for, without that, there can be no just, right, and good government. 3. In government this power is reduced into act: there is a prudent, seasonable exerting and putting forth of the power in order to the attaining of these ends. II. PROVE THAT GOD GOVERNS THE WORLD. 1. The light of nature has discovered this. Even some among the heathen call God "the Rector and Keeper of the world," "the Soul and Spirit of the world," and do expressly compare Him to the soul in the body, and to the master in a ship, who doth command, rule, direct, steer, and turn it what way and to what port He Himself thinks good. 2. Scripture is full of testimony to this effect (*Joh. v. 9-13; Isa. xlv. 5-7; Ps. xxxiv. 16, 17; Eph. i. 11; Dan. iv. 34, 35; Matt. x. 29; Ps. ciii. 19*). 3. God has a most unquestionable right to order and govern the world. 4. For God to govern the world is no dishonour to Him. Is it possible that His doing so should render Him cheap to the children of men? Nay, is it not enough to commend Him to all wise and thinking persons, that He is so great a God as that He can extend His care to so many millions of objects, and so graciously condescending as to look after the lowest of the works of His hands? 5. God is abundant in mercy and goodness. He built this huge and stately fabric, and He furnished it with all its inhabitants, from the highest and most glorious angel to the meanest and most contemptible insect. And how can we possibly think otherwise, but that the pity and love which He hath for the works of His own hands will draw out His wisdom and power and care for the ruling and directing of them? III. HOW OUR BELIEF OF GOD'S GOVERNING THE WORLD MAY SUPPORT US IN ALL WORLDLY DISTRACTIONS. 1. God is most fit and accomplished for this great work. Men have unruly passions; they interfere in their several interests, and, while they are carrying them on, quarrel and jostle one another: and who but God can order all, and direct them to most noble and excellent ends? Who but God can take these several scattered shreds, and unite them together in one curious and amiable piece of workmanship? Who but God can take these jarring discords, and turn them into an admirable and delightful harmony? 2. Consider the extent of God's governing providence. It reaches to—(1) All creatures. (2) All motions and actions. (3) All issues and results of things both good and evil. 3. The properties of God's government. He governs the world—(1) Mysterially. (2) Wisely. (3) Powerfully. (4) Most righteously. (*S. Slater, M.A.*) *The Divine government*:—I. SOME OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE DIVINE DOMINION. 1. It is a righteous dominion, and it is founded upon unquestionable right. Sovereignty alone, without these virtues, is often the greatest curse. God's government is regulated by His moral perfections: these blend to form an administration absolutely perfect. Justice regulates it (ver. 2). Holiness (*Ps. cxlv. 17*). Faithfulness (*Ps. xxxvi. 5*). Mercy (*Ps. cxlv. 9*). 2. The Divine government is universal. The extent surpasses our conceptions. The earth is but a fraction. Our system is but a speck. 3. The Divine government is directed to the greatest ends. The dominion of such a Being must be adapted to the worthiest purposes. (1) The glory of the Governor. (2) The happiness of His subjects. II. THE VARIOUS RESPONSIBILITIES WHICH DEVOLVE UPON US IN CONSEQUENCE OF THIS CHARACTER OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT. 1. Joyful praise. 2. Cheerful obedience. 3. Unlimited confidence. Personal, national. 4. Look for-

ward to the day of account. (*Evangelical Preacher.*) *The Divine government the joy of our world:*—Men are placed here to be formed by a proper education for another world, for another class, and other employments; but civil rulers cannot form them for these important ends, and therefore they must be under the government of one who has access to their spirits, and can manage them as he pleases. "The Lord reigneth"—I. UPON A THRONE OF LEGISLATION. "Let the earth rejoice"—1. That God has clearly revealed His will to us, and not left us in inextricable perplexities about our duty to Him and mankind. 2. That God's laws are suitably enforced with proper sanctions, such as become a God of infinite wisdom, almighty power, inexorable justice, untainted holiness, and unbounded goodness and grace, and such as are agreeable to the nature of reasonable creatures formed for an immortal duration. How happy is it to live under a government where virtue and religion, which in their own nature tend to our happiness, are enforced with such resistless arguments! On the other hand, the penalty annexed by the Divine Lawgiver to disobedience is proportionably dreadful. 3. That the Divine laws reach the inner man, and have power upon the hearts and consciences of men. II. BY HIS PROVIDENCE. 1. Over the kingdoms of the earth. 2. Over the Church. 3. Over all contingencies that can befall individuals. 4. Over evil spirits. He keeps the infernal lions in chains, and restrains their rage. He sees all their subtle plots and machinations against His feeble sheep, and baffles them all. III. UPON A THRONE OF GRACE. This is a kind of government peculiar to the human race; the upright angels do not need it, and the fallen angels are not favoured with it. This is invested in the person of Immanuel (Eph. i. 22; Matt. xi. 27; xxviii. 18). This is the kingdom described in such august language in Dan. ii. 44, 45; vii. 14; Luke i. 32, 33). To His throne of grace He invites all to come, and offers them the richest blessings. From thence He publishes peace on earth, and good will towards men. From thence He offers pardon to all that will submit to His government, and renounce their sins, those weapons of rebellion. From thence He distributes the influences of His Spirit to subdue obstinate hearts into cheerful submission, to support His subjects under every burden, and furnish them with strength for the spiritual warfare. IV. The Lord will reign ere long UPON A THRONE OF UNIVERSAL JUDGMENT, conspicuous to the assembled universe. 1. In that day the present unequal distributions of Providence will be for ever adjusted, and regulated according to the strictest justice. 2. In that day the righteous shall be completely delivered from all sin and sorrow, and advanced to the perfection of heavenly happiness. (*S. Davies, M.A.*) *The Divine government matter of universal joy:*—I. THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT. 1. God's right to govern the world must be original and inalienable. 2. God alone can uphold creatures in being. 3. The government of God is universal. 4. All second causes are under His direction and control. II. THE CAUSES OF REJOICING WHICH THIS AFFORDS. 1. The benevolence of its design. When we consider the character of the God of love as opened in His Word, we are sure that His conduct is governed by an ultimate regard to the highest felicity and glory of His moral kingdom; whether He pardon transgressors, or make them feel His wrath in the present world, or exclude them from happiness in the next. 2. The certainty of its accomplishment. It is promoted by all events in providence; and will fill its enemies with confusion, and its friends with joy, in the day when all creatures shall appear at the bar of God, and His righteous judgment shall be revealed before the assembled worlds. (*C. Backus, M.A.*) *The fact and consequence of the Divine government:*—I. VISIBLE EVILS CALL FORTH THE EXPRESSION OF THE PSALMIST'S FAITH. Some powerful form of evil had been judged and overthrown. II. THE FACT CONCERNING WHICH THE PSALMIST UTTERS HIS CONVICTION—THAT GOD REIGNS. God is overhead counteracting the shortsighted selfishness of the wicked. In the psalmist's day, men looked on the idols of the heathen as wicked spirits, less powerful than the righteous Jehovah. We are too advanced to believe in the gods of other people. We can scarce believe in a devil, though that would be less awful than to be in the grasp of nature. It would have been, "some comfort could I have fancied myself tormented of the Devil," said Carlyle once. Those who think the universe a vast machine find it terrible to contemplate a fall amidst its ponderous wheels. Better a devil than a blind force. But Jehovah is a living God, and not hostile to us. Righteousness and judgment are the base of His throne. And He is a God of love. III. THE OCCASION HEREIN FOR JOY. It was this thought that inspired Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus." "Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. . . . King of kings, and Lord of

lords. Hallelujah!" And it is a glorious conviction to reach. Those who hold it may rejoice in the midst of injustice. Or while patiently doing deeds of unappreciated lovingkindness, they may, like the Saviour, have respect unto the recompense of reward. In the storms of life they may say, as did the happy child to the anxious passengers: "My father is at the helm." And when Death knocks his dire summons at the door, since God reigns, they may remember that he is but a messenger from the courts of heaven. And when the Lord comes to judgment, and the wicked call upon the rocks and hills to hide them, the saints may shout for joy, since this God is their God for ever and ever. (*G. M. Mackie, M.A.*) *Jehovah's sovereignty*:—I. **IN THE MATERIAL WORLD.** What men call a "law of nature" is nothing else than God in action; it is infinite power carrying out the plans that infinite wisdom has devised. Is God then present as the presiding Deity? He is. The world proclaims it by its infinite variety; by its beauty and harmony of arrangement; by its constancy of succession. "Yes," you say, "we do not doubt that, but what of these disturbances, these irregularities? Sometimes our fruits are nipped by an early frost; our herds are swept away by disease, our fields wasted by the flood. What of these? Is there a providence in them?" We must remember that the grand centre of the world is man; that all things are made for him. Vegetation blooms for him; minerals are stored in the hills for him; beasts graze in the fields for him, and around him the world revolves. But there is a soul as well as a body, and as the world ministers to the body and is in subjection to it, so in turn the body ministers to the soul and is in subjection to it. Here, then, come in the grander purposes of God. He is preparing a race of intelligent beings for Himself; and so what we call His natural government must be subject to His moral government. Man may transgress the Divine law, but that transgression must be punished; he may mistake, and that mistake, while it brings no guilt, may bring loss. It still may be infinite wisdom that sweeps away the promise of a harvest, for this temporal loss may be the one ingredient needed in order to bring spiritual gain. II. **IN THE POLITICAL WORLD.** We judge of events from the low standpoint of expediency or of self-interest. When we sum up the results of the war we borrow the language of diplomacy, and tell of an indemnity at so much, and certain boundaries altered. But God cares not for these. They are but as trifles, notes in His vast heavens, so small they do not cast a shadow. We want to get up—up where God is; up where Infinite Wisdom looks down! Then shall we discern the harmony, and learn that in the grand march of nations the music is set to two keys only—God's promises and God's purposes! III. **IN THE INDIVIDUAL LIFE.** Even those lives that run contrary to His will He checks and controls, and makes them subserve His own purposes; nor is there one life, however dissipated, however wild, but some time or other it gets into one of God's sluices, and turns one of His thousand wheels. But when the heart is submitted to Him, He does more than control the life, He guides it and shapes it to His will. But how far does this intervention of Providence extend? Does He not leave us to follow our own judgment; and is not that judgment the only cloud we follow? Even granting that it is, still that judgment is influenced by Him, for "The meek will He guide in judgment; the meek will He teach His way." Many a time when we fancy our decisions are merely the result of the exercise of common sense and ordinary prudence, God has been secretly influencing our minds to the choice. But then many of the actions of life are so insignificant, what can God have to do with them? He has worlds to look after, why should the little notes of my life cause Him any concern? We do wrong in thus thinking, in thus banishing God from what we call life's trifles. What is our life made of? Of so many days. And what is each day made of? Of so many moments and so many little deeds. But what is a little action? I put a piece of bread in my mouth. A little thing you call that, you do it frequently. But stay. That crumb may choke me, may end my life, and leave all my plans undone. Is it a little thing now? I set my foot down upon the pavement. Ah, that's a little thing, you do it thousands of times a day. Yes, but I step upon some orange peel and slip. That fall gives me a broken limb, unfits me for some intended pursuit, and completely changes the current of my life. Is it a little thing now? And does not God mark these little events that fill up each day of my life when such vast interests may depend upon them? (*H. Burton, B.A.*) *The consolation of God's sovereignty*:—I. **THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON THIS EARTH.** 1. Necessarily autocratic in its form. 2. Singular in its basis. 3. Universal in its range. 4. Profound in its reach. 5. A present,

active, accessible power. God is with us—not locally and geographically merely, but spiritually, sympathetically, practically, actively with us; controlling, co-operating, counteracting; directing, defeating, determining; making effectual or bringing to nothing the designs of the children of men. And we do well to go to Him, not trembling, as Esther to Ahasuerus, but with holy confidence in all times of personal, family, social, national necessities, to ask for His pity, to pray for His delivering power. II. THE CONSOLATION WHICH THE FACT OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY GIVES TO THE GOOD. 1. It is a consolation that the Evil One does not reign: that strong as are the forces of evil in this world, they are not supreme; that greater is He that works for righteousness than all they that work for sin and ruin; that our great adversary has himself an Adversary who is mightier than he; that though we may be in danger of being "led captive at his will," he is under the control of the Omnipotent. 2. It is a consolation that mere force does not reign. All the forces that are at work are "under law," and law is under the control of the Divine Law-maker; and He can act upon and control His own laws, touching links out of sight with His skilful hand, changing the aspect and the issue of things at His holy will and in accordance with His far-seeing wisdom, evolving the bright and the blessed out of the dark and the distressing. 3. It is a consolation that man does not reign. There have been times when the destinies of a continent have seemed to be in the hands of a Cyrus, a Cæsar, a Napoleon; and now it may seem that very large issues hang on the decision of a few controlling minds in London, St. Petersburg, Berlin. Yet God can and will determine results, and He can overrule all events, either saving from calamity, or compelling disaster itself to yield "peaceable fruits of righteousness." 4. We may all rejoice that we ourselves do not reign over our own lives. "The Lord reigneth"—the loving Lord, who wills the happiness of His children; the holy Lord, who wills their true and pure well-being; the wise Lord, who will not withhold any good thing, but will withhold that which seems to be so but is not; the mighty Lord, who can compel the saddest and strangest events to contribute to our well-being; the faithful Lord, who will make good the kindest of His promises—"The Lord reigneth," and not we ourselves; "let us rejoice and be glad." (*W. Clarkson, B.A.*)

Ver. 2. **Clouds and darkness are round about Him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne.**—*The providence of God*.—I. ITS MYSTERY. Infinite plans require an infinite mind to comprehend them. Before you can justifiably impugn the ways of God, you must be able to understand the majestic march of all events from "everlasting to everlasting." You must see the past, the present, and the future in a moment. But canst thou comprehend all that has been, and is, and is to come? No. How, then, canst thou explore the mysteries of the providence of God? II. ITS PERFECTION. 1. In nature. From the beginning the earth has proclaimed the glory of God. The four seasons are four witnesses for Him. Seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, cold and heat, come in grand procession, each the messenger of plenty; all of them the gifts of God. 2. In the rise and fall of nations. There is no natural decay in nations as there is in a tree. "Righteousness exalteth a nation," and so long as nations act on righteous principles they prosper; but God hath ordained that warlike, oppressive, cruel, profligate nations shall perish. Let history bear witness to this fact. 3. In the rewards of the good. Read the histories of Abraham, Joseph, Daniel, and Job—study them well, and you will learn how perfect is the providence of God. You will see how He led them, comforted them, vindicated them, raised them to honour, did them good, and not evil, even when He permitted their afflictions, and how He made their peace to flow like a river, and their righteousness to shine like the morning stars. III. ITS GLORY. 1. In the fertility and beauty of the earth. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." And how great is that fulness! Think of the mountains; the pastures covered with flocks; the valleys filled with corn; the cattle on a thousand hills! Oh! see in all these the goodness of God. Behold the glory of God's providence in His care of all living creatures. He made them by His power; He protects them in His love. 2. In the redemption of men. The Cross of Christ is the most eloquent exponent—the truest interpreter—of the providence of God. Speak ye of God, of His justice and mercy? Speak ye of man, of his guilt, death, and future? Turn to the Cross. There in your Saviour you have a vindication of God's law and a manifestation of God's love. 3. In the judgment to come. He will then appear as He is—almighty, merciful, and holy—and He will show forth before

men and angels and fallen spirits the glory of His name. None will then reply against Him. (G. W. M'Cree.) *The majesty of God obscured by the sinfulness of man*:—View this subject with respect to—1. Our own conceptions of the Divine Being. 2. The providential government of God. 3. The dispensation of sovereign grace. 4. The final judgment. (*Essex Remembrancer*.) *The mysteries of Providence*:—1. The limited spread and small success of the Gospel. 2. The success that has attended the propagation of error. 3. The gifts bestowed upon bad men, who abuse them, while many men of piety have smaller talents. 4. The afflictions of good men, while the wicked are so extensively prosperous. 5. The poverty of the liberal, while the churl is opulent. 6. The small degrees of sanctification in God's people. (D. A. Clark.) *God's ways, though inscrutable, are righteous and just*:—I. "CLOUDS AND DARKNESS ARE ROUND ABOUT GOD." The appearances of God to the saints in old times are the origin of the figure in the text (Exod. xiv. 19, 20; xix. 16, 18, 20; 1 Kings viii. 10, 11; Matt. xvii. 5; 2 Pet. i. 17). Clouds are emblems of obscurity; darkness of distress. The works of God's providence are often obscure and productive of distress to mankind. In the affairs of nations we see the interference of Divine providence; yet it is surrounded with "clouds and darkness." So it is also in instances of a smaller kind; it is thus in the removal of the most eminent, holy, and useful characters, that while we acknowledge the hand of God, we say "clouds and darkness are round about Him." Again, look at Christianity. How little has been done by it compared with what might have been anticipated from its Divine principles, the character of its Author, and from the interest it possesses in the heart of God! Paganism yet strikes deep its roots in various lands. Even in Christendom, how little have the known and blessed effects of the Gospel been manifested! II. **RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUDGMENT ARE THE HABITATION OF HIS THRONE.** 1. The dispensations of God towards man are regulated by the consideration of his being a fallen and disordered creature. 2. The Divine Being was not bound in justice, either to prevent the disordered state of man, or to correct it when it had taken place. 3. The whole of those evils that form clouds and darkness round about God are either the penal or natural effect of moral evil. 4. Those that receive the grace of Jesus Christ are still in such a situation as renders a great part of their trials and miseries necessary. 5. The moral evils of man, and the depravity of human nature, are often, in a great measure, corrected and subdued by the natural evils of life, which thus are made the means of conducting to repentance, reformation, and happiness (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18). 6. The light of prophecy dispels many of those clouds which would otherwise obscure, for the present, the government and the throne of the Deity. (R. Hall, M.A.) *The unknowable and knowable in God*:—I. **THE PSALMIST CONFESSES HIS IGNORANCE.** "Clouds and darkness are round about Him;" through clouds a little may be seen; through darkness nothing can be seen. So this may mean that slight glimpses of God may here and there be caught; but that, taken altogether, He is a mystery to men. Is that to be wondered at? Consider how short a time we are here to explore the mystery. Threescore years and ten, or at the most four or four and a half score years. For how small a portion of even this are our powers at their best! What are thirty or forty years of life—even life at its best—to sound the depths of the Infinite? Then consider how small are our powers for this great work. We have but five gateways of knowledge. John Bunyan says, "The famous town of Mansoul had five gates, in at which to come, out of which to go." And the greater part of these are of no use for reaching the knowledge of God: only perhaps the two—Ear-gate and Eye-gate; and how small these gates are! The ear can hear only that which is within easy reach. The eye can see only that which is within the horizon's bound. We need to realize the limitations of our present condition, and then perhaps we should not be surprised—as often we are—that we cannot see through the clouds and darkness that now are around the Eternal One. II. **THE PSALMIST EXPRESSES HIS CONFIDENCE.** Do you believe in God? Then you must believe that justice and truth are the foundation of His throne. There is a common Latin saying, "Fiat justitia, ruat cælum." If justice were not at the core of the universe the firmament would fall. Why, in the little affairs of nations the reign of injustice and falsehood sooner or later brings overthrow. It has been long coming to the Turkish Empire, but it is on its way. And if a nation cannot get on save as justice and truth prevail, be very sure that the universe cannot get on without these. We are not far-sighted enough to see how the ways of God are just and true. Some of them, because we see only a part, appear neither

just nor true. But then we see only a fragment, and you cannot judge by a fragment, any more than you can judge of a house from a single brick. But we see enough of order, of law, of regularity, to be assured that, when the whole is revealed, we shall cry, "Just and true are Thy ways, O thou King of saints." (IV. G. Horder.) *The hidings of the Deity*:—I. AS TO HIMSELF. Turn, e. g. to the doctrine of the Trinity. We are not perhaps competent to judge whether the union of three persons in one essence could have been made intelligible unto man; it may be that we have not the faculties by which so wonderful a fact could in any case be grappled with; so that whatever the amount of information, we must still have continued unacquainted with the mode how three can ever be one. At all events, it is certain that God hath concealed this mode from us; "He hides Himself" even when He would reveal Himself. Clouds are about Him, even when He would give light; and what we want you to feel in regard to all this concealment of God is that it should summon forth our thankfulness. We ask you what limit there would be to human pride if reason availed to "find out God." What then? If I have been brought to the confession, "Clouds and darkness are round about Him," must I shut myself up in my ignorance, as though I could make out nothing on points which most concern me as an accountable being? Nay, quite the reverse. The obscurity which there is about God does but strengthen my conviction that He is God, my persuasion that He will show forth all the attributes which pertain to God; so that after confessing, "Clouds are round about Him," I shall exclaim with assurance, and even with exultation, "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne." II. IN HIS DEALINGS WITH HIS CREATURES. 1. This is true in providential dispensations. God does not lay open the reasons of His appointments; He does not explain why prosperity should be allotted to one man, and adversity to another. The wicked, moreover, often flourish like a green bay tree, whilst the righteous are cast down, and given over to the extremes of misery and destitution. Evil, too, is permitted to stalk unblushingly abroad, whilst "wisdom crieth" in vain "in our streets." Indeed there is much of cloud in all this, and much of obscurity, which may well overtask any earthly philosophy. But we contend, that what is thus hidden furnishes matter of confidence and thankfulness; for man is hereby thrown upon his faith, and faith gives most honour to God, and is the best discipline for ourselves. 2. Or again: "who knoweth the day of his death?" Here, again, are the clouds and the darkness. "One dieth," saith Job, "in his full strength," etc. (Job. xxi. 23-26). Nature has been ransacked for imagery; the shortness of our days is on every man's tongue; and everything that is fleeting, and everything that is fragile, and everything that is uncertain, has been laid under contribution to furnish similitudes for a human life-time. It is a most trite, but melancholy saying, that no man is able to reckon on to-morrow. Then is it not an evidence of God's faithfulness, of His regard for the creatures of His hand, that we cannot reckon on to-morrow? Such is the constitution of our nature, that if a fixed period were allotted to our days, the thought even of the distant hour would in most cases prove an insupportable burden. 3. There is much hidden from us respecting the nature of a future state. Here, again, are clouds and darkness which God Himself throws around it. There is enough disclosed to stimulate zeal, and enough to scare from transgression; but still, whilst the heirs of immortality are clothed with corruption, they see only "through a glass darkly," and neither the harpings of glorified spirits nor the wailings of the ruined convey more than a feeble metaphor of futurity. But if the veil had been more drawn back, what, then, we ask, would become of a state of probation? Where would be the province of faith, when everything was thus made the object of sense? Where would be the trial of hope, when every joy was thus already told? Where the exercise of self-denial, when the better portion forced itself on the notice of the most unobservant, compelling by its burning manifestations the universal recognition of its superiority? And where would have been the excellency of an economy under which a race of sinful beings could have found no place for faith, no sphere for hope, no occasion for self-denial? (H. Melville, B.D.)

Ver. 8. **Zion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of Thy judgments, O Lord.**—*The judgments of God are a proper cause of gladness and rejoicing to His people*:—I. THE CHURCH IS GLAD, AND REJOICES IN THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD, BECAUSE IT IS ITSELF REDEEMED WITH JUDGMENT. 1. By judgment the Church is redeemed from the curse of the law—judgment on Christ.

2. By judgment the Church is delivered from the captivity of Satan—judgment on Satan. 3. By judgment the Church is freed from the bondage and tyranny of the world—judgment on the world. 4. By judgment the Church is to be redeemed from the power of Antichrist (Rev. xviii. 20). 5. By judgment the Church is to be redeemed from the power of sin—judgment on the Church. II. **THE CHURCH IS GLAD, AND REJOICES IN THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD, BECAUSE THEY ARE THE TRIUMPHS OF CHRIST.** 1. The triumphs of Christ are of two kinds—(1) The triumphs of His grace. (2) The triumphs of His vengeance. 2. The one as well as the other is rejoiced in and celebrated by the Church. III. **THE CHURCH IS GLAD, AND REJOICES IN THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD, BECAUSE THEY DIMINISH THE AMOUNT AND PREVALENCY OF SIN.** 1. The direct effect of judgments is to remove the barriers which hinder the progress of the truth. 2. Another effect of Divine judgments is to deter from the commission of sin. 3. The effect of the finally overwhelming judgments of God is to remove sin from its place in the moral universe, and shut it up in everlasting concealment. Hell—lazar-house. IV. **THE CHURCH IS GLAD, AND REJOICES IN THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD, BECAUSE THEY FURNISH A GLORIOUS MANIFESTATION OF HIMSELF.** 1. They reveal His holiness—He cannot look upon sin. 2. They manifest His justice. He gives to each one according to his work. 3. They that prove His omnipresence as a moral governor. No sin escapes Him. 4. They demonstrate His truth—for they are for the most part predicted. 5. They exhibit His power—for they overwhelm the mightiest. 6. They reveal His love to the Church—for they are chiefly in her defence and rescue. (*James Stewart.*)

Vers. 10–12. **Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.**—*The privileges and duties of the Lord's people.*—I. **THE CHARACTER OF THE PERSONS ADDRESSED.** "Ye that love the Lord." This love is—1. The consequence of God's love to the soul (Jer. xxxi. 3). 2. Genuine, or pure (Rom. xii. 9). 3. In its power unconquerable (Cant. viii. 6, 7). 4. In its duration lasting (Phil. i. 9–11). 5. In its influence constraining (2 Cor. v. 14). 6. In its nature—(1) Working. (2) Uniting. (3) Confirming. (4) Lasting to eternity. II. **THEIR PRIVILEGE DECLARED.** "He preserveth the souls of His saints," etc. 1. He secures them from the sinfulness of their hearts (Rom. vi. 14). 2. From the prevalence of ignorance (Ps. lxxiii. 24). 3. From all slavish fear (Isa. xxvi. 3). 4. From the curse of the broken law (Gal. iii. 13). 5. He rescueth them from Satan (Rom. xvi. 20). 6. From wicked and deceitful men (Ps. xxvii. 2, 3). 7. From every other kind of opponent (1 Pet. i. 5). III. **THE DUTY OR PRACTICE EXHORTED TO.** "Hate evil." 1. Personal or internal evil (Rom. vii. 6). 2. The sin which we see in others (Ps. cxxxix. 21, 22). 3. The evil that is in the world (Ps. cxix. 104). 4. All national evils (Prov. xiv. 34). IV. **THE STATE OF THE SOUL DESCRIBED** (ver. 11). 1. **Light.** (1) The knowledge of God's purpose of grace (Eph. i. 3, 4). (2) The comprehension of Scripture (Ps. cxix. 105). (3) Light was sown for the righteous (Isa. ix. 2). (4) Salvation is sown for the righteous (Ps. xxvii. 1). (5) The teaching of the Holy Ghost is light (2 Cor. iv. 6). 2. **Gladness.** (1) Heartfelt (Ps. iv. 7). (2) The gladness of received mercy (1 Pet. iv. 13). (3) Future and joyous gladness (Ps. xxxi. 7, 19). V. **THE EVIDENCES AND EXPERIENCES OF THE CHRISTIAN** (ver. 12). 1. "Rejoice in the Lord." (1) In the death of the Lord. (2) In the life or righteousness of the Lord. (3) In the majesty or power of the Lord. (4) In Christ the salvation of the righteous. 2. "Give thanks to Him." (1) For His essential holiness as a Divine person. (2) The holiness of His life as God-man mediator. (3) For our being partakers of His holiness. (4) And for that perfect holiness which we shall have and enjoy in heaven with Christ hereafter. (*T. B. Baker, M.A.*) **Righteous hatred.**—The Spirit of Christ is love. Wherever He governs, love reigns. The Christian man is not allowed to hate any one. But we may and must hate a man's sins. Hatred is a power of manhood, and therefore to be exercised. And we may hate and sin not. We may have hatred in our hearts, only see to it that it run only in one stream, and that against evil. And we are to hate all evil, not merely some. It was said long ago of some professors that they did—

"Compound for sins they were inclined to,
By damning those they had no mind to."

But it is a universal duty to which we are here called. I. **HATE ALL EVIL IN THYSELF.** Thou hast good reason. Think—1. What mischief it has already wrought thee. It kept you from Jesus, it would have lost you your soul but that grace

interfered. 2. How unbecoming it is to thee. Thou art of the blood royal of the Kingdom of God. Shall such a man as thou sin? Thou art set apart for God Himself. 3. How it weakens you. Can you pray after committing sin? You know you cannot. You have lost your power. Sin will make thee leave off praying or else praying will make thee leave off sinning. And if you try to engage in work for Christ, you cannot do it. An unholy man must be a useless one. 4. Hate it, because if you indulge in it you will have to smart for it (Ps. li.). If thou wouldst strew thy path with thorns and put nettles in thy death-pillow, then live in sin. 5. You will do hurt to others. The Church of Christ—how you will shame that: and poor sinners, how you will cause them to stumble and encourage them in their sin. And think especially—6. How it grieves Christ. Now, if you would be rid of sin, the terrors of the law will not help you, but communion with Christ will. And get as much light as you can upon it. The housewife when she is busy about her house, with curtains drawn, may think everything looks clean; but she opens a little corner of the window, and in streams a ray of light, in which ten thousand grains of dust are dancing up and down. "Ah," she thinks, "my room is not so clean as I thought it was; here is dust where I thought there was none." Now, endeavour to get not the farthing rush-light of your own judgment, but the sunlight of the Holy Spirit streaming upon your heart, and it will help you to detect your sin—and detection of sin is half-way towards its cure. And if you have fallen into sin make confession of it, and when your mind is in a holy state seek to estimate sin aright. With regard to some sins, flee them. There is no other way. And if you would keep from sin, seek always to have a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit. Old Master Dyer says, "Lock up your hearts by prayer every morning and give God the key, so that nothing can get in." And never palliate sin. II. HATE SIN IN OTHERS. Then, if you do, never countenance it, not even by a look. Often condemn it openly. Of course prudently. And do not get into it yourself. Those who live in glass houses, etc. And encourage all who are fighting against it. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

A good man sensitive to moral evil:—If we would realize the full force of the term "hatred of evil" as it ought to exist in all, as it would exist in a perfectly righteous man, we should do well to consider how sensitive we are to pain, suffering and misfortune. How delicately is the physical frame of man constructed, and how keenly is the slightest derangement in any part of it felt. A little mote in the eye hardly discernible by the eye of another, the swelling of a small gland, the deposit of a small grain of sand—what agonies may these slight causes inflict. That fine filament of nerves of feeling spread like a wonderful network over the whole surface of the body, how exquisitely susceptible it is. A trifling burn, scald, or excision, how does it cause the member affected to be drawn back suddenly and the patient to cry out. Now, there can be no question that if man were in a perfectly moral state, moral evil would affect his mind as sensibly and in as lively a manner—would, in short, be as much an affliction as pain is to his physical frame. He would shrink and snatch himself away as sin came near: the first entrance of it into his imagination would wound and arouse his moral sensibilities, and make him positively unhappy. (Dean Goulburn.)

Ver. 11. **Light is sown for the righteous.**—*Seed from God's storehouse:*—I. The SEED, "light." 1. The preciousness of this figure is seen as we reflect upon—(1) The quality of the seed, "light." "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light." That which dispels mists and shadows, and reveals realities, is the seed. (2) The idea of increase involved in the fact, "light is sown." (3) The amount of this precious seed that is sown. 2. Through the entire field of probation, from the gate of responsible action, in every direction, clear back to the river of death that rolls at the extreme end, "light is sown." II. The SOWERS, implied in the fact, "Light is sown." 1. God was the first being to scatter this precious seed. Dwelling in the midst of the unlocked granaries of "light" in regard to Himself, and the universe, and especially in regard to the great scheme of salvation. He soon commenced to scatter the seed, which was caught up and disseminated by "holy men of old who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2. "Light is sown by the righteous"—(1) For his own good. (2) For the good of others. Sometimes we have got to sow our own "light." Little irregularities, follies, or besetments may be persisted in till we are made to see, by the light of experience, that they are deceptive and damaging. 3. Light is sown for the righteous by the wicked. (1) By wicked nations. French Revolution the result of the infidelity

and atheism of France. (2) By wicked men. The sensuality, want, destitution, misery of the multitude who forget God is light revealing to the righteous the blessedness of his choice. III. The PERSONS for whom the sowing is done. "The righteous," not the half-hearted, worldly, or hypocritical professor, but the man whose purpose in the right is a whole purpose, and who stands before his own conscience and his God in the full honours of rectitude. Such a man, no matter where he may be, is surrounded with growing light. (*T. Kelly.*) *Sown light*:—I. The metaphor is a rather singular one, and yet full of poetry—LIGHT is sown. We can very soon catch the idea if we follow Milton in his speaking of the morning,

"Now morn, her rosy steps in th' eastern clime
Advancing, sowed the earth with orient pearl."

The sun, like a sower, scatters broadcast his beams of light upon the once dark earth. Look up at night upon the sky bespangled with stars, and it seemeth as though God scattered them like gold-dust upon the floor of heaven in picturesque irregularity, thereby sowing light. Or if you want a fact which comes nearer to the sowing of light literally than anything which our poets have written, think of our vast coal-beds, which are literally so much sown light. The sun shone upon primeval forests, and the monstrous ferns grew and expanded under the quickening influence. They fell, as fall the leaves of chestnut and of oak in these autumns of our latter days, and there they lie stored deep down in the great cellars of nature for man's use; so much sown light, I say, which springs up beneath the hand of man in harvests of flame, which flood our streets with light, and cheer our hearts with heat. Understand then that happiness, joy, gladness, symbolized by light, have been sown by God in fields that will surely yield their harvest for all those whom by His grace He has made upright in heart. 1. Sown light signifies, first, that light has been diffused. That which is sown is scattered. Before sowing, it was in the bag, or stored up in the granary, but the sowing scatters it along the furrows. Thank God, you who love Jesus and are resting upon His atonement, that God's happiness is not kept to Himself, but is diffused for you and the whole company of His elect; and that the pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore are not kept within their secret springs, but made to flow like a river; that you with all the blood-bought may drink thereof to the full. 2. Seed that is sown is not in hand. After the husbandman has scattered his wheat he cannot say, "Here it is." It is out of sight; gone from him. So the gladness which belongs to the righteous is not to be regarded as a thing of the present. Their great store of pleasure is yet to come; it is light that is sown, not light that now gleams upon their eyes; it is a gladness that has been buried beneath the clods for a special purpose, not a gladness which is now spread upon the table as bread that has been baked in the oven. Let us remember that this world is not our rest. 3. As seed sown is not visible, so it is not expected that it shall be seen or enjoyed to-morrow. It was said of the northern nations, near the Pole, and said truthfully, that they sowed their barley in the morning and reaped it at night, because the sun goes not down for four months at a time; but in sober truth we must not expect to have the rewards of grace given to us immediately we believe. There must be a trial of our patience and our faith. 4. But while seed sown is not in sight, and is not expected to be seen to-morrow, yet it is not lost. The husbandman counts it gain to have sown his corn. He has transferred his treasure from one bank to another. He does not reckon that any of it has been lost. So with the happiness of a Christian. Lost, the happiness of a single hour in which we have wept for sin! Lost, the happiness of a single moment in which we have suffered affliction for Christ's sake, through persecution and slander! Nay, verily, it is put to our account, and the record of it remains in the eternal archives, against the day when the Judge of all the earth shall measure out the portions of His people. 5. Corn sown is not lost, but is actually in possession still. If a farmer had to sell his field, he would of course ask much more for that in which the seed was sown than for one which was remaining fallow, because he counts that seed sown is still his own property. Even so you may reckon the joys of the hereafter as your own, and you ought so to reckon them; they are the best part of your estate; they are yours, though you do not enjoy them. Yours to-day the seraph's wing and the angel's harp, yours to-day the cherubic song and the bliss of the immortals, the presence of the Lord, and the vision of His face. 6. Sown seed is in the custody of God. You merchants

may fancy you can do without the Lord, but the man who has to till the soil is obliged to feel, if he hath any sensibility, his entire dependence upon the God of the rain-cloud and the Lord of the sun. So, beloved, here is our comfort. The light that is sown for the righteous is in the custody of God. Our future happiness, our eternal bliss, are kept by the great Guardian of Israel, who doth neither slumber nor sleep. Be not afraid, therefore, that you shall lose your heaven, for Christ keeps it for you. 7. A thing that is sown is not only put into God's custody, but it is put there with a purpose, that it may come back to us greatly multiplied. The believer gives up in this life his self-seeking; he suffers some degree of self-denial; he yields up his own boastings to trust in Christ's righteousness; and he makes a good bargain thereby. We shall get back the seed-corn multiplied ten thousand times ten thousand, and we shall bless and magnify for ever and ever the glorious Sower who sowed such a harvest for us. II. Having opened the metaphor of sown light, let us now speak of the sowing itself. When were the happiness and security of the righteous sown for them? Answer: there are three great Sowers, the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, and all these have sown light for the chosen people. 1. First, the Father. Long ages past, or ever the world was, it was in the Eternal mind to ordain unto Himself a people who should show forth His praise. Now, all those great decrees of God, of which He has revealed some inklings in His Word, were so much sowing of light for the righteous, so much provision of gladness in the future for the upright in heart. 2. A second great Sower was God the Son. He sowed happiness for His people when He joined with the Father in covenant and promised to be the substitute for His saints. But the actual sowing took place when He came on earth and sowed Himself in death's dark sepulchre for us. He dropped Himself like a priceless seed-corn into the tomb, and what fruit He has brought forth let heaven and all the blood-washed company declare. The flower that springs from His root is immortality and life. 3. The Holy Spirit is a third great Sower, sowing in another sense, sowing in a sense that comes nearer home to our experience. Light is sown for the righteous by the Holy Spirit. In the hour when He brought the law home with its terrors, and laid us, broken, at the feet of Moses, He was sowing light for us. Our humbling was the preface to our exultation; and we have already proved it so. In that moment when we were subdued, humbled, made to loathe our own righteousness, trampled into the very mire under a sense of weakness and death, He was sowing light for us. It needed that we should be weaned from self; it was necessary that we should make the terrible discovery of our soul's depravity. To-day that Blessed Spirit continues His sowing in us. Every gracious thought; every stroke from the whip of affliction when sanctified; every down-casting of our proud looks; every discovery of our utter insignificance, worthlessness, and death; everything in us that harrows us, cuts us to the quick and wounds us, but yet brings us to the Good Physician that He may exercise His healing art; all these are sowing for us a blessed harvest of light for which we must wait a little while. Be thankful for painful inward experiences; when they are most severe they are often most beneficial. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Joy peculiar to religion*:—Joy is here represented under a double metaphor; one of light, and another of seed. This seed is said to be sown; and sown in a faithful soil, that will be sure to preserve it, and send it forth for those who are to possess it. The people for whom this joy and comfort are thus said to be prepared are described by a principal feature of their character—that of righteousness. Behold the characters for whom God is here said to have made abundant provision of joy and comfort. How does this appear? I. HE HAS FURNISHED AMPLE MATERIALS OR CAUSES FOR THIS JOY AND COMFORT IN THEM. 1. One is the knowledge of Himself and His real character. 2. They alone are capable of deriving the full benefit of Scripture. What developments of principle, for their guidance or warning, do they perceive in its histories; what correspondence between the workings of good men's hearts, there delineated, and their own: these produce a kind of glad surprise and pleasing wonder! 3. Materials for joy are provided for believers in the very workings and exercises of piety. As in the material constitution, where every act of life and motion gives pleasure, so in the spiritual. Every grace of the Spirit gives pleasure in its operation. II. God has not only provided materials for the happiness of His people, but MEANS FOR THE REMOVAL, IN THEIR CASE, OF THE SEVERAL IMPEDIMENTS TO ITS ENJOYMENT. 1. He opposes, for this purpose, their inordinate cares and anxieties about the things of this life, chastening their mind, by a variety of means and considerations, to get rid of this weight upon its energies, this cloud

upon its views and prospects. 2. He prohibits the indulgence of the irascible tempers, and the vexation of the passions. He imparts, also, the influence of His dove-like Spirit, forming the graces of meekness and humility in the heart, guiding it, as the rudder the vessel, smoothly and peacefully through all the commotions of life. 3. He divests their minds of dread from guilt, adversity, Satan, and death. III. GOD SOMETIMES, BY THE IMMEDIATE OPERATIONS OF HIS SPIRIT, PRODUCES THE EMOTIONS OF JOY IN THEIR SOULS, FROM THEIR APPROPRIATE SOURCES. 1. Sometimes it is by the outward objects and exercises of piety. The work of the Spirit then consists in adapting the state of the mind to these objects. He softens the wax to receive the impression of the seal, or moistens and loosens the soil towards the sun that is ready to pour upon it his full beams. Hence the delight sometimes communicated to the mind in the reading of the Scriptures. The portions that at other times produced little or no emotion, now excite, gladden, and transport us. The same spots of landscape, invisible before, or but half revealed, are seen in a light that imparts an interest to them, and reveals beauties in them altogether new. 2. But there are times when the Spirit produces these emotions in the soul, by opening sources of joy that lie nearer to it, and within itself, apart from externally favourable objects, and even in the presence of circumstances and objects most unfavourable. In order, indeed, to render His work more evident and more conspicuous, as well as more illustrious, from the effect of contrast, He seems to prefer the seasons of deep surrounding gloom and agony for these his gladdening and transporting emotions. This explains the paradoxes of Scripture (2 Cor. i. 5; vi. 10; xii. 10; Rom. v. 3). (*J. Leifchild.*)

The seed of light:—Light and gladness. It is natural to desire them, and God does not crucify nature. He only trains and corrects it. This text tells us that light and gladness are for the upright, and the next verse bids the righteous rejoice. An eagle desires the air, and a fish the water. Is it strange? A child of God is a child of light, begotten of Him who is light and in whom is no darkness at all. If he longs for the light, is that strange? But what about the peculiar way in which this promise of light and gladness is put? Light and gladness are "sown." A startling figure that, and a grand one too. God gives light and gladness to His children just as He does other things, germinally, in the seed form; not all at once, in floods, but with a large reserve into which the man is to work his way. As life moves toward God, it unfolds this seed and lets out more and more light, until eternity develops the full harvest of light. With this figure of sowing seed are naturally associated two thoughts—hiding and diffusion: and the two inevitably run together, because, in the natural process, hiding is with a view to diffusion. The process of growth is distributive, not only in the final scattering of the seed, but in that, in the unfolding of the seed, something beautiful and promising is developed at every successive stage, in the blade and in the ear, no less than in the full corn. I. If, then, light and gladness are to be looked for in Christian life, it is important to remember that they are growths, and that, as such, THEY CARRY WITH THEM A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF CONCEALMENT AND DELAY. Let us consider some illustrations of this. God hides away light and gladness in certain things which, for the time, give no hint of what is within, even as the rough acorn gives no visible promise of the grandeur and leafage of the oak. And here be very careful to note that when God gives us these seeds, He expects us to look for our light in them. None the less, because the acorn is hard and rough, must you look for your oak in your acorn. You will not find it by turning away to something smoother and softer. One of the very first things to which God introduces us on our entrance into His kingdom is duty. God knows that in all duty there is light which faithful doing will bring out. Often, however, He shows us very little or none of the light and promise, but only the dark furrows of duty in which the light is sown: and He says to us, "Your work lies up and down along those furrows, to keep them free from weeds, to drive away the birds, to keep the earth loose, and to watch and wait until the light shall appear." The same truth appears in the providences of God. They are full of light, but it is sown light. We understand well enough how God hides the diamond and the topaz in the dark and overlays them with hard and coarse crusts; how He shuts up the crystal in the heart of the rough geode; and we doubt not that human skill and labour can bring them forth from their wrappings and make them blaze in the coronets of kings. Why will we limit these facts to nature merely, to God's economy on its lower side, and not see that God carries up the same facts to a higher level, and applies the same method in His spiritual economy, and conceals light and joy

beneath the hard incrustations of sorrow and pain? All of you remember the story so graphically told by the Scottish poet, of the wizard buried in the abbey aisles with a lamp upon his breast; and how, when the stone was removed after many years, the light from that lamp blazed up and lighted the tomb and the magic volume in the dead hand. So it is that sometimes we go back after many days to the grave when we buried, as we thought, all the gladness and light of our lives, to find in the hand of the dead a lamp and a lesson-book. A hard providence of God is a seed with a rough and prickly husk, but it is a seed of light, sown by Him who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, and who will shine in His people's hearts to give the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The truth applies equally to the process of winning Christian knowledge and faith. We are like children at school. Study and thought and books are full of light to you now; but when you were a child, light came to you under cover of duty, by way of rules and formulas; through labour when you saw more gladness in sport; through strict discipline when you thought that complete freedom would be perfect gladness. Would it be strange if God should deal with you in similar wise in acquiring the knowledge of His truth and will? II. But let us look at the other thought—that of DIFFUSION OR DISTRIBUTION. Concealment or reserve in God's economy is with a view to revelation. Christ said, "There is nothing hidden but in order that it should be revealed," and though, as we have seen, God's revelations unfold gradually, that very fact results in the distribution of His revelations along the whole line of an individual life or of a nation's history. That is one aspect of the truth. A grain of wheat is wheat, not only in the full corn, but in the blade and in the ear likewise, and in the growth of the seeds of light they unfold into light all along the way of the upright. Though something is hidden, though all godly living includes patient waiting, yet God does not condemn His children to walk in darkness all their days, and only then let in upon them the light of heaven in one overwhelming flood. The perfect day is at the end, it is true, but still the path of the just shineth more and more. The word is a lamp unto the feet in their daily walk. And therefore the hard duties and the hard providences, while they hide light, yet do not keep in all the light. There is self-denial, for instance. No doubt it will be a good while before it will cease to be hard, or will bring its full reward: but meanwhile the practice of it is not without its gladness and light. Take the grace of Hope. Hope has a hard fight for life in some natures; and the climb to even a low slope of hopefulness is a distressing one. Yet when one of God's desponding children does manfully grapple with his despondency and resolutely work his way upward, saying, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Hope thou in God. I shall yet praise Him"—light breaks in along the line of that struggle. Some of you have stood on a rocky platform among the high Alps and watched the coming of dawn. You saw the saffron light deepen behind some monster peak, and soon the first sun-beam appeared above the crest; and as it darted forth, it struck and was flashed back from a great snow-field which blushed and kindled under its touch. Another beam shot over to a cluster of ice-needles, and each one of them became a point of dazzling light. Then a long ray leaped over to that peak, far up in the calm ether, awful in the loneliness of its virgin snow, and the great cone glistened and sparkled over its whole surface, and threw back the light to another peak, and flash answered flash, and the threads of light crossed and twined until the heaving sea of hills was bathed in glory. So every Christlike effort, every Christian grace resolutely carried into practice, not only emits light, but multiplies the light at every point where it touches. Faith nerves itself for a timid venture and throws out its one feeble ray toward a hard task or a hard trial or a hard problem; and behold the thing brightens, and in its own brightening throws light on some other duty or trial, on some great snow-field of lonely sacrifice and patience. In short, the more faithfully and persistently one addresses himself to doing God's will, the more points his experience affords from which the goodness and love and faithfulness and power of God are reflected. And these points enlighten each other. Each experience takes up the light furnished by the smallest, and reflects and helps to distribute it over the whole area. Righteousness is light and gladness though its way lie through sorrow and sacrifice: and you who are pursuing that road in faith and hope may take this for your comfort that you are going forward to inevitable gladness. God has already wrought out great goodness before your eyes; but that is nothing to the goodness which He has laid up for them that fear Him. (M. R. Vincent, D.D.) *The future happiness of the righteous:—*

I. THE CHARACTER THAT IS HERE GIVEN OF GOOD MEN. They are righteous and upright. Which words may stand—I. As terms of the same import and signification. Every righteous man is an upright man; and the upright man is the only righteous man. Or—2. They may be put as explanative of each other. The righteous and the upright man is the sincerely righteous man. Not one who is so in reputation and appearance only, but in deed and in truth; who takes more care to be good than appear so; who is not only righteous in life, but upright in heart.

II. THE PRESENT STATE OF GOOD MEN IMPLIED, viz. Darkness and Sorrow. 1. Darkness denotes either ignorance, or a state of doubts and fears. In either sense it may be here applied. 2. Their ignorance and doubts produce much sorrow.

III. THE HAPPINESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND UPRIGHT MAN'S STATE IN THE OTHER WORLD, expressed in the text by light and gladness. 1. Heaven is a state of light. (1) When the righteous are admitted into the heavenly world their knowledge shall be greatly increased. (a) Their intellectual powers will then be very much strengthened and enlarged. (b) A great variety of new and unthought of objects will be continually offering themselves. We shall then have a much more plain and perfect conception of those things which we now think we do know. The facility with which this knowledge shall be acquired will add not a little to the pleasure of the acquisition. Our knowledge then will be perpetually progressive, or for ever increasing. (2) As darkness not only implies ignorance but doubtfulness and uncertainty, so light implies not only knowledge but stability and assurance.

2. Illustrate the other branch of the saint's blessedness in heaven denoted by the word gladness. (1) Some of the chief properties of that joy and gladness which is prepared for the saints in heaven. To begin with the lowest, it will be a total freedom from every kind of pain and uneasiness. To rise a step higher, in heaven there will not only be a perfect freedom from all pain, but an enjoyment of the most solid and satisfying pleasure. The saint's pleasures in heaven shall be constant and uninterrupted. Their variety will be equal to their purity. The happiness of the saints in heaven will be an unenvied happiness. To crown all, this joy will be everlasting. There will be no fear either of an interruption, or a period of it. (2) The source of all this happiness, or whence it flows. One thing which to be sure will greatly contribute to this unspeakable degree of gladness and felicity which the righteous shall enjoy in heaven is their eternal release and freedom from a body of sin and death. The natural faculties and powers of the soul will be then strengthened and preserved in their full vigour and exercise. Not only the natural, but the moral powers of the mind will then be in a state of perfection, and every grace and virtue be complete. Much of our happiness will arise from the survey of the glorious objects which will all around open to our intellectual view; and which we shall see, if not with bodily eyes, yet with as clear and satisfying a perception as that conveyed by the organs of sense. Our perpetual advances in knowledge will be the perpetual increase of our happiness. Joy shall spring up in their souls from the immediate, free, and uninterrupted efflux and communication of it from God Himself; whose smiles shall inspire them with heavenly gladness, and fill them with satisfaction unutterable. If to this we add the society to which the glorified saints will be admitted, we have then all the principal sources of their happiness in heaven.

IV. THE METAPHOR. "Light is sown," etc. This implies—1. Something must be done by the righteous now, in order to their being partakers of that happiness which is prepared for them in heaven. 2. Though the future blessedness of the righteous must now be sown by themselves, yet it is nevertheless the free gift of God. 3. The saints on earth should patiently wait for their glory in heaven (James v. 7). 4. They should encourage themselves with the hopes and prospects of it, and thankfully acknowledge those providences and dispensations which tend to prepare and fit them for it; as the husbandman does those fruitful and suitable seasons which raise his hopes of a plentiful harvest. (*J. Mason, M.A.*) *Light sown for the righteous*:—The text evidently teaches that light is sown by the righteous, and not only for them, yet forasmuch as good and evil work together in spiritual things, we may fairly regard the righteous as having to do with both. If they themselves are in one sense the ground, they themselves are in another the mere tillers and cultivators of the ground. It is important to observe this twofold character, if you would enter fully into the metaphor of the text. The husbandman must have in the springtime a certain portion of that very grain from which he hopes for an abundance in the bright days of harvest; he must have seed for the sowing; otherwise, there can never be the reaping. The same holds good in regard to the righteous, who are taught they must sow light, and they shall also reap light.

We have "light," but we have it as the husbandman, when he sows rather than when he reaps. But to every one who receives the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, that gospel is light which shineth in a dark place—the day-spring from on high visits him—the word becomes his candle searching the heart and the spirit, as a lantern guiding his feet. We have light; we know God's light shineth in darkness—that light which is a celestial effulgence of the happiness of heaven. And the light of God already possessed has in it the elements of the knowledge and glory which shall constitute a higher state of being. The knowledge in that state shall not be partial, but, nevertheless, it shall be only our present knowledge completed. Our gladness shall be uninterrupted; but, nevertheless, it shall be only what I now feel, perfected. The future, as compared with the present, is the harvest time, as compared with the seed time. But whilst it has been necessary that we should remark on the text upon the supposition, that by man light is sown, the more interesting trains of thought suggested by the passage follow from the supposition that God Himself is the sower. God can hide light in darkness. It is light when thus sepulchred. It is the special prerogative of God to bring good out of evil, to give "the valley of Achor for a door of hope," to make the despondency of death productive of the happiness of life. It is plain that from the first God has been acting on the principle of sowing light for the righteous. What is all prophecy, but an illustration of this principle? Who knows not how God sows light for the righteous in the dealings of providence? What darkness is there often around these dealings—what mysteriousness? The Christian can find nothing in them but gloom and perplexity, when they seem clothed with an impenetrable blackness; but they are germs in which, though buried, there is light. A voice is often heard from among the tombs, and as the Christian goes forward in life, is he not enabled to derive profit from that which he had counted but loss? He is not thrown exclusively on his faith; he is not without present evidence that God is furthering His own purposes; he is sometimes permitted to see that what appeared against him has been for him, and that he has derived benefit where, from the aspect of God's dealings, he might have thought himself injured; and thus the whole field of his pilgrimage is sown with light; but he must wait till that fervent heat, through which the elements shall be dissolved, shall have brought up the harvest. There are now occasional springings up of luminous shoots; and these serve him as "first fruits." There is another and a very interesting view under which these words may be surveyed. The psalmist, you observe, does not limit the "sowing" to any particular season. As though the seed of light were always being deposited in the ground, he uses language which may denote that there is continually a fresh harvest in preparation for the righteous. He says nothing as to time; but leaves it to be inferred that the sheaves would be gathered in due season. But by making sowing continual, he seems to imply that one crop will succeed another, so that as fast as one is reaped another will be ready to be swept into the granary. And the truth figuratively taught by such a representation is that there shall be no standing still in the attainments of the righteous. The righteous shall be always in progress; one harvest of light furnishing, so to speak, seed for another. It ought to alarm us, and therefore suggest doubts as to the genuineness of our faith, if we find no advance in spiritual things, if we do not grow in acquaintance with ourselves, with God, with eternity—if as we draw near to death there is not apparently greater fitness for heaven. Now let us draw in conclusion some practical lessons from this subject. There are two prominent lessons—one to the righteous, and the other to the wicked. To the righteous we would say, be not dismayed or disquieted if God's dealings seem mysterious, and if you are met often by obstructions. In seasons of anxiety and doubt a helper shall arise; in "wiping away all tears," God shall scatter all clouds, and your exulting confession shall be—"He hath done all things well." But what have we to say to the wicked, to those who care nothing for the soul, but who "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil"? God soweth no light for you; but nevertheless you are sowing light for yourselves. You shall not be always in darkness; you shall not be always able to hide the truth from yourselves. You must wake at last to the fearful discovery, that you have been your own destroyers, that you have bartered immortality for a bauble, and purchased a momentary gratification with everlasting anguish. Oh, that you would make the discovery now!—the discovery that such must be the confession of all who close their eyes against the light, till that light gleam from the great white throne. (H. Melvill, B.D.) *Light sown for the righteous* (Easter Sermon):—Each Easter morning is a signal for fresh joy: and on each Lord's Day we celebrate our Easter

festival afresh. It is an old story, this tale of Christ's Resurrection; but it is so full of meaning, has such a depth of comfort, such a largeness of joy, that we can never take it all in at once. The aspect of the Resurrection set before us in my text is that it was joyful in itself, and, moreover, a preparation for more perfect joy. "Light," says the psalmist, "is sown for the righteous." Now, we have here a beautiful metaphor, not uncommon in ancient writers, by which the dawn is said to scatter the beams of light upon the earth. It is God drawing near to man: God approaching, bearing with Him every blessing: and as He comes within our view He sows and scatters light upon the inhabitants of the earth. The words thus refer to the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in His wings. But in the next place, they suggest that this sowing is a preparation. If the morning is beautiful, still it is but the beauty of promise. At the dawn man goes forth to labour in the path of duty and of active service; but as the sun rises towards the zenith, each hour it sheds upon earth a brighter radiance. And then, if God's work has been done earnestly and truly, even if feebly and with human imperfection, there follow softer and gentler hours, till at evening the sky is reddened with bright hopes of a future rising, and the sun sets in a bath of glory. Yet all upon earth is but a sowing; the fruit ripens not in the cold regions of this world. It is in the world to come that the fruit is gathered. So said our Lord: "He that reapeth gathereth fruit unto life eternal." But the great central thought of the text is that the blessing which God so bountifully sows upon the earth is "light." The psalmist sees the world lying in darkness. Men grope about, and examine the things around them; but it is a mere feeling with the hands. They have no real knowledge, and all that they do is wrought uncertainly. No work of much value can be done in the dark; and least of all can men set out in gloom and obscurity on a distant journey to an unknown land. And until the day of Christ's Resurrection this was the state of mankind. The darkness was that of ignorance in all that concerns the destiny of the soul and its relations to God. If you had asked the wisest heathen how this world came into being, he could not have told you. Heathen sages and philosophers had no certainty that there was but one God. Most of them had lost all belief in the numerous gods of their mythology: many even felt that there must be, and was, some one central power behind the many gods of the poets, which controlled the gods themselves: but they regarded this power only as a blind fate, or destiny. They had no certainty of there being but one God, and still less had they the idea of that God concerning Himself with the affairs of men, loving them, caring for them, and full for them of mercy and kindness. And thus such knowledge as is given to us in the very first verse of the Bible, that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," contains more than one truth beyond the utmost range of heathen philosophy: for it tells us that there is but one God, that He created matter, and that this world is His workmanship. And if they knew nothing about the world, so equally they knew nothing about man. But now, if God made the world, and placed man upon it, with all that preparation of which we read in the first chapter of Genesis, we at once gather that in man this world finds the cause of its being; or in other words, that this world was made for man's sake. Though cloud and gloom may cover the face of the sky, yet behind them we know that the sun of God's goodness and love ever shines in all its glory. But Christ's Resurrection triumph gives us more than general lessons and assurances, such as follow from the doctrine that one God made the world. It tells us that God so loved the world as to give us His Son to die for us: and that God the Son has accomplished the work He consented to do and has risen triumphant from the grave. Our enemies are sin and death. But sin is forgiven in Christ, and His Resurrection proves that He has vanquished the grim tyrant Satan, whose power over us is caused entirely by sin; and Death is vanquished too. The heathen knew nothing of the bright side of life. They knew nothing of the prize that may be won: of the peace that may be enjoyed here: of the happiness in store for those who bravely fight the battle of life. They saw only too clearly the dark side of life: its sorrows and troubles, its vices and crimes, its sad disasters and the changes of fickle fortune. They saw, too, old age ever creeping nearer and nearer, and if they asked themselves, "What next? What is there after old age and death?" no one could answer. It was all a region of mist and darkness, and they knew of no light there. But we have hope. That future land is our Master's Kingdom. It is our true, our real home. Old age has no terrors for us. We are only getting nearer home. As we look up, we see a loving Father waiting to welcome us home for Christ's sake. And if Christ by His Resurrection has thus shed upon this

world the bright light of hope, so has He made plain before our face the pathway of duty. The heathen had nothing to work for in this world: and if the Christian's hope were destroyed we should have nothing worth working for. For money, and pleasure, and earthly goods cannot satisfy an immortal soul. Christ came to do His Father's will; and He has set before us the same pathway of duty: namely, to do God's will, and labour earnestly for the glory of God and the good of man. True, He describes it as a strait, narrow, and uphill path. But what has He placed at the end? He has placed there a great light. We see the portals of the heavenly city bright and resplendent with glory. We see the myriads of the redeemed saints waiting to welcome us: angels with crowns of joy ready to be placed upon our heads. And within that heavenly city God is seated upon His throne, with all joy and happiness in His hand for the eternal blessedness of His people. And that light there is no more sowing; it is the full harvest of light: its perfect and complete realization. And that which gives us the certainty of this hope, and light, and glory is the risen Saviour. (*Dean Payne Smith.*) *Fields sown with light for the righteous*:—Where are the fields that we may well say are sown by God's grace with happiness for us? Here is one field—the field of His Word. Ah! you may almost see the happiness here. Every promise of God has a secret meaning beyond what we as yet have learnt, and that hidden sense is full of happiness for the children of God. So it is with providence. Every event which can occur is sown with light for the faithful. It does not so appear; far rather the fields just now are very unpleasant to look upon; the water stands deep in those broad furrows; you cannot imagine there will ever be a harvest in a land so flooded with trouble, but wait a while. There is not a dying child or an ailing wife, there is not a dishonoured bill, there is not a wrecked vessel, there is not a burnt house, there is not a single diseased bullock but what you shall see at the last, and perhaps before then, to have been full of real blessedness for you. There is not only mercy in God's dealings with His people in the gross, but in the detail. All the providence of God, far-reaching as it is, and extending from our cradle to our tomb, is full of the Divine intent that His children shall be blessed, and blessed they shall be. There is one little field called "God's Acre," which to some appears to be sown with much darkness, but is really sown with light—that sleeping place, the cemetery, where your loved ones lie beneath the sod. Yes, but they shall rise again, and so light is sown for you, even in the mouldering bones of your beloved children and friends. You would not have it otherwise, would you? Would you lose that seed? Imagine for a moment that it should never come up again from the sepulchre! Would not that grieve you beyond measure? It is your comfort to feel that these dry bones shall live, and all the band of those you loved so dearly who have gone from you for a while are not lost, but gone before. "Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy." And what a happy meeting, what joyous greetings, what blessed reunions, when they meet to part no more! In that "God's Acre," then, in the many burials we have attended, light is sown for the righteous. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Sown light*:—"If the different objects which treasure up and reflect the sunlight in their different ways could speak, it seems that their utterances would be something as follows. The coals would say, "I treasured up the sun's light and warmth": the plants would testify of its attraction in causing them to bud and blossom; the fruits would whisper that they owe their ripeness and bloom to its kisses; the flowers would exclaim, "We obtained our colours from its artistic touches"; the doctor tells us of its beneficent and healing properties; the astronomer unfolds to us its influence and heat; the photographer speaks of his dependence upon its rays for the reproduction of his pictures; yea, the whole creation is indebted to its presence and power for warmth, colour, and brightness. (*F. E. Marsh.*) *Gladness for the upright in heart*.—*The joy which attends godliness*:—I. GOOD AND RIGHTEOUS MEN, AND ONLY THEY, ARE THE POSSESSORS OF TRUE JOY. This appears from—1. The true nature and quality of joy, which may not unfitly be defined that pleasant and ravishing affection whereby the mind wonderfully delights itself, and acquiesces in the fruition of something that is good and beloved. Now the righteous and holy man resteth with an unspeakable delight and complacency in Him, who is the chiefest Being, and the chiefest good, and the most worthy of love, and therefore is the firmest basis of joy. God only, of all beings, is immediately, directly, originally, and necessarily good: and no being can have the denomination of being good, but from this fountain and everlasting source of goodness. Nothing is good, but as it brings and unites us to this best of

Beings, to this original of all perfection and excellency. He then that entirely loves God, and rejoiceth in Him, is in the possession and fruition of all good; and whatever he enjoys carries pleasure and delectation with it. 2. The nature of true righteousness, which always carries joy and gladness with it. For first, all virtuous actions and exercises of righteousness are in themselves agreeable to our rational nature, they are fitted to our faculties, as we are men and reasonable creatures: He that commits any vice doth violence to his own mind, and he that sins against God rebels against himself. Again, as all holy actions are agreeable to our rational and regenerate nature (and consequently to the nature of God and His will), so they agree most friendly with themselves. All moral virtues and graces are of a knot, and are tied to one another. They are all of a piece, and hold together. 3. The great benefits which the righteous man is possessor of, purchased for him by Christ. (1) The spiritual favours and blessings which a holy man is partaker of such as these, the purifying and sanctifying of his nature, the justification of his person, the pardon and forgiveness of his sins, his access with boldness to the throne of grace, his being adopted and made a Son of God, his assurance of God's providence and protection, and that all things shall work together for his good, his experience of the Divine help, and gracious assistance of the Spirit (which one thing alone is able to fill his soul with unspeakable joy, for he cannot but be happy who hath God always to assist him), the enjoying of the blessed ordinances of Christ's institution, the benefit which he receives from all the offices and undertakings of Christ. Lastly, the certainty of a future reward, of enjoying heaven and happiness, when this world is at an end. These are great and ravishing blessings, and it is impossible that he who is assured of these should not rejoice. (2) Not only spiritual, but temporal and earthly things are real matter of rejoicing to a righteous man. Whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he doth hath not only a tendency to God's glory, but his own comfort and contentment. A virtuous and godly man hath his pleasures refined and purified, strained from the filth and feculency which adhere to the delights of the wicked and debauched, and so he finds a greater gust and relish in them. Nay, to proceed higher, those things which seem in themselves to be most unpleasant and grievous are not so to a righteous person. He rejoiceth even in calamities, sufferings, persecutions. II. THE EXCELLENT PROPERTIES OF THE RIGHTEOUS MAN'S JOY. 1. It is vast and ample, its object being infinite, and therefore most comprehensive; whereas the pleasures and delights of sense are short and shallow, narrow and contracted, their objects being of that nature. 2. It is not precarious, or dependent on things outside him. 3. Though inward and retired, yet it is also visible and operative. Who can lodge in his heart an entire love and complacency in God and goodness, who can nourish that holy fire there, and not discover it to others by some eruptions and flashes of joy? 4. It is constant and durable, perpetual and inexhaustible (Ps. xxxvi. 8, 9). They are at the Fountain; a continual spring feeds and supplies their joy, so that it cannot be dried up. This spring is the kindness and favour of the God of heaven, the free bounty and goodness of that great Benefactor whose gifts and graces are without repentance, who perseveres in His love, if we do so in our duty, whose promises are all Yea and Amen, and whose faithfulness is as immutable as Himself. III. IT WILL BE OBJECTED THAT IN THE OBSERVATION AND EXPERIENCE OF THE WORLD THINGS ARE FAR DIFFERENT FROM WHAT I HAVE REPRESENTED THEM. Nothing is more ordinary and obvious than this, that the best men are sad and sorrowful, and spend their days in pensive thoughts and penitential tears: they mortify their bodies and chastise their souls, and discover little of joy all their lives long. I answer—1. It is true righteous men retain a deep sorrow and regret upon their minds for their sins, but even this is pleasant to them, it being their duty, and urged upon them by the command of Heaven. Even the austerities and mortifications which holy men exercise are productive of the highest solace and rejoicing. 2. I answer that the joys of devout and holy men being not the same with those of the corrupted world, there may thence arise a mistake, and it may be thought by some that good men are sad heavy when indeed they are nothing so. For I do not mean by this gladness any such thing as the jollity and laughter of the world. Every faithful follower of Christ, like his Master, hath meat to eat which the world knows not of, he hath pleasures and delights which they are unacquainted with. It is promised to the Christian champion that fights the good fight of faith, and overcomes the world, that he shall eat of the hidden manna, the delicacies of which are wholly concealed from vulgar palates (Rev. i. 7). A good conscience is a continual feast. IV. INFERENCES. 1. It is a false report and a slander raised against religion and

the sincere professors of it, that there is no content and complacency, no delight and pleasure in a virtuous life, but that they who resolve to become Christians indeed, must bid farewell to all mirth, they must not expect to see any more pleasant days, but bury themselves in darkness and melancholy. 2. This great privilege and blessing in the text ought to be a prevalent motive to virtue, a powerful persuasive to a godly life. The joys and pleasures of Christians are not all in reversion. Such is the infinite goodness and bounty of God, that although He hath made heaven to be the place of complete joy and rest, yet He is pleased to reward a holy life with present joys and pleasures in this world. Righteous men taste enough of these here to make them amends for all the difficulties and troubles they meet with in this life. 3. Let the proposition which I have treated of be copied out in the practice and behaviour of all good Christians. Let those of you who have sincerely devoted yourselves to the service of God, and have faithfully discharged your duty according to your power, lay aside the mourning-weeds, and clothe yourselves with the garment of joy. Dry up your tears, and silence your sighs, put on a joyful look, and let not sadness and pensiveness dwell on your faces any longer. Let the world see and be convinced that you do not serve a hard master, and that the yoke of Christ is not difficult and insupportable. 4. Would you know how you may attain to the practice of it, and experimentally find this doctrine true, that Christianity is attended with solid joy and gladness; then—(1) See that you religiously and conscientiously make use of all means and helps which God hath instituted to this purpose. (2) Carefully avoid the commission of all known sin. (3) Be sincere and upright. (*John Edwards*). *Joyful gladness for such as are true-hearted* (P.B.V.):—Surely there is a great deal of meaning wrapped up in this word, "true-hearted." Reality, loyalty, courage, in all dealings with God and man: not one of the three here and another there; for indeed they may be separated, sadly to the hurt of the man who loses hold of the bond that unites them; a man may be real and yet selfish, loyal and yet cowardly, courageous and yet neither faithful nor sincere—not one of the three here and another there, but the three together. The union of the three in the Christian character seems to be the first and most direct of the effects of faith; and, indeed, faith itself, in its normal aspect, may be defined, or rather described, as the true-heartedness that unites the three characteristics I have marked: faith, the substance of the things hoped for; faith, that though He slay me yet will I trust in Him; faith, which is the victory that overcometh the world. You ask me what I mean by Reality. We know well enough what we mean by unreality, something less wicked than hypocrisy and less excusable than mere weakness: the acceptance of principles without testing them or the authority that presents them, the profession of beliefs without experimental maintenance of them; enthusiasms caught by infection from the enthusiasm of those around you; mechanical observance of rites and usages which have no meaning to you, but which, because you have been trained in them, are easy to you, and which, when you have misgivings about them, you are too careless or indolent to cast off; the disposition to be satisfied with the easiest solution of hard questions; for the mere saving of trouble, to shirk responsibilities, whilst you confess to feeling them; to join in the upholding of institutions simply because they are institutions; to profess general good-will without doing anything to prove it; to advocate rash changes simply because they are changes; the superficiality of a whole life that has neither interest in the lot of other men nor conviction of the majesty of truth, nor the sense of responsibility for the work which the Master, by way of privilege, sets before each one of His own to do. All and each of these things is unreality, and there is much besides. But we cannot define the word by the mere exclusion of its opposites, at least in the close and near interests of which I am speaking now. "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead:" God help us, and say not that of us; but judge yourselves, and apply true-heartedness to judgment. In the reality of religious true-heartedness, in this its first aspect, there is a single mind and honest openness, veracity to oneself and to God, which is indispensable to the very first idea of either righteousness or repentance; love without dissimulation, obedience without selfish consideration, faith without wavering. And second: loyalty is an element in the true heart; faithfulness to the cause or person, realized by the single mind. The devotion of affection, the identification of oneself with the cause. I said that this is separable from the other, in idea; it is so in fact also, a man will be loyal to a cause which he has not proved, zealous for an institution which he neither understands nor cares for, in any other sense than that it is somehow connected with the line that he

has chosen for himself. And such loyalty is but a glorified form of self-will; and where self-will has opened the way, how does it cover and disguise all sorts of still inferior motives—self-interests and aggrandizement, party spirit and jealousy, misrepresentation justified by antipathy which denies the sincerity and honesty of opponents; persecution, all the poison of controversy, all the self-righteousness of vulgar ambition. Here again it is not enough to say that true loyalty can be defined by the exclusion of the false. It sacrifices and effaces self, or merges it in devotion: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to Thy word." But more; the self is effaced not for the sake of effacement, but that the devotion may be entirely practical. The hermit of the Thebaid, the votary of Nirwana, effaces himself, and does no more; he is loyal to an idea that contents itself with absorption; the loyal Christian, in the reality of his affection, girds up his loins with faithfulness to do his Lord's will; to minister to his Lord's people; as a true and living member of His body, to diffuse through every joint the life supplied from the head, that the whole may increase of itself in love. But true-heartedness has one feature more: it has the courage of its convictions, the courage not of pertinacious, desperate determination, but of convictions based on reality and developed in loyal faithfulness. This courage is a courage of patience and of struggle, of attack as well as of defence; it is one that realizes danger and realizes duty; that watches in no morbid, sensitive apprehension, but in manly facing of the occasions, be they of difficulty, doubt, temptation, or over assurance of safety. The soldier of Christ cannot fight with the world's weapons, the advocate of Christ cannot argue with the finesse or the virulence or the captiousness of the adversary. It is no small exercise of moral courage in which the true-hearted refuses to meet sneer with sneer, or sharp saying with cutting retort; or where he is lashed into impatience by the persistent utterance of half truths, or by misrepresentations intended to confuse, or by accusations so wild and wanton that he cannot see which is to be first met without risking the imputation that, by defending one point, he surrenders the rest. The true-hearted who can face all this has the very truest courage, the ghostly strength with which the Lord has anointed those that, with their eyes open and heart set, have taken up their cross to follow Him. It is not so with us all! It should be, by the very condition of our sonship; His grace shall work even this in us. Two thoughts arise in conclusion: First, how does all this apply? The cause of Christ, the cause of our salvation, is not a mere abstraction; our soldiership involves a real struggle, our advocacy real argument, our service real labour. The Church of the living God is to us presented in the flesh and blood of those with whom and for whom we are called on to fulfil our duty as members of the body of Christ. As men, as Englishmen, as Churchmen, our true-heartedness is being tried every day. And then, secondly, how about the joyful gladness? Is it the answer of a good conscience towards God—I have done what I can, surely He must see to the doing of the rest? Scarcely that, I think; although He does sometimes give His beloved such sleep, even with the knowledge that they shall be satisfied when they wake up after His likeness. But for it to come day by day; for the weary man to be able to say when he lies down to sleep, that there are no arrears to be made up, no post unguarded, no part of the day's work left for to-morrow; to be able to say, I sleep but my heart waketh; if He come at the second watch or at the third watch, I am ready: joyful gladness it would be indeed, but it can scarcely be. Can it be anything else than that loving meeting of our faith with a certain conviction and manifestation of His faithfulness, the strengthening and refreshing of the light of His countenance vouchsafed to those who, in answer to His "Seek ye My face," reply with life and courage and true heart, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek"? The joyful gladness to the true-hearted comes in the experience of the loving-kindness of the Lord, the increase of faith, the clearness of hope, the fuller realizing of that likeness, which by the name of Charity He sets before each of us, and begins to work in each of us, the instalment of the glory that shall be. Will He not increase it more and more? Trust ye in the Lord for ever! (*Bishop Stubbs.*)

Ver. 12. **Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous.**—*The nature of religious joy:—*
 I. WHAT IS MEANT BY OUR REJOICING IN THE LORD. 1. It signifies that cordial pleasure, which the serious and devout mind takes in the meditation of God's existence, perfection, and providence. 2. It signifies our receiving a very great delight from the discoveries of His will to us in His Word. 3. It imports our rejoicing in the interests which He has been graciously pleased to give His people

in Himself; and in those comfortable and honourable relations which we stand in to Him. 4. We rejoice in the Lord when we rejoice in His continual protection, guidance and influence. 5. Rejoicing in His gracious intercourses with us in the duties of Divine worship, is another thing intended. 6. The lively hope, to which all those are bogotten who love God, of fulness of joy at His right hand, and of rivers of pleasure for evermore, makes them to rejoice in the Lord with joy unspeakable. II. Rejoicing in the Lord signifies that our joy in God is superior to all our other joys; otherwise it is a joy unworthy of Him, and no way, or not savingly, profitable to us. We can build nothing on such a feeble joy; we have no ground to regard that joy as a grace and fruit of the Spirit, which is extinguished by the joys and pleasures of sense; or so suppressed and overpowered by them, as to have no considerable and lasting effect. III. WHATEVER ELSE WE REJOICE IN, WE ARE TO REJOICE IN SUCH A MANNER THAT WE MAY BE PROPERLY SAID TO REJOICE IN THE LORD, EVEN WHEN OTHER THINGS ARE THE IMMEDIATE OCCASIONS OF OUR JOY. 1. We rejoice in the Lord in the use and enjoyment of other things, by considering those things which yield us an innocent satisfaction, as the gifts of God, the effects of His unbounded munificence, and the marks of His creative and providential goodness. 2. Our joy in the Lord should be the chief spring of our joy in all the blessings and advantages with which His goodness hath supplied us. 3. The good man's joy in the Lord regulates his joy and delight in other things; being at once an incentive to it as far as it is lawful, and a restraint upon it when it would pass beyond its proper bounds. 4. Then do we rejoice in the Lord, when other joys lift our hearts to Him, are considered and improved as motives to greater diligence and zeal in serving Him here, and increase our desires of enjoying Him hereafter. IV. OUR REJOICING IN THE LORD, TO BE WORTHY OF HIM, MUST BE CONSTANT AND PERMANENT: it must not vary as our outward circumstances vary, but subsist the same in all the changes of life. It may be we are deprived of health, or perhaps have trouble in the world; however that be, we are still to rejoice in God. V. THUS TO REJOICE IN THE LORD IS BOTH THE PRIVILEGE AND THE DUTY OF THE RIGHTEOUS OR SINCERELY RELIGIOUS. 1. It is their privilege. (1) It is a very great privilege and happiness to be able to rejoice in the Lord. The object of this joy is the most excellent in the whole compass of being; the joy itself resides in the highest region of the soul; and the effects of it are of all most extensive, beneficial, and lasting. (2) This privilege is peculiar to the righteous, or sincerely religious; they only can rejoice in God, and they only have a right to do it. 2. To rejoice in the Lord is the duty of those whose distinguishing privilege it is that they can do it. Let me name some of those things which Christians should practise, in order to their being in an actual disposition or preparedness of mind to rejoice in the Lord. (1) It is their duty to make their calling and election sure, and by an impartial inquiry into the state of their souls, to decide the great question upon which their peace so much depends, viz. Whose they are, and whom they serve; for if they are the children of God, and serve Him in sincerity, nothing else is necessary to their rejoicing in God, but their knowing it. (2) It is their duty to remove out of the way whatever things they have found, or their reason tells them are hindrances to this holy joy; particularly these two, a multitude of worldly cares, and a too free indulgence to worldly joys and pleasures. (3) It is the duty of Christians to call upon their souls to rejoice in the Lord. They are not to allow themselves in a heartless melancholy frame; they must not give way to it, as if it were a temper of mind acceptable to God, and creditable to religion; but must endeavour to chide themselves out of it, expostulating with their own souls as (Ps. xlii. 11). (4) They must make this a frequent petition in their addresses to the throne of grace, that God would uphold them with His free Spirit, and enable them to rejoice in Him: they should entreat Him who is the Father of lights to dart some beams of heavenly light into their souls, that they may not sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death; but walk and rejoice in the light of life. (H. Bonar, D.D.) *The duty of rejoicing*:—Christians are ready enough to speak of the privilege of being joyful. They regard joy (and with perfect truth, for it is so reckoned by St. Paul) as one of the fruits of the Spirit; and they are too apt to consider as fruits what they may be permitted to taste, rather than what they may be bidden to do. But throughout Scripture joyfulness is just as much a commanded thing as a promised, even as temperance is a commanded thing, and justice and charitableness, though all the while those may be elsewhere exhibited as fruits of the Spirit, forasmuch as it is only through the operations of the Spirit that these qualities can be produced in such form or maintained in such strength, as a righteous God will approve. But

being a commanded thing, and not merely a promised, the being joyful is as actually a duty—a duty to be attempted and laboured at by the Christian, as the being temperate or just or faithful or charitable. Yet how little is this thought of, even by those who are in the main jealous and zealous for the commandments of the Lord! God designed and God constructed religion for a cheerful, happy-making thing; and, as though He knew that had He made joyfulness matter only of privilege, numbers would have wanted it, and would have excused the want under the plea of unworthiness, He made it matter of precept, that all might be ready to strive for its attainment. We wish you, then, to consider whether, when rejoicing is thus presented to you under the aspect of a duty, you may not find ground for accusing yourselves of having neglected a duty. Have you not been far too well contented with a state of compunction and contrition and doubt, in place of striving to advance into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and the full and felt appropriation of those rich provisions of the Gospel, with which it is hard to see how any believer can be sad, and without which it is hard to see how any one who knows himself immortal can be cheerful? And has not this very much sprung from your overlooking joyfulness as a duty to be attempted, and fixing your thoughts on it as a privilege to be bestowed? You may have often said to yourselves, "Oh! that we had a greater measure of joy and peace in believing;" but have you laboured for this greater measure? Have you wrestled with sadness as with a sin? Have you argued with yourselves on the wrongness of being depressed? Have you made memory do its part in telling up God's gracious acts? Have you made hope do its part in arraying God's glorious promises? If you have not thus endeavoured to "rejoice in the Lord," you are chargeable with having neglected a positive duty, just as much as if you had omitted to use the known means of grace, or to strive after conformity of life to God's holy law; and the continued spiritual gloom which you find so distressing, may not be more an evidence of disobedience to a command, than the punishment with which God ordains that the disobedience should be followed. And do not for a moment think that you yourselves alone are the sufferers, if rejoicing be a duty and the duty be neglected. The believer has to give an exhibition—a representation of religion; it rests with him to furnish practical evidence of what religion is, and of what religion does. If he fall into sin, then he brings disgrace upon religion, and strengthens many in their persuasion of its having no reality, no worth, as a restraining, sanctifying system. If he be always dispirited and downcast, then he equally brings disgrace upon religion, and strengthens many in their persuasion of its having no reality and no worth as an elevating, happy-making system. Yet there may be a lingering suspicion that the "rejoicing in the Lord," so distinctly commanded, is not always possible; that, like some other precepts, it rather marks out what we are bound to aim at than what we may hope to attain. And we may perhaps safely admit that, compassed with infirmities, exposed to trials, and harassed by enemies, the Christian must alternate, in a measure, between gladness and gloom; nay, that since it is more than we can hope, that he may never commit sin, it is more than we can wish that he should never feel sad. Yet is it to be strenuously held that there is such provision in the Gospel for the continued joyfulness of the believer in Christ, that if his joy be ever interrupted, it ought only to be as the sun's brightness may be dimmed by the passing cloud, which quickly leaves the firmament as radiant as before? When betrayed into sin, but only then, has he real cause for sorrow; and if he have no heart for sin, and is a true Christian (sin being that which he abhors, although he may be betrayed into its commission), he will indeed grieve at the having failed in obedience, but quickly remembering the power of the Mediator's intercession, his "heaviness may endure for a night, but joy should return to him in the morning." And it would seem as if the latter clause in our text were intended to meet the objection that there are causes of sorrow which must prevent continued rejoicing. Not content with bidding the righteous "rejoice in the Lord," he singles out one of the attributes, one of the distinguishing properties of God, and requires that it be made a subject of special thanksgiving—"Give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness." We suppose that by adding to the general call for rejoicing, a call for thanksgiving at the remembrance of God's holiness—that property at which the timid might feel as though it almost stood in their way—the psalmist wished to show that there was no sufficient reason in the circumstances of the true believer why he should not habitually exult in the Lord. There is nothing, it appears, in the attributes of God to prevent, nay, there is nothing but what must encourage, rejoicing. And is it not too self-evident a

proposition, to require the being supported by argument, that if there be nothing in God in which we may not rejoice, there can be nothing in the universe at which we ought to be sad? We may conclude, therefore, that it is not asking too much from the believer,—a redeemed man, a baptized man, a justified man, a man for whose good “all things work together,” a man who may say that all things are his, “whether life or death, things present or things to come,”—it is not asking too much from him, to ask that his habitual mood be that of gladness, and that he present religion to the world as a peaceful, cheerful, happy-making thing. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Rejoicing in God*.—There is no duty more reasonable, more becoming, and agreeable; and yet there is none more generally misunderstood, less inquired into, and worse regulated, than that of rejoicing. Joy seems to be the peculiar privilege of innocent and happy creatures; when, therefore, we consider ourselves as sinners, as poor, and naked, and miserable; polluted with the stain, and loaded with the guilt, of our iniquities; clothed with infirmities, beset with enemies, born to trouble, exposed to danger, always liable, and sometimes obliged, to grief and sorrow; we may be apt upon this melancholy view to think that joy is not made for man, and least of all for Christians; and be tempted to understand our Saviour in the most strict and rigorous sense, when He tells His disciples that they shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice. The methods which men usually take to express their joy, seem, at first view, to give the good Christian still farther objections against it; and when he observes that levity of mind, and vanity of thoughts; that excess, intemperance, and licentiousness, which it too often occasions; he thinks he may well be justified, if, with Solomon, he says of laughter that it is mad; and of mirth, what doth it? But these seeming objections against this duty of rejoicing will easily be removed; the nature of it will be fully opened; the benefits we may hope to reap from it will clearly be discerned; and we shall soon be satisfied that joy and gladness is as suitable to our nature and religion, as it is agreeable to our desires and inclinations; if we consider carefully the exhortation in the text. I. **WHAT IT IS TO REJOICE IN THE LORD.** It implies our making God the chief, the supreme, and adequate object of our joy. The true nature of joy consists in that agreeable serenity and satisfaction of mind, which we feel upon the presence and fruition of some good. Good, therefore, is the proper object of our joy; good, not in itself alone, but good to us; such as repairs, preserves, advances, exalts, perfects our nature. The good we are to rejoice in must be full, sufficient, and satisfactory; proportionable to the desires, the wants, the necessities; and suitable to the inclinations, the condition, and circumstances of those who are to be delighted with it. It must be an effectual, prevalent, and sovereign good; able to remove from us, not only the present pressure, but the danger, the possibility, or at least the fear of evil. It must be a substantial, lasting, durable good; immortal, like the soul, that is to be satisfied; ever yielding fresh delight, and yet never to be exhausted: in a word, it must be our own proper good; a good, which we may be able to attain, and sure to hold fast; a good always present with us, and never to be taken from us. Now, on all these accounts God alone is the proper and adequate object of our joy. It is He only whom we can truly look upon as a pure, perfect, suitable, sovereign, eternal, and, what is still more, our own, proper, peculiar God. Our joy must be fixed on Him, as our universal, chief, and ultimate good; and upon other things as occasional, subordinate, and instrumental to that. II. **WE LAWFULLY MAY, AND ARE IN DUTY BOUND, SO TO REJOICE.** True joy, when it is founded upon a right principle, directed to its proper object, kept within its due compass, and not suffered to exceed either in its measure, or in its duration, is not only lawful, but commendable; not only what we may, without sin, allow ourselves in, but what we cannot, without folly, abridge ourselves of. Pleasure and good, pain and evil, are but different expressions for one and the same thing. No action is ever forbidden us, but what, upon the whole, brings more pain than pleasure; none is commanded us, but what, all things considered, yields greater degrees of pleasure than it does of pain. And it can never, therefore, be an objection against anything we undertake, that it will cause joy; nor a commendation of any action, that it will produce sorrow. True it is, the great duty of repentance does in the very nature of it include sorrow; but then the end of this sorrow is, that we may be put into a condition of rejoicing the more abundantly. The sense of our sins must make us weep and lament; but then our sorrow will be soon turned into joy. Though our conversion hath its pangs, yet we shall no more remember the anguish, for joy that a new man is born into the world. Whatever reasons we may have for our grief and sorrow, they are mightily

overbalanced by those motives that recommend joy and gladness. If the sense of our manifold infirmities, our heinous sins, our grievous sufferings, our violent temptations; if the prosperity of our and God's enemies; if the calamities of our brethren, and His faithful servants lie hard upon us, and may seem to justify and require a more than ordinary degree of grief; yet in the Lord we have still sufficient matter of rejoicing; of rejoicing in God, who is our Creator, our Preserver, our Father, our Friend; of rejoicing in Christ, in His person, in His office, in the graces He vouchsafes us, in the light of His countenance, in the hopes of His glory, in the greatness of His love, in the exceeding riches of His pardoning mercy, in the fidelity of His promises, in the efficacy of His intercession, in His readiness to assist, in His power to support us in time of need. (*Bishop Smalridge.*) **Give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness.**—*Giving thanks at the remembrance of God's holiness.*—This command is addressed to the "righteous," not because they only ought to obey it, but because they only can obey it, and because, indeed, only they can understand it. If one thing more than another can show the entire and radical change which the Spirit of God, in the hour of regeneration, works upon the hearts of sinners, it is, that after this change has passed upon them they are not merely reconciled to God's holiness—cannot merely bear the thought of it, even when apprehended far more clearly and powerfully than before—but regard it with complacency and delight. I. **WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THIS DUTY.** 1. Our being in a state of reconciliation with God. Before we can delight in, and give thanks for the holiness of God, we must be at peace with Him,—we must believe that the flame of consuming wrath which His holiness kindled against us for sin has been quenched by the blood of His own Son poured forth on our behalf,—we must believe that His holiness, which was so awfully against us for sin, is now for us and on our side, because all its demands have been gloriously met by Him who was made "sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him"—in short, we must be persuaded that, pacified and propitiated towards us through the atonement of Jesus, God's holy eye no longer rests on us with the un pitying fury of an avenging Judge, but beams on us with the purest kindness and love of a merciful Father. 2. That we have a new and holy nature; for otherwise we can neither understand nor appreciate the holiness of God. And such a new and holy nature has been wrought by God's own Spirit in all who have been born again. They "have put on the new man which, after God,"—that is, in the likeness of God,—is created in righteousness and true holiness." They have been made "partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the pollution that is in the world through lust." Possessed of this Divine nature, they begin, in their own finite and imperfect measure, to hate sin as God hates it; they begin, in their own finite and imperfect measure, to love holiness as God loves it; and therefore they remember God with supreme complacency and delight, because they see in Him the perfection of that which their nature loves and approves—the perfection of an absolute and ineffable holiness. 3. The remembrance and contemplation of God's holiness as this is exhibited in the person and cross of His Son. It is when we behold God subjecting Him who is the partner of His glory and throne, by whom also He made the worlds, to the awful humiliation of taking the nature and the place of His guilty creatures; it is when we survey the sufferings of the world's Creator and Lord under His Father's hand,—the sorrow unto death, the bloody sweat, the strong cryings and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, the slow death of shame and woe; and it is when we remember that such suffering on the part of the Divine Sufferer was all absolutely necessary ere God could pardon a single sin, or allow a single sinner to approach the footstool of His mercy:—that we learn how holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts. II. **THE GROUNDS OR REASONS OF THIS DUTY.** Why may the righteous well give thanks at the remembrance of God's holiness? 1. They may well praise God for it, as that which gives lustre and glory to all His other perfections. His holiness is the crown of all His perfections. It ensures, if we may so say, that they shall be exercised in a way worthy of Himself. Oh, when we think that our God is holy, that His wisdom is holy, that His power is holy, that His mercy is holy, that His providence is holy, that all His acts and manifestations of Himself in His government of the universe are, and ever must be, perfectly holy, and worthy of Himself,—well does it become us to join with every creature in heaven, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness. 2. The righteous may well give thanks at the remembrance of God's holiness, because the display and vindication of it in the work of their redemption pacify their conscience, and secure their everlasting safety. If He were not abso-

lutely holy, I might well tremble in perpetual terror, lest, after having punished sin in Christ, my Surety, He should refuse to pardon it to me; and lest, having received the price of my redemption from Christ, He should yet deny some of its blessings to me. But well may I give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness, when I think that His absolute holiness is my security,—a security strong and abiding as His own unchangeable nature,—that, having accepted the price of my redemption at the hands of my glorious Surety, He will assuredly bestow on me all its blessings, from the pardon of my sin, to my full investiture with all the riches of glory. 3. The righteous may well give thanks at the remembrance of God's holiness, when they remember that, however mysterious and trying God's dealings towards them may be, they are all holy, and designed to promote their holiness. 4. The righteous may well give thanks at the remembrance of God's holiness, because it is the security and pattern of their own ultimate holiness. You hate sin, O Christian, and long to be delivered from it. Think, then, that the God of your salvation infinitely hates sin, and that His infinite abhorrence of sin is a pledge that He will destroy its power and its being in every soul whom He loves. What comfort, when you are using the means of holiness,—often, as you fear, vainly and with little success,—to think that this is the will of God, even your sanctification; and that, when your will is thus coinciding and co-working with the will of the Omnipotent God, it cannot fail to reach the summit of its highest endeavour! O then, give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness! It is the pledge of the progress and perfection of yours. And not only so, but,—most elevating and ennobling thought of all,—it is the pattern of yours. Your duty is always your privilege; and God commands what He will certainly give, when He says, "As He who hath called you is holy," etc. Jesus Christ is the brightness of His Father's glory. He is the living manifestation of the brightness of the Father's holiness; and is it not said, "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is"? (*James Smellie*.)

PSALM XCVIII.

VERS. 1-9. O sing unto the Lord a new song.—*Genuine praise*:—I. GENUINE PRAISE IS FOUNDED ON THE STRONGEST REASON (vers. 1, 2). Why should man be so urgently called on to praise God? 1. Because of the extraordinary deliverance which was vouchsafed to him—from the bondage of ignorance, carnality, prejudice, and guilt. Unfallen angels should always sing praises unto the Lord, and they always do; but we have no reason to believe that they have such deliverances to celebrate as we have. 2. Because all the extraordinary deliverances vouchsafed to him originated in the mind of God. "His mercy," "His truth," "His righteousness." As transgressors of His laws and rebels against His government, men, instead of having any just reason for expecting deliverance, have the strongest reasons to apprehend eternal bondage. It was of His free love and compassion that He interposed. Therefore "sing unto the Lord a new song." II. GENUINE PRAISE SHOULD BE RENDERED BY ALL WITH RAPTUROUS ENTHUSIASM. 1. By all. This means all mankind. Praise should be as wide as the race. Its spirit, like the tide in ocean, should heave and swell, and rule the mighty mass. 2. By all with joy. True praise is not a ceremonial service, not an irksome duty, still less a moan of sadness, it is the soul breaking out into the transports of delight. 3. By all with enthusiastic rapture. (*Homilist*.) *Christianity's most joyous fact*:—These words, this Easter Sunday, will find an echo in every Christian heart and congregation. The hymns of Lent, and the passion songs, are beautiful, and touch the heart; but if they were not to be followed by any Easter hymns our condition would indeed be sad. It would be a night without a morning. But to-day, everywhere, the Church resounds with this song, "O sing unto the Lord a new song!" For the great Easter message is—I. A MOST ASSURED WORD. 1. It bears the bloodstained seals of many witnesses. See the Gospel histories, listen to the impassioned arguments of St. Paul, who brands himself as a false witness if his message be not true. 2. Upon it rests the massive building of the entire Church of Christ. If it had been founded upon imposture or falsehood, would it

be standing now? 3. And if this also testifies the heartfelt experience of all true Christians, in themselves they have the realized presence of Christ. He speaks to them, they to Him. They know He is with them. II. It is a most precious word. For it enables us to believe properly, to live godly, and to die happily. (*Charles Von Gerok, D.D.*) *A summons to song*:—According to the language of the "royal singer," God's great cathedral of nature is full of magnificent harmonies. The heavens rejoice; the earth sings; the sea and the fulness thereof roar in deep-toned bass; the fields with all they contain, and the trees of the woodland with their ten thousand tongues, peal forth melodies. This chorus we have in creation; and the laziest in the song is man, who should be loudest, noblest, heartiest. Oh, it is time for us to be roused to duty by an inspired voice! We have been musicless too long, prosaic too long, dormant and mute too long, ungrateful and selfish too long. We want the summons to song, to action, to thankfulness. "O sing unto the Lord a new song," etc. And why a "new" song? Because new mercies, new deliverances, new gifts, new triumphs demand new songs. God's "marvellous things," or doings, are many and multiform. They are to be seen in creation, in providence, in redemption, in grace, in the world, in the Church, in nations, in families, in individuals. Everywhere in His theatre of action are His wonders manifest. It is impossible for us to be praiseless, if we only pause and recount our Father's gracious dealings, and manifold mercies, and wondrous goodness towards us. But interpreters of the Scripture refer this psalm to Jesus Christ. Its prophetic finger points to Him who was not only marvellous in doing, but likewise marvellous in person. From the manger to the ascension-mount, the cloud of mystery enveloped Him. At times He seemed near, intimately near as a brother-man—at other times distant, infinitely measured off as the awful and the "mighty God." Every privilege, every blessing, every gift, every enjoyment, every mercy crowded into our daily lives, flows to us through that Divinity which, blending with humanity, satisfied the claims of holiness, and instituted peace between heaven and earth, God and man. Have we, then, no song to sing unto Him who has done such "marvellous things"? Yes, thank Heaven, we have a song; and while the redeemed on high chant it, we join in the chorus, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb." Once more, not only are we called upon to break forth into joyful song because of the doings of "marvellous things," but also because of the achievement of splendid victory. "His right hand and holy arm hath gotten Him the victory." This unquestionably has specific reference to the sternest battle and grandest conquest ever fought and won on the world's great carnage-field. Through Christ's victory we shall be victorious. Our life in grace is a prolonged battle—a succession of engagements. We are on the winning side, and shall be "more than conquerors through Him that hath loved us." Awaiting us, in the not far-distant heaven, is the crown, the palm, the robe, the kingdom, and the welcome song! Let our onward march be brightened by the music of martial songs and celebrations of our Captain's praise, whose "right hand and holy arm" will assuredly secure for us the victory. (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*)

Ver. 2. The Lord hath made known His salvation.—*The praise of the vastness of God's salvation*:—Mr. Booth, of the Blue Ribbon Army, told me that on his first journey to England, before he started, he said to his wife, "I have dreamed a dream. I have dreamt that I shall be wrecked and be the only person that will escape; and what a thrilling story that will be for me to tell." He left home, and there was a collision, both ships were in very great danger, but by the wonderful providence of God both ships got back in harbour, and there was nobody lost whatever. So he said to his wife, "Is not this a much more thrilling story to tell? Is it not a much more happy thing to have to say, 'Saved, and all saved that sailed with me, not one of them lost?'" Oh, that we might have the privilege of saying, "Here am I, and the children that Thou hast given me." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 7-9. Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.—*Man and nature*:—When piety and poetry are married to each other, such a song as this is the offspring of their marriage. Alas! that the two should be so often divorced—that the pious man should so often look abroad upon the earth with unimaginative gaze, and that the poet should so often revel in the beauties of nature with a heart unmoved by any perception of the Divine glory. Here we have a man who is elevated into a state of joyful adoration by the Spirit

of God, transferring his own emotion to the world around him, and, without any sense of incongruity, calling upon the inanimate creation to share his gladness and to join him in his worship. The truth is that a religious man becomes or remains unimaginative, not in virtue of, but in spite of, his religion. And so far is it from being an unreal or "sentimental" thing for a devout man to associate the inanimate creation with himself in praising the Creator, that, on the contrary, such association is natural to all simple, fervid godliness. For man—according to the Divine idea—is the prophet, priest, and king of nature. I. MAN IS NATURE'S KING. The psalmist speaks as if he were the leader of nature's orchestra. And indeed, insignificant as man may seem in presence of those forces by which he is surrounded, yet here he stands in the midst of the world, "by the grace of God," its king. The earth was made for man, not man for the earth. If the "Great King" were governing nature capriciously, without any fixed or discoverable order, man would be the slave of nature, instead of her lord. He would be at the mercy of her ever-varying moods,—liable to have his plans nullified by the unexpected outbreaks of her power, and to be himself dragged as a captive at the wheels of her mighty chariot. But, as it is, every fresh discovery which man makes in the realm of science is a new gem in that royal crown which bespeaks his lordship over the world. All fuller knowledge of nature's facts is virtually, for him, a more extended mastery over nature's forces. And so he harnesses these forces to the chariot of human progress, and makes them do his bidding. II. MAN IS NATURE'S PRIEST. The whole inanimate creation, reflecting the glory of God, and radiant with the beauty which He has impressed upon it, seems to the mind of the psalmist to be praising its Creator. Or rather, looking abroad upon the world with the eye of a priest who is laying upon the Divine altar the sacrifice of grateful adoration, he takes it upon himself to interpret and present the inarticulate offering of nature. The most beautiful melody may be played upon the harp or the organ; you may call it a "sacred" melody if you please; and the sounds which are drawn forth from the instrument may, in their very nature, be such as would furnish a most fitting vehicle of worship; yet, in these sounds there is no actual praising of God, if there be no praise in the heart of player or listener. But, on the other hand, even if the player be himself an ungodly man, let there only be some one by who can interpret these sounds and who makes them his own through sympathy with their spiritual significance, having his heart attuned to the feeling which they are fitted to express,—and now the melody is no longer soulless; it becomes a living thing; the very sounds themselves rise up before God as acceptable worship. In like manner, throughout the whole region of the material world, considered merely in itself, there is no actual praise of God; for there is no spirit conscious of His presence, thankful for His goodness, exulting in His smile. The trees of the wood are beautiful as their green leaves glance in the sunbeams and rustle in the summer breeze; and the song of the birds amongst the branches harmonizes with the idea of thankful worship; but there is no thankfulness—no worship—there, until man comes, with a devout, joyful heart, consecrating the grove into a temple and making the birds his choristers. Influenced by the beauty and music of the world, he in turn fills all that beauty and music with a soul. To his eye the sun is as "a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race." To his ear "the heavens declare the glory of God." And, having an ear for the voiceless language of nature, when she speaks to him of God, he in turn becomes, as it were, the voice of nature, enabling her to speak to God. And who can doubt that, through the exercise of this "royal priesthood," the whole world becomes more beautiful in the sight of the Creator Himself? The smile upon the face of earth, as it brightens beneath the sunshine, becomes a living smile. And nature is thus made to praise God, just as the harp or the organ praises Him, when the listener has not only an appreciative ear, but also a worshipping soul. III. MAN IS NATURE'S PROPHET. The psalmist feels sure that the righteous and merciful God will not allow sin to disfigure and curse His world for ever, that He will manifest Himself as the rectifier of the earth's evil, the healer of the earth's sorrow, the enlightener of the earth's darkness. And there is no wonder that, in his glad hopefulness, he should call upon the inanimate creation to rejoice, as it were, with him, in prospect of that coming day which he himself delights in anticipating. For the prophetic vision of the world's regeneration implies and includes the vision of nature's redemption. Surely it is but natural that we should thus identify ourselves with the world in which we dwell, so as to associate its future, in our thoughts and hopes, with the future of its

inhabitants. We know how much more heavenly this earth seems to us when we ourselves are in a heavenly frame of mind; and we can conceive in what a "celestial light" it would be "apparelled" were it only the abode of an unsinning race. We observe, moreover, how, as mankind advances in intelligence and goodness, the face of the earth undergoes a corresponding change, so that, even literally, the "wilderness" is often made to "rejoice and blossom as the rose." And therefore, cherishing, as man ought to do, a faith in the ultimate perfection of the race, it is only right that, as the prophet of nature, he should also speak with glad hopefulness concerning the future which is in store for the material creation. We may well rejoice in the thought that this earth, linked to our memories by so many associations, is to share the destinies of our redeemed humanity. And, looking forward with prophetic eye to the time when this world shall be the perfect dwelling-place of a perfected race, we may, with poetic fitness, call upon the inanimate creation to share our gladness. (T. C. Finlayson.)

PSALM XCIX.

VERS. 1-9. The Lord reigneth.—*The rulership of God over the world:*—I. AS SEEN IN SYMBOL. "He sitteth between the cherubim." This reference to the Shekinah teaches us that His reign is—1. Moral. 2. Merciful. 3. Glorious. The ark is a humble emblem of that throne which is invisible in its nature, and universal in its authority, and withal characterized by the sublimely moral, merciful, and redemptive. II. AS EXTOLLED IN LANGUAGE (vers. 2-4). He is extolled—1. Because He is supreme. "King of kings and Lord of lords." 2. Because He is holy. His throne has never been stained with wrong, it is a "great white throne." 3. Because it is mighty in rectitude (ver. 4). God's throne is morally omnipotent because it is infinitely just. III. AS RECALLED IN MEMORY (vers. 6-8). His reign as here brought to the memory of the author of this poem taught two things. 1. That His reign had respect to human prayer. Moses and Aaron prayed and they were answered, Samuel prayed and he was answered, and so ever it was with the pious Hebrew. He recognized the duty and power of human prayer. Prayer is an element of the Divine Government. 2. That His reign had respect to human forgiveness. How frequently did He forgive His people of old; He forgave Moses, Samuel, Aaron, David, etc. Thus under God's reign on earth forgiveness is dispensed, dispensed to all true penitents. "Let the wicked forsake his way," etc. IV. AS FELT IN CONSCIENCE (vers. 5, 9). Here the sublime sense of moral obligation in the author is touched, excited and speaks with an ill-imperial voice. "Exalt ye." It is at once the supreme interest and duty of every man to give Him in all things the pre-eminence in thought, sympathy, volition, aim. (Homilist.) *The supreme dominion of God:*—The text states not only a truth, but a necessity also. It is not only absolutely true—that is, true without any restriction whatever—that God reigns; but it is also equally true, that He must reign; and that He must reign everywhere—throughout His entire universe, and over all His creatures. I. CONSIDER THE FACT, THAT "THE LORD REIGNETH." 1. And in doing so, let it be understood, that nothing whatever is intended to be said by way of proof. That would be both useless and impertinent; for God has declared the fact. And when God speaks, it is the duty of men to believe, not to dispute or argue. 2. But though it is not necessary to prove the truth of what God has said, or to explain its reasonableness, ere we receive it, it is of the utmost advantage to obtain suitable illustrations; as thereby, not only is a more sensible impression made upon the mind, but our faith also is greatly strengthened. 3. The first idea suggested arises from a consideration of the person who is said to reign—"The Lord reigneth"—that is, the Almighty, Omniscient, Omnipresent God. Now, if such attributes belong to God, then all difficulties as to the ability of God to reign supremely at once vanish. 4. Having thus glanced at some of the attributes of God, we next observe that the idea of "reigning" implies permission of every thing which occurs. We must not, therefore, be staggered at those strange transactions, which ever and anon fill the world with wonder and alarm, as though they indicated the absence of a supreme sovereignty.

5. But this idea of "permission," when applied to God, necessitates the thought of control also. For to say that He permits only because He cannot resist is to deny His power altogether. 6. But if God reigns supremely, then all things must be under His direction, as well as control. Otherwise, there may be another will in operation before the will of God, and independent of Him. 7. But, in thus endeavouring to show the absolute supremacy of God, we may not forget that His glory will be the sure result of His reign, whatever efforts may be made by men or others to frustrate it. 8. It has sometimes been argued, that as no creature can do anything except by the permission of God, and as the glory of God is the necessary result of whatever He permits, so men are justified in all their actions; and the well-known sentiment "whatever is, is right," has become a very favourite maxim with many, who plead for a licentious and irresponsible course of life. Such reasoning, however, is of no weight, since it totally overlooks the Word of God, which is our only rule of action. II. CONSIDER THE DUTY OF THOSE WHO BELIEVE THAT "THE LORD REIGNETH." "Let the people tremble." 1. It is a fearfully solemn and overwhelming thought, that an almighty and infinitely holy God is the ruler of this ungodly world, and that "He has appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts xvii. 31). Surely, then, those who believe the Word of God ought to take every opportunity to "let their light shine"; not only that they may bear a testimony in favour of His truth, but likewise that, "knowing the terror of the Lord," they may persuade men to "flee from the wrath to come." 2. This consideration is strengthened by remembering, how utterly impotent and vain are all our efforts to withstand the Most High. 3. It is not a man that reigns, nor any creature, however great in intelligence or power. It is the eternal God, "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." However much men may repine at His dispensations and strive to alter His purposes, and whatever wickedness may fill the earth while the nations are resisting His authority and His laws, the wisdom of His government is unimpeachable, and demands our unreserved and cheerful submission. 4. But not less are we called to rejoice in the goodness, than in the wisdom of God. Is the law to be vindicated? Is justice to be satisfied? Is holiness to be enforced? All this is done, so as clearly to discover that "God is love." 5. But are not other duties imperative, besides those already referred to? It is not enough that we should "tremble" and "rejoice," while we remember that God reigns. He requires us also to be co-workers with Him in establishing His kingdom. (T. Woolmer.) *The great King*:—We have here a contrast between the omnipotence of God and the impotence of man:—We see the great King sitting on His throne, raised up far above all the changes of time and sense; we see the people raging, discontented, contending one with another, but all their fury in no way affects the calm majesty of the great King. The picture is an impressive one. Power, solemnity, grandeur, on the one hand; paltriness, meanness, pretence on the other. I. LET IT TEACH US OUR OWN INSIGNIFICANCE. We make among ourselves lords many and gods many. Our little sphere is exalted and magnified, but how ridiculous are our pretensions! II. LET IT TEACH US OUR DEPENDENCE. All we can do cannot alter or change our condition. We must be dependent on the sovereign power of the Almighty. III. LET IT TEACH US PATIENCE. The restless wave is hurled back upon itself broken in pieces from the granite rock. Our groanings and discontent recoil upon our own heads when we attempt to murmur against Omnipotence. IV. LET IT TEACH US REVERENCE. We cannot but honour One so great. Our own insignificance should teach us the folly of setting up ourselves as a model of perfection. (Homilist.) *Signs of God's kingdom*:—Among these are—I. GREATER HONESTY OF THOUGHT. Professor Huxley, when he set himself to number the triumphs of scientific work during the reign of Victoria, did not put so high the inventions which have yoked steam and electricity to man's service as he put the more general habit of scientific thinking. The man in the street takes fewer statements on faith, and popular literature offers more reasons for actions. Old customs and old beliefs are tried in a court where the question is, "Does this custom express present belief? Does this belief express truth?" Positions of great attraction are now often considered, not only in relation to the pay or the power they offer, but the further question is asked, "Can I take this post and be honest?" "Can I, having my views, serve in this leader's party?" "Can I, with my opinions, take orders?" Men of high intelligence and goodness who would to-day be preaching and teaching in the Church, are doing work they like less because they will not be untrue. Justice to the individual is now often regarded as of greater obligation than expediency. The value set on thinking has

brought out the value of the man; each one would live his own life and would let his neighbour live his life. Never before was there so much care that the weak and the wicked should have fair treatment. II. A LARGER HUMAN SPIRIT. Each morning's news takes in the history of the world, and sympathy from English breakfast-tables reaches out to the needs of the sick, the plague-stricken, the wrecked, and the oppressed in all parts of the world. People watch with anxiety the movement of ideas, and without an eye to their own profit give their time and money to forward or hinder the spread of ideas. Societies for relief, for giving knowledge, for passing on discoveries and inventions increase daily. III. A MORE GENERAL HISTORIC SENSE. This is shown in the new interest taken in the characters of old times, in the many books and essays written out of much study to throw light on men who hitherto have been but names. It is shown in the interest taken in old forms, in the revival of ritual and pageantry, and in the popularity of romantic literature, in the care and restoration of old monuments. It is shown in the judgments now passed on the manners and morals of other ages. Acts wrong in the present society are seen to be right in another environment. The same principle has been discovered in martyrs and persecutors, in those who kill prophets and in those who build their sepulchres. The seeds of institutions now admired have been sown in deeds now condemned. The past and present are parts of one whole. Unity is seen to be in diversity rather than in uniformity, and a care for beauty, which is the expression of the unity of diversity, has thus been developed. Religion, which I have been trying to show is the thought about God, is, if we will only open our eyes, being worked into the actions and feelings of modern life. God is King, and His kingdom comes. (*Canon Barnett.*) *Christ's reign over men*:—Quoting the words "God reigneth" of the forty-seventh Psalm, the Church Father, Justin Martyr, added, by way of explanation, "from the wood." He meant from the wood of the Cross: Christ being lifted up on the Cross reigneth over all whom He draws to Him. We are reminded of Napoleon's saying that Charlemagne himself, who conquered and ruled by force, will soon be forgotten; but that Jesus Christ will reign for ever in the hearts of men by loving them.

Ver. 2. **The Lord is great in Zion.**—*God great in His Church*:—God is ever within the Church. Therefore the greatness of the Church is God. Not her wealth, prestige, orthodoxy, culture, or intelligence, but His inhabitation. I. He is her greatness as A LIVING FORCE—attracting, new-creating, enlightening, and teaching men; as her Vital Energy moving and moulding individual character and national life (where it is allowed free course) to the high ideal of the Perfect Life. Gold, like steam in the locomotive, rightly used and directed, is a power for good. Without it the machinery will be idle. It is indispensable to the aggressive activity and beneficent service of the Church, to the carrying out of her plans of operation, and for the accomplishment of her benignant purposes. "Bring the tithes into the storehouse," saith the Lord of Hosts. But let the Church try to draw her life from her wealth, and she will be strangled in the very attempt. God is her life—not national approbation and prestige. What the soul is to the body, He is to the Church. Her organization may be complete; on her roll of membership she may count the names of millions. She may look upon the nations as her friends. She may have the most stately buildings, the most exquisite architecture, music, and ritual; wealth may fill her coffers, eloquence may flow from her pulpits, scholarship, literature, and the sciences may flourish in her soil. She may spread herself until the melody of her bells shall tremble in the breeze of every clime, and the music of her songs and psalms shall be heard wherever man is found; yet, if God be not great in the midst of her, statue-like she is beautiful, but dead! All her action will be forced and mechanical, not the spontaneous outflow of life. "The Lord is great in Zion." II. God in the midst of His Church is the greatness of her MORAL EXCELLENCE. Apart from Him humanity has no moral excellence, as apart from the sun there can be no vegetable life and fruitfulness, and no floral beauty. Every man is therefore morally excellent to the extent that he thinks, and feels, and acts like God. The true Church is in all her action consistent, dignified, noble. Her obedience is filial and faithful, and the glory of her supreme Head is her single and constant aim. III. God is great in the Church as her INFALLIBLE TEACHER. The two books—*Nature and Revelation*—which He has put into her hands, with reverent intellect and devout heart she studies, seeking from Him the right interpretation thereof. She finds "tongues in trees, books in running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything." She finds no contradiction between the two volumes. And when "things hard to be understood"

present themselves—seeming antagonisms and contradictions—she does not doubt, or dispute, or discard, but waits for “more light,” knowing that the defect is in the reader, in the student, and not in the book. IV. God in the Church is the source and secret of her STRENGTH. Every man is strong to the extent that he incarnates the Divine. God’s thoughts actualized in man give sturdiness to moral muscle, firmness to the moral step, fixedness to moral purpose, a triumphant power to moral effort. Filled with God, omnipotence is man’s strength. Therefore, as the individual soul’s strength is proportionate to the measure of the Divine he incarnates, so is the strength of the Church. Her language has always been (Isa. xii. 2). The power which has sustained her hitherto shall not fail her in days to come. No weapon formed against her shall prosper. She shall never fail. The end of time and the destruction of earth will be but the dawning of her day—the beginning of her life in heaven. Ever closer will be her connection with the Infinite Father. V. God being great in His Church, He is THE MOTIVE POWER OF HER ACTION—the highest reason for all she does. (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*) *The greatness of God in Zion*:—“The Lord is great” in—I. SUPREMACY. He is over all and above all. Then let us serve Him with reverence and gladness. II. POWER. Creation—the creation of heaven and earth; of angels and men; of suns, moons, stars, mountains, and seas; of blooming flowers and cedars of Lebanon; of all that is, seen and unseen, known and unknown—was easy and facile to Him, to whom belongeth power for evermore. III. FAITHFULNESS. He never falsifies His precious promises, never violates His covenant, never forsakes His people. IV. MERCY. It endureth for ever. (*G. W. McCree.*)

Ver. 5. **Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at His footstool; for He is holy.**—*Jehovah exalted*:—The grand distinction between real godliness and every description of its counterfeit lies in this one point; all counterfeit professions tend to exalt the creature, and all real godliness aims at exalting God alone. I. THE FIRST PRINCIPLE OF CHRISTIANITY IS THE EXALTING OF JEHOVAH. “Exalt ye the Lord our God,” by ascribing to Him the plan of salvation whereby millions upon millions of ruined sinners shall be brought home to glory. II. THE ORDER OF WORSHIP WHICH EXALTS JEHOVAH, AND WHICH WE ARE CALLED ON TO DO PERSONALLY. “Worship at His footstool.” 1. Mark the position, and say, have you ever been there, so low at the footstool of Divine mercy as to be ashamed and confounded before God, respecting all that we find and feel in ourselves, and yet favoured with a glimpse of Divine glory in the face of Jesus Christ by a supernatural aid? Oh, wondrous position! Then, indeed, we may look on the world, with all its toys and trifles, as utterly contemptible. This is not only compatible with, but the true consequence of, the highest attainments a Christian can make. 2. Now what shall we say about the worship? The two prominent acts of worship are prayer and praise; and I do not know if they may not be said to include everything. But they must be “in spirit and in truth”; and if our offering of prayer is a mere ceremony, a mere repetition of words, a mere display of talent, it is rather mockery than worship. III. THE REASON ASSIGNED. “For He is holy.” All the persons and perfections of Deity are our inheritance, to be enjoyed personally as long as eternity shall endure. And then mark, that this inherent holiness is in Him, not in us. The man who possesses real holiness has it imparted to him; and hence the exhortation, “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” A solemn command, and a gift with it; so that Jehovah the Spirit imparts a holy nature, and a holy life to the soul of the real believer, to make him like God, that he may grow up into Christ Jesus and perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. Follow on to mark, that it is an official holiness, which is given as the reason why we should exalt Him. The Father is so holy in His covenant engagements of an official kind that He cannot withhold any good thing from the objects of His love who walk uprightly. The Son is so holy in His mediatorial character, that He cannot allow it to be tarnished by the failure of any one part of the work He undertook to perform. The Holy Ghost is so holy, as Comforter, over and above the inherent holiness on which I have been dwelling, that He cannot allow a sanctified vessel to be polluted; but will cleanse it thoroughly from every sin. Moreover, it must be a national holiness that we derive from our God, and on account of which we exalt Him (1 Pet. ii. 9). (*J. Irons.*) *On public worship*:—I. THE DUTY AND PROPRIETY OF PUBLIC WORSHIP. 1. The universal homage which under various forms is paid to the Deity, is a proof that it is founded in human nature, and is, consequently, of moral and perpetual obligation. 2. Public worship is a duty of positive institution, and being expressly enjoined by Divine authority, involves an obligation which will not surely be called

in question. 3. The great and beneficial consequences with which its due and regular observance is attended. II. THE EFFECTS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP UPON OUR MORAL CONDUCT. Suppose that the solemn observance of the Sabbath was no more; that the altar and its worship were abandoned; that all days and seasons were alike; and that the business and bustle of the world knew no pause; what would be the dreadful result? The depravity of the human heart, already too general, would be universal; science and the elegant arts would languish; men would revert to a state of barbarity, without government, law or control; and unheard-of crimes would follow the destruction of those sacred piles, which the approved wisdom and piety of ages had consecrated to religion. (*A. Stirling, LL.D.*) *How to determine whether our love is selfish.*—I. CERTAIN PRINCIPLES IN NATURAL MEN WHICH PREPARE THEM TO RELISH A FALSE OR DEFECTIVE IMAGE OF GOD UNDER THE NAME OF THE TRUE GOD. Here are five of these principles: selfishness, which delights in a benefactor and a friend; humanity, which, when self-interest does not too strongly oppose, is affected with kindness to men in general; conscience and the love of natural fitness, which, with the aid of self-love and humanity, are pleased with a good government and social order, when personal interest does not stand in the way; and sympathy, by which the soul, in view of moving grief or the tenderness of love, is melted into compassion or tenderness. All these are found to a high degree in many infidels. II. THERE IS A FALSE OR DEFECTIVE IMAGE OF GOD WHICH NATURAL MEN OFTEN FORM, and which they love from no higher principles than those which have been stated. Among the great variety of natural men I will select two classes. 1. Those who think superficially, have little to do with the moral character of God as exhibited in a moral government. The order of their thoughts is somewhat as follows. First they contemplate Him as a benefactor to themselves; as the one who preserves their lives, who sends them rain and fruitful seasons, who sent His Son to save them, and has filled their lives with mercies. This is pleasing to their selfishness. They next consider His kindness to the world, and contemplate the generous being who pours His bounty upon all nations. This gratifies their humanity; and it does not disturb their selfishness, pride, or love of the creature. But His moral character, as manifested in a moral government, is still out of view. 2. But there is another class of natural men who think more deeply and systematically. (1) The more ignorant suppose that the Divine law relates only to outward actions (like human laws), and requires nothing but that integrity, decency, and kindness in the different relations of life which all admit to be necessary to the order and happiness of society. (2) The less ignorant class are aware that the Divine law extends to the heart, and requires them to love both God and man. Well, they do. Their natural humanity wishes well to their fellow-men. They love God as a benefactor and a friend, and admire His generous munificence to the world. But let the Holy Spirit suddenly open their eyes, and they will see that the feelings required by the Divine law, and the temper of the Lawgiver, are altogether different from anything they ever conceived. They have been contemplating a law and character which called forth only the selfish and humane affections, and the love of which (self-righteous as that love was) only inflamed instead of weakening pride, and had no tendency to wean them from the idolatrous love of the creature. III. SOME WAYS BY WHICH WE MAY TEST THE GENUINENESS OF OUR LOVE. 1. Is the Divine love in view of which we are affected, the mere fondness of creature love, fitted only to melt the animal affections? Or is it that holy love which, under the guidance of infinite wisdom, hates and punishes sin, which maintains a vigorous moral government, requiring all to be holy under penalty of eternal death? 2. If it is the true God you love, you will love all the essential truths which relate to Him, as comprehended in the doctrines of the Gospel. 3. Does your love, as far as it goes, subdue your selfishness, pride, and love of the world? This is an infallible test. 4. If you have no genuine love to man, you have no sincere love to God. But all love to man is not genuine. To say nothing of the domestic affections, humanity wishes well to mankind where no self-interest is in the way, and therefore almost always is gratified with the prosperity of distant nations. But try your love to man by something nearer home,—something that comes most in competition with selfishness. Select your rival in business or honour; select your greatest enemy. Do you, in any sense or degree, love him as yourself? 5. Do you conscientiously and habitually obey God? I do not ask whether you are what the world calls moral. This you may be from the mere influence of natural principles. I ask whether you habitually act, from hour to hour, with a sensible reference to God's authority,—often asking yourselves, How would God have me do in this thing? Do you

cheerfully perform the most self-denying duties from a sacred regard to His authority? (*E. D. Griffin, D.D.*)

Ver. 8. **Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.**—*Pardon with punishment*:—A very great and grave mistake about the whole relations of forgiveness and retribution, and about the whole character of that Divine nature from which they both flow is implied in that word "though"; what the psalm really says is, "Thou wast a God who forgavest them, and Thou tookest vengeance," etc. No antagonism between pardon and retribution; both are regarded as parts of one great whole, and as flowing from the holy love of God. I. **FORGIVENESS IS, AT BOTTOM, THE UNDISTURBED COMMUNICATION OF THE LOVE OF GOD TO SINFUL MEN.** We are far too apt to think that God pardons men in the fashion in which the sovereign pardons a culprit who has been sentenced to be hanged. Such pardon implies nothing as to the feelings of either the criminal or the monarch. The forgiveness of God is over and over again set forth in Scripture as being a father's forgiveness. Indeed, I do not remember that we ever read of the pardon of our Judge or of our King, but we read "Your heavenly Father will forgive you your trespasses." Let us keep fast by that. And then, let us remember our own childhood. What makes the little face fall, and the tears come to the eyes? Is it your taking down the rod from behind the door, or the grave disapprobation in your face, and the rebuke in your eyes? It is not only the buffet from the father's hand that makes the punishment, but still more the displeasure of the father's heart that makes the child's punishment. And forgiveness is not complete when the father says, "Well, go away, I will not hurt you," but when he says, "Well, come, I am not angry with you, and I love you still." Not putting up the rod, but taking your child to your heart is your forgiveness. II. **SUCH PARDON DOES NECESSARILY SWEEP AWAY THE ONE TRUE PENALTY OF SIN.** What is the penalty of sin? "The wages of sin is death." What is "death"? The wrenching away of a dependent soul from God. How is that penalty ended? When the soul is united to God in the threefold bond of trust, love, and obedience. The two statements that forgiveness is the communication of the love of God unhindered by man's sin, and that forgiveness is the removal of the punishment of sin, are really but two ways of saying the same thing. III. **THE PARDONING MERCY OF GOD LEAVES MANY PENALTIES UNREMOVED.** If you waste your youth, no repentance will send the shadow back upon the dial, or recover the ground lost by idleness, or restore the constitution shattered by dissipation, or give again the resources wasted upon vice, or bring back the fleeting opportunities. If you forget God and live without Him in the world, fancying that it is time enough to become "religious" when you "have had your fling"—even were you to come back at last—and remember how few do—you could not obliterate the remembrance of misused years, nor the deep marks which they had left upon imagination and thought, and taste, and habit. The wounds can all be healed indeed; for the Good Physician, blessed be His name, has lancets and bandages, and balm and anodynes for the deadliest, but scars remain even when the gash is closed. IV. **PARDONING LOVE SO MODIFIES THE PUNISHMENT THAT IT BECOMES AN OCCASION FOR SOLEMN THANKFULNESS.** The outward act remaining the same, its whole aspect to us, the object of it, is changed, when we think of it as flowing from the same love which pardons. It is no harsh—no, nor even only a righteous Judge, who deals with us. We are not crushed between the insensate wheels of a dead machine, nor smitten by the blow of an inflexible fate, but we are chastened by a Father's hand, who loves us too well to do by us that which He forbids us to do by one another,—suffer sin upon our brother. "When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned." The stroke of condemnation will never fall upon our pardoned hearts. That it may not, the loving strokes of His discipline must needs accompany the embrace of His forgiveness. And so the pains change their character, and become things to be desired, to be humbly welcomed, to be patiently borne and used, and even to be woven into our hymns of praise. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Believers pardoned, yet chastened*:—Here we see, as in a glass, how God deals with His people. Toward their persons He acts in grace, answering their prayers and forgiving their trespasses—towards their sins, in justice, taking vengeance on their inventions. The allusion is to Moses, who must die in the wilderness because he sanctified not the Lord at the waters of strife; to Aaron, who joined with Miriam in murmuring; and to Samuel, who was partial to his sons whom he appointed judges over Israel. I. **THE MOST FAITHFUL TO GOD**

HAVE COMMITTED SOME SINS WHICH NEED HIS PARDON. These may be—1. Concerning His worship. This was Aaron's sin (Deut. ix. 20). Uzziah only puts forth his hand to steady the ark, and he dies. God's order of worship must be observed. Holy acts require holy frames. "The fear of the Lord" ever attends on the "comforts of the Holy Ghost" (Acts ix. 31). 2. Neglecting to give God glory before men (Num. xx. 10). God's glory is very dear to Him, it is the end of all His purposes and dispensations (Mal. i. 16). It is a very great attainment to say continually, "Let God be magnified." 3. Want of humiliation because of our and others' sins. We are more proud of our graces than ashamed of our sins. Jeshurun (Deut. xxxii. 15), Uzziah (2 Chron. xxvi. 16), David prays (Ps. xxv. 5), Job complains (xiii. 26). The sins of youth, if not confessed, will be the sufferings of age. A believer has his sweetest joys with his deepest wounds, his greatest exaltation when most truly humbled. In all our sufferings and joys, sin and grace should never be forgotten. Samuel was faithful to God, but too favourable to his sons (1 Sam. viii. 3). What a commendation it was to Levi (Deut. xxxiii. 9).

II. WHY DOES GOD TAKE VENGEANCE ON THEIR INVENTIONS, WHILE HE PARDONS THEIR SINS? 1. To prevent the abuse of His mercy. Samsou profaned God's ordinance and fell into the hands of his enemies; Peter, etc. If Christians, like the men of Bethshemesh, pry unwarrantably into the ark, they must like them suffer (Jer. ii. 19). 2. To manifest the holiness of God and His law. Our sins are known, our repentings and pardon unknown, therefore God publicly vindicates His holy name by a public reproof. He pardoned David, yet the child died. 3. To secure our watchfulness. A believer's very life lies in heart holiness, and when he is chastened for sin, he prays, "Cleanse me from secret faults," searches out earnestly his besetting sin, and walks more closely with God. 4. To warn the impenitent. If the son be scourged, surely the servant more.

III. WHY DOES GOD ANSWER AND FORGIVE WHILE HE CHASTENS HIS SAINTS? 1. From the relation He sustains to them. The covenant remains firm, while its dispensations vary. Though He hide His face, yet not His heart. 2. Because of the ransom which the surety has paid. Christ has more to say for us than our sins can say against us. 3. It is one of His titles. "Thou art a God of pardons," "a just God, yet a Saviour." 4. If He will not pardon, then we must all perish. The Canaanite is left in the land to prove, not to destroy us. Grace and mercy are for a time of need. (*Homiletic Review*.)

Suffering after forgiveness.—I. WHY SUFFERING TO ONE FORGIVEN. 1. Discipline (John xv. 2). 2. Warning. For the security of society and morality; to restrain men (Heb. xi. 36-38; 1 Peter iv. 17, 18). 3. To teach the distinction between forgiveness and escaping the consequences of sin. Whoever seeks only the latter deserves not the former. II. REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS REMOVE A LARGE SHARE OF EVIL CONSEQUENCES. 1. Evil habits are stopped which otherwise would grow continually worse. 2. The penitent secures peace. 3. He secures God's help to overcome evil and improve. 4. He avoids death, and secures life eternal. 5. He hastens towards the home where suffering ceases. III. OBSERVATIONS. 1. True penitence seeks chiefly God's love, not escape from punishment. 2. Think not God has not forgiven because you still suffer. (*Ibid.*)

PSALM C.

VERS. 1-5. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.—*Worship*.—Worship is at once the duty of all duties, the service of all services, the joy of all joys. I. IT IS **FOUNDED ON KNOWLEDGE** (ver. 3). 1. A knowledge of what God is in Himself—the absolutely good. 2. A knowledge of what God is in His relations. (1) Our Maker. (2) Our Owner. (3) Our Preserver. II. IT IS **DEVELOPED IN SERVICE**. This should be—1. Gladsome (ver. 2). 2. Thankful (ver. 4). 3. Demonstrative. "With praise." True worship does not skulk into solitude, shun the gaze of society, ashamed to show itself. It craves for an opportunity of public manifestation. The spirit of true worship breaks through obscurity as the living seed breaks through the soil to unfold itself in foliage, branches, and blossoms to the eye of all. It is a life, and all life seeks to come out into the sun. (*Homilist*.)

The Old Hundredth.—I. THE **ELEMENTS OF TRUE WORSHIP**. 1. Service (ver. 2). Everything connected with it—(1) Real. (2) Happy. 2. Praiseful (ver. 1).

(1) Fervour. (2) Cheerfulness. 3. Intelligent (ver. 3). 4. Grateful (ver. 4). II. MOTIVES (ver. 5). 1. Essential goodness. 2. Eternal mercy. 3. Immutability of faithfulness. Such a trinity of qualities in unlimited perfection sets before us a Being infinitely beautiful, infinitely lovable, infinitely worthy of our service and trust. (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*) *Religious gratitude*:—Gratitude, in the view of Dr. James Martineau, is a variety of generosity. It recognizes more than a mere fulfilment of duty. It is one of those warm human impulses that are not reduced to a science, without which we might be saved from a few mistakes, but at the expense of much that enriches life. Getting behind the psalm to the condition of mind which could produce it, we find that it could only come from one familiar with good things—from one who so thought upon God's character that his theology became translated into the poetry of song. Many do not admit the grounds of the psalmist's theology; hence the two common objections—1. God did not make us to be happy. This objection is met by showing that the greatest fact of life is its possibilities of happiness. Especially is this true in an age of such marvellous scientific progress as the present, every step in which progress opens the way to a vast increase in the possibilities of happiness for the masses of mankind. 2. God ought to be able to keep us good. This objection is met by showing that in making moral, human beings good, God can only act within His character. The goodness of a man is not the goodness of a tree or of a sheep; were it forced upon him and made compulsory, it would not be moral. (*W. H. Harwood.*)

Ver. 2. **Serve the Lord with gladness.**—*Glad service*:—I. THERE ARE ESSENTIALS WHICH GOD AND OUR OWN NATURE REQUIRE IN ORDER TO RENDER SPIRITUAL SERVICE WITH GLADNESS. 1. There must be reconciliation with God through faith in Christ. 2. There must be love to God as the motive (Gal. v. 6). 3. We must take God's will as our rule in the service. 4. We must serve Him in hope of success and reward. II. THE REASONS THERE ARE WHY WE SHOULD SERVE THE LORD WITH GLADNESS. 1. Because of our indebtedness to Him (Ps. ciii. 1-5; Eph. i. 3). 2. Because the service itself is holy, ennobling, and in its very nature joy-inspiring. To be in harmony with God, to be engaged in His service, seeking to raise men out of the ignorance, guilt, and misery of sin—how blessed is such service. 3. Because such service only can be acceptable to God. God loveth "a cheerful giver." We cannot endure to serve grudgingly. How welcome is love-inspired glad service! (*G. W. Humphreys, B.A.*) *The joyfulness of the service of God*:—I. THE OBLIGATION, DUTY AND PRIVILEGE OF THANKSGIVING. There is not only "the showing forth the praises of God with our lips, but in our hearts and lives"; this latter the real practical offering and sacrifice, of which the former should be the inspired utterance and expression. Our outward worship must be verified and substantiated by inward truth; and this can only be done as we serve God in spirit, principle, life, action, and thus with the whole man show forth His praise. II. THE REASONS. 1. Because He is our Maker, Supporter, God. 2. Because He is the Author of reconciliation and redemption, and His rule is the rule of righteousness and love. 3. Because of the largeness, freeness, universality and unchangeableness of His love. 4. Because the very spirit and principles of His service are "a wellspring of life" and gladness. 5. Because His will, His commandments, are right and good, His service a "reasonable service." 6. Because we thus most truly represent and heartily commend His Gospel and service unto men. (*W. Smith.*) *Serving the Lord with gladness*:—"Serve!" saith the man, "why should I be a servant? I hate the yoke, and I will not bow my neck." The lawless spirit, fond of what it calls "free thought" and "free action," bates the sound of the word "serve." "I will be my own master," says the wayward soul of the man who knows not what is meant by obedience, and has never drunk into the deep joy of submission to the Lord. "Serve!" saith he, "let those do so who are calves enough to bow their necks, but as for me, I know no government but my own ungovernable will." But to the soul that is humble, teachable, weaned from the world, and changed into a little child, the thought of service has heaven in it; for such a heart remembers that in the New Jerusalem they serve God day and night, and it looks forward to perfect service as being its perfect rest. Renewed minds accept "Ich dien"—"I serve"—as their motto, and feel ennobled thereby. I. The gladsome service of God has ITS SECRET SPRINGS. 1. One main cause why the believer serves God with gladness is, that he is free from the bondage of the law. When the believer serves the Lord, it is with no idea whatever of obtaining eternal life thereby. The child of God works not for life, but from life: he does not work to be saved, he works because he is saved.

2. Another reason why the Christian serves God with gladness, is because he has a lively sense of the contrast between his present service and his former slavery. What a hard, cruel, Egyptian bondage, was that out of which Jesus brought us! Jesus is the Master and Lord, whom to obey is perfect peace; but Satan, the foul tyrant, is one from whom we rejoice to have been delivered. 3. Moreover, the believer's joy in the Lord's service springs from the fact that he serves God from the instincts of his new nature. The genuine Christian, full of the love of God, cannot be an idler. 4. Another reason why the Christian is conscious of great gladness in serving God is, that he has a sense of honour with it. Did you ever reflect how wondrous a condescension it is in God to allow a creature to serve Him? He sits on His own throne, and establisheth it by His own power. He has no dependence upon His creatures. The greatest of spirits He has ever made are as nothing before Him, and yet, see! He condescends to be served by us! 5. Furthermore, the believer, when he serves God, knows that his service is not the highest place which he occupies. "I am a servant," saith he, "I am not ashamed of it—to serve God is royal dignity, but then I am not altogether and alone a servant." Here is the Christian's joy—he hears his Master say (John xv. 15). 6. Again, there comes over the Christian's mind a gentle thought which in his darkest moments yields him joy; namely, that grace has promised a reward. We are not to be rewarded for the merit of our works, but still the free grace of God has promised that we shall not toil for nought. "Well done, good and faithful servant," etc. II. Trace some of the MANIFEST STREAMS OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE IN THEIR GLADNESS. In the first place, we should always serve the Lord with gladness in the public assemblies of His people. The more hypocritical a people are, the more solemnly miserable their outward aspect when at worship. O ye chosen seed, be glad; and of all the days in the week, look at the first as the prime glory of all the feast-days of the soul. Do not pull the blinds down, let the sun shine into the room more cheerily than on week days. Be cheerful and happy at family worship. In your private devotions you should also "Serve the Lord with gladness." "Serve the Lord with gladness." But then the Christian's service for God lasts all the day long! The genuine Christian knows that he can serve God as much in the shop as he can in the meeting-house; that the service of God can be carried on in the farmyard and market, while he is buying and selling, quite as well as in singing and praying. Should not we do our business much better if we looked upon it in that light? Would not it be a happy thing, if, regarding all our work as serving God, we went about it with gladness? III. It is not always easy to serve God with gladness; if it were, we should not need to be told to do it, but on account of THE DIFFICULTY OF IT, we are therefore the oftener bidden to be happy. "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again," says the apostle, "I say, Rejoice." If he had felt it would be easy, it was sufficient to tell us once, but the repetition shows the difficulty. Our inbred sin—is not that enough, when we serve God, to make us do it with the bitter cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" Yes, but we shall be delivered, I thank God, through Christ our Lord, we shall be delivered from the bondage of our corruption. Let us serve God in infirmities with the glad thought that we shall not always be imperfect, but by and by shall be in the glory of our Master, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Outward trials, again—how hard it is to serve God with gladness when one is losing an estate, or when the cupboard is bare, and there is scarcely money to provide the children with clothes! Yet the Christian does not live upon what he sees alone; he knows there is a secret strength, a secret helper, and he knows how to go to God in times of outward trouble, and cast his care upon Him who careth for him. IV. THERE IS MUCH EXCELLENCE IN CHEERFUL SERVICE. Is it possible that when we serve God with gladness, we thereby escape many fatherly chastisements which otherwise might come upon us? (Deut. xxviii. 47). Do you not think, too, that when Christians serve God with gladness, they derive many benefits themselves? Does not the Lord water those who water others? Besides, does not our God deserve to be served with gladness? Oh, when we get to heaven, if we could have regrets, would not this be one, that we had not served Him better? Our Master deserves to have the best love, the warmest confidence, the sternest perseverance, the utmost self-denial—let us seek to give Him these, and to give them with a cheerful heart. Besides, if we would do good to our fellow-men, we must serve God with gladness. I believe thousands of young people are kept from considering the Gospel by the gloom of some professors. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The religion of being happy:—*

Are you happy? I look upon the faces of the men and women I see as I pass along the crowded street, as I meet them on the railway, or in the tram, in their business, or at their leisure, and how few faces comparatively look really happy! The most people one looks on seem to exist rather than to live. Why are people not happy? Is it right to be happy? Is it consistent for a Christian to be happy? Is religion designed to make us happy or unhappy, to depress life or to stimulate and fulfil it? I may take it that there is no being who exists who does not wish to be happy. Yet many a man and woman who in the abstract wishes to be happy rather takes a delight in being or feeling unhappy, in assuming that it is rather a proper thing not to realize happiness; and many men, while sincerely wishing to be happy, never take the smallest steps scientifically to discover the way of happiness, and to realize it in their own person. Then, again, ideas rule the world, and I have no doubt that the deficiency of happiness in our age is due to a religious idea. While science has advanced, religious conceptions have advanced very little beyond those of the savage. Our own age, so far from having escaped from its meshes, has deliberately reverted to mediæval theology. The conviction prevails that religious people in particular ought to suffer and be more or less unhappy. Pain itself is thought to be pleasing to God. Because suffering is in the world we have no right to say that it is God's will it should remain there. We have grown out of many things, and we are to grow out of this. God is happy, and therefore we are destined to be happy. We shall grow happier as we grow nearer Christ. But how to be happy? I will tell you the secret. "The Kingdom of God is within you." Once realize that happiness is not going to be given you by anybody, that you have the power in yourselves, and you have learnt the mighty secret, you are on the first step of the path. You may be happy, you ought to be happy. Were you to range through the universe, and live through eternity, happiness can come no nearer to you while you ask it of any as a favour, or expect it as a gift. Begin the work within. You are your own self-creator, by the power which the Eternal has entrusted to you. Are you unhappy, what you lack is life. Illness, disease, moral, physical, mental, is want of life. We ought to be happy in all our activity. "Blessed is the man who has found his work, and can do it," says Carlyle. Our work is the manifestation and expression of our life. No work is well done which is not done joyfully, therefore joyousness is a very element of religious service. (*C. E. Beeby, B.D.*) *Joy in service*.—Wellington once took passage to Portugal in one of His Majesty's frigates, the captain of which asked him if he did not admire the order and discipline the ship was in. "Certainly," answered Wellington; "I could not have supposed it possible, everything goes on like clockwork; but, sir, I would not command an army on the same terms you do your ship for the crown of England. I have not seen a smile on the face of any individual since I have been on board her." *All service of God should be set to praise*.—The story is told of an ancient king that he caused a temple to be built to the accompaniment of music. From the laying of the corner-stone until the last tower was finished, the workmen performed their task under the influence of the sweetest, most melodious sounds. When the temple was finished it was found that the work had been done not only more expeditiously, but more soundly and beautifully than any of its kind in the kingdom.

Vers. 3-5. Know ye that the Lord He is God.—*The claims of God*.—"Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever." There is a vast amount both of theology and philosophy in that simple answer, which our old divines have put into the mouth of a child. Were we to-day what we should be, it would be our element to love, to serve, to adore our God, and we should not need ministers to stir us to our pleasurable duty or remind us of Jehovah's claims. **I. THE CLAIMS OF GOD, ON WHAT ARE THEY GROUNDED?** 1. They are grounded, first of all upon His Godhead. "Know ye that Jehovah He is God." As Matthew Henry has very properly said, ignorance is not the mother of devotion, though it be the mother of superstition. True knowledge is the mother and the nurse of piety. Really to know the deity of God, to get some idea of what is meant by saying that He is God, is to have the very strongest argument forced upon one's soul for obedience and worship. 2. The second ground of the Lord's claim is His creation of us. "It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves." You never saw a child startled when it was told for the first time that God made it, for within that little mind there dwells an instinct which accepts the statement. 3. A third

reason for living unto the Lord lies in His shepherding of us. "We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture." God has not left us and gone away. He has not left us as the ostrich leaves her eggs, to be broken by the passer's foot. He is watching over us at every hour; even as a shepherd guards his flock. Over us all He exercises an unceasing care, a watchful providence, and therefore we should return to Him daily praise. Men, because ye are men, adore the God who keeps you living men; but saintly men, men renewed and fed out of the storehouse of Divine grace, serve your God, I pray you, with all your heart, and soul, and strength, because you especially are the sheep of His pasture and the people of His hand. 4. A fourth reason for adoration and service is the Divine character (ver. 5). Here are three master motives for serving the Lord our God. Oh that all would feel their weight. First, He is good. Now, if I were to lift up a standard in this assembly and say, "This banner represents the cause of everything that is just, right, true, kind, and benevolent," I should expect many a young heart to enlist beneath it; for when pretenders in all lands have talked of liberty and virtue choice spirits have been enchanted and rushed to death for the grand old cause. Now, God is good, just, right, true, kind, benevolent; in a word, God is love, and therefore who would not serve Him? Then it is added, "His mercy is everlasting." Who would not serve one whose mercy endureth for ever? Cruel is that heart which infinite gentleness does not persuade. If God be merciful, man should no more be rebellious. It is added, "His truth endureth to all generations," that is to say, you will not find in God one thing to-day and another thing to-morrow. What He promises He will perform. Every word of His stands fast for ever, like Himself, immutable. Thus I have set before you the grounds of God's claims; are they solid? Do you consent to them? Oh, that sovereign grace would constrain each of us to live alone for the glory of God. It is His most righteous due. II. **THE CLAIMS OF GOD—HOW HAVE WE REGARDED THEM?** Answer for yourselves. Alas, some have paid no respect to these claims—in fact they have denied them, and have said in effect, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" Sorrowfully must we all confess also that where we have tried to honour the Lord, and have done so in a measure by His grace, yet we have failed of perfection; we have to confess that oftentimes the pressure of the body which is near, and of the things that are seen and tangible, has been greater upon us than the force of the things which cannot be seen, but are eternal. We have yielded to self too often, and have robbed the Lord. What shall we do in this case? Why, we have to bless our everlasting God and Father, that He has provided an atoning sacrifice for all our shortcomings, and that there is One, partaker of our nature who stands in the gap on our behalf, in whom we can be accepted, notwithstanding all our shortcomings and offences. Let us go to God in Christ Jesus. III. **THE CLAIMS OF GOD, WHEN THEY ARE REGARDED, HOW DO THEY INFLUENCE MEN?** Let me show you how healthy it is to serve God. The man who serves God, led by the Spirit of God so to do, is humble. Were he proud it were proof at once that he was not serving God; but the remembrance that God is his sovereign, and has made him, that in His hand is his breath, makes the good man feel that he is nothing but dust and ashes at his very best. How horrible it is when man lives for lust, and puts forth all his strength to indulge his passions! Brutes! beasts! Alas! I slander the beasts when I compare them to such men. The man who lives for God is a far nobler being. Why, in the very act of self-renunciation and of dedication to God the man has been lifted up from earth, and from all that holds him down to its dust and mire, and he has risen so much nearer to the cherubim, so much nearer, in fact, to the Divine. This makes a man a man, for a man who serves is courageous, and too manly to be a slave. The love of God makes heroes. Give a man a resolve to serve God, and he is endowed with wondrous perseverance. Look at the apostles, and martyrs, and missionaries of the faith, how they have pressed on, despite a world in arms; when a nation has been apparently inaccessible they have found an entrance; when the first missionary has died another has been ready to follow in his footsteps. The first Church, in her weakness, and poverty, and ignorance, struggled with philosophy and wealth, and all the power of heathen Rome, till at last the weak overcame the strong, and the foolish overthrew the wise. O Lord, Thy service makes us akin to Thee. Blessed are they that wear Thy yoke! How strong they grow, how patient to endure, how firm to stand fast, how swift to run. They mount with wings as eagles when they learn to serve Thee. The man who is led by the Holy Ghost to serve God is incited thereby to a zeal, a

fervour, and a self-sacrifice to which nothing else could bring him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves.**—*God-made or man-made?*—There is a superficial way of reading these words which makes them a more truism. That noble paraphrase of the psalm, "All people that on earth do dwell," seems rather to fall flat and stale. "Without our aid He did us make." The psalmist is not giving utterance to a commonplace of that sort; That is not the point at all. The psalmist is, as you will see, calling upon all lands, the heathen lands, to believe in God, to believe that He is the Lord, and there is no other, because His workmanship is manifest in the people whom He has chosen; His guiding and shaping Spirit has been within them and upon them to make them what they are. All that they have of moral and religious training and continuance is the gift of His grace, and the result of His training. They are the witness to the world of God's constancy, faithfulness, truth, and mercy. Consider the application of these words—I. **IN THE INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN LIFE.** No man with any religious conviction, or any religious emotion, can look back on the story of his life up to this point, through all these changes, wrestlings, temptations, and moral victories, without feeling that God's shaping hand has been with him there all through. That man sees nothing clearly, and feels nothing deeply, who does not both see and feel that all the best things in him are not self-wrought, but are the result of forces not his own, and higher than his own. Alas, there is much of the self-made left in all of us, and it is the part of which we are the least proud. There are in us bits of the world, the flesh, and the devil, that have not been crucified with Christ; and there are hard lumps in the tenderest heart which have not felt the melting of His love. Would God they were replaced by Diviner stuff! But all the good you have and know, the noble faith, the uplifting, cheering hope, the recoil from sin, and the patience, and the courage, and the self-sacrifice, and the wells of pity, and the fountains of love, the joy in God, and the sweet singing in your heart at Jesu's Name—all these have been woven in you by God, and the Spirit of God, and the indwelling Christ. II. **IN THE NATION TO WHICH WE BELONG.** How a reader of the Bible can find God in every page of Jewish history and not see His overshadowing and guiding presence in the wonderful story of Britain's growth and greatness is to me an indication of incomprehensible dulness. We are not a self-made people, no, indeed. "Our builder and maker has been God." For no human thought would ever have imagined, and no prophet's vision would ever have foreseen, the unexampled and extraordinary growth and expansion of this little island and its people. Looked at on the map, it is a mere dot on the surface of the globe; yet its name, and flag, and ruling power, and shaping ideas have girdled and well-nigh embraced the globe. Men say we owe it to our insular position, our sea-protected shores, or perhaps to our climatic influences, or to the singular mixture of races in our composition, or to the blunders and failures of other nations, or to the grit and determination in our character; or we owe it to the wisdom of our statesmen, the enterprise of our merchants, the daring of our sailors, the valour of our soldiers, and to the sturdy, self-reliant independence which has been at the base of all the rest. And they do not see that most of these are moral and religious causes; that behind them, in the shadow, God has been standing watching and working, and that underneath them all have been the everlasting arms. They forget how heavenly light dawned and shone down on the people in their superstitious and benighted days to give them religion in its purest form and to make them righteous, truth-loving, and strong in the fear of God. They do not remember that our fathers were delivered almost in spite of themselves from the blight of superstition, how the truth set them free and gave them room to expand. They do not take into account how large a part has been played by our open Bible and our praying homes. They do not see that reverence and faith, and faith-rooted justice and Christian virtues have been the very soul and backbone of our people's strength, and that nearly all our greatest thinkers, writers, statesmen, sailors, soldiers have grown up in nurseries of prayer. They are blind to the fact, moreover, that once and again in days of stress and trial, in the dark and cloudy days when the fortunes of the nation have been well-nigh overwhelmed, the outstretched arm of God brought our fathers through Red Seas of trouble to a safe and wealthy place. Nay, we may say that hundreds of times the very blunders, follies and crimes of our statesmen have been overruled and our people led along paths which their own wisdom and foresight would never have chosen; and it may be all summed up in this, that through all the guilts and sins which have had their part in the

upbuilding, the Almighty Architect has been the chief worker in carrying our name and commerce to the uttermost parts of the earth and in bringing hundreds of millions of souls under our rule. (*J. G. Greenhough, M.A.*) *God the Maker*:—It is not in God's work in creation that the text is laid, but in His redemptive work in history. It is an exultant historical consciousness that teaches the lips of the psalmist to sing, "It is He that fashioned us; and His are we." I. God's fashionings of human life constitute THE CHIEF WITNESS OF HIS POWER AND GLORY TO MEN. The hand of God was unmistakably the power that fashioned the striking course of Israel's history. The great difference between the history of Israel and that of contemporary nations corresponded precisely to the difference in their relation to Jehovah. While other nations had wandered after the gods which were no gods, Israel had been the servant of Jehovah. The authority of Jehovah, and the influence of their worship of Him, had been beyond all question the shaping force of their distinctive and remarkable history. Other nations waxed great in external splendour; Israel's own consciousness of national greatness lay in inward truth. Other nations produced statesmen and conquerors; Israel's pre-eminent sons were its seers and prophets. Other nations fell when the foot of the conqueror trampled them into bondage; Israel waxed greater in the dark years of captivity. II. God's method in fashioning human lives is SELECTIVE. The conspicuous instance of the nation of Israel I have already mentioned. This little nation was, by a marvellous process of selection which can be conceived only in reference to a Divine plan, singled out of the general mass of humanity for special blessings, spiritual potencies, and religious responsibilities. In spite of its perversities and infirmities, the elective call of God was so effective that it answered to the call, became conscious that it was chosen of God, and was made the radiant centre of truth for the whole world. In varying degrees and for different ends, one can see the elective operations of God's shaping hand in reference to other nations, and not least in the startling history of our own England. The history of nations is full of acts which irresistibly point to a Divine elective and discriminative power. This principle is still more evident, if possible, in the life of individual men. In the circle of the nation, of the city, of the village, or of the family, we constantly see this process of election, sometimes in very startling forms. By the operation of some unseen and mysterious force, "the one is taken and the other left." God's strongest men have always lived and acted in the holy consciousness that they were singled out by God. III. God's selective method is one of CONCENTRATION WITH A VIEW TO THE MOST EFFECTUAL UNIVERSALIZATION. The inward essence of "particular election" is the yearning of God's love for the salvation of the world. God's "vessels of mercy" are chartered to bear the freight of His grace to every shore. The "few are chosen" in order that the many may be more effectually reached. Exclusion is but a fleeting phase of God's elections; the abiding soul of them is a graciously determined and comprehensive inclusion. The mountain of the house of the Lord is exalted above the hills, in order that all nations may flow into it. This gracious development of God's elective purpose multiplies the honour and glory of the elect spirit. For in this glowing light, every "election" is twofold. It is an election of a human soul into the grace and Kingdom of God, and it is also an election into the special ministry of salvation to others. (*J. Thomas, M.A.*) *There is inspiration in the thought that God made us*:—Our powers are finite, and sometimes we are troubled about that fact, wishing we could do more for our Lord: but we need not fear when we remember that He hath made us, and therefore fixed the measure of our capacity. In Roger de Wendover's "Flowers of History," an ancient Saxon chronicle, we read of a Saxon king, who, riding through a forest, came upon a little church in which a priest was saying prayers, and this priest was lame and hump-backed; and therefore the rough Saxon king was ready to despise him, till he heard him chant these words, "It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves." The king blushed, and owned his fault. If, then, we are of small beauty or slender talent, let us not complain, but serve Him who has made us what we are. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture*.—*The pasture or provision for God's sheep*:—I. GOD PROVIDES GOOD PASTURE (*Ezek. xxxiv. 14*). Although spoken of Israel, yet surely God's spiritual Israel may lay the hand of faith and appropriation upon the promises of this chapter. One chief idea of good pasture in the mind of a shepherd would be pasture from which nutriment could be derived without fear of deleterious herbs. The psalmist says, "Thy Word is very pure" (*Ps. cxix. 140*), and again (*Ps. xii. 6*). The writings

of men may be good and very helpful, but God's Word is essence. No other book will fully satisfy the soul that has found a living Christ in the written Word, and that knows experimentally how pregnant with life and meaning the Holy Ghost can make the simplest verses of God's Book. II. GOD PROVIDES LARGE PASTURES (Isaiah xxx. 23). This seems to refer to literal cattle, but 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17, embodies the same thought. In God's Word may be found everything necessary for the soul's real good, but not anything for curious speculation. Yes, large—wide as the needs of the human heart—extensive as the infinite fulness of God. Every promise from cover to cover belongs to the believer, and there is no need of man which has not its corresponding supply in the promises of God. But the mere letter of the Word will profit little; it is only as Christ the living Word, in whom all fulness dwells, is seen and appropriated through the written Word, that the need of the human heart and the infinite fulness of God are brought together. III. GOD PROVIDES GREEN PASTURES (Ps. xxiii. 2). "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;" or, as the margin, "pastures of tender grass"—some one has rendered it "springing grass." Evidently the idea is that of freshness—not stale food. There is a great tendency in our day to feed upon stale spiritual food. One says, "I had a great blessing last year through Mr. So-and-So's preaching." Another says, "My Bible seemed to be lit up one morning last week, and I have been living upon the blessing I got then ever since." If God's pasture is ever green and springing, why have you had no fresh food to-day? In the country you will see the sheep turn from the rank grass of long growth to seek the delicate fresh-springing grass. Your body cannot be strong upon yesterday's food, neither can your soul be strong upon past experiences of blessing in the Word. The fresh pasture is still there, and the Holy Spirit waits to nourish the soul by means of it. Get fresh food daily. IV. GOD PROVIDES FAT PASTURE (Ezek. xxxiv. 14). Those who have the charge of sheep sometimes say a piece of pasture land has "no heart in it"; and Christians sometimes say they find their Bibles lifeless—they read them regularly, but get no good from them. It is possible to read chapter after chapter without blessing, for the letter of the Word alone may be compared to the husk which covers the grain—to the casket which contains the precious gem. But use it as revealing Christ; see Him in and through it; take home its warnings; claim the fulfilment of its promises; touch Christ in the Word; feed on Him; seek to extract the kernel from its covering, the gem from its casket, ever seeking and depending upon the Holy Spirit's teaching and power, and there will be no more complaint over a dull Bible; but it will be found to be fat, rich pasture that will abundantly satisfy (Ps. xxxvi. 8), and upon which the soul will gain new life, strength, joy, and power for useful service. V. GOD PROVIDES PASTURE IN HIGH PLACES (Isa. xlix. 9). And in Ezek. xxxiv. 13, 14, the Lord promises to feed His flock upon the "mountains" and "upon the high mountains." May not a New Testament parallel to these "high places" be found in the "heavenly places," or heavenlies, of the Epistle to the Ephesians? Five times in that epistle the words occur, and in no other epistle. A careful study of the context would seem to show that it is a position attained through union with Christ in death and resurrection—a death unto sin (Rom. vi.), in His death, that, raised with Him, His resurrection life may be ours; not judiciously only, but in actual fact and realization, through faith in God's mighty power (Eph. i. 19-23) and promise. A daily death unto self and sin, "that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor. iv. 10, 11), that we may be able to say with the apostle (Gal. ii. 19-20). (*The Christian.*)

Ver. 4. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving.—*Thankfulness*:—Thankfulness denotes a composite emotion, whose elements are joy for a gift, and love for the giver. It differs from gratitude, not essentially, but only in form; the one being necessarily a feeling only, the other that feeling both existent and expressed. I. THE HINDRANCES WHICH PRACTICALLY INTERFERE WITH THIS GREAT MORAL AND CHRISTIAN DUTY. 1. The habit of looking too much at other people, and too little at ourselves. If the poor man would go into his own heart, and fling overboard all but his own peculiar cares and troubles, and sit down to feast on the rich viands God has gathered as his sea-stores, then his lightened and relieved bark would float buoyantly on the waters, and answer readily her helm, and with glad songs and bright skies, go on her way rejoicing. 2. Letting the mind dwell too much on the dark side of our experience. The ten thousand daily blessings wherewith God has been surrounding our lives are lost sight of in the occasional

clouds of difficulty that may have chequered our pathway. We think more of the one thousand dollars lost, than of the twenty thousand left us. More of the one month of sickness, than the eleven months of health. More of the one beloved friend dead, than of the many beloved yet living. 3. Regarding the first gift of a good thing as alone demanding gratitude, and its subsequent preservation as a natural sequence. II. THE HELPS TO THANKFULNESS. 1. We must entertain just and philosophic views of life's nature and mission. A man, crossing an ocean on shipboard, is not discontented because he cannot carry with him his sumptuous furniture and equipage; and grumbles not that his state-room bath not the breadth and brilliancy of his palatial pavilions. His very gladness is, that he is in a structure so modelled that it can have speed upon the waters. And just so it is with a man in progress to immortality. What we want is rather a tent that can be pitched and struck at pleasure; and provisions of a kind that can be carried in journeys; than a splendid palace, and ponderous luxuries, incapable of transportation. And so a true appreciation of the real uses of things will go far to render us thankful for the peculiar size and shape of the blessings God gives us. 2. We must dwell much in thought upon these Divine mercies, present and actual. We are too much given to day-dreams amid things possible and future. We lift the glass of imagination to the far hills, that, mellowed by distance and haloed with the purple and gold of the setting sun, look like fairy lands, and grow dissatisfied with the present and possessed. And yet, there is no one in whose present experience there is not enough at least for thankfulness—of comfort and blessing. 3. We must make the best of our misfortunes. What the Germans tell us as a parable, we have all of us—who have gone afield with nature in observant moods—witnessed not unfrequently. Standing by some autumnal and over-matured flower, we have seen the laborious bee come hurrying and humming, and plunging into the flower's cup, where there was not a particle of honey. But what does the bee do? Why, after sucking, and finding no nectar, does it come up from the flower's heart with a disappointed air, as if departing to some other field of labour? Ah no! If there be no sweets at the flower's red core, yet its stamens are full of golden farina, and out of the farina the bee builds its cells; and so it rolls its little legs against these stamens, till they look large and loaded as golden hose, and, thanking the flower as sweetly as if it had been full of honey, gladly humming, it flies home with its wax. Yes, and herein lies God's moral—If our flowers have no honey, let us be glad of the wax! 4. We must, meanwhile, learn to look upon these very evils as God's disguised blessings. To every true Christian, they are so, positively, and beyond controversy. As part of the special providence of a wise and loving Father, they cannot be otherwise. It is God that determines the bounds of our habitation; the stations we are to fill; the comforts we are to enjoy; and the trials we are to suffer. And if we have not much of the present world, it is not because our heavenly Father is not able to give us more. It is all to be resolved into the wisdom and kindness of the Divine administration—God's wisdom discerning how much is best for us—and His love determining to allow us no more. 5. To become truly thankful, we must become Christians—and Christians growing in grace and advancing in knowledge. (1) Religion makes a man humble; and humility, as a grace, lies at the foundation of contentment. (2) Religion gives him just views of present things, and of the true relation he sustains to them, in this earthly economy. They never seem to him ends, but only means unto ends. He understands how his present life is a sojourn—an exodus. And, as a true-hearted traveller, he expects not home comforts on a journey, but is content with rude fare and humble hostelries, and can thank God even for rough roads and foul weather, if they hinder not his progress. (3) Religion, as it is essentially a principle of self-denial, moderates a man's wishes, and so creates happiness. Diogenes was happier in his tub, than Alexander on the throne of his empire. And for a good reason—because the tub held the wisbes of the philosopher; but the world was too small for those of the conqueror. (4) Religion produces trustfulness, and so brings contentment. III. THE REASONS OF THANKFULNESS. 1. Our circumstances demand it. Just contrast your own condition this day, with that of the exulting pilgrims, when they kept their first thanksgiving festival. See them, amid the solitudes of that great wilderness—the cry of the wild beast, and the roar of the strong wind rising around them—the loved homes of their childhood, and the precious temples of their fathers, far away over the waters—a barren soil beneath their feet; and above, the cold and cheerless azure of a stranger-heaven! And yet singing triumphantly unto God their thanksgiving

anthem! 2. For the sake of your own soul, you ought to be thankful. The habit of mournful sadness blinds the eye, and dwarfs the pinions of the soul; renders the heart a nervous and neuralgic thing; eats out a man's piety; weakens every Christian grace; and makes the creature a torture to himself, and a curse to his neighbourhood. 3. As Christians, we ought, for the sake of others, to manifest this abiding spirit of joy and thanksgiving. 4. For your heavenly Father's sake, you ought to cherish and display this spirit of thanksgiving. A monarch, whose subjects are always complaining of their lot, is set down by the world as a hard and selfish tyrant. A father, whose children walk abroad ever in sadness and tears, is anathematized by all people as a heartless and cruel parent. Shame on us, if, surrounded by such blessings, and hastening onward to such revelations of glory, we go ever with the bowed head, and the mournful footsteps, saying to the world by our pitiful complainings—"See how the eternal God is maltreating His loyal subjects!" "See how our heavenly Father is torturing His children!" (C. Wadsworth.) **And into His courts with praise.**—*Praise*:—God's praises must be sung—I. **WITH THE ATTENTION OF THE MIND.** The words must be considered, as well as heard or read. A person can never be rationally or piously affected with what he sings, except he understands it. Without this, there is no more devotion in him, than there is in an organ or other musical instrument which utters the like sounds. Or if there be anything like devotion excited by mere sounds, it is probably enthusiasm, or something purely animal; a sort of pleasing mechanical sensation, which perhaps some brutes may as strongly feel, by sounds suited to the state of their frame. II. **WITH THE MELODY OF THE VOICE.** Poetry enlivens praise; and music heightens the powers of poetry, and gives it more force to engage and affect the mind. It puts spirit into every word, and their united influences elevate, compose, and melt the soul. From hence it will follow that the better the poetry is, provided it be intelligible, and the greater harmony there is in uttering it, the greater effect it will have upon the mind, and make the impression of what we sing more deep and lasting. As God hath formed us with voices capable of uttering harmonious sounds, He expects that they be employed in His service. III. **WITH THE DEVOTION OF THE HEART.** It is not sufficient to understand what is sung, to attend to it, and join our voices with those of our fellow-worshippers; but our intentions should be upright and good. And they should be these; to glorify God, and to edify ourselves and others. 1. Our intention should be to glorify God; that is, not to make Him more glorious, for neither the praises of men nor angels can do that; but to do Him apparent and public honour; to acknowledge His glory; to proclaim our high veneration and affection for Him, and celebrate and recommend Him as an object worthy the esteem and praises of the whole world (Ps. lxii. 2; l. 23; lxix. 30). 2. It should be our desire also to edify ourselves and one another (Eph. v. 19; Col. iii. 16). (*Job Orton, D.D.*)

Ver. 5. The Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endureth to all generations.—*The Divine goodness exemplified*:—I. **AN IMPORTANT STATEMENT.** "The Lord is good." All we see around us confirms this glorious truth. Nothing has left His hand without partaking, directly or more remotely, of His perfection; and the more deeply we contemplate the produce of His creative skill, the more accurately we track the wheels of His providence, and the more carefully we ponder the economy of His grace, the more enlarged will be our hearts, the louder our song, as we adopt the statement of the text. II. **AN ENCOURAGING DOCTRINE.** "His mercy is everlasting." Such is the uniform tenor of the announcements and declarations of the Divine Word. 1. His mercy is "from everlasting" in its source. If we look backward that we may be able to tell the period, in the past, when mercy took its rise in the heart of the Almighty, we shall find that before duration began to be measured by revolving seasons, the "Father of mercies" hath "delighted in mercy." 2. It is "to everlasting," in its efficacy; so that, casting the eye forward, in order to discern the length of its duration for time to come, we are lost as we contemplate it, flowing on in its effects through the amazing circle of eternity, even after the apocalyptic angel shall have proclaimed, that "time shall be no longer." III. **A STRONG ATTESTATION OF HIS FAITHFULNESS, IN CONNECTION BOTH WITH HIS GOODNESS AND HIS MERCY.** "His truth endureth to all generations." If we regard this portion of the text as an appeal to the display of the perfections already mentioned, in times gone by, then it will carry us back, in our contemplations, to His dealings with His people of old. And here time would fail us to speak of the various examples of the Divine goodness

and mercy on record, from the moment when the voice of mercy was heard in the garden of Eden, to the present hour. From these considerations may we gather confidence, that this "goodness and mercy" shall not fail us, neither the generations yet to come. Conclusion:—1. Admire the condescension of God, in thus displaying His goodness and mercy around us, and in our behalf. 2. Examine yourselves, whether you have a personal interest in the truths that have now been stated. 3. Be grateful to the Divine Being, for the character in which He has thus revealed Himself. (*John Gaskin, M.A.*) **His truth endureth to all generations.**—*The eternal truth of God:*—I. GOD IS TRUE. 1. He is true in His very nature. Falsehood is the wickedness—I dare not call it the infirmity—the wickedness of little natures; but as for the Great Supreme, you cannot conceive Him acting in any manner that is otherwise than straightforward, upright, and truthful. A God of truth and righteousness is He essentially. He must be so. 2. The Lord our God is not only true in His nature, but He is true to His nature. You never find Him doing anything that is not godlike. Select the acts of His creation. If He makes an aphid to creep upon a rosebud, you will find traces of infinite wisdom in it: you shall submit the insect to the microscope and discern a wisdom in it as glorious as that which shines in yonder rolling stars. If in providence some minor event comes under your notice, in that event you shall find no deviation from the constant rule of right and love by which the Most High characterizes all His doings. There are no emergencies with God in which He could be driven to an act of untruth; no pressures, no difficulties, no infirmities which could produce falsehood in Him. "I am Jehovah: I change not," saith He. 3. He is true in action. The covenant of grace has many promises in it, but not one of them has failed. As on Christ's side the covenant was kept by His death, so on the Father's side the covenant has been kept by the salvation of those whom Jesus redeemed from among men when He gave Himself a ransom for many. 4. He is true to His promises. 5. He is true in every relation that He sustains. II. GOD IS TRUE IN ALL GENERATIONS. 1. He has been true in the past. All history, sacred and profane, goes to prove that. 2. God is true still. All things are moving according to the decree of goodness and wisdom, and you must not doubt it. Like Jacob, you sometimes say, "All these things are against me"; but they are not, they are all for you. God is ordering all for the best. 3. God will be true. I do not know how far we have to go before we shall reach to our journey's end; but this I know, the whole of the road that we have to travel is paved with love and faithfulness, and we need not be afraid. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

PSALM CI.

VERS. 1-8. I will sing of mercy and judgment.—*One man in two characters:*—This psalm depicts one man in two characters, one comparatively good, the other comparatively evil. Such a man is a fair type of the race. I. The character of a SAINT. He is full of good resolutions—1. In relation to his conduct towards God (ver. 1). A lofty theme for song—kindness and justice. 2. In relation to his conduct towards self (ver. 2). He determined to exercise over himself a wise control, to act not from passion or impulse, but from principles, and from principles that were rational and just. 3. In relation to his conduct towards his household (vers. 4-7). 4. In relation to his conduct towards his country (ver. 8). II. The character of a DESPOT (ver. 8). Here the man assumes the prerogative that belongs to God and God only. Were all kings to act upon this resolution the world would soon be depopulated, for how few there are amongst the millions of the race who are not wicked! (*Homilist.*) *A song of mercy and judgment:*—This resolution indicates a hopeful and happy state of mind. A song is the natural channel for the outflow of gladness (James v. 13). I. To WHOM HE SINGS. Conscious nearness to God, and exuberant joyfulness of spirit, come together here. These two do not always go together: very often when they are brought near, they mutually destroy each other, like fire and water. Apart from regeneration and reconciling, you may have one of these two in human experience, but not both. In the multitude of his thoughts within him, an unconverted man may be brought,

and for a time kept, consciously near the Holy One; but then there are great sadness and grief in his heart: or an unconverted man may experience great joy; but then he has turned away from God. You may bring such a man to the Lord; but as long as he is there, he has no song: or you may give him a song; but while he is singing, he has put God out of all his thoughts. To turn to the Lord, and in that attitude to sing for joy, belongs to the children—to those who have been made nigh by the blood of Christ, and are accepted in the Beloved. II. THE PSALM THAT HE SANG. "Mercy and judgment" are the two sides of the Divine character, as revealed by God, and apprehended by men. They are the two attributes which lie over against each other, for conflict or in harmony, according to the conditions in which they are exercised, or the point from which they are viewed. A song cannot be constructed out of justice or mercy separately. Neither can they become the subjects of praise, if they meet in mere conflict to neutralize or destroy each other. It is not that God is less just because He is also merciful, and less merciful because He has undertaken to be just. When these two meet in the eternal covenant, they kiss each other. Justice is greater because mercy meets it: mercy is greater because justice is satisfied and assents. Justice is made more just because mercy keeps it company: mercy becomes more merciful in presence of a righteousness that never bends. They so meet as to support each other. This union takes place in Christ crucified. In Him the promises of God are yea and amen. We are saved, because Christ our passover was sacrificed for us. It is a song that is needed now, this song to the Lord—a song about mercy and judgment, from the ranks of the redeemed. For their own comfort this is needed; for the honour of God, and as a witness to the world. (W. Arnot.) *The twofold song*:—I. WHAT IS THERE IN MERCY TO DEMAND A SONG? 1. Freeness. 2. Fulness. 3. Greatness. 4. Seasonableness. 5. Permanency. II. WHAT IS THERE IN JUDGMENT TO ALLOW OF A SONG? 1. You are not required, properly speaking, to bless God for your afflictions themselves. No; afflictions are in themselves evils; the effects of sin. But, through the overruling providence of God, they may be made the means to take away sin; and Christians are required, not only to be submissive under their sufferings, but to acquiesce in the will of God concerning them. 2. There are views to be taken of your afflictions which will allow, yea, require even, your thanksgiving and praise. (1) The nature of them. They are not the inflictions of the judge, but the chastisements of the Father. (2) Their brevity. What is time to eternity, and what is our life to time itself? But frequently your trials are much shorter than life. (3) Their judiciousness. There is nothing casual in them. (4) Their alleviation. If you would "sing of mercy and judgment," you must dwell upon the blessings you still enjoy, as well as upon those of which you have been deprived; you must look upon the bright side, and not be always gazing on the dark. (5) Their usefulness. If the vine had reason it would thank the vinedresser for the use of the knife by which it was pruned, and made to bring forth more fruit; and if the ground had reason it would bless God for the ploughshare which breaks up the fallow. I never knew a man converted to God by gaining a fortune, but I have known more than one converted to God by losing one. (W. Jay.) *The psalm of grave, sweet melody*:—I. THE MINGLED CHARACTER OF THE DIVINE DISPENSATIONS. 1. In the work of redemption. 2. In the general course of providential dispensation towards the world. 3. In the Divine action towards the Church. 4. In the lines of our household and individual history. II. THE REASONS FOR PRAISE UNDER ALL THE VARIETY OF PROVIDENCE. 1. The discovery made by the variety in question of the Divine character is of itself enough to make us sing to the Lord with delighted heartiness. 2. The disciplinary development of our own moral and religious character thereby promoted. (1) There is the way in which such dispensations operate in subduing our corruptions. (2) The same thing operates in exercising our graces. (3) The dispensation of mercy and judgment operates in the way of leading us to exercise a more abiding dependence upon the Lord Himself. (4) This vicissitude of dispensation still further operates in the way of preparing us for a condition of unmingled enjoyment in a better world. (E. A. Thomson.) *The twofold song of the believer*:—I. MERCY. 1. What is it? Goodness and kindness to the undeserving. 2. What is there in mercy, of which we ought to sing? (1) The marvellousness of its origin. (2) The expensiveness of its sacrifices. (3) The abundance of its blessings. (4) Its universality and freeness. (5) As to other special distinctions of mercy. Its length—from eternity to eternity. Its height—higher than the heavens, and above the clouds. Its perpetuity—it endureth for ever. Besides, it is said to be strong, rich, tender,

faithful; and above all, God Himself delighteth in it. What a theme then for holy contemplation and joyous song! II. JUDGMENT. This may mean—1. God's righteousness. 2. God's law. 3. God's wrath. 4. God's chastening dispensations. (1) Their wise administration. (2) The tenderness of their application. (8) The supports He gives with them. (4) The great ends His judgments are to accomplish. Conclusion. 1. Have we not a keynote which ought to suit every heart and voice? 2. The advantages of this joyous course will be many. It will lighten the load of sorrow. It will sweeten the bitter potion. It will while away the dreary hour. It will exhilarate the oppressed and fainting heart. It will, by a kind of divine chemistry, bring new elements of health and comfort out of nauseous medicines. It will cheer the soul, honour religion, glorify your Father, and aid greatly in your spiritual and upward flight to the land of eternal joy and everlasting glory. 8. May some now learn to sing the Lord's song in a strange land. 4. Sing on the way to heaven, in the expectation of singing there, for ever and ever. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *Mercy and judgment*.—I. THE MERCY WHICH EVERY BELIEVER OUGHT TO ACKNOWLEDGE. 1. Mercy designed from everlasting. 2. Mercy revealed. 3. Mercy applied. 4. Mercy secured in the covenant of grace. II. THE JUDGMENTS OF WHICH HE MAY HAVE REASON TO SING. Christian, have you not reason to sing of the judgments which attended your conversion? Did not your terrors and alarms divest you of self-righteousness, and deepen your feeling of the detestable nature of sin? Did they not endear the Saviour to you, when He stilled the tempest and spake peace? And judgments of one kind or other will mark our progress through this wilderness. We cannot bear the continual sunshine of prosperity. It is only in heaven that our sun will never go down; but it is only in the perfection of heaven that we can endure its perpetual brightness. (*Carus Wilson, M.A.*) *Mercy and judgment*.—The mercies of God are new every morning, and are renewed every evening. Think of His redeeming mercies, who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. Think of His sparing mercies when thousands have gone from this great metropolis in that last influenza epidemic. Think of His patience, with you, that while He spared your soul your behaviour has been so far short of what it should have been, if you had done your best. Think of your spiritual privileges, think of these precious Sabbaths, this open Book, this welcome home, with its fellow-disciples and warm hearts, and the Father's smile to greet His children when they come. Think of God's providential mercies from the cradle to this hour; how He has kept you still in life, rescuing you from more perils than you ever dreamt of. How He has replenished your basket; how He has filled your cupboard. Mercies! let your mind dwell on them. Surely, like David, we should say this morning, "I will sing, I will sing of mercy." Then let us get on a little further. "I will sing of mercy and judgment." Ah! that is a different thing. How can I sing with a choking in my throat? I can sing with the lark in the times of sunrise, but to sing in the night when the wind moans, when the owl hoots, and the bat flits through the shadows of the evening; to sing when the lights are gone, the fruit has fallen, when the icy wind nips me to the marrow, and the snow is falling heavy on a winter's day, to sing then, when God's hand is heavy upon me! Like Hezekiah I can roar; or I can hold my peace, because God did it. But to sing, to sing a night song, a winter's song, a sorrow psalm, surely that can never be! And yet here it is, "I will sing of mercy and of judgment." I find that David is not by any means alone in it. I turn me to the grand old patriarch Job, and in the day of his affliction I hear from his lips that snatch of heavenly music which we have heard so often at the graveside: "The Lord gave," etc. I turn to the Apostle Paul, and as he is manacled and chained in the dungeon with lacerated feet, I hear them singing praise to God, and that with such gusto that their songs betray them, and the whole of the prison wonders how such a song can be sung there. And so this man David sings of judgment, "It was good for me to be afflicted." "Who giveth me songs in the night." "I will praise the Lord in the fire, and in the night-time His song shall be with me." These are patterns, so you see it can be done. Not only so, but you will find that the Church's richest, sweetest, and most excellent songs of all are those which have been sung in the fire of suffering, wrung out from their lives. I call to mind the beautiful story of the days when martyrs burned. When one poor old man was tied to the stake, as soon as the flames began to rise, he bared his white head and sang the "Te Deum," that matchless song of praise. Hark! "The noble army of martyrs praise Thee." And hark again, "When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of

death, Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." "I will sing of mercy and of judgment." Another martyr, a woman, when the fire began to crack round her, sang the "Magnificat." Surely never was sweeter song sung by woman's lips as she sang "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. He that is mighty hath done great things for me." For her, poor creature, in the flames, He hath done great things for me. He has exalted her of low degree. And then the royal robes were put on, and a still more glorious Magnificat sounds from her lips on high. I ask you to look at the conjunction of mercy and judgment as a reason why you should sing. This blending of sorrow and joy, this admixture of sorrow and peace. See if you cannot find ground for singing, for singing loud. Not that you sing enough, even on the mercy side. But see if you cannot find how we do need judgment to keep us humble, and watchful, and pure. How greatly we need mercy in its turn to make us hopeful, to nerve our efforts, assure our hearts, and sustain our patience. We need both the rod and the staff. "Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." Why the rod? That tells of expectation of correction, does it not? The staff! why, that means support, help, and strength, as you walk along. You don't like the rod, but God knows things better than we do. Do not forget that the judgments are not the applications of a judge. We get above all that. They are not the carrying out of a sentence. No strokes of vengeance. They are the medicines of the soul. They are tonic if the believer's heart is right with his God. The cross is love; on the cross is love. I need not tell you that grace is the key that opens all the treasure that God has for you. Another thing to think about is the duration of these judgments. That we are to sing of these judgments, to think of their profit even if they last a lifetime. This is but the school time. Do you know how Paul puts it? "These light afflictions which are but for a moment." Still they bowed his head for him. Sorrow endures for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. (*J. J. Wray.*) *Mercy and judgment in nature*:—Never shall I forget the terrible sublimity of the scene around me, when in the heart of the icy solitudes of the Alps, in the innermost shrine of one of nature's most stupendous temples, amid stupendous precipices, lofty spires of rock, towering domes of everlasting snow. But the scene that struck me most in the landscape was the glaciers, which filled with their rigid, ghastly masses every gorge around. Amid these was a bright little garden of Alpine flowers, blooming on the very borders of the ice, which eloquently spoke to me of the greatness and goodness of the Creator, the life and death, the joy and sorrow, the blight that destroys, and the blessing that renews, are so mysteriously blent on this earth of ours. On the one hand the glaciers were grinding down the mountains, and the Alpine flowers were healing scars which she inflicted. The terrible majesty and love of God, His mercy and judgment were there, as they ever are, if we could only see it, side by side. (*Hugh Macmillan, D.D.*) *Mercy and judgment a subject for praise*:—Some people seem never to have any serious thought of life. They think only of amusement, and never get beyond the airy surface of things. But to one who thinks deeply life is not all a round of empty pleasure. A traveller who tarried at Antwerp describes the effect which the bells in the great tower had upon him. Every quarter-hour they rang out on the air their sweet notes, in soft melody, which fell like a delicious rain of music dropping from the heavens. Then at the full hour, amid their shower of liquid notes of silver, there rang out the solemn strokes of the great bell, with iron tongue, deep and heavy; and these heavy tones filled him with a feeling of awe. As he listened, hour after hour, to the chimes, the tender melody of the smaller, sweeter bells reminded him of the mercy and love of God, and the solemn undertones that broke on his ear at the end of each full hour spoke of the awful themes of justice, judgment, eternity. So it is that every thoughtful person is impressed in reading the Scriptures. Their usual tone is mercy. Love rings everywhere, like the notes of angels' songs. But here and there, amid the words of Divine tenderness, comes some deep note telling of justice, of wrath against sin, of the awful Judgment Day. It is the same in life. The flow of the common day is gladness. There is music everywhere. Flowers bloom. Love lights its lamp in our path. Then suddenly there breaks in, amid the merry laughter, a tone, deep and solemn, which fills us with awe. Life is not all gaiety. Even now its undertone is serious. We should be thoughtful. Eternity lies close to time. The momentous things of judgment are hidden only by a thin veil of mist.

Ver. 2. **I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.**—*A holy and homely resolve*.—I. WHAT A COMPREHENSIVE RESOLUTION THIS IS! "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way." 1. With a full knowledge of all the care and circumspection it entailed on himself, and with as clear an apprehension of all the risks of popularity it involved among his subjects, this was David's deliberate choice. Influenced by the grace of God he, like his son Solomon after him, chose wisdom as the principal thing, and accounted the fear of the Lord as the choicest safeguard. 2. This deliberate choice of David was no doubt suggested by a sense of necessity. He felt that he needed to behave himself wisely. He was to be a king, and a foolish king is no ordinary fool. Oh, parents and heads of households, masters of factories, managers of business houses, and you, too, ye working men and servants, ye all need wisdom, and you must have it, or you will make shipwreck. If the fisherman's little boat be wrecked through mismanagement, it is as bad for him, especially if he be drowned in it, as if he had lost the greatest steamship that ever ploughed the waters, and perished with the vessel. It is his all; and your all is embarked in the momentous voyage of life. You need to behave yourselves wisely whatever your vocation in the world may be. 3. Moreover, David recognized that to behave oneself wisely one must be holy; for he says, "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way." He felt he could not be wise if he were unacquainted with the true ideal of absolute unblemished perfection; wisdom lay there. The wise man will keep along the king's highway, cost what it may. But you do not need to be a philosopher, and consult huge books, to discover how you ought to act under any circumstances. The way to act in every case is to fear God and keep His commandments. II. But now the text is interrupted. There is a break; there is a piece inlaid, as it were, of a different metal. It is AN ENACULATION. "Oh, when wilt Thou come unto me?" Many inspired writers, without diverging from their train of thought, interline their purpose with a prayer. There is an old proverb that "kneeling never spoils silk stockings." Prayer to the preacher is like provender to the horse. It strengthens and cheers him to go forward. As the scribe halts to mend his pen, or the mower to whet his scythe, without loss of time, but rather with more facility to do his work; so you expedite instead of hindering your business by stopping in the middle of it to offer a word of prayer. So here it is written, "Oh, when wilt Thou come unto me?" It is a crying of his soul after Divine teaching, Divine direction, Divine assistance; nor less, I believe, is it a yearning after Divine fellowship. You know we never walk aright unless we walk with God. As I have said that holiness is wisdom, so let me say that communion is the mother of holiness. We must see God if we are to be like God. "Oh, when wilt Thou come unto me?" seems to me a question full of solicitude. Lord, it may be Thou wilt come on a sudden with a surprise, for Thou hast told me that in such an hour as I think not Thou wilt appear. Am I ready? Am I able to give in a satisfactory account as to what I have done as Thy servant, in my general walk and conversation? Come, let me press these thoughts upon myself, and then upon you. "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way;" and well I may, since Thine eye is on me, O my God, and Thy day is coming when I must be put into the balances, and if I am found wanting, terrible must be my doom, for other eyes than mine shall search my heart, and other scales than I am able to use shall give the final test, and settle once for all my endless state. God grant you to order your lives by His grace. You cannot do so without the power of the Holy Spirit. Oh that whenever the Lord shall come you may meet Him with joy. III. After a parenthesis of devotion, he returns with more intense earnestness to his resolution. IN A MOST PRACTICAL MANNER HE CONCENTRATES HIS AIM—"I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." With his house or household in view, for which he felt a deep responsibility and a yearning anxiety, he applies himself with a delicate consideration to the state of his own heart. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." A very wise thing. If any man were to say to you, "I mean to be a good husband, a good father,"—if any woman shall say, "I mean to be a good mistress," or "a good servant," that will not do, unless you understand that the heart must first of all be altered. If the heart be right, other things will surely follow in their place. Now, the heart, if we are to walk rightly, must show itself in the house. "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." The heart must be perfect, and then we must show our heart in our actions. Oh, a house is all the better for having a heart inside it, and a man is a man, and he is more like God when there is a

heart inside his ribs. When he gets home the children feel that father has got a heart, and as they climb his knees and smother him with kisses, and when he greets his dear relatives, especially those that are part and parcel of himself, he has got a soul that goes beyond his own little self, and is enlarged and inspires the whole of the family. Oh, give me heart, and that is what David meant when he said he would behave himself wisely. But when he was in his own house he would walk with a perfect heart. He would be hearty in everything he did and said. Well, now, the next thing is that the conduct at home must be well regulated. "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." The Christian man at home should be scrupulous in all departments within his house. We may have different rooms there, but in whatever room we are we should seek to walk before God with a perfect heart. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *On wisdom in religious conduct*.—Of the wisdom or prudence which is necessary to guide and support virtue, I purpose to treat in this discourse. I shall adventure to propose some practical rules for that purpose; which may be of service to persons who, with good dispositions and intentions, are beginning the career of life; and which may, perhaps, deserve attention from persons in every period of age.—I begin by observing—I. THAT IT IS MOST NECESSARY TO LAY DOWN PRINCIPLES ON WHICH WE ARE TO FORM OUR GENERAL CONDUCT. If we set out without principles of any kind, there can be no regular plan of life, nor any firmness in conduct. No person can know where they are to find us; nor on what behaviour of ours they are to depend. If the principles which we pitch upon for determining our course be of a variable nature; such, for instance, as popular opinion, reputation, or worldly interest; as these are often shifting and changing, they can impart no steadiness or consistency to conduct. The only sure principles we can lay down for regulating our conduct, must be founded on the Christian religion, taken in its whole compass; not confined to the exercises of devotion, nor to the mere morality of social behaviour; but extending to the whole direction of our conduct towards God and towards man. I proceed to advise—II. THAT WE BEGIN WITH REFORMING WHATEVER HAS BEEN WRONG IN OUR FORMER BEHAVIOUR. This counsel is the more important, because too many, in their endeavours towards reformation, begin with attempting some of the highest virtues, or aspiring to the most sublime performances of devotion, while they suffer their former accustomed evil habits to remain just as they were. This, I apprehend, is beginning at the wrong end. We must first, as the prophet has exhorted, put away the evil of our doings from before God's eyes; we must cease to do evil, before we learn to do well. III. WE MUST SHUT UP, AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, THE AVENUES WHICH LEAD TO THE RETURN OF FORMER EVIL HABITS. Here is required that exercise of vigilance, self-distrust and self-denial which is so often recommended to us in Scripture. This wisdom requires farther—IV. THAT CONSISTENCY AND UNIFORMITY BE PRESERVED IN CHARACTER; that not by pieces and corners only we study goodness, but that we carry one line of regular virtue through our whole conduct. Without this extensive regulation of behaviour, we can never hold on successfully in a perfect way. True virtue must form one complete and entire system. All its parts are connected; piety with morality, charity with justice, benevolence with temperance and fortitude. If any of these parts be wanting, the fabric becomes disjointed; the adverse parts of character correspond not to each other, nor form into one whole. It is only when we have respect unto all God's commandments, as the psalmist speaks, that we have reason not to be ashamed. At the same time, when I thus advise you to study entire and consistent virtue, and to guard strictly against small transgressions, let me warn you—V. AGAINST UNNECESSARY AUSTERITY, AS FORMING ANY PART OF RELIGIOUS WISDOM. Too strict and scrupulous, indeed, we cannot be in our adherence to what is matter of clear duty. Every dictate of conscience is to be held sacred, and to be obeyed without reserve. But wisdom requires that we study to have conscience properly enlightened. We must distinguish with care the everlasting commandments of God, from the superstitious fancies and dictates of men. A manly steadiness of conduct is the object which we are always to keep in view; studying to unite gentleness of manners with firmness of principle, affable behaviour with untainted integrity. VI. In order to walk wisely in a perfect way, IT IS OF IMPORTANCE THAT WE STUDY PROPRIETY IN OUR ACTIONS AND GENERAL BEHAVIOUR. In a great number of the duties of life, the manner of discharging them must vary, according to the different ages, characters, and fortunes of men. To suit our behaviour to each of these; to judge of the conduct which is most decent and becoming in our

situation, is a material part of wisdom. In the scales by which we measure the propriety of our conduct, the opinion of the world must never be the preponderating weight. Let me recommend—VII. THE OBSERVANCE OF ORDER AND REGULARITY IN THE WHOLE OF CONDUCT. Hurry and tumult, disorder and confusion, are both the characteristics of vice and the parents of it. Let your time be regularly distributed, and all your affairs be arranged with propriety, in method and train. VIII. WE SHOULD GIVE ATTENTION TO ALL THE AUXILIARY MEANS WHICH RELIGION OFFERS FOR ASSISTING AND GUIDING US TO WALK WISELY IN A PERFECT WAY. Those open a large field to the care of every good man. We must always remember, that virtue is not a plant which will spontaneously grow up and flourish in the human heart. The soil is far from being so favourable to it; many shoots of an adverse nature are ever springing up, and much preparation and culture are required for cherishing the good seed, and raising it to full maturity. (*Hugh Blair, D.D.*) *The art of good behaviour*:—The Bible is the one great authority on good manners. There are others, of course; but they are absolutely unnecessary, for all we need is here. In fact, this book is mostly about behaviour—how men have behaved and how they ought to behave under the varying conditions of human life. It is such a mistake to think that these things are externals, additions to a man—they are fundamentals. Good behaviour is a vital thing, it is from the heart. "I will behave myself." We have often been told to do it—perhaps that is one of the first things most of us remember being told. But necessary as the parent, the guardian, and the schoolmaster are to enforce obedience, to moral, and national, and religious law, it is best to take the matter into our own hands, assert our own responsibility, and say, "I will behave myself." Oneself is the person we ought to be most concerned with. And yet there are very many people who are so anxious about the behaviour of others—such careful guardians of other people's morals. How many wise and gratuitous critics there are! How many to point out the mote in their brother's eye! Reformation begins at home—"I will behave myself"—and to do that properly will take me all my time. The psalmist now tells us in what good behaviour consists. "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." The first thing, then, to be seen to is home-conduct. "Is he a Christian?" said one to a friend the other day; and the answer was, "I don't know, I haven't seen him at home." It was a wise reply; home is the best place to judge—there we have the evidence unmistakable. Home graces are best; and if a woman would have her name kept in sweet and everlasting remembrance, let her always be at her best at home; and if a man will win fame that will outlast the renown of all the world's battlefields, let him be a hero at home, a knight of the little round table in his own parlour, where those who love the best will crown him with a wreath that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. The psalm continues, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes." That undoubtedly is an essential part of fine conduct. Even to look on sin is harmful; it blurs, while it dazzles the vision; it casts a film over the eyes. "I will not know a wicked person." Literally that seems a resolve too difficult to carry out. In business, shop, and office we often have to meet wicked persons, to do business with them, to work at their side. We have to know them—we cannot help ourselves. But we must not know more of them than we can help—we must not be friends with them. Acquaintances they may be, but never friends. "Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land that they may dwell with me." Whoever we cast our eyes upon does well with us in a very real sense. "I am a part of all that I have met." We cannot help being imitative, we reproduce what we see over and over again. So must we fix our eyes upon those who do good and are good, upon those whose atmosphere is purest and most reverent. But mark now that the psalmist has no sooner made this great resolve, than he realizes that the task is beyond him. It requires more wisdom and strength than he possesses. So in the midst of his resolution the prayer breaks from his heart, "O when wilt Thou come unto me?" For such behaviour as this the etiquette of high society is useless—it is the grace of God that we want; not more education, but more love—that love which "doth not behave itself unseemly." "O when wilt Thou come unto me?" That question is soon answered. When will a father run to his child in need? "When wilt Thou come?" Why, He is "not far from any one of us"—"closer than breathing and nearer than hands or feet." Our very feebleness and frailty make irresistible appeal to Him. (*W. A. L. Taylor, B.A.*) *I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.*—*The sanctity of the family*:—

That which strikes us first in this psalm is that the qualifications for continuing in the household of David are to be moral qualifications. He does not say that he will make choice of the clever, or of the strong, or of the brave to be companions of his life. He, for his part, will live with the good, the faithful in the land, the perfect in the way. That which shall disqualify men from living with him is not want of ability or want of distinction, but want of loyalty to goodness and to God: "A froward heart shall depart from me; I will not know a wicked person." David needed all the help he could get from courage and from talent in his difficult position; but he made up his mind to reserve his highest favours for goodness. And next we observe that the qualifications for membership in David's household are chiefly negative. He is more careful to say who shall not than who shall enjoy the privilege. The sins of unfaithfulness, the froward heart, the privy slanderer of his neighbour, the man of proud look and high stomach, the worker of deceit, the teller of lies—these were to have no access in the house of David in Jerusalem. It seems to be a low because it is a negative standard; but people would not say so who have at all tried to act upon a like principle. Let us be sure that we could do as much before we criticize him. What, then, is David's hope? He hopes that with the coming of the sacred ark of Jerusalem—in other words, that with a nearer contact with the presence of God—he will be able to effect a great change. The restored sense of a sacred presence among them, the active works of the ministers and the sanctuary, the pervading atmosphere of worship and of praise, where everything suggested what God expected of His people and what was due to God from each and from all—these things would, in time, make the reformation which David had at heart easy and natural. In Christendom the family is a different and it is a more beautiful thing than it was in David's time. It is a return to nature, to the order of life clearly traced in nature, and at the bidding of the Restorer of our race. He reminds us that "at the beginning God made man, male and female," and that "for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh." More than one French writer has expressed the admiration felt by his countrymen—felt, at least, in their more judicial moments—for the family life of the middle classes in England, and of the English poor throughout the country districts. It is, indeed, one of the choicest blessings which God has bestowed upon our country. But we must admit that family life in England is threatened not only by the standing enemies of its happiness and well-being, such as a preference of club society to that of wife and children on the part of men, of a husband's personal extravagance or inconsiderateness, or cruelty, or worse. In conclusion, two lessons would seem to be suggested by this psalm of King David. Observe the order and methods of David's proceeding. He began by improving himself. "Oh, let me have understanding in the way of godliness. I will walk within my house with the perfect heart." No man can hope to influence others for good who is not taking pains with himself. No man to whom eternity, sin, prayer, are not real, can hope to get others to think seriously about them. No man who is not endeavouring to rule his own temper, his own tongue, his own life by the law of Jesus Christ can hope to make that law a rule of the life of others, however much younger, however much less instructed they may be than himself. And next the improvement of the family can only be procured by religious as distinct from moral—merely moral influences. David does not expect to do much with the sinister elements of his motley household until the return of the sacred Ark to Jerusalem. There is one mark of the household in which God is known and loved, which is too often wanting in our day, I mean the practice of family prayer. Depend upon it, the worth of every practice of the kind can only be measured by its effect during a long period of time. Family prayers, though occupying only a few minutes, do make a great difference to any household at the end of a year. (*Canon Liddon.*) *Family religion*:—A house without a roof would be scarcely less a home, according to Bushnell, than "a family unsheltered by God's friendship." A pious wife with a prayerless husband is compared by Payson to a dove with a broken wing, trying to beat her upward way through storm and wind. (*E. P. Thwing.*) *Piety at home*:—Some people in public act the philanthropist, but at home act the Nero with respect to their slippers and their gown. Audubon, the great ornithologist, with gun and pencil went through the forests of America to bring down and to sketch the beautiful birds, and after years of toil and exposure completed his manuscript and put it in a trunk in Philadelphia, and went off for a few days of recreation and rest, and came back

and found that the rats had utterly destroyed the manuscript; but without any discomposure, and without any fret or bad temper, he again picked up his gun and pencil, and visited again all the great forests of America and reproduced his immortal work. And yet there are people with the ten thousandth part of that loss who are utterly irreconcilable; who, at the loss of a pencil or an article of raiment, will blow as long and loud and sharp as a north-east storm. Let us learn to show piety at home. If we have it not there, we have it not anywhere. If we have not genuine grace in the family circle, all our outward and public plausibility merely springs from the fear of the world, or from the slimy, putrid pool of our own selfishness. Home is a mighty test of character. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

Ver. 8. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes.—*In the mind's eye.*—On one occasion Sir Thomas Lawrence, the great painter, then President of the Royal Academy, visited the studio of a struggling young artist. He had noticed the young man's work, and thought it had some promise; but when he saw the sketches tacked up on the walls of the bare little room, he shook his head. They were rough, clever examples of the Flemish school, striking but coarse. "If I were you," said the great painter to the beginner, "I would not allow my eye to be familiarized with any but the highest forms of art. If you cannot afford to buy oil paintings, buy good engravings of great pictures. If you allow your eye to become familiar with what is vulgar in conception, however free and dashing the handling, and however excellent the feeling for colour, your taste will insensibly become depraved; whereas, if you habituate your eye to look only upon what is pure and grand, or refined and lovely, your taste will insensibly be elevated." It was sound artistic advice, and the young painter profited by it. It remains, also, sound moral advice for all young people. Our mind's eye needs training as much as our physical vision. If we hang pictures in the halls of our brain that are not elevating, our moral perceptions will become lowered. The best thoughts are within our reach. Why should we choose, instead, thoughts that are flippant, vulgar, or worse? Every time we put an undesirable picture in our mind's eye, where it will be often in view, we deprave our own understanding. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." If we wish to elevate and strengthen our souls, we must be careful in our choice of habitual thoughts. "Whatsoever things are true," etc. It is well-known advice—but can it be bettered? (*Free Church Record.*) **I hate the work of them that turn aside.**—*Turning aside.*—I. DESCRIBE THEIR CHARACTER. The phrase, "turn aside," denotes three things—1. That there exists a way, path, or road in which we have to go. 2. That we have been in that way. 3. That there has been an awful departure from it. (1) Some turn aside cowardly (*Num. xxi. 4.*). (2) Some turn aside incautiously (*1 Sam. xii. 23.*). Bunyan's Pilgrim, with his companion Hopeful, wandered into the grounds of Giant Despair, and ultimately found themselves in the dungeons of Doubting Castle. He discovered a stile which led into a meadow, where was a footpath that seemed to run parallel with the high-road; into this path he went, thinking that it would prove easier for his feet. Let this illustrate what is meant to be conveyed by the term turning aside incautiously. (3) Others turn aside courteously and complaisantly. (4) Some turn aside through unwatchfulness (*Matt. xxvi. 41.*). II. ILLUSTRATE THEIR WORK. 1. An evil work (*Jer. ii. 19.*). 2. A disgraceful and dishonourable work (*Prov. xiv. 34.*). What a disgraceful reflection it is upon the wisdom and economy of a man who begins to build, and is not able to finish! (*Luke xiv. 28-30.*) How scandalous to forsake God, and associate with the devil; to exchange Christ for Belial, light for darkness, truth for error, liberty for bondage, heaven for hell! 3. It is a diabolical work; because it displays more of the devil than any other engagement pertaining to earth. It is following the example which apostate fiends have set. What was their original transgression but turning aside? 4. It is a ruinous work (*Heb. x. 28, 29.*). III. EXHIBIT THE ABHORRENCE OF THE PSALMIST. 1. Our hatred of this work should be sincere. 2. It should be publicly professed. Though the Christian ought to avoid the very appearance of ostentation, there are times when silence or neutrality would be highly criminal. 3. It should be constantly and cordially cherished. Pray that you may increase in the love of God; for in proportion as you love God, you will hate evil. Meditate also on the tremendous consequences which will not fail to follow. 4. It should be practically exemplified. Do not forget how possible it is for those who now profess to detest the evil, by slow, and almost imperceptible, degrees to become familiarized with it,

and ultimately being led to practise that which now they hate. David fell into this snare. Also Peter. How frail is human nature! Exemplify your detestation of the evil in question, by attending to the injunction of the apostle (Phil. iii. 16). Persevere in the good way. (*R. Treffry.*)

Ver. 5. Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour.—*Sins of the tongue*:—Mr. Spurgeon used to say that if all men's sins were divided into two bundles, half of them would be sins of the tongue. And if any one thinks that is a preacher's exaggeration, let him read what is written in the Book of Proverbs and the Psalms on the matter, and he will find that the preacher has good authority for his strong words. The sins of the tongue, who can number them? The mischief of the tale-bearer, who can measure it? When St. Paul commands aged women that they be "not slanderers," the word he uses means, literally, "devils"; it is the word which has given us our adjective "diabolical"; and verily there is no temper that is so wholly un-Christian and anti-Christian, that so well deserves the ugly name of "devilish," as the temper of the slanderer and the back-biter. The Apostle James is, if possible, more emphatic still: "If any man thinketh himself to be religious," he says, "while he bridleth not his tongue but deceiveth his heart, this man's religion is vain." But on the other hand, "If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also." It is said that St. Augustine had engraved upon his table these words: "There is no place at this table for any one who loves scandal." Shall not we make a like resolve, speak no slander—no, nor listen to it? For, if for every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account in the day of judgment, where shall the slanderer and the back-biter appear? (*George Jackson, M.A.*)

Ver. 6. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me.—*The King and His court*:—I. WHO ARE THESE FAITHFUL MEN to whom Jesus, our King, will have respect at all times? 1. They are true in their dealings with God. How many a man has become a bankrupt by a lavish expenditure which exceeded his income! He said that he "must keep up appearances," and he did keep up appearances till they became his ruin. God grant that you and I may never try to keep up appearances before Him! Be what you would seem to be; and in the presence of God never seem to be or dream of seeming to be what you are not. Thus I think we, first of all, know the faithful by their upright dealing with God. 2. This will lead them to be true in their dealings with men. That man is not faithful in God's esteem who is not upright, honest, true to a hair's breadth, in his dealings with his fellow-men. We must stand to our bond even though we lose by it. We must be true to the word we speak though it be to our own hurt. 3. Such people will, in the next place, always be true in their dealings with men on God's behalf. I think this passage bears very pertinently upon the minister, and upon the Sunday-school teacher, and upon the Christian worker. 4. These faithful men are thorough in all that they do. The psalmist says, "He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me." May I be permitted to say, especially to you who are commencing the Christian life, that if you wish to live near to God, and to be greatly used of Him, it is important that you should begin as you mean to go on, by endeavouring to walk in a perfect way? Be you determined that, if others do as they please, you are not accountable for their action; but you will do what you believe to be right. If you are a Christian, go through with it; be a follower of Christ in every respect as far as the Word of God and your own conscience lead you. II. WHAT WILL THE KING DO WITH THEM? 1. His eye of search will seek them out. There is a working-man who, the other day, in the midst of a swearing company, rebuked the blasphemer, and spoke up for Christ. That noble action is not recorded in the newspaper, and never will be; but God's eye is upon the faithful of the land. 2. His eye of favour will cheer them. God greatly favours and blesses those whom by His grace He makes to be faithful. 3. They shall dwell with God. Oh, this is a choice privilege! When grace makes a man faithful, God rewards his faithfulness by permitting him to dwell in close communion with his Lord. It is a wonderful thing to me that, if we have any good works, God always works them in us, and then he rewards us for them as if they were our own. He gives us grace, and then smiles on us because of the grace that He Himself gives. 4. They shall be Christ's servants. I do not know which is the greater privilege, "He shall dwell with me," or, "He shall serve me." Perhaps the second is the

higher. Have you ever thought what an honour it is to be permitted to do anything for God? For God to bless us, is great condescension on His part; but for Him to permit us to be of any use to Him, this is a wonderful honour from His right hand. III. HOW MAY WE GET AMONG THESE FAITHFUL ONES? 1. Perhaps we can truly say, God helping us, we hope that we are among them. If so, "it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves." If there be any faithfulness, if there be any uprightness, unto God be the glory of it all. Pray that you may never lose your faithfulness, but that you may be kept even unto the end. 2. But now I speak to others who are not as yet faithful. You say, "How are we to get among the faithful?" (1) Well, I should say, first, so far as you may be, and so far as your light goes, be faithful to-night, be honest in confessing sin. Before you sleep, put yourself before God just as you are. (2) Then, next, be anxious to have a new heart and a right spirit. (3) Be sincere in all your dealings with the living God. (4) Depend continually on the Lord Jesus and His Word to make and keep you faithful. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 7. **He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house.**—*Wise choice of companions*:—"A man is known by the company he keeps;" yes, and by his company you may know what he is coming to be. We unconsciously fall into the habits of thought and feeling of those with whom we are associated. Our ideas are moulded by our ideals; our conduct by our examples. To choose refining, purifying society is the grandest step up and on, to keep the company of the vicious and the vile is as sure a step toward ruin. The Church is mainly given us to meet this demand of our social nature. (A. T. Pierson, D.D.)

PSALM CII.

VERB. 1-28. **Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto Thee.**—*Thoughts of comfort and complaint*:—I. THOUGHTS OF COMPLAINT (vers. 1-11). 1. Concerning bodily sufferings. (1) The physical anguish of life (ver. 3). (2) The terrible brevity of life (ver. 11). 2. Concerning mental sufferings. "I am in trouble." "My heart is smitten," etc. His mental anguish destroyed his appetite for food, made his bones "cleave" to his "skin," and to mingle his drink with tears. Such is the connection between the mind and the body that a suffering mind will soon bring the body to decay and death. One dark thought has often struck down a stalwart frame. 3. Concerning social sufferings (ver. 8). The coldness, the calumny, the envy and jealousy of our fellow-men cannot fail to strike anguish into the heart. 4. Concerning religious sufferings (ver. 10). Moral suffering is the soul of all suffering. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" II. THOUGHTS OF COMFORT (vers. 12-28). These thoughts refer to God. 1. His existence amidst all the changes of earth (ver. 12). 2. His anticipated interposition on behalf of mankind (vers. 13-18). (1) It is fixed—a "set time." (2) It is conditional (ver. 14). "Seek, and ye shall find," etc. (3) It is glorious (ver. 15). (4) It is prayer-answering (ver. 19). (5) It is always rememberable (ver. 18). 3. His past kindness towards the suffering (vers. 19-22). 4. His unchangeableness amidst all the mutations of the universe. (1) Men change, but He remains the same (vers. 23, 24). (2) The universe changes, but He remains the same (vers. 25-27). The universe had an origin and is destined to have a dissolution. It had an origin. "Of old hast Thou laid," etc. This account of the origin of the universe contradicts atheistic eternalists and sceptical evolutionists. It will have a dissolution. "It shall perish." Dissolution, in fact, is a law of the organized universe. Both the origin and dissolution of the universe are attributable to One Personality. "Of old hast Thou laid." The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews applies this to Christ, therefore to him Christ was Eternal God. One Being created all, one Being will dissolve all. This One Personality remains unalterable from the origin to the dissolution of the universe. (Homilist.) *The conditions of acceptable prayer*:—1. There must be a holy respect for the character and ways of God. We must come looking at all His attributes. They must fill all the eye, and ravish all the heart. 2. As we are social beings, the mode of

our approach must show that we are not praying alone, that we belong to a praying family; and we should wish to get near to His presence, and not pray at a distance. The child would choose to come where the father was, if he could speak to him, and not stand at a distance, as if he were praying by proxy to an absent father. 8. Our prayers must go up with sincerity before him, and with that open frankness that love is accustomed to generate. And we should really desire the blessing we need, and not some other that we are afraid to ask for, as if we were held in the attitude of foreigners, who were supplicating mercies which we not only did not deserve, but had no reason to expect. 4. We must have our eyes filled with the precious Mediator: He must be to us "the chief among ten thousands, and altogether lovely." 5. We must approach Him with a spirit of submission. This, however, will not imply indifference. There can be no resignation, unless the heart desires earnestly the blessing it supplicates. 6. We must come with a spirit of humility and penitence. The suppliant who can for one single moment forget that he is a suppliant will deserve to be repulsed in the very prayer he makes. 7. It would be natural and indispensable that we remember that we have received blessings from the same hand before, and there is no part of our plea that is more efficacious than where we tell of the mercies received in days gone by. (*D. A. Clark.*) *Earnest prayer alone succeeds*:—"Not very long ago I was staying at Matlock, and some one in Manchester wanted to call me up on the telephone. Speaking through the telephone is a thing to which I am unaccustomed. I could hear the voice at the other end asking me if I were there. I shouted that I was, I bellowed that I was, but still I heard the question, 'Are you there?' In despair I put the instrument down and went to the porter. With a pitying smile he took the instrument, and spoke through it as quietly as possible. He was heard. I said, 'Why can't I make him hear?' 'Because,' he said, 'you forget one very simple thing. You do not take hold of the receiver firmly.'" Oh, how often in our appeals to high Heaven we ask and receive not because we forget to take a firm hold. (*R. J. Campbell, M.A.*) *God will hear my prayer*:—There is Christ, as most of us, I suppose, believe, Lord of all creatures, administering the affairs of the universe; the steps of His throne and the precincts of His court are thronged with dependents whose eyes wait upon Him, who are fed from His stores; and yet my poor voice may steal through that chorus-shout of petition and praise, and His ear will detect its lowest note, and will separate the thin stream of my prayer from the great sea of supplication which rolls to His seat, and will answer me. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Vers. 13, 14. *Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come.*—*A revival of the Church, and symptoms which precede it*:—I. THERE IS A FAVOURABLE TIME TO PROMOTE THE REVIVAL OF THE CHURCH. 1. The source to which the Church must look for a revival. The Lord alone can revive the Church, and add to her such as shall be saved (Ps. lxxx. 1-3; lxxxv. 6; Isa. li. 3; Hab. iii. 2; Zech. iv. 6). 2. The nature of that revival which the Church may expect. The words "mercy" and "favour" suggest—(1) Deliverance. (2) Union. There may be unity of effort with a great variety of name, method, and form. The union of which God is the Author is frequently spoken of in the Bible (Ps. cxxxiii.; John xiii. 34, 35; xvii. 21). (3) Prosperity. The conversion of sinners. 3. The time when the revival of the Church may be expected. The deliverance of the Jews from their captivity was foretold (Isa. xiv. 1, 2; Jer. xxv. 11, 12; xxxii. 36-39). How wonderfully Jehovah brought about the deliverance of His people from Babylon at the set time! He influenced Cyrus and Darius, heathen princes, to forward it. He raised up Ezra and Nehemiah, etc. II. THE REVIVAL OF THE CHURCH IS ALWAYS PRECEDED BY CERTAIN INFALLIBLE SIGNS. 1. Solemn humiliation before God. Before the Jews were delivered from the Babylonish captivity, they were humbled before God on account of their transgressions. The nation was ashamed and cured of its idolatry, and never since then has it bent its knees at an idol's shrine (Ezra ix. 6, 7; x. 1; Dan. ix. 7-11). Is there this spirit of humiliation before God in modern churches? 2. Special, importunate, believing prayer. What beautiful instructions and examples we have in the Bible of the value of such prayer (Isa. lxii. 1; Ezek. xxxvi. 37; Luke xi. 5-10). 3. Affection for the ordinances of God's house. They loved the very stones, and even the dust of their dilapidated Zion (Ps. cxxxvii. 5, 6). So it is in a revival of religion. When God is about to visit His people in mercy, everything in regard to the Church is loved. 4. Activity and self-denying efforts in God's cause. The

Jews showed their love to Jerusalem in a practical manner (Neh. iv. 6). They work despite the scorn of their foes. Let these signs exist in any Church, and the fruit will soon appear. She shall increase in purity and influence. (*J. Wilman.*) *Religious revival*:—Zion is in captivity; but the psalmist is confident that God will deliver and revive His people. I. GROUNDS FOR EXPECTING A REVIVAL. 1. God's unchangeable character (ver. 12). 2. God's memory (ver. 12). 3. God's mercy (ver. 13). 4. God's purpose (ver. 13). II. SIGNS OF APPROACHING REVIVAL. 1. The Church's increased attention to all that pertains to its welfare and success (ver. 14). 2. Its affectionate desire for such a revival (ver. 14). 3. Its compassionate concern on account of prevailing desolations (ver. 14). 4. Its manifest pleasure in service (ver. 14). III. THE EFFECTS OF SUCH REVIVAL. 1. The ungodly shall fear the Lord (ver. 15). 2. The great of earth will recognize our God, abiding in and working through His Church. (*Anon.*) *The set time to favour Zion*:—I. WHENEVER GOD AFFLICTS HIS CHURCH HE HAS GOOD REASONS FOR DOING SO. 1. The purification of the Church. Before the last great persecution, under Diocletian, the Church had sunk into a state of declension from the truth and vital piety through the continuance of a long season of comparative tranquillity. The same remarks will apply even to a yet earlier persecution, under Decius. During this last calamity Cyprian, of Carthage, bore the following testimony:—"It must be owned and confessed that this calamity has happened to us because of our sins. Christ, our Lord, fulfilled the will of His Father, but we neglect the will of Christ. Our main study is to get money and to raise estates. We follow after pride; we are at leisure for nothing but emulation and quarrelling, and have neglected the simplicity of the faith. We have renounced the world in words only, and not in deed." 2. The trial and development of the graces of the saints. Adversity tries the mettle of our faith. It shows whether or not we are really walking under the influence of that principle which is the substance of things hoped for—the evidence of things not seen. It tests the quality of our zeal, demonstrating whether it be the mere result of the excitement produced by a crowd, or whether it has its foundation sufficiently deep in principle and affection to sustain it in being and activity when it has to work, as did Elijah, almost alone; whether it be like the flower, which blooms in summer and dies in winter; or like the hardy evergreen, which lifts its head and wears its foliage amid the severest cold. Every Christian grace is, more or less, tried, and the whole character of the man of God is tested by adversity—just as the qualities of the ship are proved by the fury of the billows on which she rides, and the might of the tempest with which she is assailed. And as a time of adversity tries, so it strengthens and matures the virtues of the Church. It imparts a robustness to the faith of believers, and an energy to their patience and zeal. It brings them into frequent and protracted communion with their God, and imparts an agonizing earnestness to their addresses to the throne of grace. 3. The display of the Divine power to deliver. It is manifest that if the Church had no trials, she could have no deliverances. God permits her to be led into straits, that He may show her how He can save, and that the recollection of past deliverances may fortify her mind against all future difficulties. II. GOD HAS A SET TIME FOR THE DELIVERANCE OF THE CHURCH. 1. This time is unalterably fixed by the Divine wisdom and mercy. 2. It is selected as being most conducive to the Divine glory. He commonly selects the time when He sees that "the power of His people is gone, and that there is none shut up nor left" for their deliverance. Then the creature can arrogate none of the praise to himself, and it is evident that all the honour must be laid at the feet of the Almighty. The pride of all human glorying "is stained," and "the Lord alone is exalted." 3. The arrival of this time is promoted by the whole course of Providence. How admirably does the history of the Reformation in Europe in the sixteenth century illustrate this sentiment. The rising up of such men as Luther, Melancthon, Zuingli, Calvin, Knox, and their coadjutors, and their appearance almost simultaneously upon the theatre of Europe; the extraordinary political convulsions of the times, which repeatedly served to divert the attention of the enemies of the Church from their designs upon her; the conversion to the faith of some of the potentates of Germany, and other countries, who screened most opportunely the lives of the reformers from the fury of the papists; the recent invention of the art of printing; and the revival of literature under the auspices of Erasmus, all served to aid in shaking the ponderous pillars of the papal power! The pages of general ecclesiastical history, and of particular religious communities, abound with examples of a similar character, proving that the course of Providence, and the riches of universal nature, are ever subservient to

the Mediator's sceptre. III. THE NEAR APPROACH OF THE TIME TO FAVOUR ZION IS ALWAYS INDICATED BY CERTAIN INFALLIBLE SIGNS. It is preceded by—1. The sanctification to the Church of her trials. When God's design in the affliction of His Church is answered, the chastisement ceases. 2. The prevalence of great affection for the ordinances and people of God. One principal evidence that the Lord was about to restore the Jews to their native land, was the ardour of their reviving affection for the city and Temple of their God. 3. Faith in the Divine promises. Faith is to God's mercies what the tone of the digestive organs is to the aliment of which we partake. It enables us so to receive them as to convert them into nourishment for our spiritual life; whereas without faith they would only produce sluggishness and disease. (*John Stock.*) *Zion's prosperity*:—I. THE NATURE OF THE PROSPERITY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. We do not conceive it necessarily to be a sign of a church's prosperity when the congregation is large or rich, or the minister eloquent. We must consider for what purposes the Church was formed; and if it be not accomplishing that particular object, it is not prospering. The Church is established for two objects: first, for bringing God's wandering sheep back to the fold of Christ; and, secondly, for fostering those sheep that are brought within the fold. II. THE NECESSITY FOR THE PROSPERITY OF THE CHURCH. I trust that some of you have a regard for the Church's prosperity; if not, you ought to have. Let me remind you why; even selfish as we may be, we ought to care for the success of the Church. 1. For our own sakes. If we do not, by Divine grace, live and labour for our fellow-creatures, their decline will have a deleterious influence upon our own piety. 2. Your families, too, are deeply interested in the prosperity of the Church. What is good for the parent is good for the child, and what is good for the child is good for the parent. 3. Also, for the sake of the neighbourhood in which you live, labour for God, seeking His blessing, that your Church may prosper. 4. Again, for the sake of our nation, seek the prosperity of Zion. If we are to be a prosperous nation, we shall not accomplish that result by our commerce, or by the force of arms, but by our Christianity. The flag of old England is nailed to the mast, not by our sailors, but by our God. But, most of all, we want to see the Church prosper for Christ's sake. III. THE ONLY MEANS OF REVIVAL IN GOD'S CHURCH. What is it? We may hear of some great evangelist going through the land; surely he will revive the Churches. We will hold a convocation of the clergy, and they shall devise means of reviving the Churches. Not so thinks the psalmist; he says, "Thou shalt arise," as if God had nothing to do but to arise, and then His Church would arise, too; for, when God arises, Zion begins to prosper. How easy are the methods by which God accomplishes His great works! IV. THE SIGNS THAT GOD'S CHURCH IS BEING BLESSED (ver. 14). What are the "stones" of Zion? 1. The Church of God is built of living stones,—that is, the children of God; and it is a good sign when God's servants take pleasure in one another, and "favour the dust,"—that is, not the ministers, nor the deacons, but the poor members. 2. The next translation we will give of this word "stones" is, the doctrines of the Bible. You say, "I do not see so much in doctrines, after all." Then you will not see much prosperity. I love so much what I believe to be true, that I would fight for every grain of it; not for the "stones" only, but for the very "dust thereof." I hold that we ought not to say that any truth is non-essential; it may be non-essential to salvation, but it is essential for something else. 3. The stones of Christ's Church are the ordinances, and God's people ought to take care that they love her "stones," and favour her "dust." 4. It is a good sign of the Church's prosperity when the ministry of the Word and the prayer-meeting are well attended;—especially the latter. If you say, "It is only a prayer-meeting," even that is the "dust" of Zion, and God's people "take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof,"—the little services as well as the great services. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Zion's ruin and Zion's hope*:—I. ZION'S STATE OF RUIN AND DESOLATION. 1. The enemies of vital godliness triumph. 2. Iniquity abounds, and the love of many cools. 3. Worldliness. 4. Sorrow. 5. Darkness. Zion is under a cloud. The world asks: "Where is thy God?" II. ZION'S FRIENDS. 1. They love its ruins and dust. 2. The very mournful state of Zion produced a gracious effect upon the hearts of its friends. III. ZION'S HOPE. 1. Zion's hope is in God. 2. God's time to work deliverance is when His people are ready. 3. God's time, yea, God's set time, has come, when hopeful signs appear among God's people. It would be presumption to expect God to work for us if we were inactive. The love of God's people for Zion prompts their prayers; their knowledge of God inspires hope. (*E. Compton.*)

Ver. 14. **For Thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof.**—*The secret of the stones.*—Stones and dust! Stones that have fallen out of place and lie scattered on the ground; dust that flies on every wind and drops back again into crevice and heap. Stones that are chipped and stained with smoke and fire and blood; dust, the final form of great things, the last remainder of vanished glories. There is nothing specially interesting or attractive about these things; you would not go out of the way to view them. Yet to a certain few they are beautiful with a beauty neither nature nor art can give. They are the stones of a temple that once smoked with sacrifice and rang with resounding psalms. It is the dust of a shrine that once reared its head into the sky, and centred in itself the national pride and worship. I. BRICKS AND STONES AND MORTAR ARE NEITHER INTERESTING NOR IMPRESSIVE MATERIALS. Scattered about over yards and fields, they have no attraction for any one except the boys of the neighbourhood. But bring them together, combine them, and their condition is at once altered, and the commonplace things become a force whose power all men must acknowledge. Weld them into the monument of some illustrious statesman, and crowds will gather round it and garland it with flowers. Build them into some cathedral of vast proportions, and the effect is overwhelming; you sink into insignificance, and feel like an ant crawling over its floor. Fashion them into some mighty sepulchre to hold the dust of some uncrowned king, and pilgrims from the far places of the earth will come to gaze upon it. II. THE TEMPLE STONES HAVE A POWER OVER US, BUT THE SECRET OF THEIR POWER IS NOT SO MUCH IN THEM AS IN THAT WITH WHICH THEY ARE IDENTIFIED. It may be found partly in the memories which cluster about them. Round those stones of the Temple there hung for the Jew memories of his two great kings, David and Solomon—memories of the full tide of national prosperity and the zenith of their power as an empire; of the great priests and prophets who had ruled them; of the oracles and revelations in national need; of great days of festival; and of sacrifice, confession, and pardon. And our less ancient and less historic fane are full of memories, less splendid, but equally dear. There is the memory of one long since dead, who first guided our little feet up the aisle. There is the memory of the saintly men who first taught us how sweet and strong and beautiful human character could be. There is the memory of friendships formed there and loves born there which have been woven into our lives, and are part of our lives for ever. There is the memory of that great hour when we first discovered Christ was real and living, and knew what it was to believe and be saved. III. IT IS CUSTOMARY FOR SOME TO LOOK UPON THIS AFFECTION WITH SCARCELY VEILED CONTEMPT. They call it love for bricks and mortar, and dub it superstition and sentiment. Instead of being a superstition or sentiment, this attachment to God's house is one of the great forces which make for the building of character. Love of the temple is love of the best and highest, and its harvest is nobility of character and righteousness of life. Let us use our wisdom, our intellects, our energy, and our wealth to make the temple increasingly dear. Let us make it so beautiful, its service so attractive, its ministry so strong, its power so Christlike that the love for the stones of His house—which is one of the strongest formative and conserving forces in the lives of men and nations—may be the common and binding sentiment of all classes of men. (C. E. Stone.)

Ver. 16. **When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory.**—*The building up of Zion.*—I. WHEN MAY ZION, OR THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, BE SAID TO BE BUILT UP? 1. When sinners are converted to God. 2. When Christian converts grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour. 3. When pure and undefiled religion spreads to the ends of the earth. II. THE BUILDING OF ZION IS GOD'S OWN WORK. 1. He is the Author, Cause, and Fountain of all blessedness. 2. He has promised prosperity, success, and extension to the Christian Church. III. IN THE BUILDING UP OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, THERE IS AN EXTRAORDINARY DISPLAY OF THE GLORY OF GOD. Conclusion:—1. Christians may see how much reason they have to be confident and joyful under the most discouraging circumstance which occur, both with respect to themselves and the Church. 2. The duty of Christians to observe, with habitual attention, the course of Providence, and diligently to compare it with the designs announced in prophecy. 3. Reproof to those who are saying that the time is not yet come for the friends of Zion to exert themselves with diligence and zeal for her building up, extension, and glory. 4. The extreme folly, impiety, and danger of those who ridicule our hopes, and attempt to oppose the progress of the gospel. 5. This

subject is eminently fitted to illuminate our path, and direct our steps, in the present situation of the world. 6. Our subject affords great encouragement to missionary plans and exertions. (*W. B. Browne.*) *The glory of God displayed in the building up of Zion*.—I. THE BUILDING UP OF ZION IS WHOLLY THE WORK OF GOD. In effecting this work, indeed, it pleaseth God to employ and to honour mortal men, and other creatures, visible and invisible. He calls "pastors and teachers for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ," by publishing and enforcing the doctrine of salvation. He raises up kings and queens, and princes and nobles, to be "nursing fathers and nursing mothers" to His Church. He gives a Paul to plant, and an Apollos to water. This He does, however, not because He stands in absolute need of them, nor because of any fitness they possess in themselves to accomplish the end. All their motions and operations and success depend entirely upon God. II. WHEN IT PLEASETH GOD TO BUILD UP ZION, HE APPEARS IN HIS GLORY. 1. Consider the materials of which the Church is built. When a building of strength, of beauty, and of magnificence, is to be erected, men collect the most excellent materials that can be procured. But here, materials are chosen and employed which are in themselves the most worthless, and the most unlikely to answer the purpose. 2. Consider the instruments which God employs for accomplishing this great object (1 Cor. i. 27, 28: Matt. xxi. 16; 2 Cor. xii. 9). 3. Consider the circumstances of the times in which Zion is most remarkably built up; times the most unlikely for her revival. Such was her condition at the close of the seventy years' captivity, when she was like "a valley of dry bones." Such was her condition when "the Word was made flesh, and tabernacled" on earth; and when the apostles of Jesus were sent forth to propagate the Gospel among the nations, "blinded by the god of this world, sitting in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death." III. WHAT THE PARTICULAR GLORIES ARE WHICH HE THEN DISPLAYS. 1. His unsearchable wisdom. The plots and combinations of avowed enemies, their strength, their artful policy, their cruelty, their persecutions, nay, the very imperfections, faults, and corruptions of sincere friends (like the contention between Paul and Barnabas), all contribute to the building of the Church, though all of them seem to have a quite contrary tendency. 2. His almighty power. So eminently is this Divine excellence manifested in this work, that it is not unusually represented in prophecy, as a new creation (Isa. lxxv. 17, 18). 3. His holiness. 4. His benignity. 5. His faithfulness. 6. His justice. (*T. Davidson, D.D.*) *God's glory in the building up of Zion*.—I remember to have seen, close by the side of the Alps, a house which had upon its front words to this effect: "This house was built entirely by the skill, wealth, and industry of its inhabitants." It struck me as not being a very modest thing to put in front of one's house, for after all the structure was not very marvellous; but when we look at the glorious architecture of the Church of God, it would be no mean part of its lustre that it may fittingly bear such an inscription as this—"This house was built entirely by the wisdom, the munificence, and the power of the infinite Jehovah." I. ZION BUILT UP. 1. One essential to the building up of Zion is practical conversion. As we see our sons converted, and the great miracle of regeneration still being performed, we take heart and are of good courage to go on in the work of the Lord. 2. A public confession of faith must follow conversion. It is the duty of every Christian—nay, it is the instinct of his spiritual life—to avow the faith which he has received, and avowing it, he finds himself associated with others who have made the same profession, and he assists them in holy labour. When he is strong he ministers of his strength to the weak, and when he is himself weak, he borrows strength from those who just then may happen to be strong in the faith. 3. We cannot build without union. A house must have its doors, and its windows, its foundation, its rafters, and its ceiling. So, a church must be organized; it must have its distinct offices and officers; it must have its departments of labour, and proper men must be found, according to Christ's own appointment, to preside over those departments. 4. There must also be edification and instruction in the faith. No neglect of an appeal to the passions, certainly; no forgetfulness as to what is popular and exciting; but with this we must have the solid bread-corn of the kingdom, without which God's children will faint in the weary way of this wilderness. 5. It does not strike me, however, that I have yet given a full picture of the building up of a church, for a church such as I have described would not yet answer the end for which Christ ordained it. Christ ordained His Church to be His great aggressive agency in combating with sin, and with the world that lieth in the wicked one.

6. After a church has become all that I have been describing, the next thing it ought to do should be to think of the formation of other churches. The building up of an empire must often be by colonization; and it is the same with the Church. II. **THE BUILDING UP OF ZION IS, ACCORDING TO THE TEXT, CONNECTED WITH JEHOVAH'S BEING GLORIFIED.** 1. God often appears in glory to me as one of His builders, and I will tell you in what respect. When I have been sitting to see inquirers, I have sometimes found that God has blessed to the conversion of souls some of my worst sermons—those which I thought I could weep over, which seemed more than ordinarily weak, and lacking in all the elements likely to make them blessed, except that they were sincerely spoken. 2. Persons have been brought up and educated under sermons that are as hostile to spiritual life as the plague is to natural life. The case of Luther is one instance of this, and in all such cases God appears in His glory. 3. Think, too, of the agencies which are abroad hostile to the Church of God. What a splendid thing was that—may we see it repeated in our own day!—when the twelve fishermen first attacked Roman idolatry. The prestige of ages made the idolatry of Rome venerable; it had an imperial Caesar and all his legions at its back, and every favourable auspice to defend it. Those twelve men, with no patronage but the patronage of the King of kings, with no learning except that which they had learned at the feet of Jesus, with weapons as simple as David's sling and stone, went forth to the fight; and you know how the grisly head of the monstrous idolatry was by and by in the hands of the Christian champion as he returned rejoicing from the fray. So shall it be yet again, and then, amidst the acclamation of myriad witnesses, shall God appear in His glory. III. **THE HOPE EXCITED.** If God be glorified by the building up of Zion, then most certainly Zion will be built. If He is glorified by the conversion, and by the banding together of converted men and women, then it seems but natural to hope, yea, with certainty we may conclude that the zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform it. I like the spirit in which Luther used to say, that when he could get God into his quarrels he felt safe. When it was Luther alone, he did not know which way it would go; but when he felt that his God would be compromised and dishonoured if such a thing were not done, and would be glorified if it were done, then he felt safe enough. So in the great crusade of truth is not God with us beyond a doubt? The honour of the Church is intertwined with the honour and glory of Christ; if she shall pass away, if she be deserted, then where is her Captain, her Head, her Husband? IV. Our whole subject suggests an inquiry. Have I any part or lot in this work which is to bring glory to God? I may have to do with it in two ways, as a builder one, or as a builder. I can have nothing to do with it in the latter capacity, unless I have had to do with it in the former. God will be glorified in the building up of Zion; shall I minister to His glory by being part of the Zion that is to be built up? If thou wouldst glorify God, humble thyself, and receive salvation from the Lord Jesus Christ; and then, being built upon this foundation, thou shalt glorify God. The inquiry shapes itself afresh. Hast thou anything to do with glorifying God in respect of being thyself a builder up of Zion? Did you ever win a soul to Christ? (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Zion built—the glory of the Lord:*—I. **ZION MAY LIE FOR A TIME IN A SOMEWHAT RUINOUS CONDITION.** 1. When but few are converted—when a preached Gospel does not reach the heart—and when pardon, grace, and salvation are not seen, and acknowledged, to be the most important objects that can be attended to or pursued. 2. When many of the professors of religion draw back, and the enemy of souls hath so far prevailed as to lessen their number. When a worldly and carnal, proud or contentious spirit, or any other proceeding from the same corrupt source, makes inroads among Christians, carries them off from those societies to which they belonged, and from that allegiance they owed and professed to Christ; her walls are broken. 3. When the religious character of those who compose the Church of God is low. When those who belong to Christ are weak in faith, and inconstant in their affections; when they are so immersed in the cares and concerns of this world as that they move but slowly on the road to that for which they were born, and to which they ought ever to aspire; when they do not attend the house of God with that constancy, pleasure, and profit they once did; when they read not the Word of God with that relish and self-appreciation which they formerly experienced—and when the warmth of their holy zeal and devotion is abated, the Church is in an unhappy state. II. **TO BUILD UP ZION IS THE WORK AND PROVINCE OF GOD.** 1. This will appear from His own Word, which is the highest authority (Ps. cxlvii. 2-4; Ezek. xxxvi. 26-28, 36; Matt. xvi. 18,

17; Eph. ii. 10; 1 Cor. vi. 2; iii. 9). 2. When I consider what the Christian is, the principles by which he is actuated, the spirit he possesses, the attainments he makes, the calm fortitude and dignity with which he meets affliction and death, and that unparalleled heroism which multitudes have displayed in persecuting times; I can be at no loss to know, independent of the Word of God, whose work and province it must be to build up Zion at large, the Church in Britain, or those Christian societies to which we belong. 3. When we consider the blindness of men, the hardness of the human heart, the very affecting contrariety there is in us to the holy nature and righteous law of God, the state of things in the world, in a religious view, when the Saviour appeared, and what is the real state of the unconverted in these times; does it not appear that the grace and power of God are requisite to raise a Church out of such materials? **III. IT IS A WORK IN WHICH HE WILL CERTAINLY ENGAGE.** From the perfections of Jehovah—from the personal dignity and glory of the Redeemer, the scenes he passed through, and the characters he now sustains—from the preparation that was made for His appearing among men—from Christianity's having nothing of a local nature, but being equally suited to the state and condition of all men—and also from the circumstance of the Gospel's having stood the test of the strictest inquiry for so many years; and the strongest objections that have been made to it only serving to clear and illustrate its evidence; it appears exceedingly probable, that the kingdom of Christ will more fully come, and His religion have a more splendid and glorious triumph. But the main pillar of our hope, with respect to this delightful subject, are the promises and declarations of Him, to whom nothing is impossible (Ps. ii. 8; Isa. xi. 9; Ps. xxxvi. 9; Dan. vii. 18; Mal. i. 2). **IV. THEN THE LORD WILL APPEAR IN HIS GLORY.** 1. When faith and holiness prevail among men, the Lord will appear in the glory of His wisdom. This perfection shines whenever a single soul is converted: how much more when the glorious fruits and effects of the Redeemer's undertaking, death, and intercession shall be abundantly visible! 2. When Zion is built in the world at large, or in any particular place, the Lord will appear in the glory of His power. What display can there be of this Divine attribute, at once so honourable to God, and happy to man, as "quicken the dead in trespasses and sins"; causing the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the insensible to feel, and changing the corrupt and sinful bias of the human heart? 3. When Zion is built, God will appear in the glory of His grace and love. 4. When the Lord shall build up Zion, He will appear in the glory of His truth and faithfulness. God will appear to be faithful to every engagement into which he entered with His Son, and to every promise which His Word contains. On a review of what hath been advanced—1. Let us rejoice in, and be grateful to God for what He hath done, and is still doing, towards building up Zion. 2. Let us rejoice in that great prosperity which awaits the Christian cause; and let the Church encourage herself under all her troubles. 3. Let us all cherish an ardent desire of seeing the Church of God in a more prosperous state, and manifest that desire by our utmost exertions in its favour. (*N. Hill.*)

Ver. 17. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.—*Good news for the destitute:*—Trumpets are sounding, banners are displayed, princes and nobles glitter in their array, and the King appears in His glory. But who is this whose mournful wail disturbs the harmony? Whence comes this ragged mendicant who bows before the Prince? Surely he will be dragged away by the soldiery, or cast into prison by the warders, for daring to pollute so grand a ceremonial by such wretched presumption! But see, the King hears him, the sound of the trumpet has not drowned the voice of the destitute. His Majesty listens to him while he asks an alms, and in matchless compassion pities all his groans. Who is this King but Jehovah? **I. THE SPIRITUAL PAUPER.** The spiritual pauper is, in our text, described as "destitute," and you may take the word in its extreme sense—the spiritually poor man is not only positively but utterly, thoroughly, terribly destitute. He is destitute of all wealth of merit or possession of righteousness. He is so far from claiming anything like merit that he loathes the very thought of self-righteousness, feeling himself to be guilty, undeserving, ill-deserving, and hell-deserving, meriting only to be banished from the presence of God for ever. There is a kind of destitution which is bearable. A man may be quite penniless, but he may be so accustomed to it that he does not care; he may even be more happy in rags and filth than in any other condition. Have you ever seen the lazzaroni of Naples? Notwithstanding all their attempts

to move your compassion, they generally fail after you have once seen them lying on their backs in the sun, amusing themselves the livelong day. You feel sure that beggary is their natural element; they are perfectly satisfied to be mendicants like their fathers, and to bring up their sons to the profession. The ease of poverty suits their constitutions. But the spiritual pauper is not a member of this free and easy lazzaroni club by any manner of means, he is destitute of content. The poverty which is upon him is one which he cannot endure, or for a moment rest under; it is a heavy yoke to him, he sighs and cries under it. He is hungering and thirsting after righteousness. II. HIS SUITABLE OCCUPATION. He has taken to begging, and it is a very fitting occupation for him, indeed there is nothing else he can do. Blessed is that soul which is shut up to prayer. When you stand as a condemned criminal at the bar, and plead "Guilty, guilty, guilty," then you stand where God can look upon you with an eye of pity, and can save you. The trade of begging is one which is most suitable for a spiritual pauper, because, if he cannot do anything else, I warrant you he can do this right well. They say in London that many of our beggars are mere actors, they mimic distress; if so they do it uncommonly well, and are splendid imitations. But I will venture to say this, that nobody will ask help so well as the man whose distress is real; he needs no one to teach him, starvation is his tutor. Take away his diffidence, and give him courage enough, and his distress will make him eloquent. Still, perhaps, there will be some here who say, "I do not feel in a fit state to ask for mercy." It is your unfitness that is your fitness. Your poverty fits you for alms, your sickness fits you for the physician, your being nothing fits you to have Christ made all in all to you; your emptiness is all He wants, that He may fill it with all the fulness of His grace. Take to begging; that is the way to be rich towards God. III. THE MENDICANT'S VERY NATURAL FEAR. He is afraid that the great King will despise his prayer, or will not regard it, and he is afraid of this, first, from the greatness and holiness of God to whom he addresses himself. Can He look on worthless me? Infinite, and yet listen to my sigh; eternal, and yet catch my tears? Can it be? Many are a long while in distress of soul, because they do not remember that there is a Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus. God is thus glorious, but he is not far from any of us; for there is one who is God, and at the same time a man like ourselves, even Jesus, who has compassion on the ignorant, and on those that are out of the way. Cease ye then to fear, for the gulf is bridged. You may approach the Lord, for Jesus has paved the way. The same fear takes another shape. Trembling souls are afraid that God can never look upon them in love, because their prayer itself is so unworthy of notice. Ah, yes; but the Lord looketh at the heart, and he does not regard the eloquence nor the style of prayer after the manner of man. Cry on, and look away to Jesus, and you shall find all your destitute soul wants, and one of these days you who have learned to pray shall learn to praise and bless the prayer-answering God who did not suffer the soul of the destitute to perish. The Lord visit you at this moment and give you peace! IV. Our text affords to the destitute beggar A MOST COMFORTABLE ASSURANCE. "He will regard the prayer of the destitute." God, in order that destitute sinners should never doubt His willingness to hear their prayers, has left this on record, with a very special note appended to it: "This shall be written for the generation to come, and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord." You see the Lord not only said that He would regard the prayer of the destitute, but He added, "This shall be written," because, when a poor soul is in doubt and fear, there is nothing like having it in black and white. God has said it, but, says He, they shall not merely go by their ears, they shall see with their eyes. "This shall be written." When a man brings my own handwriting to me and says, "You promised me, and there is the writing," I cannot get away from it; and how shall the Lord draw back from what He has said, "This shall be written for the generation to come"? Oh, it must stand true. Be of good courage, poor seeking sinner, God will hear you. Remember, too, that when the Lord Jesus Christ was on earth, He used to choose for His associates the destitute. "This man receiveth sinners," said they, "and eateth with them." "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him." Jesus cast out none when He was here; He will cast out none that come to Him now. Remember, in the matter of praying, that God loves to hear sinners pray. We may be quite sure of that, because He teaches them how to pray. Do not be afraid, therefore, to pour out those broken sentences which God the Holy Spirit has taught you. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 18. **This shall be written for the generation to come.**—*Our responsibility towards the young:*—The antecedent to the word "this" are the truths contained in vss. 1-13:—1. That the Lord will have mercy upon Zion. 2. That the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord. 3. That He will build up Zion. 4. That He will regard the prayer of the destitute. These were the promises that were to be written for the generations to come. Why written? That they might be preserved and handed down. Tradition is uncertain, imperfect, often fails wholly, cannot command credence. The New Testament declares that these things were written for our instruction. I. **WHAT HAS BEEN WRITTEN?** 1. Observe the nature of this knowledge of God which was written. It concerns God's faithfulness and ability in the performance of all He has promised. He who makes a promise comes under obligation. In this God differs from man. He was under no obligation to come under obligation. Having promised, He has come under obligation, and Christians everywhere bear testimony to His faithfulness and His ability to perform fully all He has freely promised. 2. What God has promised. The great thing is the reconciliation of Himself to man; the salvation worked out through atonement; the establishment of a Church—a family that bears the name of Jesus. Salvation can be wrought only through this atonement. It is loose thinking that makes men imagine that education, culture, political economy, philosophy can lift up the world. The fear of the Lord lifts up man. II. **OUR DUTY.** 1. Let us be faithful to our own children. We want more men and women to tell to the generation coming of God's promises and faithfulness. 2. We want to take care of the children grown up into youth. The most critical period in the life of man is when he is breaking away from home. How many of the children at this age become vagrants among the Churches, wandering here and there, receiving but little benefit and giving none. The class most largely reached are the children of believing parents. 3. Then we have a great work to do among the children near us, those who are to be our fellow-citizens. A great work is there to be done. God knows there is enough of ignorance and criminality around us. These evils must be restrained by knowledge, by virtue. Ignorance and crime must be restrained, or social ruin is inevitable. 4. We must do all possible for the children of the entire country. If we would have the nation Christian, we must work and bear the burdens. We have the opportunity. (*John Hall, D.D.*)

Ver. 24. **I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: Thy years are throughout all generations.**—*The death of good men, in the midst of their days, considered and improved:*—I. **THE REASONS OF THIS DISPENSATION.** 1. The sovereignty of the Divine will, which is—(1) Absolute. (2) Uncontrollable. But the will of God is always reasonable. 2. It is a point of wisdom. We are born mortal, and under a sentence of death. When any, therefore, are removed in early life, as there is nothing uncommon and extraordinary, so it is nothing but what He has a right to do by the constitution of His law, and has reserved the judgment of to Himself. But more particularly still—3. It is a display of His all-sufficiency, and to show that He needs not the best instruments, and the most fitted for His service, but that He can do without them, or raise up others in their room. 4. It is in great mercy to themselves. It is a great kindness to them, though it is a grief and loss to us. (1) He sometimes removes them from the evil of the world, and impending calamities coming upon it (*Isa. xlvii. 1*). (2) Or they may be taken from the snares of life, and the temptations of sin, which might prove a great disadvantage to them; and from all the conflicts and hazards of the Christian life, which they are sure to be exercised with. (3) Besides, it is a great instance of Divine mercy that He takes them the sooner out of heaven, and gives them their reward betimes. They are not only the sooner out of danger, but the sooner happy. 5. It may be considered as an act of justice, and as the punishment of sin. (1) God may remove useful persons in the midst of their days, in rebuke for their own sin. He may see fit to contend with them for former offences (*Deut. xxxii. 40*). (2) Or else they may be removed for the sins of others. God may take them away for our over-indulgence, and too great opinion and expectation from them. *Gustavus Adolphus*, the great patron of the Reformation, is reported to have said in the midst of his remarkable victories and success, "That he believed God was about to lay him aside, because the eyes of all Europe were drawn upon him, and their expectations raised to so great a height." (3) Or else, it may be on the other hand, when they are neglected and slighted. God sometimes punishes the ungrateful world by removing early eminent persons,

whom they did not know how to value or treat with kindness. 6. It is for the good of others, and to exercise the graces and virtues of those who survive. What so proper as the thoughts of death, to inspire our sluggish souls with life and vigour, and makes us more fervent in spirit and zealous of good works, to keep up a lively sense of religion in the world, and a constant care to please God? Hereupon—7. To be a standing monument of human frailty, and to give warning to all about them. 8. Perhaps it may be considered as an instance of our conformity to Christ. As the servant must not be above his lord, and we must not expect kinder usage from the world than He met with; so we must not wonder if we are suffered to stay no longer in it than He did. 9. It is to make heaven more desirable to us, and raise our hearts more powerfully thither. II. IMPROVEMENT OF THE SUBJECT. 1. We should reverence and adore the Divine sovereignty and wisdom. Does He do us any wrong when He takes away what is His, and calls back again what we first received from Him, and enjoyed so long by His leave? 2. Let us look more to God, and live more entirely upon Him. 3. Let us comfort ourselves in their loss by the consideration of the mercy it is to them. Let not us be uneasy that they are happy, and repine at that which is the matter of their joy. 4. Yet we should be humbled under the sense of their loss, and lament it as a great affliction. 5. It should teach us to value useful men while they live, and make the best use of them we can. Labour to be better for them, and get some good by them, while you have them. 6. The reasonableness of early religion, and being in good earnest in it. And here let me caution you against dangerous delays, and reckoning upon long life, and neglecting present duty. 7. What reason of thankfulness for longer life and opportunity! How great is the mercy of continued life in a view of further usefulness, and better preparation for heaven. (*W. Harris, D.D.*) *The year past*:—1. Time is a sacred deposit, entrusted to them who sometimes think they have no one talent for which they must give account at last. 2. Let us ask what new principles we have gained, or what old principles have been confirmed and strengthened in that space of time. The question I have really in sight is this—Have you been leaving the first rudiments of the faith, and going on unto perfection? 3. With regard to our habits, what use have we made of the closing year? Have evil habits loosened their hold; have good ones been grafted in their place? 4. Inquire how the year has been employed with respect to the society we have sought, the connections we have made, the friendships we have cemented. Have you been prudent? Have you never sat in the seat of the scornful; nor stood in the way of sinners? (*J. B. Marsden, M.A.*) *The year to come*:—In all undertakings, success very much depends upon the plan we have laid down to guide our conduct. What, then, are the plans by which your course is to be steered throughout the coming year? Life's voyage will lie among hidden rocks, as well as over stormy seas. Of the dangers you will meet with, some are evident, but some cannot yet be known. How, then, do you propose to conduct the frail bark in which your all is ventured? On what principles, in what direction, do you purpose to proceed? I. SOME EVENTS MAY BE FORESEEN. 1. The duties which our station will demand. 2. The difficulties with which our station in life is usually connected. We should foresee, in order to resist and conquer them. Shall we pass on as heretofore? No fresh precautions! Such indifference is the prelude to destruction. 3. What facilities our condition in life will afford for spiritual improvement. Is not the Lord's Day such an one? II. SOME EVENTS ARE CONTINGENT AS REGARDS OURSELVES, THOUGH NOT SO IN THE SIGHT OF GOD. The preparation they demand is that which events call for that may come soon, and of which some at least must come at last. 1. Unexpected sorrow may surprise us; and how soon we cannot tell, for we know not what a day may bring forth. 2. Sudden prosperity may await you. "In all time of our wealth, good Lord, deliver us." 3. There is another trial which may overtake us—lengthened sickness. 4. Death itself may appear within the limits of the present year. Should not a great seriousness mark our deportment? Should not the world be less, and heaven far more, in our thoughts? (*Ibid.*) *Fear in the prospect of death*:—Here a pious Israelite, whether Nehemiah, or some other, for self and for the afflicted Church; elsewhere, David, Job, Hezekiah, and others, in like manner cast into gloom and great grief at the prospect. I. If even Christians themselves had tormenting fear, let us by God's help seek out some OF THE CAUSES OF THIS DISTEMPER, that we may be guided to its cure. 1. Christians shrink from the prospect of death as long as there remains any uncertainty as to their real state in the sight of God. The very light of the Gospel, where it is

unaccompanied by the fulness of its felt comforts, intensifies the dread of the awful judgment. And what originates and fosters so much this morbid, melancholy foreboding and doubt in the matter that above all others is of most vital concern to you? What but not taking God at His word? You do not receive the record He has given concerning His Son. 2. Another hindrance to the tranquil prospect of death is the spiritual declension or backsliding to which Christians are liable. Love and zeal do not always burn with a steadfast flame, nor does this present world ever hold the child of God by such slender attachment, that like Job, Elijah, or Peter, he can pray for an instant summons hence. 3. There is sometimes a need-be, a gracious necessity in the sovereign purpose of God, that the valley that leads down to death should be shadowed with clouds and thick darkness. You know that all believers suffer chastisement in this present life for their sins; this is in God's infinite wisdom and love, and not in anger. Thus it is that strong natural passions are curbed, and thus, too, even amiable and pious persons, who follow the guidance of God's eye and lean on Christ, are taught that they too, like others, owe an infinite debt to the sovereign mercy; that they are infinitely unworthy, and God infinitely gracious and long-suffering; the fire is made to burn that they may meditate on love Divine and free. 4. It is sometimes a keen disappointment to a godly man to be summoned away in the midst of active usefulness. II. SUGGESTIONS THAT MAY BE HELPFUL TO CHRISTIANS IN PRESERVING A TRANQUIL AND CHEERFUL PROSPECT OF DEATH. For though dying grace must not be expected till the dying hour, the prospect and preparation for that dying hour is one of the highest duties of our lifetime. 1. Remember, if you would welcome death without fear, your only standing ground, and refuge, and comfort, must be in the redeeming work of Christ. 2. If so, grace is begun; and as grace grows wherever it lives, seek the growth of grace if you would have a comfortable prospect of death. All who lean on Christ grow like Christ; and all who grow like Christ are fitting for heaven; and death is the happy portal that ushers them into His blissful presence, and the work and the joy of heaven differ more in measure than in character from the work and joy of the Christian life below. (*G. B. Blake, M.A.*) *Death in the midst of life*:—I. THOSE WHO ARE IN THE MIDST OF THEIR DAYS ARE GENERALLY THE MOST UNWILLING TO DIE. Generally, I say, because there may be exceptions to this opinion. There are so many changes in the outward and inward state of mankind, that some in the earlier, and some in the later period of life, may be the most unwilling to die. 1. Those in the midst of their days have the strongest expectations of living. They have often been visibly exposed to accidents; but have always escaped those that are fatal. They have often been sick, and sometimes dangerously so; but have always happily recovered. All these recoveries from sickness, and escapes from danger, have had a natural tendency to create hopes and expectations of living, and still escaping future dangers and diseases. 2. Those in the midst of their days often wish to do a great deal more good in the world before they die. Nature and grace unite in giving them a peculiar reluctance to leaving the stage of action, before they have gratified their benevolent feelings. 3. Those in the meridian of life very often wish, not only to do more good, but to get more good in the world before they die. Mankind generally have the most promising prospects of worldly prosperity in the midst of their days. It is, therefore, in this fascinating season, that they most sensibly dread the approach of death, which must necessarily lay all their promising hopes and prospects in the dust. 4. Those in the meridian of life are the most intimately and extensively connected with their fellow-men. These connections are the principal source of human happiness in the present life, and render it the most pleasant and agreeable. 5. Those in the meridian of life are often very unwilling to leave the world, because they have not accomplished the designs they have formed, nor obtained the purposes which they have long pursued. 6. Those in the midst of their days are more unwilling to die than others, because they are more unfit. This is commonly the case, whether they are saints or sinners. We find that the meridian of life is often very different from the beginning and close of it, both in good and bad men. Christians frequently brighten up in the decline of life, who had been cold and lifeless in the days of their vigour and prosperity. And on the other side, those who had been stupid sinners in their early days, sometimes become more serious and disposed to think about death and eternity, in the decline of life. II. GOD DOES TAKE AWAY SOME IN THIS PERIOD OF LIFE. It is true, indeed, He more seldom takes away the middle-aged, than either those who have not reached, or those who have passed,

the meridian of life. Much the largest portion of the human race die before they have arrived at thirty years of age, and the next largest portion die after they have arrived at fifty. And between these two periods the smallest number of mankind go off the stage of action and return to dust. This may be owing to both natural and moral causes. In the meridian of life the bodily constitution is generally the most firm and robust, and least exposed to fatal accidents and disorders. The moral cause may be, that God has the most occasion for the exertion of mankind, while they are in the vigour of their mental and corporeal powers and faculties. He employs human agents in carrying on most of His providential designs. He has occasion for strong men, bold men, wise men, and enterprising men, to carry into execution His wise and holy purposes. **IMPROVEMENT:**—1. If those in the meridian of life are so unwilling to die, then those who have been preserved through that period have peculiar reason to be thankful that they are still among the living. 2. If those in the meridian of life are so unwilling to die, and so desirous of living, then they have been greatly favoured and distinguished. Distinguishing goodness calls for distinguishing love, gratitude and obedience. 3. If those in the meridian of life are the most unwilling to die, then they are the most unwilling to hear and obey the voice of God in His Word and providence. 4. If those who are in the midst of their days are the most fond of living, and the most unwilling to die, then we may see one reason why God does actually take away some in that period of life. He may do this for the benefit or hurt of the dying, or for the benefit or hurt of the living. He knows that the deaths of those in the midst of their days are more alarming, and make a deeper impression upon the human mind, than the deaths of the young, or of the old. He knows how painful and distressing it will be to the dying, to have all their earthly desires and hopes destroyed; and He knows how distressing it will be to the living, to have those taken away on whom they had placed peculiar hopes and dependence. But He may see it best to disappoint all such mutual hopes and expectations, to teach them and others the vanity of the world, the uncertainty of life, and the infinite importance of being habitually and practically ready to go the way of all the earth. 5. If those in the midst of their days are the most unwilling to die, then those in this stage of life, in this place, are in a very dangerous situation. How few are either habitually or practically prepared to leave the world! How many are entirely absorbed in the cares and concerns of the world, and are too busy to think, to read, to hear, to meditate, or pray! They are standing all the day idle, and refusing to enter into the vineyard of Christ. They neither worship God in secret, nor in private, nor in public. Is it safe to stand, and live, and act in such a manner, while God has need of you, and calls you into His service? Are you willing to live in this manner; are you willing to die in this manner? (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *Prayer for a complete life, and its plea:*—This is a prayer which springs from the bosom of the Old Testament, and it bears the impress of its time. Life and immortality had not yet been brought to light; and long life in the land which the Lord their God had given them was a special promise made to these ancient saints. The prayer looks to that promise. It is thus the request for a complete life. **I. WHEN IS IT THAT A LIFE MAY BE SAID TO BE COMPLETE?** While length of life in this world is not the chief blessing of the New Testament, there is nothing wrong in desiring it, and that, when well used, it may have on it special marks of God's wisdom and kindness. It is necessary, then, in speaking of a complete life, to find those elements that will suit either him who has come to his grave in a full age, or the young who have been taken away in the beginning of their days. We thank God that in His Word we can find a goal where the old and the young may meet in a complete and perfect life. 1. The first thing needed to gain this is that a man should have lived long enough to secure God's favour. Until he has found this he has not attained the great end for which life has been given to an intelligent and responsible creature. 2. A complete life has this in it still further, that it has done God and His world some service. We are here not merely to find God's favour, but to do God's work (*John ix. 4*). Stephen's Christian life was short, and yet what ends it gained! The dying thief's was still shorter, but how many sermons his words have preached to dying men! 3. The next thing we mention in a complete life is that it should close with submission to the call of God. 4. It should look forward to a continual life with God. **II. THE PLEA FOR A COMPLETE LIFE WHICH THIS PRAYER CONTAINS.** The psalmist contrasts his days with God's years, his being cut off in the midst of his days with those years that are throughout all generations. There is deep pathos in it, a

sense of his own utter frailty and evanescence. And yet in the heart of it there is faith and hope. It is an appeal to God as the possessor of a complete life in the most absolute sense, the inhabitant and owner of eternity. 1. The eternal life of God suggests the thought of His power to grant this request. He is the possessor of independent and everlasting existence, and can share it with His creatures as seems good to Him. 2. The eternal being of God suggests the thought of His immutability to secure the request. We may have the confidence of this if we realize the thought of an ever-living God, who not only gave being to our souls, but holds them in His hand, and puts into them desires after Himself. All the changes, whether of life or death, cannot affect our relation to Him, except in bringing us nearer. Without an eternal God, what refuge would there be for troubled souls? 3. The thought of God's eternal being suggests His Divine consistency as an encouragement to this request. He has done so much that we may infer He will, if we ask Him, do still more. When I contemplate Him, I see that His eternity is the enclosing zone, the compact and mighty girdle of all His attributes, without which they would be scattered, conflicting forces, aimless and chaotic and fruitless. And what eternity is to God, immortality is to man. It is the indispensable requisite to the unity and completeness of His being. If, then, God has made Himself my highest standard, His unalterable truth and righteousness and goodness the goal towards which I should press, may I not expect that the course will be opened which leads to the goal? 4. God's eternal being is a plea for this request, because it suggests His Divine compassion for us. Great natures are made not more limited by their greatness, but more comprehensive; and the eternity of God does not shut out the thoughts and trials of human lives, but brings them more within His merciful regard. When we feel a touch of tenderness to the feeble creatures around us, to the bird or butterfly that sings its song, and flutters its hour, and dies, let us not imagine that we are more compassionate than God. Every spark of mercy is from His hearth. And when He has put into our souls a sense of a higher life, and a cry for its fulness in Himself, let us not believe He will treat us worse than the beasts that perish, that He will meet their wants in His great liberality and leave ours in endless disappointment. (*John Ker, D.D.*)

Vers. 26-28. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure.—*A perishing world and an immutable God*:—The great practical lesson which we are being daily taught is this, to withdraw our hearts from a changing and decaying world; and fix our hopes, and seek our happiness, in an unchanging and eternal God. This is the secret of real and permanent happiness to the soul of man. I. THE DESCRIPTION WHICH THE TEXT GIVES OF THE MATERIAL WORLD—THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH. They are described as—1. The effect of Divine operation. The contemplation of God's creative wisdom and power, as displayed in the works of His hands, should deepen the feeling of awe and reverence, with which we regard His sacred majesty. 2. Mutable, perishable, and destined to destruction. II. THE CONTRAST WHICH IT PRESENTS IN THE PERFECTIONS OF THE WORLD'S CREATOR AND MAN'S REDEEMER. Thus the shifting scenes and dissolving frame of nature may be improved by the children of God to their own comfort, by giving the force of a most advantageous contrast to the perfections of God their Saviour. III. THE CONCLUSION WHICH IT DRAWS FROM THIS VIEW OF THE DIVINE CHARACTER. God our Redeemer will maintain His cause in this mutable world, as long as the world shall continue. Conclusion:—1. How utterly unsuitable the world and the things of the world are to be the chief objects of man's solicitude and pursuit. 2. How pre-eminently secure and blest are they, whose dependence and hopes are fixed in the eternal God. (*Essex Remembrancer*.) *Things which grow not old*:—1. The love and mercy of God as shown in our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life, never grow old or wear out. 2. The salvation of Jesus has not grown old. 3. The sympathy of Jesus never grows old or worn out. 4. Heaven never changes nor wears out. And yet how old Heaven is! (*H. J. Wilmot Burton, M.A.*)

Ver. 27. But Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end.—*The immutability of God*:—God is unchangeable in His essence, nature, and perfections. This unchangeableness of God was anciently represented by the figure of a cube, a piece of metal or wood framed four square; when every side is exactly of the same equality, cast it which way you will, it will always be in the same posture, because it is equal to itself in all its dimensions. He was therefore said to be the

centre of all things, and other things the circumference; the centre is never moved, while the circumference is; it remains immovable in the midst of the circle. Shadows and variations have no place in the eternal Father of lights; He hath not the least spot or diminution of brightness; nothing can cloud Him or eclipse Him. I. IN WHAT RESPECTS GOD IS UNCHANGEABLE. 1. God is unchangeable in His essence. He is unalterably fixed in His being, that not a particle of it can be lost from it, nor a mite added to it. God is the first being, an independent being; He was not produced of Himself, or of any other, but by nature always hath been, and therefore cannot by Himself, or by any other, be changed from what He is in His own nature: that which is not may as well assume to itself a being as He who hath and is all being have the least change from what He is. Again, because He is a Spirit, He is not subject to those mutations which are found in corporeal and bodily natures; because He is an absolutely simple Spirit, not having the least particle of composition, He is not capable of those changes which may be in created spirits. 2. God is immutable in regard of knowledge. God hath known from all eternity all that which He can know, so that nothing is hid from Him; He knows not at present any more than He hath known from eternity, and that which He knows now He always knows (Heb. iv. 13). 3. God is unchangeable in regard of His will and purpose (Isa. lv. 11; xlv. 11; Num. xxiii. 19). 4. God is unchangeable in regard of place. Therefore observe, that when God is said to "draw near to us" when "we draw near to Him" (James iv. 8), it is not by local motion or change of place, but by special and spiritual influences, by exciting and supporting grace. II. THE REASONS TO PROVE GOD IMMUTABLE. 1. The name Jehovah signifies this attribute (Ex. iii. 14). If we say not of Him He was, nor He will be, but only He is, whence should any change arrive? 2. If God were changeable, He could not be the most perfect being. God is the most perfect being, and possesses in Himself infinite and essential goodness (Matt. v. 48). If He could change from that perfection, He were not the highest exemplar and copy for us to write after. 3. God were not the most simple being if He were not immutable. But God is the most simple being; for that which is first in nature, having nothing beyond it, cannot by any means be thought to be compounded; for whatsoever is so depends upon the parts whereof it is compounded, and so is not the first being. Now, God being infinitely simple, hath nothing in Himself which is not Himself, and therefore cannot will any change in Himself, He being His own essence and existence. 4. God were not eternal if He were mutable. God cannot be eternally what He was; that is, He cannot have a true eternity, if He had a new knowledge, new purpose, a new essence; if He were sometimes this and sometimes that, sometimes know this and sometimes know that, sometimes purpose this and afterwards hath a new purpose, He would be partly temporary and partly eternal, not truly and universally eternal. All changeableness implies a corruptibility. 5. If God were changeable, He were not infinite and almighty. All change ends in addition or diminution; if anything be added, He was not infinite before; if anything be diminished, He is not infinite after. All change implies bounds and limits to that which is changed; but God is infinite, "His greatness is unsearchable" (Ps. cxlv. 3). III. IMMUTABILITY IS PROPER TO GOD, AND INCOMMUNICABLE TO ANY CREATURE. 1. The changeableness of all creatures is evident. (1) Of corporeal creatures it is evident to sense. All plants and animals, as they have their duration bounded in certain limits, so while they do exist they proceed from their rise to their fall; they pass through many sensible alterations, from one degree of growth to another, from buds to blossoms, from blossoms to flowers and fruits; they come to their pitch that nature hath set them, and return back to the state from whence they sprung; there is not a day but they make some acquisition, or suffer some loss; they die and spring up every day; nothing in them more certain than their inconstancy (Rom. viii. 20). The heavenly bodies are changing their place; the sun every day is running his race, and stays not in the same point; and though they are not changed in their essence, yet they are in their place: some indeed say there is a continual generation of light in the sun, as there is a loss of light by the casting out its beams, as in a fountain there is a flowing out of the streams, and a continual generation of supply. But in man the change is perpetually visible; every day there is a change from ignorance to knowledge, from one will to another, from passion to passion, sometimes sad, and sometimes cheerful, sometimes craving this and presently nauseating it. His body changes from health to sickness, or from weakness to strength; some alteration there is either in body or mind. (2)

Spiritual natures, as angels. They change not in their being, but that is from the indulgence of God; they change not in their goodness, but that is not from their nature, but Divine grace in their confirmation; but they change in their knowledge, they know more by Christ than they did by creation (1 Tim. iii. 16).

2. No creature can be unchangeable in its nature. (1) Because every creature rose from nothing. As they rose from nothing, so they tend to nothing, unless they are preserved by God. (2) Because every creature depends purely upon the will of God. He that created them by a word, can by a word destroy them. (3) Because no creature is absolutely perfect. The perfections of all creatures are searchable, the perfection of God only is unsearchable (Job xi. 6), and therefore He only immutable.

IV. SOME PROPOSITIONS TO CLEAR THIS UNCHANGEABLENESS OF GOD FROM ANYTHING THAT SEEMS CONTRARY TO IT.

1. There was no change in God when He began to create the world in time. The creation was a real change, but the change was not subjectively in God, but in the creature; the creature began to be what it was not before.

2. There was no change in the Divine nature of the Son when He assumed human nature. There was an union of the two natures, but no change of the Deity into the humanity, or of the humanity into the Deity, both preserved their peculiar properties.

3. Repentance and other affections ascribed to God in Scripture argue no change in God.

4. The not fulfilling of some predictions in Scripture, which seem to imply a changeableness of the Divine will, do not argue any change in it. God declared what would follow by natural causes, or by the demerit of man, not what He would absolutely Himself do; and in many of those predictions, though the condition be not expressed, yet it is to be understood; so the promises of God are to be understood with the condition of perseverance in well-doing, and threatenings with a clause of revocation annexed to them, provided that men repent. And this God lays down as a general case, always to be remembered as a rule for the interpreting His threatenings against a nation, and the same reason will hold in threatenings against a particular person (Jer. xviii. 7-10).

5. God is not changed, when of loving to any creatures He becomes angry with them, or of angry He becomes appeased. The change in these cases is in the creature; there is a change in the dispensation of God, as there is a change in the creature, making Himself capable of such dispensations.

6. A change of laws by God argues no change in God, when God abrogates some laws which He had settled in the Church, and enacts others. God commanded one thing to the Jews, when the Church was in an infant state, and removed those laws when the Church came to growth (Gal. iv. 3). A mother feeds not the infant with the same diet as she doth when it is grown up. Our Saviour acquainted not His disciples with some things at one time which He did at another, because they were not able to bear them. (*S. Charnock.*)

Divine immutability:—I. IT IS AN UNDOUBTED FACT. This is clear—1. From reason. Immutability enters into the essence of our idea of Deity. 2. From nature, which in its essence seems immovable. 3. From the Bible.

II. IT IS PECULIAR TO HIMSELF. Mutation is the law of the material universe, so far as its laws are concerned. Geology shows that the history of the earth is the history of revolutions. "The mountains falling come to nought," etc. Astronomy tells of planets that once shone in the heavens, that are gone, and of new ones that appear. The vegetable and animal systems of the earth are changing every hour. Mutation is also the law of the spiritual universe. Human minds are constantly changing in thoughts, feelings, purposes, character. Angels changed. Some have fallen from heaven to hell. But God sits enthroned above all these changes, more fixed than the sun above the shifting clouds, or the rock amidst the surging waters. God alone is unchangeable.

III. IT IS A BLESSING TO THE UNIVERSE. Were God unholy, untruthful, malevolent, the universe might well pray for a change in Him. But He is eternally opposite to all this. He is infinitely holy, true, and loving, and a change in Him would be a terrible calamity. We would not have Him change. We rejoice that we can look up to Him midst all the false and morally foul and infernally malignant, and feel that there is One who is ever pure, ever true, ever merciful and good. (*Homilist.*)

A revelation of the immutability of God:—The chemist in his laboratory, as he questions Nature, may be almost said to put her to the torture when, tried in his hottest furnace, or probed by his searching analysis to her innermost arcana, she by a spark or an explosion, or an effervescence, or an evolving substance, makes her distinct replies to his investigations. And . . . in every quarter of the globe her answer is the same—so that, let the experiment, though a thousand times repeated, only be alike in all its circum-

stances, the result which cometh forth is as rigidly alike, without deficiency, and without deviation. . . . But there is a God who liveth and sitteth there, and these unvarying responses of Nature are all prompted by Himself, and are but the utterances of His immutability. They are the replies of a God who never changes, and who hath adapted the whole materialism of creation to the demonstration of it. The certainties of Nature and of science are, in fact, the vocables by which God announces His truth to the world; and when told how impossible it is that Nature can fluctuate, we are only told how impossible it is that the God of Nature can deceive us. (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*)

Ver. 28. The children of Thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before Thee.—*God's care for the posterity of His servants:*—I. **HOW FAR A BLESSING COMETH ON THE POSTERITY OF GOD'S SERVANTS.** 1. Good men do convey many temporal mercies to their relations; that is the least. God cannot satisfy Himself with doing good to the persons of His children, but He must do good to their relations; all about them fare the better for their sakes. A land fareth the better for them (2 Kings ii. 12). 2. Where the parent is in visible covenant, the children also are in visible covenant with him as soon as born. 3. If they die in infancy, we need not trouble ourselves about their salvation. God is their God (Gen. xvii. 1); and that is all the best of us has to show for his right to heaven. 4. If they live, and betray the corruption of their natures, there is more hope of them than of others. The grace of the covenant runneth most kindly in the channel of the covenant (Rom. xi. 24). 5. Among them salvation is most ordinary, though God leaveth himself a liberty to take men of an evil stock. A rose may grow upon a thorn; a slip of an ill stock may be grafted into the tree of life. 6. They are not cast off till they do even wrest themselves out of the arms of mercy. Cain excommunicated himself (Gen. iv. 16). II. **THE REASONS.** 1. That He may show the riches of His grace, which reacheth not only to the persons, but to the families of those that love Him and serve Him. Grace, like a mighty river, will be pent within no banks, but overfloweth all that a man hath, all his relations. 2. Out of an indulgence to natural affection. God hath a son of His own, and He knoweth how He loveth Him, and is acquainted with the heart of a father, and he hath planted an affection in parents to their children. Love, like a river, is descensive. III. **HOW CAN WE RECONCILE THE PROMISE WITH EXPERIENCE,** since the children of the servants of the Lord are reduced to great extremities, and are as naught and bad as others? I answer, The blessing is invisible for a great measure, and we want faith to interpret this privilege, as well as any other mentioned in the covenant. Sometimes their outward portion may be small, but, however, they are a holy seed unto God. We see the providence of God by pieces; for the present they may be in their natural condition, and the blessing doth not as yet break out in effects of grace, as it doth afterwards. We must leave the Lord to His own seasons. IV. **TO WHOM THE PROMISE WILL BE MOST EMINENTLY FULFILLED.** There are some qualifications mentioned. All God's servants have their blessings, but these especially; as, namely—1. The strict, and such as dare not offend Him (Ps. ciii. 17). 2. The just and upright. They abridge themselves of many advantages of gain which others hunt after. It is not lost (Ps. cxii. 2). 3. The merciful and charitable (Ps. xxxvii. 26). When we are urged to giving, you may object, What shall wife and children do? I answer, Give the rather; do something the more for every child, that the blessing may be entailed upon them; it is lent to the Lord, and it will be paid to your posterity: your children will not have a whit the less. 4. Those that are tender of God's institutions: the second commandment, that provideth for God's instituted worship, the sanction of it speaketh of blessings and punishments in the posterity, and deservedly. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *The perpetuity and establishment of God's servants:*—How blessed the assurance contained in this text; and if it might be understood literally, what encouragement would it afford to godly parents. But, alas! it is a lamentable fact that not a few of God's servants have to mourn, as Abraham once did, "Oh! that Ishmael might live before God." Those who are children of God by a second birth, and consequently the posterity of Zion, shall continue for ever, and their seed be established before God. I. **THE BIRTHS IN SUCCESSION.** There is no real religion in existence but that which commences with the new birth. These births, which are in constant succession, conduct to grace privileges and to a glorious inheritance. II. **THE ESTABLISHMENT OF WHICH THE TEXT SPEAKS.** The first thing which I would press upon your attention here is,

that the true Church of God must continue on earth, "despite all the rage." We pass on just to remark of this establishment and perpetuity that the holy seed cannot die. Observe, further, that the experience of these established ones, and their establishment too, is supernatural. "Shall be established before Thee." Now, I wish to bring my own establishment—for I claim to be an established Christian—to this test. Will it bear being brought before God? (*J. Irons.*)

PSALM CIII.

VERS. 1-22. Bless the Lord, O my soul.—*A song of praise*:—Like stately pillars supporting a solemn temple, three noble psalms, placed side by side, exalt the glory of Jehovah: ciii. glorifies the God of grace; civ. the God of nature; cv. the God of history. Each springs from a strong pedestal of adoration, and is crowned with a rich capital of praise. I. **THIS IS A PSALM OF HUMANITY.** It is a true psalm of life; the experience of a throbbing human heart; born of the Holy Ghost, in travail of soul, amid the exigencies of weakness and sin, into the rapture of Divine compassions. All the darkness and evil of the world it knows, but suffers these only to enhance the richness of the life with God into which we move. This great achievement is won by finding out God. II. **THIS IS HUMANITY'S PSALM OF ADORATION TO GOD.** We see His throne exalted, His kingdom stretched abroad; His angelic hosts above, His inanimate works below, called upon to praise Him. His eternal power and Godhead, His everlasting years, are set before us in great majesty. Think rightly on God, and all that is within you will bless Him; and this will bless you. If our life had more praise, it would feel less drudgery. "Forget not," unworthy source of so much ingratitude, despondency, distrust. "Count your mercies." III. **A GREAT TRUTH AND A GREAT DUTY.** 1. God offers the penitent a full redemption. 2. Accept this full redemption. (*C. A. Southgate.*) *A song of praise*:—I. **THE OBJECT OF PRAISE.** The living, not the imagined, the present, not the remote God, by His own inbreathings, called forth this tribute to Himself from a heart in which He dwelt. Sublime in His being, He is oftenest called Preserver, Judge, Father, King. In these several relations He is brought before us in this psalm. II. **THE PERSONS AND THINGS WHICH ARE SUMMONED TO PRAISE.** The grossest confounding of body and spirit then prevailed; yet the soul was a term which all understood, though few could explain. This, the direct inspiration of the Almighty, would naturally be the first to perceive and respond to Divine favours. It is bidden, therefore, to express itself. The emotional, intellectual, and even animal nature may and must each offer Him its peculiar sacrifice of thanksgiving. III. **THE REASONS FOR PRAISE.** The shower of good things had been so constant, that merely to mention some of them seemed to the enthusiastic singer to ensure within himself the response he sought. He accordingly rallies his own too sluggish soul to pour forth its meed of praise, mindful of the general blessings he had received. He was prone to forget them. All are. Ingratitude is fostered by abundance. Thanklessness is more than meanness. Themistocles sadly said of the Athenians, that when a storm arose, they sheltered themselves under him as under a plane tree, which when the weather was fair again, they would rob of its leaves and branches. So do the needy multitudes cry unto God, and helped, return not to give Him glory, save here and there a stranger. Nay, more; they selfishly use their benefits to deprive Him of that honour which is His due. It was just this sin against which Jehovah had cautioned Israel (*Deut. xxxii. 15*). And so, as if writing down the long list of gifts that he may count them, the psalmist would beget a fit return. This psalm has been called "a little Bible within the greater." It is a striking revelation of the being, character, and purpose of God. It is also a clear portrayal of the origin, doings, needs, blessings, and destiny of man. (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *A song of praise*:—I. **THANKSGIVING FOR PERSONAL BENEFITS.** 1. Thanks for forgiveness and inward healing. 2. Thanks for redemption and glory. 3. Thanks for intermediate blessings. There is a long journey from the mouth of the pit of destruction, whence God has rescued us, to the gate of glory by which God will bring us in to receive our everlasting inheritance. On that way we are not left to our own resources. He gives us the supplies needful for the journey, and ministers

the strength with which we may reach the end. II. PRAISE TO THE CHARACTER OF GOD. 1. The righteousness and judgment of the Lord (Ex. xxxiii. 13). 2. The mercy and grace of God (Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7). III. THE MEASURE OF GOD'S MERCY. 1. Heavenly greatness (ver. 11; Rom. v. 20). 2. Infinite forgiveness (ver. 12). 3. Fatherly pity (ver. 13). 4. The shortness of man's day and the eternity of God's mercy (vers. 15-17). 5. A solemn reminder (ver. 18). IV. A UNIVERSAL CALL TO PRAISE (vers. 19-22). Let us who have been forgiven, renewed in the inner man, redeemed from destruction, whose lives have been crowned with lovingkindness and tender mercy, take up the song of thanksgiving, and so, perchance, extend His mercies to those who are yet strangers to it, by setting forth His benefits as we have come to know them in our own experience. (*G. F. Pentecost, D.D.*) *A soul's song to God*:—The singer of this melody, whoever he may have been, has left behind him the valley and has climbed to magnificent heights; yea, on the suburbs of heaven, he sings with impassioned ardour of the goodness of his God, and, finding his voice inadequate to give vent to his gratitude, he summons a goodly choir—the works of God, the ministers of God, the angels of God—to accentuate the joyful strains and to make His praise glorious.

I. A BLESSED EXERCISE. Some one has said that the Christian ought to be like a horse that has bells on his head: so that he cannot go anywhere without ringing them and making music. His whole life should be in harmony; every thought should constitute a note; every word he utters should be a component part of the joyful strain. 1. The psalmist is solicitous that his praise should be spiritual. It is his soul and not his lips he addresses. He wants nothing formal, mechanical, lifeless, spiritless. 2. The psalmist also arouses himself to unreserved adoration. "And all that is within me," etc. Our nature is a many-stringed instrument, and every string is to contribute its quota to the symphony. If the soul is to be the leading singer, then every faculty of our mental, moral, and spiritual being, like a united choir, are to render the chorus. 3. The psalmist also urges himself to personal adoration. "O my soul." He begins with himself, and, albeit he goes out from himself and seeks to engage others in singing unto God, he comes back and concludes his exhortation with himself as the subject. Let the trees clap their hands, let the ocean lift up its voice, etc. "Bless the Lord, O my soul."

II. A REASONABLE EXERCISE. In praising God, we perform one of the highest and purest acts of religion. In praise, we largely eliminate the element of self, and are like the angels in performing the unpoluted service of the skies. 1. There are national benefits. 2. There are social benefits. "God setteth the solitary in families." He has placed us together so that the cup of our life might be full. What a benediction is Home! 3. But better than all others, there are spiritual benefits of which we must take strict account. These are God's greatest gifts to us. (1) Forgiveness. Mercy comes to thee full-handed. Love abundantly pardons. (2) Healing. Eyes at one time blinded by the God of this world can now see the things eternal, ears afflicted with deafness can now hear the welcome sound of God's voice, hands once sadly paralyzed can now perform the glorious business of the King, feet which dragged from sheer impotency can now run on God's errands with joyous alacrity, and faces once wearing the ugly scowl of sin now shine with the beauteous smile of God. (3) Redemption. (4) Coronation. (5) Satisfaction. (6) Rejuvenescence. (*J. Pearce.*) *Self-exhortation to worship*:—

I. WITH THE WHOLE SOUL. There are at least three immeasurable faculties within—intellect, imagination, conscience. All these should praise Jehovah, who is the True, for the intellect; the Beautiful, for the imagination; and the Righteous, for the conscience. Let all come out in praise, as all the powers of the harp come out under the touch of the master musician; as all the powers of the seed come out under the genial influence of the sunbeam. II. FOR URGENT REASONS. "All His benefits." 1. Sin is an offence; and here is forgiveness. 2. Sin is a disease; and here is healing. 3. Sin is ruinous; and here is restoration. 4. Sin is a degradation; and here is exaltation. 5. Sin is discontent; and here is satisfaction. 6. Sin is weakness; and here is invigoration. (*Homilist.*) *The saints blessing the Lord*:—You see here a man talking to himself, a soul with all his soul talking to his soul. His own soul is the first audience a good man ought to think of preaching to. Indeed, if any man desires to excite the hearts of others in any given direction, he must first stir up himself upon the same matter. I. THIS EXHORTATION IS REMARKABLY COMPREHENSIVE. 1. The unity of our nature is here bidden, in its concentration, to yield its whole self to the praise of God. No white-washed sepulchres will please the Lord,—“Bless the Lord, O my soul,”—Let the

true Ego praise Him, the essential I, the vital personality, the soul of my soul, the life of my life! Let me be true to the core to my God; let that which is most truly my own vitality spend itself in blessing the Lord. My immortal soul, what hast thou to do with spending thine energies upon mortal things? Wilt thou hunt for fleeting shadows, whilst thou art thyself most real and abiding? Raise thyself on all thy wings, and like the six-winged cherubim adore thy God. But the words suggest yet another meaning,—the soul is our active self, our vigour, our intensity. When we speak of a man's throwing his soul into a thing, we mean that he does it with all his might. My intensest nature shall bless the Lord. Not with bated breath and a straitened energy will I hush forth His praises, but I will pour them forth ardently in volumes of impassioned song. 2. But, then, David speaks of the diverse faculties of our nature, and writes, "All that is within me bless His holy name." The affections are to lead the way in the concert of praise. But the psalmist intended next to bestir the memory, for he goes on to say "forget not all His benefits." Recollect what God has done for you. Thread the jewels of His grace upon the thread of memory, and hang them about the neck of praise. For mercies beyond count, praise Him without stint. Then let your conscience praise Him, for the psalm proceeds to say, "who forgiveth all thine iniquities." Conscience once weighed thy sins and condemned thee; now let it weigh the Lord's pardon and magnify His grace to thee. Let thy emotions join the sacred choir, for thou hast many feelings of delight; bless Him "who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies," etc. Is all within you peaceful? Sing some sweet pastoral, like the twenty-third psalm. Let the calm of your spirit sound forth the praises of the Lord upon the pleasant harp and the psaltery. Do your days flow smoothly? Then consecrate the dulcimer to the Lord. Do you feel the exhilaration of delight? Then praise ye the Lord with the timbrel and dance. On the other hand, is there a contention within; does conflict disturb your mind? Then praise Him with the sound of the trumpet, for He will go forth with you to the battle. When you return from the battle and divide the spoil, then "praise Him upon the loud cymbals: praise Him upon the high-sounding cymbals." Whatever emotional state thy soul be found in, let it lead thee to bless thy Maker's holy name. II. THIS SUGGESTION IS MOST REASONABLE. The Lord has given innumerable blessings to every part of our nature; all our faculties are the recipients of blessing; therefore should they all bless God in return. Every pipe of the organ should yield its quota of sound. As all the rivers run into the sea, so all our powers should flow towards the Lord's praise. To prove that this is reasonable, let me ask one single question:—if we do not devote all that is within us to the glory of God, which part is that we should leave unconsecrated; and being less unconsecrated to God what should we do with it? III. IT IS NECESSARY. It is necessary that the whole nature bless God, for at its best, when all engaged in the service, it fails to compass the work, and falls short of Jehovah's praise. All the man, with all his might, always occupied in all ways in blessing God, would still be no more than a whisper in comparison with the thunder of praise which the Lord deserves. Do not, therefore, let us insult the Lord with half when the whole is not enough. Jesus Christ will have of us all or nothing; and He will have us sincere, earnest, and intense, or He will not have us at all. IV. IT IS BENEFICIAL. 1. It is beneficial to ourselves. To be whole-hearted in the praise of God is to elevate our faculties. Consecration is culture. To praise is to learn. To bless God is also of preventive usefulness to us; we cannot bless God and at the same time idolize ourselves. Praise preserves us from being envious of others, for by blessing God for all we have, we learn to bless God for what other people have. 2. It is also useful to others. You cannot do good more effectually than by a happy consecrated life, spent in blessing God. If there be anything that is cheerful, joyous, dewy, bright, full of heaven, it is the life of a man who blesses God all his days. This is the way to win souls. We shall not catch these flies with vinegar,—we must use honey. V. All this is PREPARATORY. If we can attain to constant praise now, it will prepare us for all that awaits us. We are harps which will be tuned in all their strings for the concerts of the blessed. The tuner is putting us in order. He sweeps his hands along the strings; there is a jar from every note; so He begins first with one string, and then goes to another. He continues at each string till He hears the exact note. The last time you were ill, one of your strings was tuned; the last time you had a bad debt, or trembled at declining business, another string was tuned. And so, between now and heaven, you will have every string set in order; and you will not enter heaven till all are in

tune. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The keynote of the year*:—David sounds the tuning-fork with this clear note—"Bless the Lord, O my soul." I. **THE BLESSED OCCUPATION.** How, then, can we bless God? 1. God blesses us by thinking well of us, and we bless God by thinking well of Him. Think deeply of what the Lord has done. Do not pass His mercies over superficially, but look into them. Do not cease to think of the covenant of electing love, of everlasting faithfulness, of redeeming blood, of pardoning grace, and all the ways in which eternal love has shown itself. 2. We also bless God when we wish Him well. Sit down and wish that all men knew God, that all men worshipped Him; and let your wishes blaze up into prayers. Wish that all idols were abolished, and that Jehovah's name would be sung through every land by every tongue. Wish well to His Church, His cause, His people, and all that concerns His glory. 3. You can bless God by speaking well of Him. Have you said anything to praise God to-day? 4. Bless His name by acts and deeds of holy service and consecration. Do it with hand, and purse, and substance, and sacrifice. II. **THE COMMENDABLE MANNER** mentioned. Half the virtue of a thing lies in the way in which it is done. Now, in the service of God, it is not only what you bring, but in what spirit you bring it. 1. That mode of blessing God to which we are called is very spiritual—a matter of soul and spirit. The music of the soul is that which pleases the ear of God: the great spirit is delighted with that which comes from our spirit. A heart that praises Him has within itself all the harmonies that He delights in. The sigh of love is to Him a lyric, the sob of repentance is melody, the inward cries of His own children are an oratorio, and their heart-songs are true hallelujahs. 2. When we bless God, the sacred exercise should be intense. Let every part of your manhood be aroused, and so aroused as to be in fine form. Give me a man on fire when God is to be praised. Let "all that is within me bless His holy name." A whole God, and a holy God, should have the whole of our powers engaged in blessing His holy name. 3. The text seems to remind me that we ought to do this repeatedly, because in my text the word "bless" occurs twice. "Bless the Lord, O my soul: bless His holy name." And in the next verse there is "bless the Lord" again. He is a triune God: render Him triune praise. III. **THE SACRED OBJECT OF THIS BLESSING—JEHOVAH.** I adore the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God that made the heavens and the earth. I worship the God that cut Rahab, and wounded the crocodile at the Red Sea, the God that led His people through the wilderness, the God that gave them the land of Canaan for a heritage. "This God is our God for ever and ever. He shall be our guide, even unto death." "Bless Jehovah, O my soul." Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, we worship Thee; we bless Thee! Do you love a holy God? While you bless Him for His mercy, do you equally bless Him for His holiness? You bless Him for His bounty, but do you feel that you could not thus bless Him if you were not fully aware that He is perfectly righteous? "Bless His holy name." Aye, when that holiness burns like fire, and threatens to devour the guilty, let us still bless His holy name! When we see His holiness consuming the great Sacrifice, we bow before the Lord in deep dread of soul, but we still bless His holy name. An unholy God! It were absurd to think of such a thing; but a thrice-holy God—let us bless and praise Him. IV. **THE SUITABLE MONITOR.** Who is it that says to David, "Bless the Lord, O my soul"? Why, it is David talking to David. The man speaks to himself. (*Ibid.*) *A song of praise*:—This psalm is a type of intelligent thanksgiving—an expression of sanctified emotion based upon sanctified thought. We see at once how this true emotion is distinguished from mere formal thanksgiving by the words, "all that is within me"—words which appeal to the very deepest feelings of the heart. But we also notice how, as so often in Scripture, a caution is associated with the highest devotional feeling at the point where one in the ardour of holy rapture forgets for the moment that he is a sinful man in a sinful world: "Bless the Lord, O my soul! yet, my soul, thou art weak and fallible, and prone to forget these very mercies which are calling forth thy praise. Forget not all His benefits." It is with blessings much as with troubles: few people, comparatively, have great catastrophes in their life, and few have great, colossal joys. There is only the daily succession of little, commonplace pleasures, and we foolishly get into the way of attaching little importance to anything which is not of the nature of a crisis. Go back over your life and pick up the happy times—the day your little child began to walk; the day your boy graduated with honour; the many evenings you have come home tired and have found rest, and light, and warmth, and pleasant words at home; how many happy

hours over a book or in conversation with a friend. These, after all, are the benefits which make up the staple of our life. They seem to be little blessings, perhaps because they are so common, yet if we number all God's benefits we shall find the sum of them very great. The psalmist specifies certain causes for thanksgiving; and the first of these is very significant—the forgiveness of his sins. And rightly, because this is essentially the first fact in all thanksgiving, and is therefore the key not only to this psalm, but to the whole great lesson of Christian thankfulness. Having thus laid this spiritual foundation for a true thanksgiving, the psalmist now passes to mention temporal mercies, yet, possibly, all along with an undertone of spiritual meaning. God healeth all diseases, redeemeth the life from death, ministers to the healthful appetite with good things, makes His child strong and vigorous as the eagle. The association of these benefits directly with God imparts to them a spiritual suggestiveness such as they may well have in this psalm. They are not only pleasant facts, but types of spiritual good. He healeth all thy diseases, but the most deadly disease of all is sin. Thy mouth is satisfied with the kindly fruits of the earth, yet man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Thy youth and vigour are renewed like the eagle's, but thou knowest too what it is to be strengthened with might by God's Spirit in the inner man. And now, through all these things—forgiveness, redeeming, renewing—God is working toward an ulterior purpose. "He crowneth thee." God's work is not finished in the forgiveness of sins. If a prince were to take a beggar out of the street in order to make him the heir to his throne, would his work be done when he had washed and decently clothed him? No. He must be trained for his position. All that kingly power and fatherly love can command must combine to fit him to be a king. The redeemed sing to Him who not only washed them from their sins, but also made them kings and priests. And as we reach the close of the psalm we find its keynote struck again. It is a psalm of thanksgiving, but it tells us that true thanksgiving can be only within the sphere of God's accepted sovereignty, from the standpoint of voluntary allegiance to Him. The foundation of all thanksgiving is that God reigns—the foundation of our individual thanksgiving is that God is our King. (*M. R. Vincent, D.D.*) *Divine goodness celebrated*:—I. THE MERCIES ENUMERATED. 1. Benefits bestowed.

(1) Personal. Life, health, food, etc. (2) Spiritual. The great gift of His Son, Gospel ordinances, Word, Spirit, etc. 2. Iniquities forgiven. (1) We are all chargeable with iniquities. (2) They are many. (3) God forgives all. (4) This forgiveness is communicated through repentance and faith in Christ. 3. Diseases healed. (1) Bodily. (2) Spiritual. 4. Redemption from destruction. 5. A crown of lovingkindnesses and tender mercies. II. THE THANKS PRESENTED. 1. He blesses God. 2. He does this with all his soul. 3. He calls upon all within him to join in the work of praise. 4. He purposes a lively remembrance of God's goodness. "And forget not all His benefits." He would keep it before his eyes; he would be constantly meditating upon it; morning and evening, and in the night watches, etc. APPLICATION. 1. The amazing extent and profusion of the Divine goodness. 2. The immense obligations we are under to serve and bless God. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *Worship*:—Worship means recognition of worth, doing homage to goodness. Even when the worth is limited, as in the case of a good man, the recognition should be cordial. When the homage is offered to Infinite Goodness all the gifts of mind and heart should be brought into play, so as to yield the maximum of worship and recognition. The Lord our God ought to be loved and served with all the heart, and soul, and strength, and mind. Unhappily, in no department of human conduct do the ideal and the reality lie further apart than in religious worship and in religious life. What then are the conditions under which it is possible to render such a service as is illustrated in this exquisite psalm? 1. Faith, or a right conception of God, a right idea of God. We must believe in a God whose character is fitted to inspire devout thought and excite religious affections of reverence, trust, gratitude, and admiration; such a God, that is to say, as is presented to our view in this psalm. He must bless God in a feeble, cold, hesitating fashion, who is all the time not sure whether his Divinity be worthy of worship. The lips say: "God is good"; the mind thinks only of the chosen objects of an arbitrary favouritism. The tongue declares: "God loveth the right"; the reason asks: "Why then do bad men prosper and good men pine?" If we are to worship and serve God aright, this antagonism between word and thought must be overcome. We must believe in a God whose name is a veritable gospel of gladness to our souls. 2. Sincerity. Everywhere in Scripture

we find great stress laid upon this condition of efficient service. The perfect man in the Bible is not the man without fault, but the man of single-hearted devotion who loves and serves God. Faults in conduct, errors of judgment, infirmities of temper there may be in abundance. The one quality that redeems, enables character is self-devotion without reserve to the Divine kingdom of the Gospel, to the cause that is worth living for. 3. Liberty. No one can say with emphasis, "O Lord, truly I am Thy servant," unless he also is able to say, "Thou hast loosed my bonds." There are bonds which keep men from being religious, or from being devoted in religion, and there are bonds springing out of religion itself by which many saintly souls are bound. Everything pertaining to religion—worship, creed, practice, tends to become an affair of routine, ceremonial, formula, mechanical habit. Fetters are forged for soul and body, for every faculty of our composite nature—for hand, tongue, mind, heart, conscience. And by such as are in bondage it is regarded as a mark of piety and sanctity to wear with scrupulous care all these grievous fetters. There are times, however, when the bondage becomes unbearable, and the human spirit rises in rebellion and asserts its liberty. Such an epoch is a veritable year of jubilee, when minds are emancipated from worn-out commonplaces, and hearts are enlarged into original and heroic love, like rivers in flood overflowing their banks, and "consciences are purged from dead works to serve the living God." It is "the acceptable year of the Lord," "acceptable" to redeemed men, though regarded with pious horror by the slaves of tradition, and "acceptable" to God also. For, be it understood, God takes no pleasure in spiritual bondage. God gets no glory from that sort of thing. His glory is bound up with liberty, for with liberty came opening of closed lips, unsealing all the fountains of religious emotion, locked up by the frosts of a dreary winter, awakening all dormant powers of thought, whereupon once more men bless God with "all that is within them." (A. B. Bruce, D.D.) *The Christian's gladness deeply rooted*:—How vigorous was the plant of joy in the writer's heart. And why? Because its roots were spread far and wide in a nourishing soil. In the experience of God's forgiving love and ever bountiful kindness to himself, in the recognition of God's sure friendliness towards all that are oppressed, in the remembrance of the vast past of His lovingkindness to His people, in a large, real, partnership of joy with "all them that fear Him," and in an exultant realization that God and gladness ruled the universe, did this cheery saint and singer root his joy. What a poor feeble plant is the happiness of many professed Christians! And no wonder—for it lacks strong and ample roots. No sufficient time or pains are given that thought and affection may spread abroad in the rich nourishing ground of God's vast goodness and lovingkindness. Take time to be happy—to be exultingly and persistently happy in God and His salvation! (C. G. M.) *The harp of the heart*:—A more wonderful instrument than any which Israel's psalmist ever struck is carried in the human breast. Upon its "ten strings" the hand of God often strikes, and evokes most sublime melody. The one hundred and third psalm was originally played upon this harp of the heart. Its keynote is, "Bless the Lord, O my soul! let all that is within me bless His holy name." At another time the strains of that harp were inexpressibly plaintive and mournful. They were like the wail of a sick child. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness. Against Thee have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." Happy is the man who can begin to rehearse for heaven by attuning his heart to the will of God. He is like the old psalmist's psaltery, every wind that Providence sends only makes music in him. Even boisterous gales of adversity call forth grand and sublime strains of resignation. When he is in trouble, he "giveth songs in the night." The kind acts he performs for others touch sweet chords in his memory. And amid all the harsh and jangled discords of this world, such a Christ-loving soul is a harp of gold making constant melody in the ear of God. (T. L. Cuyler, D.D.) *Praising with the soul*:—When the photographer sits that iron rest at the back of your head and keeps you waiting ten minutes, while he gets his plates ready, why, your soul goes out of town, and nothing remains but that heavy look! When the work of art is finished, it is you, and yet it is not you. You were driven out by the touch of that iron. Another time, perhaps, your photograph is taken instantaneously, while you are in an animated attitude, while your whole soul is there; and your friends say, "Aye, that is your very self." I want you to bless the Lord with your soul at home as in that last portrait. I saw a book wherein the writer

says in the preface, "We have given a portrait of our mother, but there was a kind of snored twinkle about her eyes which no photograph could produce." Now, it is my heart's desire that you do praise God with that sacred twinkle, with that feature or faculty which is most characteristic of you. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 2. Forget not all His benefits.—*Remembrance of God's benefits*.—I. **SOME OF THOSE THINGS WE HAVE TO REMEMBER.** 1. The pardon of sin. 2. The various providential mercies we have received during our lives. 3. The hope of a renewed life beyond the grave. II. **SOME OF THE ADVANTAGES ATTENDING THIS RECOLLECTION OF THE DIVINE GOODNESS.** 1. It will convince us of the fact of God's providential care of us. 2. It will preserve us from undue despondency under the adverse providences of God. 3. It will help us to connect the thoughts of God with every detail of our common life. III. **A FEW DIRECTIONS FOR THE DISCHARGE OF THIS DUTY.** 1. Take no step in life without a previous reference to the law of God. 2. Remember those seasons of life in which Divine providence appeared for you in a remarkable manner. All have such seasons: your first settlement in life—your going out into a situation—the choice of a trade or profession—the first definite step. 3. Remember that it will be utterly inexcusable hereafter if we pass through life without the recognition of God. (*W. G. Barrett.*) *Motives to gratitude*.—I. **SOME OF THE MERCIES WHICH WE ARE CALLED ON TO ACKNOWLEDGE.** 1. The possession of life. 2. The continuance of bodily health and enjoyment. 3. Protection from numerous dangers, and the supply of constantly returning wants. II. **THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS ACKNOWLEDGMENT SHOULD BE MADE.** 1. Grateful emotions should be felt in the heart. 2. The devout and grateful aspiration of the heart to God. 3. The offering of praise and thanksgiving in public, that others may be encouraged, and may unite with you in the delightful exercise. 4. Corresponding devotedness of life to God must accompany these feelings of the heart, and these public expressions of thanksgiving. (*Essex Remembrancer.*) *Why we should bless God for His mercies*.—I. **FOR THE SAKE OF THE MERCIES THEMSELVES.** Are they not worth it? Is there a year, a day, an hour, which is not crowded with them? II. **FOR THE SAKE OF THE GIVER.** If they came from a dear earthly friend, should we not prize them for friendship's sake? If they flowed from royal bounty, would we not be profuse in our praise and feel burdened with a sense of our obligation? But all our mercies are the gifts of God our Heavenly Father; they are the purchase of infinite love; they flow to us through Christ. We can render no returns for them save gratitude, praise and service. III. **FOR THE SAKE OF OUR EXAMPLE—OUR INFLUENCE ON OTHERS.** The tone and tint of our religion go very far in impressing others. One happy, bright, ever rejoicing and praising Christian will impart cheer and life to a whole circle, while one gloomy, despondent, ever-mourning disciple will chill a prayer-meeting, and often a whole church. IV. **FOR THEIR OWN SAKE.** It is their birthright. It is honouring to God their Saviour. It is in harmony with the spirit and purpose of the Cross. It is the spirit of the heavenly world. It is the first notes of the song everlasting that will resound through all the mansions of glory and give expression to the gratitude and harmony of the redeemed. (*Homiletic Review.*) *The believer gratefully recounting his mercies*.—I. **THE EXHORTATION GIVEN.** Show that you do not slight the benefits which God has bestowed upon you, but hold them up, and evidence your gratitude before God and the Church. 1. Publicly. 2. In private. 3. By your actions. II. **THE BENEFIT DECLARED.** "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." Not a part of them; not the greatest sins which we may have committed, to the exclusion of the less. III. **THE COMMUNICATION MADE.** "Who healeth all thy diseases." And truly our diseases are many. Look at the disease of the understanding. Although it may be brought by tuition to the comprehension of much that relates to our redemption, it is nevertheless totally incapable of comprehending Divine things, unless God heals it; for the understanding is so corrupted by sin, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them." And how is this done? The operation of the Spirit of God consisteth in letting light into the understanding—the light of life—Jesus Christ our Lord. So there is the rectification of the will. Though our wills are naturally stubborn, and we are inclined to turn to that which is opposed to God, and to turn from God, yet let but the Holy Spirit enter into our understandings and our wills, and then we find rectitude. Thus He "healeth" our will. He further gives a direction to our affections. For the affections of the heart are all alienated. But God the Holy Spirit communicates an impulse to

the soul, whereby the poisonous influences of this terrestrial atmosphere are so far counteracted that they shall not be fatal to our souls. IV. A DELIVERANCE ACCOMPLISHED. "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction"—i. e. from the consequences of sin, from the love of sin, from the fear of death; and from eternal torment. V. THE RECEPTION OF A PROMISED BLESSING. "Crowning" the soul here denotes the application of these wonderful mercies, which God has communicated to us in Christ. It signifies the enjoyment of them all. It further signifies power over sin and Satan. VI. THE GRATIFICATION OF THE SPIRITUAL APPETITE. "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things." VII. "THY YOUTH IS RENEWED LIKE THE EAGLE'S." This expression is used to signify, that saints, through the grace of God, even in old age become "fat and flourishing," "steadfast and unmovable," "fruitful in every good word and work." They "run and are not weary, they walk and do not faint"; and they rejoice in the approach of their end. (T. B. Baker, M.A.) The memory:—By "memory" two things are designated, which are really very distinct; the one is the power of bringing past experience into consciousness; and the other is the power of retaining past experience in the mind out of consciousness. Suppose I meet a friend. He says to me as we meet, "What is the Latin for door?" I answer at once, "Janua." The question has brought this Latin word at the moment into my consciousness, and we say that I remembered it. But if I am a Latin scholar there are thousands of Latin words in my mind; not in the sense of being at present in my consciousness—because all the Latin I am conscious of at the moment is "janua"—but in the sense that I am capable of bringing them into consciousness when required. Perhaps it would be a good thing if in English these two powers were designated by two words instead of one. They are in other languages. This is the difference in German between "erinnerung" and "gedächtniss"; and in French between the word "souvenir" and "mémoire." Perhaps in English the power of bringing past experience into present consciousness might be called "recollection," while the word "memory" might be reserved for the other power of keeping past experience in the mind out of consciousness. This latter power of keeping past experience in the mind out of consciousness is in some respects the most extraordinary feature in the whole realm of psychology. You might put it in this way, that at the back of our present consciousness—I mean the consciousness of the moment—there stretches within us a vast treasury or magazine in which past impressions are stored. In some people it is larger, in others smaller; in some minds it may be slight, in others well arranged. You can hardly help thinking of it, in some people, as comparable to one of the huge warehouses of this city, where the passages are like streets for length, and there are ever so many departments, but everything is in its own place. Things that are like one another are found near one another, and the master has complete hold over all his possessions. But where is this storehouse? Has it a local habitation? Is it in the head, or where is it? Perhaps there is nothing which is so antagonistic to a materialistic view of the human mind. You know materialism holds that thought is simply a movement of matter; but if so, in what form do these modifications of matter continue so as to be remembered? If they were additions to the matter of the brain, however slight, they would very soon expand far beyond the holding power of the skull. If they were marks, like tracks or other marks, they would soon be covered up, so as to be wholly irrecoverable. The spiritual view looks on mind, as a whole, as a mystery; and it refers, especially this aspect of memory, to the region of mystery, and that is obviously where it belongs; and though in the act of remembering, as perhaps in every mental act, the mind uses the brain as its organ, the brain is no more to be identified with the mind than the musical instrument is to be identified with the person who is playing. "Great," says St. Augustine in his confessions, "great is the force of memory, O my God; a large and boundless chamber! Who ever sounded the bottom thereof? . . . And men go abroad to admire the heights of mountains, the mighty billows of the sea, the broad tides of rivers, the compass of the ocean, and the circuits of the stars, and pass themselves by." The second power to which the name of memory is applied is the power of bringing past experience into present consciousness. Now, in comparison with the great magazine which I have described, this power of memory takes place on a very limited stage. It is as if in front of this silent magazine there were erected a platform, to which the images of the magazine could at any time be summoned. The summons occasionally is very slight. All that is necessary often is that a passing thought should appear on the platform, when imme-

dialoly a thought like it comes from within. Perhaps a whole bevy of them may come. For instance, one will go home at the holiday time to his native place, and will take a walk in some scene of beauty which he used to frequent in his boyhood; and as you go along at every step the images of the past will throng out on you, the faces of your companions and their merry talk. "On this seat," you will say to yourself, "I used to sit with so-and-so by my side; at that turn of the road I once thought on such a subject; across the ravine some one's voice once called to me." Images will pour out of the past on you in a perfect tumult, and you will be astonished at the vividness and minuteness of the reproduction. At other times, however, the summons has to be louder and more urgent. Sometimes, when you call for the images of the past, they will not come. Perhaps the wrong ones come, and you have to order them back to their places again. However loud you call they will not come, and you may have to go into the magazine, and search about in odd corners, and tumble things over, and at last you say, "Ah, there it is; I remember." Or perhaps after all your searching you are baffled, and you say, "No, I am beaten; I cannot remember." If we remembered everything we should be embarrassed with our riches. As a rule, older impressions push out newer ones, though in old age this law is reversed, although in every mind there are some memories that never become dim:

"Time but the impression deeper makes,
As streams their channels deeper wear."

But the rate at which memories become dim and sink out of sight is extremely different in different minds; and one of the excellences of what is called a good memory is to have a large domain of reminiscence permanently within one's grasp. Every man of great ability thus holds sway over a wide domain of acquisition and experience. Another excellence of memory is the power of committing things rapidly to heart, as we call it. This also varies exceedingly in different persons. In some it has been almost miraculous. It is said, for instance, that the scholar Scaliger committed the Iliad to heart in three weeks, and even more astonishing feats of memory have been accomplished by men who were not in the least distinguished in other directions. And a still more curious thing is that such persons have sometimes been able to retain the things they thus rapidly committed to memory. But, as a rule, what comes quickly goes quickly. An advocate, for instance, may get up quickly details of a complicated case, and perhaps along with that the outlines of a whole science, for a particular occasion, but as soon as the occasion is past, the whole thing goes out of his memory. Perhaps the most enviable excellence of memory is the copious and ready delivery of its contents as occasion requires. It is this that makes the happy historian, because, as he writes, he can recall parallel incidents from other histories. It is this that makes the good speaker, because, as he speaks, his memory calls principles and illustrations unto his mind from which he can select what is most suitable. It is this that makes the fortune of the conversationalist; whereas the speaker who has not this quality of memory makes all his best remarks to himself on the way home after the occasion is past. The conditions of a good memory are very simple and are worth remembering. The first is, that we must attend to things as they are entering the mind. The more we attend to them at the time they are entering the mind, the more easily will we remember. Then, secondly, we remember what we have repeatedly attended to. The oftener we think of things, the more likely are we to remember them. But most important of all is emotion—to mix things as they enter the mind with emotion. Now, this will easily guide us to the religious use of memory, and I cannot help regarding it as a fortunate circumstance that we are discussing this subject to-day, because there is no day so consecrated to memory as the last Sabbath of the year. "Forget not all His benefits." That is the first religious use of memory. I am sure none of us can look back over the past year, however carelessly, without observing how good God has been to us, to our families, to our Church; but we shall remember these benefits the better the more we attended to them at the time when they happened. Even, however, if we did not attend to them then, we can compel the memory to give them up. We can go into the magazine which I described, and search for what we have lost or forgotten. We can go back to the beginning of the year, and trace downwards till to-day the footsteps of our Almighty Guide. Then the other great religious use of memory, especially on a day like this, is

to remember our sins. Some of them, like God's mercies, can be seen the moment we turn our eyes in that direction, because all of us during the year have committed some sins that burn in the memory. Others may need to be called up out of the place where they are loitering because at the time they were not much observed, our consciences not being keen. It is only as we look back on a day like this, over an important stretch of life, that we see how little use we have made of golden opportunities; how little we have grown; how little we have done; how seldom we have prayed. It is no pleasing task thus to recall our sins of the past, but it may be a very salutary one. Better to recall them now than to recall them in a place of woe. Do you remember the first word spoken to one in that place? What did Abraham say to the rich man? It was, "Son, remember." Memory is the worm that dieth not. (*J. Stalker, D.D.*) *Count up your mercies*.—I. THE PHILOSOPHY, WHICH UNDERLIES ALL TRUE PRAISE OF God, is exceedingly slender in its analysis; there is no ponderous weight or tedious intricacy in its development. 1. Grateful thanksgiving is the most reasonable of all human duties, for the earliest instincts of our redeemed nature turn us towards the immediate acknowledgment of our vast spiritual favours received. The common courtesies and interchanges of civilities in life require the outward expression of gratitude. 2. This decent duty is easily performed. Peace is very uncertain and hard to attain, for the devil is continually coining out accusations against each believer. Repentance in ourselves has sometimes to be sought carefully, and with as many tears; for the heart of man remains stony, and is frequently in exposure by reason of regnant corruption. Gratitude is so spontaneous and natural, that a generous and manly soul has often to check its profuse outflow by some external force of reserve. It is actually harder to repress it than to exercise it; one is compelled to be sullen, morose, or malicious, in keeping it back. 3. Praise is the oldest duty in performance on the records of the race. Before faith was required in the human heart, before there was the least reason for repentance, when our first parents dwelt in primal purity within the undefiled precincts of Paradise, even then they cherished the spirit of thankfulness, and sang their songs of simple adoration. Hence the privilege of "blessing" the Lord is older than justification, older than sanctification, older than prayer, older than sacrifice. 4. Grateful praise is the longest-lived of all human obligations. It is a duty and a privilege which will never end. As the supreme truths of celestial knowledge, and the supreme felicities of glorified enjoyment, which God means to give to the redeemed, are disclosed, our souls will assuredly swell with a fresh enthusiasm, our voices will grow tremulous in the expression of a new exultation. Thanksgiving is to enter into the serene perpetuity of eternal communion with each other and with God. II. WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES WHICH ACCRUE FROM THE HABIT OF GRATEFUL PRAISE? 1. We need not go far to find vivid illustrations of the effects produced upon one's temper and heart by a songful spirit of grateful acknowledgment. We will admit that there is much to test human patience all around us; but the question is, What are we going to do about it? We can treat the world in one of two ways. We can carp at it, and grow morose in our feeling; or we can rise cheerfully above it, and diligently seek for those kind mitigations which Divine wisdom has made to accompany all our vexatious experiences. We can wear our lives out discontentedly, finding fault with everything that is an annoyance to us; or we can labour trustfully on, recognizing the good, and ingeniously endeavouring to counteract and balance the evil. What we think, settles what we shall become. 2. But now add to this, that a determinate cheerfulness of praise really seems to modify work. Gratitude transmutes our disciplines into evidences of love. It is related of one of the most distinguished clergymen in England, that he always read at the family altar, on Saturday evening, this one hundred and third psalm. But his wife died. For a moment he waited; and then he said quietly, "I see no reason why we should not choose our usual song to-night." There is in the writings of old Thomas Fuller one curiously quaint paragraph, which I have often wanted to quote: "Lord, my voice by nature is harsh and untunable, and it is vain to lavish any art to better it. Can my singing of psalms be pleasing to Thy ears which is unpleasant to my own? Yet, though I cannot chant with the nightingale, or chirp with the blackbird, I had rather chatter with the swallow, yea, rather croak with the raven, than be altogether silent. Hadst Thou given me a better voice, I would have praised Thee with a better voice; now what my music wants in sweetness, let it have in sense—singing praises with my understanding. Yea, Lord, create in me a new heart,

therein to make melody, and I will be contented with my old voice, until, in Thy due time, being admitted unto the choir of heaven, I have another, more harmonious, bestowed on me." He does the best work, in this moping, croaking age, whose cheerful face gives the benediction of a happy heart wherever a heavy step is treading along just behind him. Think of the martyr Ignatius exclaiming, "Oh, would that I could do what would make all the earth adore Thee, and psalm to Thee." (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Yesterday's mercies forgotten*:—What recollections have we of the sunsets that delighted us last year? The energy of an impression fades from the memory and becomes more and more indistinct every day. We constantly affirm that the thunderstorm of last week was the most terrible one we ever saw in our lives, because we compare it, not with the thunderstorm of last year, but only with our faded and feeble recollection of it. (*John Ruskin.*) *Insufficient gratitude*:—It is no less certain, however, that we are not so wide awake to the wrongfulness of insufficient gratitude. We are all prone to let ourselves off too easily in this respect. We let slip the memory of benefits conferred, or we fail to see our obligation for acts of unselfish service rendered to us by our best friends. We take things too much as a matter of course, not only in human relationships, but in the sphere of religion. Dante has a place in the Inferno for those who were sullen and gloomy in God's sweet air; failing to perceive or acknowledge the Divine benefits on earth, they were condemned to continue sullen in the under-world. We are not ungrateful, but our gratitude costs us little. (*R. J. Campbell.*)

Ver. 3. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.—Forgiveness and healing.—I. FORGIVENESS AND HEALING ARE MEN'S GREATEST NEEDS. 1. Because without them there can be no upward spiritual progress. Man's course is downward until he is divinely forgiven and healed. The accumulating power of sin. 2. Because without them there can be no truly happy service for God. 3. Because without them, existence itself must ultimately become intolerable. II. FORGIVENESS AND HEALING ARE RECEIVED FROM GOD. 1. He only has the right to forgive and heal. 2. He only has the power. 3. With God is the disposition to put forth His power and assert His right to forgive and heal. III. FORGIVENESS AND HEALING ARE, IN THE KINGDOM OF GRACE, INSEPARABLY CONNECTED. Whom God forgives He heals (1 John i. 9). IV. FORGIVENESS AND HEALING, WHEN POSSESSED, INSPIRE DEEPEST GRATITUDE TO THEIR AUTHOR. (*W. Smith.*) *The pardon of sin*:—First, we are blessed with the pardon of sin, and then we bless God for the pardon of sin. I. Forgiveness is a PRIMARY BLESSING. 1. We never enjoy a mercy as a mercy from God till we receive the forgiveness of sins. 2. There are many mercies which are not given at all, and cannot be given, until first of all the pardon of sin has been bestowed. The application of the blood of sprinkling must be felt, the cleansing power of the atonement must be known, or the rest of the blessings of the covenant will never reach us. 3. And well may the Lord place this mercy first, because when it comes it ensures all the rest. The day-dawn is always followed by the clearer light. 4. The pardon of sin comes first, that it may be seen to be an act of pure grace. If any other blessing had preceded it, our legal spirits would have dreamed of merit and fitness: if any attainment had been reached by us before the forgiveness of sins was given, we might have been tempted to glory in self; but now we perceive that God forgives our sins before He heals our moral diseases, and therefore there is no room for pride to set her foot upon. II. Forgiveness is a PRESENT BLESSING. 1. This privilege the believer has actually obtained. As many as have looked to Christ upon the cross are now justified by faith, and have peace with God. This is a matter of present fact, and not of mere hope. 2. This present mercy is perpetually bestowed—He still forgiveth our iniquity; there is perpetuity in it. At this very moment I may be mourning my sin, but God is forgiving it. Even in the holiest deeds we do there is still sin, but even then God is still forgiving. 3. This mercy of pardon is knowingly received. Nobody ever sings over uncertain blessings. 4. This present blessing is immediately efficient, for it secures us a present right to all that is involved in being pardoned. Then seek it at once. III. Forgiveness is a PERSONAL BLESSING. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." Our Lord is a blessed God to forgive anybody, but that He should forgive me is the greatest feat of His mercy. A good brother wrote me the other day, "Mercy had reached its zenith when it saved me." He thought so of himself, and we may each one think the same of his own case. "But may we know this person-

ally?" saith one. I answer, "Yes." 1. Some of us know that God has forgiven us, because we have the character which He describes as being forgiven. In repentance, in confession of sin, in forsaking sin, and in faith in our Lord Jesus, we have the marks of pardoned sinners, and these marks are apparent in our souls. 2. Moreover, if you have any doubt about whether the Lord forgives you now, it will be well for you to make sure that you accept His way of salvation. It is by faith in His dear Son. 3. We know that we are at this moment forgiven, because we at this moment give to the Lord Jesus Christ that look which brings forgiveness. IV. FORGIVENESS IS A PERFECT BLESSING. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." He does not remove the great ones, and leave the little ones to rankle; not the little ones, and leave one great black one to devour us, but "all" of them He covers and annihilates with the effectual atonement made by His dear Son. Now, I want you to obtain this pardon as a complete thing. Do not rest till you have it: you will never know true peace of mind until it is yours. V. FORGIVENESS IS A PRICELESS BLESSING. Though it could not be purchased by a life of holiness or by an eternity of woe, forgiveness has been procured. This pardon which is freely preached to-day to all who believe in Jesus hath been purchased, and there is He that procured it, sitting at the right hand of God the Father, a man like unto ourselves, but yet equal with the ever-blessed One. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The disease of sin, and its remedy*.—I. WHY SIN IS CALLED A DISEASE. 1. As it destroys the moral beauty of the creature (Gen. i. 31; vi. 5; Ps. xxxviii. 7; Lam. iv. 1). 2. As it excites pain (Ps. li. 8; Acts ii. 37; 1 Cor. xv. 56). 3. As it disables from duty (Isa. i. 5; Rom. vii. 18). 4. As it deprives men of sound reason (Isa. v. 20). 5. As it leads to death (Rom. vi. 1). II. THE VARIETY OF SINFUL DISEASES TO WHICH WE ARE SUBJECT (Mark vii. 21-23; Rom. i. 29; Gal. v. 19). III. THE REMEDY BY WHICH GOD HEALS THESE DISEASES. 1. His pardoning mercy through the redemption of Christ (Isa. liii. 5; Rom. iii. 23). 2. The sanctifying influences of grace (Ezek. xxxvi. 25; Heb. x. 16). 3. The means of grace (Eph. iv. 11-13). 4. The resurrection of the body (1 Thess. iv. 16). 5. The case of an ignorant, insensible sinner is very deplorable. 6. The case of a real Christian is very hopeful. (1) His sinful disease is radically healed. (2) The completion of his cure is certain. 7. The glory of Christ, as the Physician of souls, is great indeed. (The Study.) *Forgiving mercy*.—I. FORGIVENESS IS THE CROWN OF GOD'S BENEFITS (vers. 2, 3). Think of all God's common daily mercies, and all God's special care and blessing, and then show why, in view of this life and the next, His forgiving seems to be the best blessing of all. II. FORGIVENESS IS THE FIRST OF MANY NEW BENEFITS (vers. 4, 5). When God forgives, He follows on to give temporal blessings. His providences wait on His mercies. Illustrate in Job, and in David. III. FORGIVENESS TAKES EVEN THE REMEMBRANCE OF SIN AWAY. See figures in (vers. 11, 12, 13). They help us to realize how complete God's forgiveness is. He remembers our sins no more against us for ever. Show how true this is of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Then we may well be happy in our forgiving, merciful God, and sing psalms of praise to Him. Only let us always remember that God's forgiving us is made to depend on our forgiving others. (Robert Tuck, B.A.) *The great Physician*.—I. DISEASE ITSELF AFFORDS US ONE OF OUR RICHEST LUXURIES. It is impossible to describe, to one who has not known the joy of a timely release from the fierceness of disease, the exquisite enjoyments of such an hour. And in this we see the goodness of God. "Sorrow may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." There may remain still great weakness, and much, that in other circumstances, would be called distress; but this is all forgotten amid the luxury of a temporary release, and a hope still better. II. WE SEE DIVINE GOODNESS IN THE EFFORTS THAT NATURE MAKES TO EFFECT HER OWN CURE. By "nature" I mean the unseen operation of His hand who healeth all our diseases; I mean God Himself, operating by certain laws which He has indented upon every part of our frame. The cure is effected without a miracle, but not without the finger of God. David, when diseased, was cured like other men, by the laws of matter, and by human means; still he takes occasion to bless and praise Jehovah as Him who healeth all our diseases. III. THE GREAT VARIETY OF SPECIFICS FOUND IN EVERY PART OF THE CREATION, FOR THE VARIOUS DISEASES OF MEN, SPEAK THE DIVINE GOODNESS. Probably there is not a plant or shrub that grows but yields us either food or medicine. The severest poisons are, at length, in many instances, considered the safest and speediest remedies. The mineral and vegetable kingdoms are constantly pouring their treasures into the chamber of distress. And there seems an almost

inexhaustible variety. Hence they furnish a specific for every disease. Now in all this how good is God! He could have sent the plague without the remedy, the poison without the antidote. It would be our shame if we could withhold our praise, and yet live in a world so full of the glory of God, where every plant, and shrub, and mineral speaks His praise, and every disease yields to the specific He prescribes. IV. IT STILL IS TRUE THAT IT IS GOD WHO HEALETH ALL OUR DISEASES. But for that wisdom which He has given to man, physicians could never have known the nature or the virtue of those plants and minerals which are their appointed remedy. And His blessing makes the means effectual. REMARKS. 1. A period of recovery from sickness should be a season of praise. 2. The life that God has made His care should be devoted to Him. 3. We see why many have praised the Lord upon the sick bed. It is not a place so destitute of comforts as many have supposed. 4. The subject will lead us to reflect with the psalmist on the wondrous mechanism of our natures. (D. A. Clark.) *Divine healing*:—The Almighty is over and over again presented as the source of strength, and as the supreme cause of health. Not without reason is He termed "Jehovah that healeth"; and various are the references to His healing mercies (Ex. xv. 26; Jer. xvii. 14; xxx. 17; Ps. cxlvii. 3; Isa. xxx. 26). Also, when Jesus appeared as the Messiah fulfilling the hopes of the Hebrews, He healed the broken-hearted, bound up wounds and gave sight to the blind. The direct agency of the highest of all beings is brought out in the case of the woman who for twelve years had suffered and had spent her living on physicians, and only found relief when she touched the border of Christ's garment (Luke viii. 41). In this example we have only another version of Abraham's prayer (Gen. xx. 17). Now, however men may argue, the scientific mind is at one with the Bible. Life in all its phases is a mystery. While conditions and aspects of its beginnings and development have been fixed and determined, birth and death defy explorers, and that which fluctuates between the two—disease—is hardly less obscure. God the ultimate healer will be more fully recognized as science attains to its maturity. To Him, then, should the honour be attributed when we are restored from the bed of languishing and pain. That is His due. The tribute was paid Him by the ancients in adorning the altars with votive offerings, and a similar practice obtained in the Middle Ages, and in some countries has been continued to this day. I have seen altars in Europe burdened with models of the limbs and organs that have been healed by Divine mercy. It would be well for Christians in their prayer-meetings to tell how God has helped their bodies as well as their souls. Were we to speak more in His praise we would encourage more to look to Him for restoration. But His being the healer does not preclude the use of means in overcoming disease. These means may be infinitely varied and may border on the inscrutable, but they are real just the same. When it is said a virtue went out of Christ to cure the woman, that influence was the means employed, and though inexplicable, may at least suggest to thought the transmission of something from God when the sick are made whole. That certain states of feeling are remedial agencies, that they who rouse such feelings are useful, that cherished beliefs will operate on the body, and that moral improvement has in itself a curative value, is becoming more and more apparent. Xavier, who found Simon Rodriguez sick at Lisbon, chronicles the fact that the joy excited in the patient broke up the fever; and Melancthon was operated on in a similar way by the appearance of Luther. Mr. Herbert Spencer illustrates the great power of mind over body, when he shows how intense feeling brings out great muscular force. Dr. Berdoe has shown us a gouty man throwing away his crutches and running to escape an infuriated animal. I have never doubted that the mind can affect in a wonderful way the sick. The story of the Prince of Orange at the siege of Buda, 1625, sending for mock medicine for his troops dying of scurvy is well known. He brought into camp a decoction of camomile, wormwood and camphor, which he gave out as so precious a medicine that a drop or two in a gallon of water would suffice. The restoration of the men to health was due to imagination, not physio. And the same may be said of cures wrought at the hands of monks or pious souls in the past, and at the shrines of Lourdes and Old Orchard in the present. It will not do to ascribe a desire to deceive to all the so-called miracle workers. While impositions are discernible, still many were sincere, and God evidently used their sincerity to His own glory. The cures wrought by the Jansenists at St. Midard, by the Ultramontanes at La Galette and Lourdes, and by Father Ivan at St. Petersburg, have been neither few nor slight. A curious instance of the power of mind wa

have in what was known as the cure of the King's evil by royal touch. Charles II. touched nearly 100,000 persons, and many were healed. And coming nearer to our own time we find William III., while practising the same act, offering a different prayer: "God give you better health and more sense." Among curative agencies a very high rank must be assigned to the moral and the spiritual. When a man abstains from demoralizing habits, excessive feeding and drinking, the effect will be discernible in his appearance. While the cure is like that wrought by sanitation, back of it is the ideal of a pure manhood. When the spiritual is supreme, and Christians have little time to think of themselves or of their cares, and when they are fully occupied with celestial visions, they usually keep well and hearty. At such times we understand the text: "Thou art the health of my countenance and my God." But among the means owned of God are we to class what is known as material remedies? St. Ambrose insisted that "the precepts of medicine are contrary to celestial science, watching or prayer"; only it must be remembered that this was maintained as necessary to the efficacy of relics as remedial agencies. Calstadt for different reasons sympathized with Ambrose. He declared that "whoso shall fall sick shall use no medicine or physic, but commit his case to God, praying that His will may be done." To which Luther made answer: "Do you eat when you are hungry?" And as only an affirmative reply could be given, he continues: "Even so you may use physic, which is God's gift just as meat and drink is, or whatever else we use for the preservation of life." When Jesus says that "they who are whole need not a physician, but they who are sick," He lends His countenance to the medical science. We find medicine distinctly recognized in the following places: (Prov. xvii. 22; Jer. xxx. 13; xlv. 11; Ezek. xlvii. 12). Paul commends to Timothy a little wine for his stomach's sake and his infirmities. He does not regard it as an invalidation of faith in God to use a remedy. Neither did Isaiah (2 Kings xx. 7). When Ezekiel beholds the vision of "Holy Waters," he says the leaf of the tree which grows on either side of the river shall be for medicine. Here is a distinct recognition of medicinal virtues in nature. Why should the "balm of Gilead" be praised, why should the mollifying quality in ointment be referred to by Isaiah, if all such means reflected on and were inimical to Divine healing? The case of Asa, "who sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians" (2 Chron. xvi. 12) is sometimes adduced against this supposition. But his error did not lie in employing doctors, but in trusting to them. Had he shown in his sickness the same discrimination he evinced in his attack on Ethiopia, when he cried out (2 Chron. xix. 11), he might have overcome disease as he did his foe in the field. If God is the supreme healer what line of conduct should we, especially Christians, pursue? Surely we ought to do all in our power to provide for the comfort and recovery of the afflicted. It is written (Ps. xli. 3) that "God will make all his bed"—the sick man's—"in his sickness." But that surely does not mean that we are not to make it too. The hand of God is precious to smooth our pillow; and a wife or daughter's or mother's is not an unnecessary second. We want to carry the spirit of Christ into our contact with disease. With that came more humanitarianism in the past. Establishments for the cure of the sick appeared at an early day in the east; the Infirmary of Monte Cassino and the Hôtel-Dieu were opened at Lyons in the sixth century, and in the seventh the Hôtel-Dieu in Paris; and it is to the credit of Napoleon III. that while he was building the Opera House in Paris, he was rebuilding, on a magnificent scale, the hospital of that sacred name. In this department wonderful has been the progress. We have everything apparently new from such institutions to the Ambulance Corps and the Genevan Cross. But more and more should these arrangements be permeated with the Christ spirit. This faith in God as the Divine Healer should lead to prayer for the sick. Many answers have come to us. I can testify to as many notable instances of recovery from disease as perhaps any other minister. And yet we must never forget that Jesus, overcome by agony, trembling on the verge of death, while praying for deliverance, exclaimed, "Thy will be done." Complete reconciliation and harmony with God is worth more than a few years, more or less, of existence in the world. The devout soul will realize that He is healing all its diseases, and that the final health of the body can only come through the collapse of death leading to the glorious resurrection. But until then, I expect, in proportion as God is exalted, by faith and science the approach of that time when sickness shall largely disappear, and when (Isa. lxx. 20). And when that season comes health and holiness, both, under God, the product of human agencies, shall

preserve the race, and the burden of earth's anthem be: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases." (*G. C. Lorimer, D.D.*) *What follows forgiveness*:—At one of his mission meetings Gipsy Smith recently told a story about his own little ones who had played truant, and in trying to be stern he sent them to bed without any supper. He passed the rest of the evening tiptoeing about, listening, and wondering what the effect of the punishment would be. Finally, not hearing any sound, he made his way to the bedchamber. As he leaned over the bed, one of the little fellows said: "Is that you, father?" and sobbed out, "Father, will you forgive me?" "Yes, my son, yes—yes, I will forgive you, for I love you." "Then, father, take me down to supper." This was used by Gipsy Smith to point the lesson that once we are forgiven by our Heavenly Father, we have the blessedness of sharing intimate communion with Him. After the kiss of reconciliation the erstwhile prodigal breaks again the "bread enough and to spare" of his Father's house. (*Sunday Circle.*) *Forgiveness possible*:—No debt need be carried forward to another page of the book of our lives, for Christ has given Himself for us, and He speaks to us all—"Thy sins be forgiven thee." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Christ forgiving sin*:—There is much need of asserting the great truth that God can forgive sin. Science is a teacher much honoured now, and science says that it is as impossible morally as physically to put things back where they were before; as impossible to restore a sinful heart as to make whole a broken shell. Under such teaching has grown up a modern religion whose god is fate, whose hope is dust for the body and nothingness for the soul, whose heaven is but to be an influence in others' lives. The sect is not large, but skilful of speech in philosophy, poetry, fiction. One of them speaks through the hero of a tale: "I hate that talk of people as if there was a way of making amends for everything. They'd more need to see that the wrong they do can never be altered. It's well we should feel that life's reckoning we can't make twice over; there's no real making amends in this world, any more than you can mend a wrong subtraction by doing your addition right." And the age may need this lesson. We have been guilty of making sin too slight and punishment too soft. "It is good," sing the old Eumenides in *Æschylus*, "that fear should sit as the guardian of the soul, forcing it into wisdom—good that men should carry a threatening shadow in their hearts under the full sunshine; else how should they learn to revere the right?" True, but God has thought it also good to give His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Far diviner is the message of *Hawthorne* in "The Scarlet Letter," where the badge of sin and shame becomes the charmed symbol of a pure and helpful life. Nature knows nothing of forgiveness; science and conscience as well assure us it is impossible. They speak for their own realms, and truly. But, "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." How God takes care of the disaster wrought by our sin is one of the hidden things. That He will blot out our transgression as a thick cloud vanishes in the sun is His radiant promise. It is a forgiveness which not only enables us to enter heaven; it is heaven, or else, for our race, there were no heaven. God can forgive sins, and God alone; and Jesus is "God with us" forgiving sins and sending penitents away praising with a song that angels could not sing. (*Christian Age.*) *The greatness of Divine mercy*:—"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." God's mercy is so great, that it forgives great sins to great sinners, after great lengths of time, and then gives great favours and great privileges, and raises us up to great enjoyments in the great heaven of the great God. As *John Bunyan* well says, "It must be great mercy, or no mercy; for little mercy will never serve my turn." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Pardon precedes crowning*:—"We cannot expect God to crown a man with lovingkindness and tender mercies while still he is dead in sin, and lives in daily dread of a second death—a death eternal. A coronation for a condemned criminal would be a superfluity of inconsistency. To crown a hardened convict who lies in the cell at Newgate awaiting his execution, would be a cruel mockery. How could it be that God should wreath a chaplet of favours for a man who has refused His mercy and wilfully abides under His wrath on account of unconfessed and unpardoned sin. (*Ibid.*) *The need of a healer*:—"Who healeth all thy diseases." "Do you think that was necessary? If my Lord came to me and wiped out the guilt, annulled the debt, would not redemption be perfect?" If you take sin into your life, all the powers are affected. Conscience is seared, the fineness of the judgment is lost, the river of the affections becomes foul, the will loses its erectness. I saw

the Metropolitan Tabernacle a few days after the great fire there, and noticed that every one of the pillars in the building had received a wrench, a twist. "When the fire of sin breaks out in my body every pillar of my life gets a wrench." (*J. H. Jowett.*)

Ver. 4. Who redeemeth thy life from destruction.—Redeemed from destruction.—By destruction here he meaneth, not only the danger of being killed by his enemies, but also and especially the state of condemnation and perishing in God's wrath, from which the man justified is redeemed by the Mediator. 1. The benefit of preservation from eternal death is given unto the man, to whom all iniquity is forgiven; for here these benefits are joined the one with the other. 2. The deliverances which are given to believers, as well bodily as spiritual, temporal as well as everlasting, do come to us in the way of redemption, made by our kind and faithful kinsman, Jesus Christ. 3. A man must be sensible of the merit of sin, and see himself in the state of perdition for sin, before he can put a right estimation upon his delivery; he must count himself a lost man till the Lord's Redeemer deliver him. 4. The favour which God bestoweth upon a believer is not in giving unto him one or two, or some few evidences of His love and mercy, but in a constant compassing of him on every hand, in everything; so that He shall turn him about to what act He will, he is circled round about with love and mercy, supplying wants, preventing, or mitigating and seasoning, his troubles, reclaiming him from sin, and directing him in God's way. 5. The evidences of God's kindness and mercy to a man is not only a means to glorify God, but also a means to our respect and honour; yea, and a crown of glory on the head of the believer, in the sight of all who look upon him. (*D. Dickson.*)

Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies.—*A present crown.*—One Sunday morning we visited a poor old man of 97 years. He told us two gentlemen had each promised him a sovereign, if he lived to be 100. "I wish they'd give 'em to me now," he said. God promises us crowns in the future; but we are also crowned with lovingkindness in the present. (*W. Luff.*) *Divine mercy.*—He who hath said to us, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," has given us a grant of all needful good in that one sentence of His love. Like the comet's nucleus, which bears a streaming train of light behind it, so doth forgiveness draw along with it a far-reaching glory of boundless favour. Well may this blessing be set first, since it carries all the rest in its loins.

"When dreadful guilt is done away
No other fears we know;
That hand, which scatters pardons down,
Shall crowns of life bestow."

(*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 5. Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.—Like eagles.—"Like the eagle." I think it is helpful to contrast this figure with the figures used in the previous psalm. There we have a psalmist upon whom the renewing ministry has not yet been wrought, and he lies prone in the grip of a deep depression. "I am like a pelican of the wilderness"; this is the very figure of gloom and desolation. "I am like an owl of the desert"; he finds a fitting symbol in the bird which dwells among the ruins, and which finds no comfort in the light of day.

"The moping owl doth to the moon complain."

And yet a third figure is used by this melancholy singer: "I am like a sparrow alone on the housetop." In his loneliness he finds a suitable emblem in the bird which has lost its mate or its young, and which abides on the house-top silent, lonely, and desolate. Now turn away from these dark and dismal figures to the one of my text. Now my text makes the inspiring declaration that the eagle type of life is the divinely-purposed possession of every man. Men and women who are in covenant with the Almighty will not appear to the world to be kinsmen of the owl and the pelican. They will rather be significant of the eagle. The eagle is, perhaps, our most majestic bird; even to see it in captivity is to behold a creature of splendid and royal build. This is the bird which is to typify the life that is in communion with God. First of all, the life will be eagle-winged. There is nothing more striking about the eagle than its mighty power of wing. The bird

can soar away into uplifted mountain vastnesses, and far beyond the highest summit it can mount into the glorious blue. "They shall mount up with wings as eagles!" And our life is never completed, and we have never really come to our own, until we are in possession of these wings. It is that wing power which marks the maturity of our life, and by which we enter into our splendid destiny. Now, this wing power is just the ability to rise above our circumstances, and to soar into the "heavenly places" in Christ. We are all familiar with men and women who never get above their immediate surroundings. Such experiences have been the lot of all of us. Our immediate surroundings become our prisons, and we sit down and moan in the midst of our captivity. Life with God is life with the eagle wing; in the strength of that wing we can rise above our prison house into the purer, larger air of the Spirit. I can rise above my temptations. When snares are crowding round me, and when the enemy comes quite near, it is purposed that I should just "take wings" and find myself far above them. "Flee as a bird to your mountain!" We make a great mistake when we confront every temptation in the attitude of fight. Most of our temptations could be conquered by quietly rising into a higher sphere. And we can rise above our sorrows. And so it is with our worries and cares. Too many of us just creep and crawl, or we sit among them in cold complaint. Our destined inheritance is the heights. It is the eagle's wings we want. "Give me the wings of faith to rise!" And life in God will not only be eagle-winged but eagle-eyed. What a piercing, wide-casting eye is the dowsy of the eagle! When we want a suitable figure to express our conception of a Gladstone's eye, or a Kingsley's eye, or an Emerson's eye, we go to the eagle for it. And this eagle vision is to be the gift of every soul which is in sacred covenant with God. But how this book bemoans our feeble eye. "Your eyes are dim." "Ye cannot discern." "Eyes have ye, but ye see not." "Ye are blind." But the book not only indicts us for our short and imperfect sight; it offers us the gift of splendid vision. If we had the eagle eye two things would happen. First of all, we should discern the significance of the immediate. But, secondly, we should have a sensitive discernment of the remote. We should be the first to see the little cloud on the horizon which betokens the coming rain. We should be the first to catch the faint dawning which is the herald of the coming day. No one would be before us. With the eagle eye we should get the first glimpses of the coming of the Kingdom. Now, how are these gifts of the eagle wing and the eagle eye to be obtained? They are to become ours by the ministry of renewal. God will so re-fashion us that in our recovered strength we shall be like the eagle. The words which immediately precede my text describe to us two of the ways by which this renewal is to be effected. We are to be made young by the repair of diseased tissue. "He healeth all thy diseases." The gracious Lord will lay hold of powers upon which decay has fastened, and He will renew the dead matter, and make it sound again. "God by His mercies recovers His people from their decays." Decay so easily sets in! Our highest powers so speedily become destroyed. As we grow older our sympathies are apt to shrivel, and love is apt to wither, and hope loses its youthful strength. And, secondly, He will feed the sound tissue. "He satisfieth thy mouth with good things." He will remove the disease, and He will provide suitable nutriment to sustain the powers He hath renewed. And the nutriment will satisfy, and we shall have no restless and tiring cravings. "Our inner man is renewed day by day." And so in our spirits our youth can be recalled, and in strength of wing and power of eye we can be like the eagle. In old age we can have daily surprises, as we make daily discoveries of "the unsearchable riches of Christ." The whole secret of the renewal so far as we are concerned is just here; we must "wait upon the Lord." "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *The secret of perpetual youth:*—These words suggest three points from which to view the great problem of human life, namely, those of the "Good," the "perfection of life," and "Satisfaction." Each of these represents an aspiration of human life, and corresponds to a conviction of what should be, and must be, in a world with an infinite wisdom, power and love on the throne of it. I. THE "GOOD" FOR MAN MUST BE FOUND IN LIVING TRUST IN, AND UNION WITH, GOD. As in the case of the words, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it," we have here an allusion to the relation of birds in the nest to the parent-bird. Man does not find the "good" for his life until he enters into a living spiritual relationship with God. II. THROUGH THE ATTAINMENT OF THE "GOOD" MAN OBTAINS "PERPETUAL YOUTH." There can be no old age or decay for those into whom the life of

God is flowing, for those that drink out of the fountain of good. The inner life is ever young, and grows more beautiful with the advance of time. III. IN THIS DIVINELY-SUSTAINED AND EVER NEW LIFE MAN FINDS FULL SATISFACTION. Who satisfieth thy mouth, etc. "Fulness of life" only can bring "fulness of joy," and "fulness of life" can be found only "in the presence of God." Satisfaction cannot be full unless it is permanent. "Fulness of joy" cannot be asserted unless we are able to add "Pleasures for evermore." Eternal youth is the fount of eternal joy. In finding God man finds himself, finds life, finds joy. A "real satisfaction" even in this world of change; by and by "in God's presence" fulness of joy. (*John Thomas, M.A.*) *The renewal of youth*:—I. A STRIKING FIGURE. The eagle is an emblem of the prosperous Christian—1. In the penetration of its eye. 2. In the elevation of its flight. 3. In the swiftness of its motion. If the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, we cannot be dull and inactive. 4. In the dignity of its appearance. The grace of God elevates the mind and ennobles the soul. Christians are dignified in character, principles, pursuits, duties, ends and aims, and destinies. II. A PLEASING FACT. There are times when God graciously appears on behalf of His people, in such a way, that He may be said to "renew their youth like the eagle's." 1. In the recovery of health after severe sickness. 2. In the renewal of vigour after religious decay. 3. In the restoration of joy after spiritual depression. 4. In the perpetual bloom of immortality. (*E. Temple.*) *Renewed youth*:—Past spiritual experience need not be a memory only, nor need the claims of the future alarm us, in Christ we have never had or been our best, from age to age through the satisfaction of our mouth with good our youth may be renewed like the eagle's. I. SPIRITUAL LIFE, THEN, MAY BE MARKED BY CONSTANT YOUTH. 1. Because youth's best features are of the very essence of the spiritual nature. (1) Conscious possibility. (2) Enjoyment of life. (3) Untiring strength. Christianity is constant youth, it brings youth's best features with it, as it increases the more spiritually youth-like we are, according to our Lord's principle that to grow in greatness in the kingdom of heaven is to grow towards the child. 2. Because spiritual life has never reached its maturity. The Christian can never say, The best is gone. With him, better experiences, and attainments, and service are to come. 3. Because its source is untouched by the deteriorating influences of earth. "Our life is hid with Christ in God." Thus it cannot die, Christ maintains it from Himself. For the same reason it never need decline. II. WE SOMETIMES FAIL OF THE YOUTHFULNESS OF SPIRITUALITY. We need not. It is a grave dishonour to Christ to suppose that He cannot keep us from falling, and a great injury to ourselves to suppose that anything in the nature of the case forbids unbroken Christian progress. Therefore, though what we speak of now is a fact, let us remember that it need not be, and is only due to sin. 1. It is so when we feel our chance is gone: "Time is the great enemy," said a statesman. And so we say of our religious possibilities, "Time is the great enemy"—it destroys what we might have been. In early life we form ideals, we determine then to conquer circumstances, and rise; time passes, and the ideal fades, we think then we can only be what circumstances let us. 2. It is so, too, when we miss the sacred powers and experience of other days. For "the days that are past," with some, "were better than these." 3. And it is so, when there is nothing youth-like in our piety. III. THIS FAILURE IS REMEDIED BY PARTAKING OF DIVINE NOURISHMENT. 1. We have as much strength as we receive in nourishment, and no more. Every life has its proper food—vegetable life, animal life, human life, and so on; and if it be deprived of it, it fails till at last it dies. Our natural strength is the result of the food we have taken, and its maintenance, and increase, and revival depend on our feeding it. Now it is so with spiritual life, Christ is its food, "I," said He, "am the Bread of life," our life is in Him, the measure of our piety therefore is the measure of our reception of Him, we can have no more Divine life than we receive through partaking of Christ. 2. That, then, indicates the source of spiritual decline. Have we lost our youth? Have our powers, and possibilities, and joys vanished? It is due to this, and if we trace it back we shall find it so: we have neglected Christ. 3. That reveals the means of renewal. Christian young in years, and Christian young by the long retention of spiritual youthfulness, you will never grow old (faded and worn, I mean) in the Divine life, you will keep and increase your blessedness, if you but constantly feed upon Christ. (*C. New.*) *The renewal of youth*:—Every fresh inspiration is a new beginning of life. Over the years as they slip by there will

always be inscribed the apostolic saying, "Not as though I had already attained." But though perfection is ever in front, we may thank God for every experience that opens out new roads, and helps us to move forward to that which is holy and good. 1. Renewal is essential in all things. When the body ceases to form new cells the hour of its dissolution quickly arrives. Does the imperial mind cease to delight itself in, and eagerly search after, new and brilliant aspects of truth? You know the result, how soon that mind becomes either as sweet bells jangling out of tune, or is enervated, crusted, stale, and unprofitable. Carried out into nature, the same law ordains that the capacity of the earth to sustain mankind shall depend on bursting seeds, prolific roots, opening buds, and the renewal of generous fruits. Repeated in form, they are new every year. But while renewal is at once a law, and a most marvellous manifestation of the Divine Providence, it never assumes such a profound significance as it does in the world of thought and feeling. Your ideals are opportunities for renewal; from the splendid aims and hopes they reveal you may go on to the greatness and beauty of the deeds that make them real. 2. The redemptive and saving purposes of Divine love work by and through the same law. Renovation is the guarantee of spiritual health; recreation is the secret of sustained energy, and of triumphant faith. In "Jesus our Immanuel" the words of the psalm before us find their verification. He came that He might say to the weary and storm-tossed, to the evil who repented, to the bowed-down and forsaken, to those in the guilt and slavery of iniquity, "Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." He is still saying it; He is still offering to satisfy our mouths with good, that our youth, too, may be renewed. 3. Consider the powerful contrast here set forth. Age, even though veiled with poetic grace, and having many compensations, is a time of waning powers. There is less generous enthusiasm and more of caution and prudence. On the other hand, youth is marked by splendid impulse and ardour; radiant in energy, care sits lightly on its shoulders. It is "like a morning gladness before the heat and burden of the day." In this world these conditions, so strangely distinct in features and qualities, are equally essential. We must have beginnings, the sweeter and purer the better; and we must have endings, and always is it cause for rejoicing when they are full and honourable, and the garments of time and the tools of nature are laid aside after long and faithful use. But there is no such thing as age in heaven. "Growing old in heaven is growing young." "Those that are in heaven are continually advancing to the spring of life, with a greater advance towards a more joyful and happy spring the more thousands of years they live," because "it is goodness and charity that forms and presents in them its own likeness." (*J. T. Freeth.*) *Youth renewed*.—I. The youth of the soul of God's child was renewed gloriously, and he entered on a new and imperishable life in HIS NEW BIRTH,—in the hour of that entire change of state and of character, of which Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again," etc. Most blessed renewing this of youth, wherein a sinner, throwing off the iniquities of a lifetime, returns back to somewhat of the very gladness, and innocence, and guilelessness, of childhood! II. There is often a further, most blessed renewing of the soul's youth of God's child—some call it a second conversion, though the expression requires to be used cautiously—when, after a period of darkness, and distance, and spiritual decay, with, it may be, the commission of positive sin, God REVISITS HIS CHILD with His pardoning and sanctifying mercy, brings him to deep repentance, and restores to him the purity and the joy of His salvation. III. But there is what I might call a more NORMAL AND PROGRESSIVE REJUVENESCENCE,—renewal of the soul's youth of the child of God,—which Paul exemplifies for us (2 Cor. iv. 16-18). Oh, this is God's filling His child with all peace and joy in believing, that he may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. IV. The youth of the soul of God's child comes to be renewed, strange to say! in the highest of all ways, IN HIS DEATH,—in that which, to the eye of sense, might seem to be the end and wreck of all. Oftentimes there are marvellous foretastes and anticipations of this in the closing hours. (*C. J. Brown, D.D.*) *The renewal of youth*.—This thought of the renewal of youth appears again and again in the traditions and legends of mankind. As if shrinking from decay, and having somehow a conviction that man was not intended to be lost, outworn and exhausted in his earthly pilgrimage, he has had his dreams of the renewal of youth. Sometimes the dream took the shape of the legend of the phoenix, living for centuries, and when consumed rising from its ashes; or the eagle mounting up into heaven till he comes near to the seat of central fire in the sun, when scorched by the sun

he casts himself into the sea; thence he emerges again with new vigour and fresh plumage, till at his hundredth year he perishes in the sea. In the text there may be an allusion to the yearly moulting of the feathers of the eagle and other birds, the eagle being selected as the liveliest image of strength and activity. And the old alchemists were searching for the elixir that would not only transmute inferior metals into gold, but would restore to man his youth, and so prolong his life, enabling him to resist disease, and set the destructive influences of nature at defiance. It was a beautiful dream. It contains a hint of man's great capacity of life, and his wondrous destiny. I. GOD IS THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH. He is "from everlasting"—the underived, uncreated, unbeginning Existence; the Ancient of Days. But He is eternally young. His mercies are "new every morning." The resources of Omnipotence have not begun to fail; the energies of the Holy Spirit are not spent. The measurements of time are only a convenience to us, our dates and chronologies are nothing to God. He is clothed with the eternal beauty of youth; and new benefits, too numerous to be counted, are ever bearing witness to the freshness and constancy of His love. II. WE, THEN, MAY RECEIVE FROM HIM THE GIFT OF PERPETUAL YOUTH. The psalmist, with the boldness of faith, speaks of the Eternal as standing in close relation to himself. Jehovah and the soul are represented as in touch with each other. "Who forgiveth all," etc. It is difficult to satisfy a human soul. Myriads are making the attempt, and failing. But here is satisfaction. The soul at rest, its longings met; no longer wandering in the market-places of the world in search of goodly pearls, it has now found the pearl of great price, it has found the "good." What is this good? Why, it is God Himself, and that is the reason why it is satisfying. "The Lord is my portion." III. WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUTH? Think of two or three. There is energy. A young man without energy is out of his place; he is "born out of due time." If he is not energetic in youth, he had better apply for a position among the lotos-eaters, and "steep his brows in slumber's holy balm." Action is identified with life. Energy, activity is the mark of the renewed nature. The rest to which it attains is not indolence, but the harmony of the powers in the service they render, the absence of all disturbing or thwarting elements, the repose of the soul in God, who is not idle, but ever working out the counsels of His own will. Youth is a time of hopefulness. It is led on and sustained by the visions of hope. Many of them may be, and probably are, only illusions; but even then they are useful. It is God's kind provision that the morning should be bright. And this trait of youth is in the renewed nature. It is begotten again to a "living hope." Many hopes are dead; they grew very weary as the years advanced, and gave up the ghost. The paths of all who forget God are strewn with the withered hopes that were once green and beautiful. But this is a living hope—living because Jesus is living, the hope of life, fulness of life, complete victory over the powers of darkness and death. And we speak of the enthusiasm, fervour, dash, daring of youth. And so there is brightness and fervour in the renewed nature. We say that the heart grows cold with age; no new friendships are formed; the interest in the outside world is lessened; the blood is more sluggish; the pulse more slow; the heart more cold. But the man who is living in the company of Jesus Christ has not a cold heart; it is burning with love to Him, and with zeal for the triumph of His cause. IV. THIS NEW LIFE IS BEYOND THE POWER OF THE VISIBLE AND TEMPORAL. Suffering cannot harm it. Indeed, it has manifested its greatest beauty and shone with heavenly splendour in seasons of affliction and trouble. Death cannot harm this life. While the outward man is decaying, the inward man is renewed day by day, moment by moment. The true life can no more die than God can die; and the change will only be a renewal of youth. Heaven is a land where the people "grow younger," and their glory never fades. (J. Owen.) *Rejuvenescence*.—Ever since our first parents were banished from the Tree of Life, by whose blessed medicine they were kept in undecayed vigour, mankind have sought a substitute for it in ways of their own. In Greek mythology we read the story of Medea, who, by the magic of her incantations, restored the aged to the bloom of youthful beauty. In Eastern fables we are charmed with descriptions of the Vijara Nadi, the ageless river, which makes the old young again by only seeing it; and of the spring of immortality flowing in caverns below the earth, and guarded by the pundit Kabib, where the bodies of those who bathe in it shine as if anointed with oil, and are fragrant as with the scent of violets. The South Sea islander, seeing the sun sinking, dim and weary, in the western waves, and rising again from the eastern main fresh and bright, conceived the beautiful

myth of "the water of enduring life," which removes all deformity and decrepitude from those who plunge beneath its silvery surface. Among the Aleutian islands the legend is current that in the early ages of the world men were immortal, and when they grew old had but to spring from a high mountain into a lake, whence they came forth in renewed youth. In the Mediæval romances we are familiar with the "Fountain of Youth," and with the wanderings of pilgrims in search of its miraculously-healing waters—wonderful and adventurous as those in quest of the Sangreal, or the treasure hid at the foot of the rainbow. Rejuvenescence is the one great poetic idea of the universe. All the phenomena of the spiritual and material worlds are illustrations of it. The dream of humanity is the fact of creation; the longings that in the human world have been expressed in myths and romances have been symbolized in the objects of nature, in the epic poem of the seasons and the ages. Geology is the history of rejuvenescence on our earth. It reveals to us continual disintegration counterbalanced by continual construction; decay everywhere followed by renewal; so that all things have continued as they were from the beginning, and the earth looks as young to-day as it did on the first morning of creation. Every spring there is a rejuvenescence of the vegetable kingdom. But although most apparent at this season,—showing itself in the tender verdure of green grass, and fresh beauty of bright leaves and blossoms,—it is not the work altogether of spring. The labour of renovation begins at an earlier period; and the breath of spring only unfolds that which was preparing in silence and secrecy during the dark chill season of winter. The illustrations of rejuvenescence which zoology affords are still more interesting, because connected with a more complex organization and a higher function of life. Animal growth differs very widely from vegetable growth. The vegetable grows by means of additional cells; the animal by means of substituted cells. The cells of the plant die as soon as they are produced and have served their purpose, but they are retained in the structure and help to build it up; there being no provision made in the economy of the plant for the expulsion of dead cells. The cells of the animal on the other hand also die, but they are expelled from the body, and new ones take their place. Many animals have periodical and most curious replacements of entire organs and parts of their structure. Every one is familiar with the process of moulting in birds, in which the old feathers drop off every year and new ones are formed; this change in the plumage being accompanied by corresponding constitutional changes. Lizards, serpents, and spiders stately cast their entire skin, and are furnished with a new one. The crab even replaces its stomach, forming a new one every year and casting away the old one. Just as plants rejuvenize by the annual renewal of their leaves and flowers, so animals rejuvenize by the annual renewal of some of their parts or organs. Passing on to man, who sums up in himself all animal and vegetable types of structure and function, and connects them with the spiritual world, whose existence is the aim to which the infinite rejuvenescences throughout all nature strive, we find that his body is subject to the same laws of growth which rule in the bodies of other animals. He, too, grows by the substitution of new particles for the old. But besides this particular and general molecular renovation, there are also periodical renewals of some organ or conspicuous portion of the body itself. The body renews its youth through fever, producing new hair and new skin, and becoming stronger and healthier afterwards. Sleep is one of the most wonderful phenomena of rejuvenescence. The mind in sleep relaxes its hold of the outward world, and becomes a mere passive mirror to reflect its images and sensations in dreams; but in this state of passivity it gathers itself into new force—into a renewed recollection of its specific purpose—and rearranges in an orderly manner all the confusions and perplexities of its waking state. It is also through the soft soothing sleep which occurs at the crisis of severe diseases that the rejuvenescence of the body occurs. Humanity rejuvenizes itself in the birth of every child; and grows young again in the youth of its children. Our own character fixed, our opinions become prejudices—this young generation with plastic minds comes forward to carry on the work of the world a few steps, and to become stereotyped in turn. In the rise and fall of nations, in the birth and death of individuals, humanity rejuvenizes itself. But the greatest of all rejuvenescences was the origin of Christianity. In the person of the child Jesus, humanity became young again. By His works the world became a new creation. Every rejuvenescence which man experiences is an additional assurance to him that, as he has borne the image of the earthy, so he will bear the image of the heavenly. This is the glorious hope set before us in the

Gospel; this is the climax and consummation of all rejuvenescences here—the renewal of nature—of man's body—of his mind—his heart—his soul. All these renewals are leading to and preparing for the great renewal of heaven. The kingdom of heaven in its highest sense is the "restitution of all things." It is the New Jerusalem, the new heaven and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness—not another physical world specially created for the dwelling-place of glorified humanity; but this earth itself which in all its various phases has been so closely united and bound up with the nature of man, and hallowed by the footsteps, yea, even by the tears and blood of the Son of God Himself, and which in the end shall share in the new and wondrous birth of redemption,—“put on its glorious resurrection robes and minister delight to the ennobled senses of the redeemed.” (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*) *Recovered youthfulness*:—A famous Roman once penned a delightful treatise intended to reconcile himself and the friend to whom it was dedicated, to the approach of old age. Much in his cheerful philosophy is worthy of the study of Christian people, though some things are superfluous; for the Bible shows to us a more excellent way. The humiliations and bitter distresses of old age need never come to us if an inward process of spiritual repair is effected to compensate the disabilities of outward decay. True religion is always fresh and glowing as the day-dawn, and if it has lost its youthfulness, decay and oblivion are inevitably before it. The Apostle Paul is pre-eminent for his unfailing youthfulness of character; no tribulation could quench the fire of his enthusiasm or destroy the buoyancy of his spirit. He speaks of himself as “Paul the aged,” but neither in his mental nor spiritual life is there the slightest sign of abating vigour or failing vitality. A tree of tenacious hardihood called the tree of life grows in the Central American forests. If the leaf be cut, new buds will at once form themselves on the shorn, bleeding edge thereof, and its tenacious vitality and productiveness will be asserted in face of the fiercest injury. As we read the catalogue of the ills that failed to daunt the spirit of the apostle, we feel he must surely have eaten of the fruit of that tree. And the Giver of life repeats His wonder to those who wait in His presence. If our youth is renewed, the sorrow that has cut us to the heart will not prove itself a death-wound nor hinder our after-fruitfulness. True religion must be young, for it is an expanded childhood. Recovered youthfulness is in itself meetness for immortality. Our doctrine of an endless being would be repulsive apart from that rejuvenation of the powers which makes ready for the enjoyment of it. The sense of jadedness may weigh upon our anticipations of heaven. For the appreciation of this world as well as that which is beyond it, we need a replenished inward life. In nine cases out of ten when Alexander weeps it is not that he has no more worlds to conquer, but because he has so worn himself out that he cannot possess the world which lies at his feet. We have come to speak of the activities of heaven as various, including widely differentiated ministries as well as worship; and rightly so, for a monotonous immortality would be a curse grievous to bear. But the cure for monotony often lies within. The ever-lengthening duration of life apart from its replenishment with new faculties and new enthusiasms would be intolerable. There must be that constant renewal of the youth of which devout worshippers of God in every period of the world's history have had experience. And the writer of the Apocalypse, in describing his visions, is mindful of this need. Life blooms with a vernal freshness that never stales. The river that flows through the celestial city and the fountains to which the Shepherd King leads His redeemed flock are symbols of vitality and perpetual renewal. It is always springtide, for the trees yield their fruit every month. Let us live in the fellowship of Jesus Christ, and be baptized with His Spirit, and we shall then be ever renewing our life. “Your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams.” The dreams of old men who receive the Spirit are as rich, as far-ranging, as many-hued as the visions of the young men. Cherishing this Spirit, however deep our wounds and fierce and wasting our conflicts, we shall not fail in warmth and hope and fresh springing force. (*T. G. Selby.*) *Rejuvenescence*:—All occupations and professions have afforded illustrations of rejuvenescence. Hippocrates, the father of medicine, lived one hundred and nine years, and among those eminent in the medical profession who became septuagenarians, and octogenarians, and nonagenarians, were Darwin, Gall, Boerhaave, Jenner and Ruysch, observing themselves the laws of health that they taught their patients. In art, and literature, and science, among those who lived into the eighties were Plato, and Franklin, and Carlyle, and Goethe, and Buffon, and Halley. Sophocles reached the nineties. You cannot

tell how old a man is from the number of years he has lived. I have known people actually boyish in their disposition at eighty years of age, while Louis II., King of Hungary, died of old age at twenty. Haydn's oratorio, "The Creation," was composed at seventy years of age. Humboldt wrote his immortal work, "The Cosmos," at seventy-five. William Cullen Bryant, at eighty-two years of age, in my house, read without spectacles "Thanatopsis," which he had composed when eighteen years of age. Isocrates did illustrious work at ninety-four. Leontinus Gorgius was busy when death came to him at one hundred and seven years of age. Herschel, at eighty years of age, was hard at work in stellar exploration. Masinissa, King of Numidia, at ninety years of age, led a victorious cavalry charge against the Carthaginians. Titian was engaged on his greatest painting when he died, in his one hundredth year. How often they must have renewed their youth! (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The oldest become the youngest*:—Commenting upon the words, "Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's," Mr. Jowett paid a beautiful tribute to "The youngest deacon of my church," the old man who is always the child of the morning, the revolutionary, and the Radical in his party. "I have never heard him speak about sunsets. He is a child of God, his youth is renewed every day, he will die with his face to the east, looking for the morning."

Vers. 6-14. The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.—*God's conduct towards mankind*:—In the preceding verses the hymnist exhorts himself to praise the Great God on account of the benefits conferred on himself. Here he strikes off into general reasons why he and all men should bless His holy name. I. *God's conduct in relation to the socially oppressed.* He "executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed" (Job xxxvi. 5, 6; Isa. x. 1, 2; Prov. xxii. 22, 23; Ps. cxi. 12; Amos viii. 4-6; Deut. xxiv. 14, 15; Matt. xix. 27; James v. 1-5). 1. To some extent in this life this is seen in the strength that is given the oppressed to bear up under all their trials, and in the unhappiness and the ruin that God brings upon their oppressors. Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Herod, Napoleon. 2. He does so fully in the life to come. II. *God's conduct in relation to the methods of revealing Himself to mankind* (ver. 7). There is a great difference between the "ways" and the acts of any intelligent agent; as different as cause and effect. All men have their particular ways of doing a thing. God has His way, His method of action. 1. It is more difficult to know the "ways" of God than to know the "acts" of God. A child may understand many of the actions of a philosophic father, but not his ways or methods of action. Israel understood many of the acts of God; but Moses only rose to a knowledge of His ways, His principles, and manner of actions. 2. It is more important to know the ways of God than the acts of God. (1) As a man knows His ways, he may forecast the future. Such and such events will occur in the future because it is in the order of the Divine procedure. (2) As a man knows His ways he may acquiesce in His dispensations. (3) As a man knows His ways he becomes exalted in thought and sympathy. III. *God's conduct in relation to sinners in general* (vers. 8-10). 1. His mercy is longsuffering. "Slow to anger." 2. His mercy is abundant. "Plenteous in mercy." 3. His mercy overcomes His resentment. 4. His mercy restrains punishment (ver. 10). IV. *God's conduct in relation to the genuinely pious* (vers. 11-14). 1. Immeasurable grace (ver. 11). 2. Sin-removing grace (ver. 12). 3. Fatherly considerateness (vers. 13, 14). Our physical, intellectual, and moral constitutions are thoroughly understood by Him. If He thus knows us, we may infer two things—(1) That He will not lay on us more trials than we are capable of enduring. (2) That He will not demand of us more service than we are capable of rendering. (*Homilist.*) *Christianity and the penal code*:—A young exile in Siberia told me that during the first part of his imprisonment the only literature given him were the Bible and the Penal Code. The intention, doubtless, was to incite to virtue on the one hand, and to warn against crime on the other. But the effect produced was to lead only to a comparison between the laws of Russia and the laws of Christ, and not to the benefit of the former. (*George Kenman.*)

Ver. 7. He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel.—*A twofold revelation, and a twofold attainment*:—I. *A twofold Divine revelation.* There is an obvious distinction between ways and acts. Acts are deeds; ways are methods. A man's acts are the results and representatives of his ways. A man's ways indicate the leading principle, spirit, and style of his life.

His acts are not always consistent with his ways. 1. God reveals His ways. The universal, immutable, and eternal principles that guide Him in all His operations in the spiritual world are clearly laid down in the Book. The laws He gave to Moses reveal His ways, and so does the biography of His blessed Son in a still sublimer measure. 2. God reveals His acts. His acts are recorded in the Bible: creative acts—governing acts—redeeming acts—acts of justice and of mercy. His acts should be studied in order to reach the higher knowledge of His ways.

II. A TWOFOLD THEOLOGICAL INTELLIGENCE. Moses, on Sinai, received the eternal principles that regulate the Infinite in all His operations with man. The children of Israel down in the desert only saw His acts. They understood not the laws of His providence, and the grand purposes of His heart. There is a great distinction between these two kinds of knowledge. 1. One is far more profound than the other. The outward acts of God, as recorded in this Book, may be easily ascertained and detailed in fluent and accurate speech. But to understand His ways, to penetrate the region of principles, and to have an insight into the method of Divine operations, is a difficult work. This requires not only an inductive study of the Holy Book, but exalted feelings of devotion. "The secrets of the Lord are with them that fear Him." 2. One is far more valuable than the other. It is more valuable to the possessor. The man who is only conversant with the mere acts of God will often be filled with confusion by providential events. One act will apparently contradict another, but he who understands the ways, the grand purposes and principles of God, will not be easily confused. It is more valuable, too, in qualifying us for usefulness. The man who is acquainted with mere details may repeat Bible anecdotes, and be popular. The man who has some knowledge of eternal principles can alone instruct souls. 3. One is far more uncommon than the other. (1) In nature the millions observe the acts of God. They hear His thunder; they witness His lightning. They see His operations in heaving oceans and revolving worlds. But only one here and there understands His ways, and these are our men of science. (2) In human history, numbers are conversant with the leading facts of human history. They know the acts of this statesman and that, this warrior and that, this nation and that; but the ways of God, the great principles with which He governs man are known only by a few—the philosophic historians. (3) In redemption, the leading facts of Christ's life are familiar to most in Christendom; but His ways, His grand principles, and sublime purposes, how few know anything about! (*Homilist.*) *Revelation by action:*—God has revealed Himself to man. Nothing can be more reasonable. Can it be that a supreme intelligence would create intelligent subjects of His government and children of His family, and have no further communication with them? Intelligence creating intelligence, revelation is inevitable. But how did God reveal Himself to man? When I was a very little child, I supposed that He had revealed Himself in a book, and that the self-revelation was limited to the book. I wish to insist that God, in revealing Himself to humanity, does not limit Himself to a book; but that God "made known His ways" unto individuals, "His doings" unto nations, and that His revelation was a revelation chiefly by action, a revelation on the plane of human activity, in vast historic unfoldings, through long centuries, on a colossal scale and with deep incisions. He did not write, He wrought. And man wrote. God wrought deeds to make words possible, to give significance to words; but His revelation was primarily a revelation in action. "He made known His ways unto Moses." Glance for a moment at that wonderful scene recorded in the Book of Exodus, where Moses and Aaron appear before Pharaoh. Pharaoh demanded a sign, and Aaron, in obedience to Moses' command, cast his rod upon the ground and it became a living serpent. At Pharaoh's command his magicians cast their rods to the ground, and they became living serpents. But "Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods." And then began a series of marvellous deeds which made the people of Israel and the people of Egypt acknowledge that the finger of God was there. The outcome was that the children of Israel were delivered from bondage and taken into the wilderness, where through many years they were guided by the God who had delivered them. Thus "God made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel." From the Old Testament let us go to the New. Jesus Himself never wrote a book, a sermon, an essay. "He went about doing good." His words were the explanation of the things He did, and the things that God did in nature and in providence. When John sent his disciples to Jesus, they asked the question, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" His first answer was—silence. Then

He touched the eyes of the blind man, and he saw; He touched a lame man, and he walked; a leper, and he was cleansed; a deaf man, and he heard; and, pointing to the son of the widow of Nain, who the day before had been rescued from his bier and restored to his mother, He said, "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up; the poor have good tidings preached to them." Thus He made known His ways, His doings to the children of men. As in the time of Moses and in the time of Jesus, so in all history has God manifested Himself as Lord of nature, who works His will on the material and with the forces He has created. And is He bound to any one mode or order of action because of the nature He has created? See the fountain breaking loose upon the top of the mountain, pouring forth its water! Following the laws of nature, these waters work their way through the yielding soil to the edge of the mountain, and then fall over in a succession of fine cascades to the plain below, where, winding their way through the sand, they join the river and pass to the sea. We say that this movement is a work of nature. Is there any other way of doing with the water that springs from the mountain than that which we have observed? Certainly. Even a man can do something other and better with this stream on the mountain. As proprietor of the land he proceeds to dig, regulate, guide, and carry for a mile along the brow of the hill the waters that break from the fountain. He then causes the stream to descend in waterfalls down the mountain-side, and then in artificial channels, crossed by rustic bridges, here and there, expanding into little lakelets, and now confined in narrow limits, he brings the stream to the river and to the sea. Thus there are at least two ways of using the same elements in nature. Nature does one thing if left to herself. Man's ingenuity and power can make nature do another thing without violating a law of nature. Can God do with His own resources what man can do with God's resources? And why should there not be action in the realm of human history that is not simply a product either of nature or of man? And why may we not encounter in the records of human history marvels of which we are compelled to say, "Lo! God hath wrought this." I once listened to a rendition of a concerto by Rubinstein where Rubinstein himself took part. Before the artist himself appeared, Thomas's orchestra delighted the great audience with Rubinstein's music. Although I did not see him I heard his music. After a little while he came in and took his place at the piano while his own music was going on. After a while he touched the keys himself; and, accompanying his own music rendered by other performers, he swept from the instrument strains of exquisite harmony that held the multitude spellbound. The same artist produced indirectly the music he had composed through the orchestra that rendered it, and directly through the instrument under his fingers. Can God do such things with His universe? Through all the ages His purposes have gone rolling on in harmony with His wisdom, in display of His power, in manifestation of His goodness; but there came a time when on the plains of Palestine One walked the earth, the incarnation of wisdom and love and power, and went about doing good to the children of men. In the light of this law of revelation by action, let us look at the life of Jesus. He came to reveal God to man that He might reveal man to himself. He did not come to startle our race by the wonders that He wrought. He did not come to depreciate nature as a revelation of God by simply showing that there were possibilities beyond nature. He did not come to stifle human research or to put a ban on human science and discourage human culture. He came to set forth before all the ages God's holiness and love, the worth of man and his destiny and possibilities. See Him yonder hanging on that cross between heaven and earth, revealing by action God's loathing of sin, His love of righteousness, and His boundless mercy. By His victory over death, as He emerged from the sepulchre, He demonstrated by action the power of the immortal life. By His ascent from the summit of Olivet into the visible heavens He revealed, as no literary or artistic production could ever have revealed, the fact of a realm of being beyond this. Reappearing in tongues of fire at Pentecost, He made known to men the fact of His presence and power on the earth for the ages to come. Thus "He made known His ways" and "doings" to humanity. In the light of this law of revelation by action let us look at the Scriptures. It is easy for us to fancy what a Divine book ought to be—how perfect and flawless, with no syllable in it that is not exact and Divine; a book completed in heaven and handed down to humanity. But this is not the Bible which we do have. We can easily see what would happen if the law of revelation

by action through gradual processes be the Divine way of revelation. First, the Bible would be largely biographical; then, of course, historical; and gradually developed. It must be characterized by an all-pervading unity; there would be progressiveness in the unfolding of truth, and we should expect to get a fuller, larger, and worthier idea of God through Paul than through Moses, and through Paul's last writings than through Paul's earliest writings. If it was to be a revelation by action, it would take ages to produce it and ages to complete it. Its perpetuity would be guaranteed. It would be a trustworthy book if rightly interpreted. The human element would be present in it; for, if God revealed Himself through men, He would recognize the limitations of the man through whom He reveals Himself, and do the best He could with the material in hand, without violating the laws of nature or of man. In the light of this law of revelation by action let us look at the Christian life. When an individual soul receives the Divine truth and lives it out, he makes known to men by action the Divine truth he has received. Horace Bushnell has a great sermon entitled "Every Man's Life a Plan of God." Chrysostom says, "The true Shechinah is man." Give me a living man in whom God dwells, whose character is moulded by the Divine truth, whose spirit is possessed by the Divine Spirit, and whose life is under the Divine direction, and I will show you a version of the Scriptures that will be of immense value to the community in which that man dwells. You have read an essay about the sun. You have seen pictures of the sun, although artists are usually ingenious enough to give a landscape just before the sun rises or just after sunset. You have seen the sun reflected in a dewdrop as it trembles on the little twig. You have seen the sun embodied in the beauty of the flower. But there is still another embodiment of sunlight. It is when on a cold day I come to your house, and a man puts a huge piece of bituminous coal on the fire. Millions upon millions of years ago the sunlight was stored in that lump of coal, but now in your home it comes out again; and the flashing light, with its brightness and its warmth, is the old sunlight millions of years ago hidden, and now giving blessing to your household. So God by action has put into this book of Divine truth the energies of His grace. These in turn have been transferred by faith to the souls of earnest and obedient students, and they in their turn make known again by action the ways of God to men. The Christian is thus a "living epistle," read and known of all men. Often in walking through the Palace of Versailles, where those fine historic paintings fill the wall, I have imagined the trembling of the canvas, and then the coming down to the floor of those pictured men and women, no longer dead, but living and walking as they did one hundred years ago and more. It is a great thing for people to get the ideas that are in the Book inwrought into personal character, so that ideas, growing into ideals, will become realities, and people whom you meet will seem more and more like the prophets and apostles of old. Thus may we walk among men, incarnations of the Divine truth, and work over again the works of God. Therefore, let Him have His way with you that He may make known to others through you His ways of grace, and power, and victory, and blessing. (*J. H. Vincent.*)

Ver. 8. The Lord is merciful and gracious.—The mercy of God:—I. DEFINE THE IDEA OF MERCY. It is the exercise of a Divine benevolence in respect to a guilty being, and such an exercise, that if it had been wholly wanting, no just judgment could ever have impeached the benevolence of God. Mercy is the intervention of gratuitous goodness. It is benevolence, bending in pity and compassion over the very creature, whose guiltiness has deserved the everlasting abandonment of Heaven. II. GUARD AGAINST AN ERROR IN RELATION TO IT. The error we wish you to avoid consists precisely in the difference there is between the notions of Divine Mercy entertained by an intelligent and humble Christian, and those entertained by unconverted sinners at ease in their sins. When we speak of the pre-eminence of Divine Mercy, we are speaking of that thing which we, as Christians, feel to be of all things most calculated to make us fear and hate sin. We see it does not render the Deity indifferent to His laws; it does not infringe upon His justice, or make Him less terrible, but more terrible, to all who will indulge themselves in sin. But still the Divine Mercy is pre-eminent. By this attribute God peculiarly shows Himself. If you did not pervert the Divine Mercy, you would feel it as an infinite attraction; you would find its solace reaching the deepest woes that ever trouble your agonized spirit. III. EXPLAIN HOW IT COMES TO PASS THAT THE MERCY OF GOD, WHICH OUGHT TO AFFECT OUR HEARTS SO MUCH, REALLY DOES AFFECT

THEM, WHILE UNCONVERTED, SO LITTLE. The believer walks with God and lives in Christ. He sees God in all things, and all things in God. The influence, and a sweet and sensible influence of the perfections of God, all His perfections, comes over the renewed heart. An unregenerated heart fails in this. And it fails in a very remarkable manner to be affected by the Divine mercy. There are several things which conspire together to cause this. 1. The first is found in the nature of mercy itself. Sin in the human heart tends always and uniformly (when the heart is unaffected by the Divine Spirit) to put God out of mind. 2. The second cause is found in the fact that sin, in the human heart, has made its most perfect triumph over those very sensibilities which mercy aims to affect. 3. A third reason is found in the sufferings that fill the world; *i. e.* the ideas of irreligious people about these miseries give them a wrong idea of the Mercy of God. Let us not be materialists, to weigh nothing but dust and ashes, and the earthly felicity that springs out of them. Let us think as immortals—feel, hope, and fear, as immortals. Let us go out in our contemplations, and plant our feet on the borders of that unbounded field, as wide as eternity, and, by the mercy of God, as blissful as heaven; and then we shall not be tempted to think God's mercy little and unworthy to be trusted, though He should give us but few joys here. He intends to give us but few. He means to show us that He cares very little about the dying bliss of this dying world. And if we understand His Word rightly, we shall understand that He mentions His earthly mercies to us, not on account of any value He puts upon them, but only as tokens and attractions to that infinite mercy which would save, eternally save, our sinful and immortal souls. IV. ENDEAVOUR TO GAIN SOME JUST IDEAS OF THE MERCY OF GOD. 1. Mercy is that attribute in which the Deity peculiarly delights. God loves to forgive sinners, to adopt them into His family, and to cheer them with His promises. 2. The great purpose of the Divine revelation is to disclose to us the mercy of God, and lead us to accept it. God has trusted His world to demonstrate His other attributes, but not to demonstrate His mercy. His mountains and His seas—His winds, His lightnings, and His thunders—His worlds wheeling in infinite space around His throne—suns, stars, and comets in their order—the existence and nature of this material universe, God has trusted to unfold to us His wisdom, His omnipotence, His justice. But the mercy of God has such a pre-eminence that He Himself must speak it out to us from His hiding-place in eternity! 3. Divine mercy is of such pre-eminence, that its method of operation is entirely singular, and unlike anything else which God Almighty does. It operates by the incarnation, life, and death of the eternal Son of God. 4. The promises of mercy in the Gospel are absolutely unlimited by human guilt. There is no crime so odious, no circumstances of sinning amidst light and warnings, and the strivings of the resisted Spirit, so aggravating as not to be pardonable, when the sinner sincerely turns to Jesus Christ. This is wonderful! Human reason could never have conjectured this. Human sentiments, without grace, never have anything like it. 5. The extent of the sinner's guilt makes no difference about the readiness of His forgiveness—that the mercy of God will forgive him if he repents at any stage of his sin on this side of hell, with precisely the same facility and readiness! This is pre-eminence in mercy. It surpasses all the extent of human reason, human expectations, human sentiments and hopes. It not only reaches the greatest offences, but the greatest as readily as the least. (*I. S. Spencer, D.D.*) *Divine mercy*.—The term mercy is derived from *misericordia*; a compound of *miserans*—pitying, and *cor*—the heart; or *miseria cordis*—pain of heart. The mercy of God, then, is the pity, the pain of His heart, inclining Him to pardon the guilty and succour the helpless. Grace is the twin-sister of mercy—gratuitous favour, unmerited bounty, benefit bestowed where there is no claim, blessing communicated without worthiness in the recipient. I. ITS BENEFICENCE. It is not an inert compassion, but communicative and bounteous. It flows forth a spontaneous stream from an infinite fountain. The air is not more free, nor the light more diffusive and impartial. II. ITS FORBEARANCE. "The Lord is slow to anger." His "charity suffereth long and is kind"; and, though its patience is often abused by impenitence, it "is not easily provoked." He delays punishment that He may lead to repentance; men pervert the delay into an occasion and encouragement of crime; and when He can justly delay no longer, He hurls His thunder with an averted face and a backward aim. He always warns before He smites; generally suspends the judgment long after the warning; then executes it gradually and by slow degrees, with frequent intervals of kindest indulgence, and arguments of

unwearying love. III. ITS ABUNDANCE. "The Lord is plenteous in mercy." Wonderful words! "Mercy"—what music in those two syllables! There is no term of richer import in any language. It is sweeter than sympathy, more tender than charity, and lies deeper than the fountain of tears. The inspired writers adopt a variety of expedients to heighten its signification. Sometimes they connect an epithet with it, and we read of His "great mercy," "tender mercy," "loving mercy," "abundant mercy," "everlasting mercy." Sometimes they couple another term with it, and we have "mercy and grace," "mercy and truth," "mercy and goodness," "mercy and judgment," "mercy and compassion." Sometimes they employ the plural form "mercies"—to indicate the frequency, the variety, the endless modifications and adaptations, of this most engaging trait of the Divine character. Then the plural is intensified in the phrase " manifold mercies," giving the idea of mercies wrapped up in mercies, a thousand contained in one. At last enumeration is outdone in "the multitude of His mercies"—mercies numberless, thronging upon mercies unnumbered—a host to which the stars of heaven multiplied by all their beams of light could scarcely furnish a competent arithmetic. The apostle calls Jehovah "the God and Father of all mercies," because He rejoiceth in His mercies as a father in his children; and tells us that "He is rich in mercy to all that call upon Him," because no monarch ever dispensed his bounty so freely; and, though infinite in capacity, "full of mercy"—full as the ocean is of water, as the atmosphere of light. (*J. Cross, D.D.*)

Ver. 9. **He will not always chide: neither will He keep his anger for ever.**—*The Lord chiding His people:*—Text refers only, as does the whole psalm, to the children of God. They only can sing it. But though we are forgiven as rebels, He, when needful, chides and chastens us as children. I. **HE WILL CHIDE.** He will be angry, though not for ever. 1. Why will He chide His dear children? (1) Because if He did not do so, it would seem like winking at sin. See Eli and his sons. (2) Others of the family would follow their evil example. If I knew a man living in sin and yet enjoying the light of God's countenance, should I not conclude that I may do as he does, and fare well as he does? (3) And what would the world say if God did not chide His sinful children? Shall it be said that the great Father of spirits does not enforce discipline in His own house? (4) If He did not, the evil would lie festering in us, breeding I know not what of deadly mischief. And we should never humble ourselves at the Cross of Christ, as His rebukes lead us to do. 2. How does He chide? (1) Often by means of the sin itself. They who sow it have to reap its harvest. See Lot's history. (2) Often by His providence. See Rebekah by loving Jacob. (3) By the withdrawal of privileges. Assurance departs. The means of grace have no blessing in them. There is no joy in private prayer, no communion with God. Your prayers have lost their prevailing power. Influence over others. See David, and Shimei cursing him. Success in service all gone; no conversions, no edification. His Holy Spirit chides us, through the ministry of the Word. By the discipline of the Church; not the formal discipline so much as that which God Himself exercises. See Church at Corinth. Many cases which I shall never relate are written down in the tablet of memory with this verdict, "Removed by the discipline of God." I have seen others blighted in fortune, chastened in body, and especially depressed in spirit as the result of grieving the Spirit of God in the Church. Church sins are surely visited with stripes. 3. When does God chide? Not for every sin. His Word does, but He does not actually chasten in the sense here intended. That is reserved for sins of which we will not repent. Anything like deliberate sin is sure to bring down the Father's anger. See Nathan's parable about David. Thus we have gazed at the black cloud, now see the silver lining. II. **HE WILL NOT ALWAYS CHIDE.** 1. This means that He will not chide for every fault; nor will He chide long; He does not hold any grudge. Many men say, "I forgive you," but it is only because they have not now the opportunity to pay you out. They will do so as soon as they can. Not so God. And there is no eternal wrath for a child of God. The Lord will soon leave off chiding. He will when we begin repenting: when we come to tears, then He will cease rebukes. When we put an end to sin, there shall be an end to chastening. But often not till the results of the sin as well as the sin itself shall have been removed. So was it with David. 2. Why does He thus leave off chiding? He would not have His children treated as slaves. Our spirits would fail altogether if He always chided. He will not crush our spirits. To chide too much might lead to other sins. Some parents, in driving out

one devil, drive ten in. Not so our God. 3. Though God chide, He loves us as much as when He caresses them. He never loves to chide. Be comforted, therefore. III. INFERENCES FROM THE WHOLE SUBJECT. 1. Consolation for Israel. 2. Ministers in their preaching must not always chide. 3. Nor parents with their children. 4. Nor masters with their servants. 4. Go, tell God's love to His troubled ones. (*O. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 10. **He hath not dealt with us after our sins.—God's mercy to sinners:—**
 I. THE VIEWS WHICH THIS DECLARATION PRESENTS TO US OF THE DIVINE CONDUCT. 1. He has not dealt with us as our sins deserve. 2. He has not dealt with us as He has dealt with others. This especially will be a reflection greatly beneficial to our minds, when we enumerate our mercies of a personal and relative kind—our mercies of a civil and religious kind—our mercies temporal and spiritual, the unexpected concurrence of events overruled by Divine Providence in our favour, the staying of the rough wind, in the day of His east wind. 3. His dealings towards us have always been mingled with mercy even in the severest dispensations. II. THE PRACTICAL USES WE SHOULD MAKE OF THIS DECLARATION. 1. It should lead us faithfully to inquire what has been the effect of chastening and trial on us. Are we brought to humility, self-abasement, penitential sorrow? 2. The subject ought to excite adoring gratitude for the love, the patience, the wisdom, and the faithfulness of your Father in heaven. 3. Let the subject teach you to cherish humble confidence. Whatever be the issue of His conduct towards you, remember it must be for the best. 4. Let there be practical imitation of the Divine conduct in your judgment towards others—in your temper towards others—in your patience, forbearance, in your longsuffering, in your forgiveness. (*J. Fletcher, D.D.*) **The mercy of God:—I. WHAT HAVE WE DESERVED DURING THE PAST YEAR?** We are painfully conscious that we have been guilty of "sins" and "iniquities," heinous and aggravated because committed against light and knowledge. We have not deserved the least of God's mercies. Let us be humble, penitent. II. **WHAT HAVE WE RECEIVED DURING THE PAST YEAR?** The gifts of God to us are as innumerable as they are inestimable. 1. Think of temporal mercies—health, food, clothing, home, friends. 2. Think of spiritual mercies—Bible, Sabbath, sanctuary, means of grace, hope of glory. III. **WHAT HAVE WE RETURNED DURING THE PAST YEAR?** The earth has received the showers and sunshine, and in return has given foliage, flowers, and fruits. Have our hearts and lives yielded fruit to the glory of God for all His goodness to us? Or have our hearts been like the barren rock or desert sands, giving no response or return for heavenly influences received? (*F. W. Brown.*)

Ver. 12. **As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.—Plenary absolution:—**The doctrine of forgiving love is one of those necessities of daily life, of which we may say that however frequently it be set before you, you would not tire of it. Therefore, in the simplest manner, we would speak of the great Gospel truth of the forgiveness of sins. Now, in our text which tells of it, notice—I. THE WORD OF PECULIARITY. It is not all men who can say, "As far as . . . from us." They are a specific people who can say this: they have felt the chidings of God in their conscience,—hence they say, "He will not always chide." And they have been humbled into contrition, repentance and confession; hence they say, "Neither will He keep His anger for ever." But they have tasted of God's surprising mercy which baffles all human thought, and excites the adoring wonder of all who receive it, and hence come the words of our text. Can we all say them? II. THE WORD OF POSITIVENESS. The psalmist does not indulge in vague hopes or fond wishes, but he declares that God "hath removed" our transgressions from us. He is quite sure about it. It is an actual fact. Now, there are many who think that we never can know in this world that we are forgiven. They are taught to go on asking for pardon as if they had never received it. But we are forgiven. Pardon is a fact, and there is nothing more sure to believers than this. It is far more presumptuous to pay respect to our own misgivings than to believe what God has so plainly said. How wretched it must be not to know: how can a man do anything whilst he is in doubt about whether he is forgiven? And we can be sure, for we have the plain word of God. Not the evidence of sense, for that may often deceive: and still more may feeling. But we have the evidence of God's word. If I have trusted my soul with Jesus, then I am forgiven, and our text is true of me. And over and above the written word,

God gives to believers the inward witness in the deep peace they feel in their souls. They may not be able to fix the date when they were forgiven, but whenever they look to the Cross and see the incarnate God bleeding thereon, they get a renewed assurance of complete absolution. Some love always to gaze upon their crucified Lord, as if they had never before looked upon Him. They stand and kiss those bleeding feet and look up to that dear face bedewed with drops of grief and that dear brow crowned with thorns, and say, "Thou art my Saviour! Dear lover of my soul, I rest in Thee." Happy are they who can thus stand at the Cross.

III. NOTE THE COMPREHENSIVENESS OF OUR TEXT. I do not find any list of sins here. Only these two words, "our transgressions." I am not skilful in matters of common law, but I remember hearing a lawyer make this remark about a man's will, that if he were about to leave all his property to some one person, it would be better not to make a recapitulation of all that he had, but merely to state that he bequeathed all to his legatee, without giving a list of the goods and chattels, because in so doing he would be sure to leave some of them out. In one instance, a farmer who desired his wife to have all, recounted, as he thought, all his property; but he actually omitted to mention his largest farm and the very house in which they lived. Thus his attempt to be very particular failed, and his wife lost a large part of the property. Let us be thankful, then, that in our text God speaks in this broad way which takes in the whole compass of enumeration. "Our transgressions"—that sweeps them away all at once. Like as the Israelites saw with joy all their enemies dead upon the sea-shore. Not one of them left. Well might Miriam dance and sing.

IV. THE PERFECTION, THE ABSOLUTE PERFECTION OF THE PARDON. "As far as the east is from the west." Who can tell how far that is? Not any distance measurable on this earth, or in our solar system. It is just infinite distance. That is how far God hath removed from us our sins. Some think that after men are pardoned they may yet go to hell. It does not seem to me worthy of a God or even a man. Poor is that pardon which may be followed by eternal torment. I have heard of the Duke of Alva pardoning a man, and then hanging him; but to think that God should do this! And God means by our text that He has forgotten our sins, so far has He put them away. "Your sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Note—

V. THE RAY OF DIVINITY, full of hope for us, in our text. It is God that thus forgives. God is the great remover of sin. No priest can do this, God alone.

VI. ITS TOUCH OF PERSONALITY. Our sins are removed not only from Himself, but "from us." I sometimes see believers troubling themselves as if all their sins were laid up in an iron safe in some part of the Lord's house. It is not so. They are all gone. See Zechariah's vision of Joshua the priest. We moan and fret ourselves about what does not exist. I saw two men yesterday handcuffed to be taken off to prison. But suppose I had walked behind them, with my wrists close together, and had never opened my hands, nor stirred them, and said, "Alas! I committed, years ago, some wrong, and had handcuffs put upon me." You would naturally say, "Well, but are they not taken off?" And I reply, "Yes, I have heard they are, but somehow, through habit, I go about as if I had them on." Would not every one say, "The man's insane"? But this is what we too often do as to our sins. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The believer separated from his sins*:—

I. IN WHAT RESPECTS? He is separated from his sins as regards—

1. The sentence they procured—the sentence of death. What this sentence implies. How was it removed?
2. The power they wielded—that is, their reigning power. "Sin shall not have dominion over you."
3. The alienation they caused. From God, hence from His favour, family, fellowship, kingdom.
4. The prospect they commanded. Of wrath to come, of exclusion from heaven, of endless destruction.

II. TO WHAT DISTANCE? "As far as the east is from the west"—one side of infinite space from the other—infinity intervenes.

1. An infinity of merit intervenes—the atoning merit of Christ's sacrifice intervenes. What? How?
2. An infinity of rectitude intervenes—the rectitude of the Divine nature.
3. An infinity of faithfulness intervenes—God's faithfulness to His word, covenant, purpose.
4. An infinity of love intervenes—God's love, which is infinite, eternal, unchangeable, sovereign. All these infinities must be exhausted and cease to exist before his sins can be reunited to the believer. Learn—

- (1) That separation from sin is necessary to admission into heaven. "There shall in nowise," etc.
- (2) That the separation here described is the work of God—of His grace, righteousness, word, spirit.
- (3) That separation from sin requires active exertion on our part. "Work out," etc.
- (4) That the separation we have been considering is the privilege of only true believers.

(N. Macdonald.) *No Eastern or Western poles*.—The distance from north to south is measurable. In every sphere there are north and south poles—both fixed points; and on the earth the distance between them is about twelve thousand miles. So that had the psalmist said, "As far as the north is from the south," our conceptions would have been thus limited. It is otherwise with the east and the west. There are no eastern and western poles. From every point alike in the circuit of the world, the east extends in one direction, the west in the other. Thus, the traveller westward, for example, might be said to be for ever chasing the west without coming nearer to it. The psalmist himself might not have known this astronomical fact; yet, regarding his words as dictated by the Spirit of God, we are surely permitted to read them in the light of modern science, and so to discern in them the most forcible illustration that can be imagined of the illimitable distance to which God has removed the iniquities of His people. (*Cyclop. of Nature Teachings*.) *Forgiveness a delightful remembrance*.—Like some black rock that heaves itself above the surface of a sun-lit sea, and the wave runs dashing over it; and the spray, as it falls down its sides, is all rainbowed and lightened; and there comes beauty into the mighty grimness of the black thing; so a man's transgressions rear themselves up, and God's great love, coming sweeping itself against them and over them, makes out of the sin an occasion for the flashing more brightly of the beauty of His mercy, and turns the life of the pardoned penitent into a life of which even the sin is not pain to remember. (A. Mac-laren, D.D.)

Vers. 13, 14. *Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.*—*The tender pity of the Lord*.—With a text from the Old Testament, I purpose to take you straight away to the New, and the tenderness and pitifulness of the Father shall be illustrated by the meekness and lowliness of the Son towards His immediate disciples, the apostles. While the Holy Spirit shows you thus the pity of Jesus Christ towards His own personal attendants, you will see as in a glass His pity towards you. I. THE DIVINE PATIENCE OF OUR LORD JESUS TOWARDS THE APOSTLES. He kept no register of their faults, He never rehearsed the list of their shortcomings, but, on the contrary, His main rebuke was His own perfect example, and He ever treated them as His friends and brethren. Think of this, and you will see in Christ Jesus that "like as a father pitieth his children," etc. Much forbearance He had with their lack of understanding. The apostles, before Pentecost, were very gross and unspiritual in judgment. Their eyes were holden in more senses than one. Many a master would have grown weary of such pupils, but infinite love brought to its succour infinite patience, and He continued still to teach them though they were so slow to learn. "Like as a father pitieth," etc. He taught them humility by His humility; He taught them gentleness by His gentleness; He did not point out their defects in words, He did not dwell upon their errors, but He rather let them see their own spots by His purity, their own defects by His perfection. Oh, the marvellous tenderness of Christ, who so paternally pitied them that feared Him! II. THE REASONS OF THIS DIVINE PATIENCE in the case of our Lord. Doubtless we must find the first reason in what He is. Our Lord was so greatly good that He could bear with poor frail humanity. When you and I cannot bear with other people it is because we are so weak ourselves. I would to God we could copy His love and borrow His "meekness so divine." He bore with them and pitied them because of His relationship to them. He had loved them as He has loved many of us, "from before the foundation of the world." He was their Shepherd, and He pitied the diseases of His flock; He was their "brother born for adversity," and He stooped to be familiar with their frailties. Another reason for His patience was His intention to become perfect as the Captain of our salvation, through suffering. In order that He might be a complete High Priest, and know all the temptations of all His servants, He bears with the infirmities and sins of His disciples whom He could have perfected at once if He had willed, but whom He did not choose to perfect because He desired to reveal His tender pity towards them, and to obtain by experience complete likeness to His brethren. Did He not also do this that He might honour the Holy Spirit? If Jesus had perfected the apostles, they would not have seen so manifestly the glory of the Holy Ghost. Until the Holy Ghost was come, what poor creatures the eleven were! but when the Holy Ghost was given, what brave men, what heroes, how deeply instructed, how powerful in speech, how eminent in every virtue they became! It is the

object of Jesus Christ to glorify the Spirit, even as it is the design of the Holy Spirit to glorify Christ in our hearts. III. **THE TEACHING TO BE DERIVED FROM THIS PATIENCE.** 1. If the Lord had thus had pity upon you as He had on His apostles, do ye even so to others. Look at the bright side of your brother, and the black side of yourself, instead of reversing the order as many do. Remember there are points about every Christian from which you may learn a lesson. Look to their excellences, and imitate them. Think, too, that small as the faith of some of your brethren is, it will grow, and you do not know what it will grow to. Though they be now so sadly imperfect, yet if they are the Lord's people, think of what they will be one day. 2. In your own case, have firm faith in the gentleness and forbearance of Christ. Think of how gentle He was with the apostles, and remember He is the same still. Change of place has not changed His character. The exaltations of heaven have not removed from Him the tenderness of His heart; He will accept you still. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

The Divine pity:—No word better brings home the truth of Divine lovingkindness than pity—the pity of the Lord. There is love and mercy shown in passing by our sin, and forgiving us; but it is the love shown in the pity of the Lord that touches us most directly, and at once reaches the quick of our nature. And the reasons for this are not difficult to understand. I. **THE PITY OF GOD IS CONDESCENDING LOVE.** It is the love of one who is infinitely our superior. Abject penitence on the one hand, and reliance upon the Divine compassion on the other—that is the truest and best relation in which the sinner and God can stand. II. **THE PITY OF GOD IS UNDEMANDABLE.** The pity of God is most welcome to us, because it is that which best corresponds to our own thoughts concerning ourselves. It is true, we are unworthy; and so unworthy, the very thought of it often repels us from God and makes us ashamed to seek His forgiveness and help; but we can say very sincerely that, however great our sins may be, there is need so great, weakness and helplessness so great, that, apart from our deserts, we ought to be the objects of the pity of a compassionate and loving God. III. **GOD'S INTEREST IN HUMANITY.** The wounds of the patriot who has bled for his country become eloquent appeals to his countrymen if he come to be in want; the distresses of the poor become appeals to our hearts, even when they are brought about by their own sin. In the hour of distress we fail to be judges. There is only one feeling of compassion to a fellow-creature in distress. Shall not God be as much moved by the sight of human need as we are? (*James Ross.*)

Our heavenly Father's pity:—I. **THE DISPLAYS OF THIS PITY.** 1. God pities His children, in all their ignorance; He is not angry with them, nor doth He speak sharply to them; but He leadeth them on by His Spirit, until they understand His truth, and receive His Word. 2. What pity has the Lord had upon you and me, in all our wanderings. 3. In actual transgressions and downright sin. 4. In sickness. 5. In all our manifold trials, of whatever kind they are, and from whatever quarter they proceed. 6. Sometimes God's people have wrongs; and a father pities his children, if they have wrongs that are unrevenge. There never was a wrong done to one of God's people that God did not avenge; there has never been an ill deed done towards them yet but He hath punished the doer of it. II. **THE SPIRIT OF GOD'S PITY.** 1. There is no contempt in it. 2. It is not the pity of inaction. 3. It is not the pity of mere sensitiveness. Go to Him now if you are poor; tell Him all your care, and see if He will not help you. Go and try Him, for His pity is a heavenly pity; it is the very nard of Paradise, that healeth sores effectually. III. **THE PEOPLE WHOM GOD PITIE.** "The Lord pitieth them that fear Him." Oh, that ye would tremble at His presence; and, then, oh, that ye could know yourselves to be His children, and fear Him as children do their parents! Oh, that ye did reverence His name, and keep His Sabbaths! Oh, that ye did obey His commandments, and have His fear ever before your eyes! Then should your peace be like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

God's pity:—I. **IT IS LIKE THAT OF A TENDER AND MERCIFUL FATHER.** 1. He forbears summary punishment. 2. He encourages us when we try to serve Him. 3. He ceases to chastise when chastisement has accomplished the purpose for which it was sent. II. **WHY GOD SHOWS SUCH PITY TO HIS CHILDREN.** 1. It is His character to be pitiful. 2. He feels to us as a Father. (*W. Handcock.*)

The best need the pity of God:—It is like tolling the death-knell of all our pride to talk about God pitying us. Why, we shed our pity profusely upon the ungodly; we are often pitying the wicked, the profane, the blasphemer, the Sabbath-breaker; but here we find a God pitying us. Even David, the mighty

psalmist, is pitied; a prophet, a priest, a king, each of these shall have pity from God, for "He pitieth them that fear Him," and finds good reasons for pitying them, however high their station, however holy their character, or however happy their position. We are pitiable beings. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *A father's great love:*—How much a father loves his son is shown in the story of the nobleman who went all the way from Capernaum to Cana for the sake of his boy. The other day an American father gave the great Austrian, Dr. Lorenz, £6,000 to make his crippled daughter able to walk. Many other fathers and mothers brought their children to this great doctor, and he treated as many of them as he had time to do. We never know how much our parents love us until we are sick or in danger. Then it is mother who sits by our bed and never goes to sleep until the danger is over. Then it is father who thinks no toil or sacrifice too great for his darling boy or girl. (*Freeman.*)

Ver. 14. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust.—*God's perfect knowledge and merciful consideration of our frame:*—I. **THE NATURE OF THE HUMAN FRAME.** 1. The body. (1) Its wants and necessities. (2) Its weakness. (3) Its pains and sicknesses. (4) Its mortality. 2. The soul, as in union with the body. (1) The disadvantage arising from hence to that faculty of the soul which we call the understanding; the foundation of all the excellency and glory of man, but liable to be sadly confined, clouded and even distracted by the alterations that happen in the temperature of the body. (2) Being united to a fleshly body, the soul is beset and agitated by a variety of passions, that are not natural to it, and yet could not more vex and influence it if they were. (3) The consequence of all the rest is, that the embodied soul has a great many difficulties to struggle with and surmount, in the steady exercise of virtue and piety, in the regular exercises of devotion, and in maintaining its integrity and faithfulness to the end of this mortal life. II. **GOD'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE HUMAN FRAME.** 1. Immediate and direct. 2. Perfect. He sees us through and through, without and within. This perfect knowledge of God extends not to some actions only, but to all; not only to our external actions, but even those which pass no further than the mind itself; its thoughts, and purposes, and affections; its least tendencies to good or evil; and the degree of good or evil in each. III. **GOD'S COMPASSIONATE REGARD TO THE NATURE AND WEAKNESS OF OUR FRAME IN ALL HIS DEALINGS WITH THOSE THAT FEAR HIM.** 1. He does not expect that they should new-model and alter their frame. This is absolutely out of their power, and therefore no part of their duty. 2. God, who knoweth our frame, requires no other measures of virtue, obedience, and devotion, than are proportioned to the nature He hath given us, and the state and circumstances of being in which we are placed. 3. He knoweth our frame, and therefore does not willingly afflict and grieve us, not for His pleasure but for our profit, and that we may be made partakers of His holiness. And when He sees it necessary to correct us, it is in measure, and for no longer time than is expedient. 4. Out of a merciful regard to our frame, and remembrance that we are but dust, our gracious God grants us all that assistance and support and consolation of which we stand in need. 5. Remembering that we are dust (as liable to be swept out of the world as dust is to be scattered and blown away by the wind), He watches over us with a most tender care, and preserves us in life, as long as His own glory and our interest requires it. IV. **THE GROUND OR REASON OF THAT MERCY WHICH GOD EXERCISES TOWARDS THEM THAT FEAR HIM.** He has the relation of a father to us, and the affection of a father for us; the affection or love without any of the imperfections attending it in earthly parents. **APPLICATION.** 1. Since the words of the text are designed not only for the consolation of those that fear God, they that do not fear Him have nothing to do with the comfort they administer, as long as they continue in their sins. 2. This should make us more favourable in our censures of the characters and actions of others, than we too commonly are. 3. Let such as truly fear God often revolve the subject of this discourse in their thoughts: it would be of great use to them, by affording them ground of caution on the one hand, and of comfort and encouragement on the other. (1) Let me consider that I am dust, and from hence learn not to boast of anything I call mine, or to presume upon it: for, alas! what is anything merely human as such? human life, or reason, or virtue, or any other accomplishment? how weak the foundation! how uncertain the tenure! (2) The comfort which the same consideration yields to persons of integrity is very great, and very apparent. Does not my heart condemn me, as wanting sincerity?

I may, then, have confidence towards God, that He will not condemn me for the want of perfection: all my desire is before Him, and my groaning is not hid from Him. As He knoweth my most secret sins, so my sorrow for them, and my conflicts with them. As He knoweth all my weaknesses, so He knoweth how to pity them, and is both willing and able to help them. He will proportion my burdens to my strength, or my strength to my burdens. (*II. Grove.*) *God remembers man's weakness*.—1. God is absolutely faithful in all His dealings with us. He treats us as just such creatures as we really are. He remembers that we are dust. But He remembers, too, what is in this dust: our insignificance in connection with our immortality, our powers and capacities of spirit. He therefore does not despise, but pities us. "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." And this knowledge of our frailty is given as the occasion of His compassion, "For He knoweth our frame," etc. It is thus contrast in us which stirs the Divine heart. I never had my sympathy more excited than once when I found a man, of superb education and talent, doing the most menial tasks, in order to get food and raiment. Had he been a boor, of spirit in keeping with his condition, he would have hardly awakened a passing thought. And if man's soul were as limited as his bodily condition, as the materialist says, only "animated dust," God would have evinced no such concern, for there would have been no occasion for it. It is the reflection of God's own image in human nature, spirituality, that might glow at His throne, confined in clay, an incorruptible chrysalized in corruption, that brings the Divine to bow in solicitude over us. 2. But the Divine compassion is not of the nature of comfort in our perishing condition, to sustain us until all is over. He does not let us perish. Note the contrast in a succeeding verse, "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him." How many once familiar faces I miss! Others are getting ready to fold up the tent of the flesh and disappear over the horizon of time. I shall soon miss others, or you will miss me; but not much. Lord Macaulay, speaking of the death of Wilberforce, says, "I was truly fond of him. And how is that? How very little the world misses anybody! If I were to die to-morrow, not one of the fine people with whom I dine every week will take the less on Saturday at the table to which I was invited to meet them. . . . And I am quite even with them. . . . There are not ten people in the world whose deaths would spoil my dinner; but there are one or two whose deaths would break my heart." Macaulay was not hard-hearted, only plain-spoken, to say that, for it is true of all of us. God alone follows us with His solicitous care when we leave the world. If we have accepted His companionship, and walked with Him on earth, He will conduct us for ever in the land of His rest. 3. The expression, "God remembereth that we are dust," suggests that the plan of salvation which He has devised for us may be easily understood. If we were fallen angels, with powerful intellects, accustomed to solve eternal mysteries, glowing, like stars in this, our nether firmament, and with vast moral energies, and ages in which to perform, I can imagine that God would have given us a very different and immensely fuller scheme of doctrine and duties than He has given. But remembering that so brief is life that we can know but little, He has flashed the saving truth before our souls, so that he may run that reads. Behold the consideration of God in telling us, so simply and yet so clearly, all we need to know; and telling it in such a way that it falls into the heart as easily as light through a window into your dwelling, if you will only make your heart walls transparent with sincerity. 4. God, "remembering that we are dust," has given a religion which may be readily accepted. We have no time to transform our natures by any process of development in virtue, by the evolution of any slight germ of spirituality we may have within us, for have we the strength any more than the leaves now dropping from the trees in the winter winds have strength of growth to grow into a forest? Some of you have tried it; ten, twenty, thirty years have been spent in the honest attempt to make over your lives, refine your dispositions, spiritualize your natures. But you will confess that you have made hardly perceptible progress; perhaps have only felt more strangely the downward current in your attempt to buffet it. 5. Behold the loving consideration of God, in making, not the complete renovation of heart and life the condition of salvation, but simple faith and repentance, and the acceptance of the peace of the Spirit, which transforms the nature. I cannot revive myself, lying as a poor, drooping, dying plant; but I can give myself up to the showers of heaven which quicken me. I can accept of immortality with the gasp of my mortality. (*J. M. Ludlow, D.D.*) *The pity of the Lord*.—

The pity of the Lord is here said to spring out of His knowledge and His memory; but if He were not pitifully inclined towards the frail children of the dust, no amount of knowledge and memory could in themselves originate in Him the sweet qualities of tenderness and mercy. A hard man may fully know and well remember the sorrows and afflictions of his neighbours, and yet feel no pity, and exercise no benevolence. Even the fact that such an one is a father is no absolute security here; for there are fathers without natural affection, who harden their hearts against their children, and close their doors against their own flesh and blood. As to the limitation that is here, "them that fear Him," there need be no thought for a moment of narrowness or exclusiveness; for if the Lord pitied only those who fear Him, what would have become of us when we feared Him not? "He knoweth our frame," for He hath made it. He, and He alone, understands the mystery of life, and the invisible link that binds together the body and the spirit, the silver cord which, being loosened, ends the feast of life so far as this present world is concerned. He "knoweth our frame," too, for He has taken part with us in our very flesh in the person of His Son Jesus Christ. "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part in the same." "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." He knows the weakness of our flesh, for He Himself was weak; when shrinking from the Cup He said, "If it be possible, let it pass," while yet, in the impossibility of love's failure, it passed not. "Could ye not watch with Me one hour?" not one brief hour? "Verily, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." We are but dust. He knows it, and by the experience of His humanity remembers it. He knows, too, the strength of our temptation, matched, and, alas! sometimes overmatched, against this weakness, and He will not burden us above our strength; or if even for wise ends this should be, and we should faint and fall, we shall be sure still of His pity, for He "knoweth our frame." (*J. W. Lance.*) *God's individual care*:—The historian tells us that the great Duke of Wellington, who was known as the Iron Duke, before one of his earliest campaigns had a soldier with his full marching equipment accurately weighed. Knowing what one soldier of average strength had to carry, he could judge how far his army might be called to march without breaking down. Our Heavenly Father does not deal in averages. With infinite wisdom and love He cares individually for us. (*L. A. Banks, D.D.*)

Vers. 15-18. As for man, his days are as grass.—*Human life*:—We have here presented man's existence in relation to—I. THE MATERIAL AND THE MORAL. 1. His relation to the material. Like the flower—(1) He springs out of the earth. (2) He is sustained by the earth. (3) He returns to the earth. 2. His relation to the moral. Inside this frame of organized dust there is a spirit that can reverence the Infinite, that can keep His covenant and attend to His precepts. Herein is the glory of man's nature. The power to do this is His distinction; the willingness to do this is his glory. II. THE TEMPORARY AND THE ETERNAL. 1. The connection of all men with the earth is temporary (vers. 15, 16). The wind of mortality is ever breathing through the human world, and men like flowers wither every hour, aye, every minute. 2. The connection of good men with mercy is eternal (vers. 17, 18; Isa. liv. 10). (*Homilist.*) *The lessons of autumn*:—There is a pensiveness in this season, which surely all must feel, and which must dispose all, except the most thoughtless, to some degree of reflection. It would be strange if we could stand amidst the decay, which is now so rapidly advancing, without being led by it into some train of meditation, favourable to religious feeling; and without receiving impressions calculated to make us wiser and better. I. THE FRAIL AND FLEETING NATURE OF MAN (vers. 15, 16; Ps. xc. 5, 6; Isa. lxiv. 6; xl. 6, 7; Job xiv. 2; James i. 10). The place which we now occupy was once occupied by others, but it knows them no more; and soon it will know nothing of us. Our occupation will be gone—our daily doings will have ceased—our history will have come to its close. To fix our wishes on earth, would be to doom them to certain disappointment; it would be like putting our goods into a dwelling which we knew the next hour would be burned unto the ground—trusting our treasure to a vessel which we knew would go to pieces in the coming storm. II. THE ENDURING NATURE OF THE MERCY OF GOD (vers. 17, 18; 1 John ii. 17; John vi. 27; Matt. xxiv. 35). Why, then, need we be depressed at the thought, that our days on earth are but as grass, and our joys but as the fading flowers of the field, since we may revive again, and become partakers of an "enduring substance" in a better world. III. THE CHARACTER OF THOSE TO WHOM THIS MERCY WILL BE SHOWN.

Although it is free in its offers, it is not indiscriminate in its gifts: although it is given gratuitously, it is not given unconditionally: although it is offered to all, it is not granted to all. (*G. Bellett.*) *Mortality*:—If we consider ourselves as offenders in many things, which we all are, death is a just consequence of our transgressions; for it is fit and reasonable that disobedient creatures should be deprived of the powers which they pervert and abuse. I. OUR PRESENT STATE OF MORTALITY IS UPON MANY ACCOUNTS CONVENIENT AND USEFUL. 1. It is convenient that we should die, because this world is a state of trial. 2. As the consideration of death hath a tendency to deter us from vice, it consequently prevents some disorders, and makes us live together in society better than we also should pass our days. 3. It is also convenient that we should die, because the future recompenses of obedience are of a spiritual nature. 4. Another reason why it is convenient that we should die, is, that our obedience at best being defective, death prepares us for the next state, and excites in the soul thoughts and inclinations which ought to accompany it at its entrance into the world of spirits, and into the presence of its Maker. 5. It is not only convenient, but desirable and profitable, that we should die, if death conducts us to life eternal. 6. If by obedience and perseverance we secure to ourselves an inheritance in the Kingdom of God, when that promised time shall come, and this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, the remembrance of our former earthly state, and of all its inconveniences, may probably add to our happiness; and then it will be good for us that we once were mortal creatures. II. THE METHODS WHICH WE MUST USE, TO ALLAY AND RESTRAIN THOSE IMMEDIATE FEARS OF DEATH, WHICH ARE BLAMEABLE, AND WHICH ALSO RENDER LIFE ITSELF, WITH ALL ITS CONVENIENCES, DULL AND COMFORTLESS. 1. Frequent thoughts of our latter end will assist to produce this good effect. 2. Another way of reconciling ourselves to death is to consider it as unavoidable. 3. Another consideration tending to make us more willing to die, is, that it is common to all. 4. The troubles of life, rightly considered, may help to remove a great dislike of death. (*J. Jortin, D.D.*) *As a flower of the field.*—*What the flowers say* (*Flower Service*):—Let us listen to the preaching of the flowers to-day. What do they say to us? One thing they all say is—"trust God." God takes care of the flowers, and sends them dew, and rain, and sunshine, and fresh air, and they tell us that the same God who cares for them cares also for us. And next, I think, all the flowers say to us, "thank God." See how the daisies in the meadow seem to look up thankfully to God. Some one says that God smiles on the earth, and that the earth smiles back again with its flowers. Next, the flowers say to us, "be contented." They are quite satisfied to grow, and smell sweet, and look pretty, in the place where God puts them. Now, just as God plants the flowers in a certain place, some up high on the hills, others down low in the valley; some in the Queen's greenhouse, others in the cottager's garden, so He puts you children in your right place. Another thing which all the flowers tell us is this, "remember that you must die." When the autumn and winter come we say the flowers are dead because we cannot see them. But the flowers are not really dead. They are sleeping in the earth till the spring comes again. God has put them to bed in the warm ground, and when the proper time comes they will waken up. Just what God does to the flowers He does to us. What else do the flowers say to us? I think they say, "keep in the sunshine, be happy." You always find that flowers are on the sunny side of things. So ought we to be. There is another thing which the flowers say to us—"Be sweet." There is nothing so delicious as to go into a flower garden after a warm shower, and to smell the sweet scents. Well, God has sent you into the garden of this world to be sweet like the flowers. Some children are regular stinging nettles in a home, or a school. They always make people uncomfortable. They sting with their tongues, and they sting with their looks and their tempers. (*H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, M.A.*)

Ver. 16. *For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.*—*The autumn wind: an emblem of death*:—I. The autumn wind works GRADUALLY. Blade by blade, the herbs wither under its influence; and leaf by leaf, the tree is stripped of its foliage. Thus on gradually until all is dust. So death works gradually. "We die daily." II. The autumn wind works UNIVERSALLY. It is on all herbage, in all forests, it withers all, sows death everywhere. All are dying, individuals, families, nations, the whole generation. III. The autumn wind works INSIDIOUSLY. Only occasionally does it come with

the rush of violence, and scatter the leaves. Quietly, invisibly, insidiously it works. So does death. It is working in their systems when men are utterly unconscious of it. "The wind passeth over it and it is gone." And when the wind of death passeth over us, we are gone, gone for ever. (*Homilist.*) *Soon forgotten*:—We shall sleep none the less sweetly, though none be talking about us over our heads. The world has a short memory, and, as the years go on the list that it has to remember grows so crowded that it is harder and harder to find room to write a new name on it, or to read the old. The letters on the tombstones are soon crased by the feet that tramp across the churchyard. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 17. **But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him.**—*Man and mercy*:—Verses 15–19 form a beautiful contrast between man's life and God's mercy. I. THERE IS A CONTRAST IN THEIR STRENGTH. 1. Man's life is weak. All men in all places and at all times are like grass, and will soon pass away. But the mercy of the Lord is not weak, feeble, and easily consumed; it is almighty. The almightiness of mercy is proved by its wonderful achievements. 2. Man's life is a disappointment. "As for man, his days are like grass." Grass soon withers away. Such is human life. It is frail, and full of disappointments. But God's mercy is everlastingly green. II. A CONTRAST IN THEIR BEAUTY. (*Isa. xl. 6.*) This figure refers to human beauty. The apostle calls the beauty of man his glory (1 Pet. i. 24). Man's glory is his health, energy, beauty, talent, wisdom. His vigour is soon gone; his beauty fades, his wisdom ceases. But "the beauty of the Lord"—the beauty of holiness—the beauty of mercy never fades away. III. A CONTRAST IN THEIR DURATION. 1. Man cannot carry out his designs after death, but mercy executes her plans independent of his presence. 2. Mercy distributes her invaluable blessings among families throughout all generations. (*Homilist.*) *The character and privileges of God's people*:—I. THEIR CHARACTER. 1. They fear Him. By this we are to understand obedience to all the duties of religion. 2. They keep His covenant. This implies that they walk agreeably to their baptismal and Lord's Supper engagements; that they resist the devil, the world, and the flesh. 3. They remember His commandments to do them. II. THE PRIVILEGES OF GOD'S PEOPLE are innumerable, and are almost all summed up in this one word mercy. They are all summed up in Christ. 1. Original mercy. This, in God, is like a fountain that runs night and day—that is never diminished or dried up. 2. Communicative mercy. It is over all God's works. Since the earth was created, it has been full of temporal and spiritual mercies. 3. Tender mercy coming from the heart. It is exercised towards miserable objects, immediately and in the very time of need. 4. Free in its exercise towards us, without any deserving on our part. 5. Great mercy. God is "plenteous in mercy; rich in mercy"; abundant in mercy; He has manifold mercies; He keeps mercies for thousands (*Exod. xxxiv. 7.*). 6. Infinite mercy. Far above the heavens (*Isa. lv. 7, 9.*) Deeper than the sea (*Micah vii. 19.*) 7. Eternal mercy. His compassion fails not; "His mercy endureth for ever." III. IMPROVEMENT. 1. Those who have experienced this mercy are happy. Finding the end of this mercy is like finding the end of a ring—impossible. 2. Those who have never experienced this mercy are truly miserable. (*James Kidd, D.D.*) *The mercy of the Lord to the children of those who fear Him*:—The word "righteousness" here, as in many other places, is equivalent to mercy or beneficence; and the ever-enduring lovingkindness of our God, described in the first clause as from everlasting to everlasting, is in the second more precisely defined, as continued to the children's children of those who fear Him. The Almighty hath done nothing in vain. Every power, every affection of the human soul, is implanted in it by Him for some valuable end, and is operated on by the means which His wisdom hath appointed for carrying forward our improvement here, and accomplishing our preparation for happiness hereafter. Of those principles, there is no one more universal, more powerful, or more obviously beneficial, than parental affection. In the inferior animals, with whom it is merely instinctive, it exercises a power to which every other habit and propensity seems to be subordinate. Under its dominion the most ferocious become mild and gentle, the most fearful, fierce and daring in the defence of their offspring, the feeblest and most indolent, indefatigable in providing for their subsistence. By its operation, the living tribes of earth are, in almost each individual instance, trained up to maturity, and prevented from perishing from off the surface of the globe. In man, especially when he is enlightened and civilized, it assumes a loftier bearing, and holds a more important

place. When it is guarded by religious principle and sound judgment from the abuses to which all the feelings of mortality are liable, when it is purified and refined by the sacred and endearing habits of domestic life, and hallowed by the hope of immortality, it triumphs over every selfish inclination, and connects the successive generations of men by ties equally blessed to the present and the future inhabitants of earth. It is obvious, that under the diversified government of God, this, like every other principle, is made to produce the most valuable fruits. His providence employs it to control selfishness, to restrain turbulent passion, to draw forth useful exertion from the individual, to supply a most powerful motive for acting uprightly and honourably. Yet it is not only by its direct operation that parental love influences the human mind for good. The Almighty appeals to it in His Word as a motive to cherish godly fear and holy obedience. To mankind He holds out a blessing on their posterity, as a most powerful incentive to compliance with the requisitions of His law (Exod. xx. 5, 6; Gen. xxii. 17, 18; Ps. cxli. 1, 2). Though the Christian revelation, in directing our views to another and a better world, renders the vicissitudes of this life less marked and less momentous, still an attentive observer may discern the fulfilment of this gracious declaration in the ordinary and general course of human affairs. You see the unsullied fame of the parent descend on the son and recommend him to notice, confidence, and employment. Were it given you to enter more deeply into the counsels of the Almighty, and to trace more accurately than you now do the ways of His providence, you might behold proofs still more decisive of His righteousness to the children of His servants, in soothing their afflictions, in supplying their wants. Such views of the Divine procedure must fill our minds with admiration of the wisdom of Him by whom our souls and bodies were formed, and who governs and conducts us by laws and motives adapted to every branch of that nature in which He hath created us. In filling the hearts of parents with an indelible attachment to their children, He not only prompts them to those exertions which contribute so largely to the happiness and improvement of mankind, but renders them capable of appreciating, and disposed to comply with those inducements to obedience which are suggested by His promise of a blessing on their posterity. What parent who reflects can resist their influence? who, with a heart to feel, would not endeavour to keep His covenant and remember His commandments to do them, when assured that His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting on them that fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children? If there be one branch of Christian conduct in which, more than in another, it becomes you to be followers of God as dear children, it is in doing good to the children of those who have loved and served Him. In so doing you imitate those dispensations of His providence in which His unerring wisdom is most conspicuously displayed. You copy the most amiable and affecting manifestation of His fatherly benevolence. (*D. Macfarlan, D.D.*)

Ver. 18. To such as keep His covenant.—*Keeping the covenant*:—Saints are to look upon themselves as wholly the Lord's, in opposition to all competitors. The Lord will not divide with rivals; if ye take Him these must go. The soul till it comes within the covenant is in a restless case, like a bee going from flower to flower, or a bird from bush to bush; but when it is married to Christ it is settled with Him, and breaks its league with all others. Remember, the covenant ye have entered into is an offensive and defensive league. You are to have common friends and common foes with the Lord. His people must be your people, and His enemies your enemies. (*Thomas Boston.*)

Vers. 19–22. The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens.—*Genuine piety*:—I. It recognizes God as the SUPREME GOVERNOR OF THE UNIVERSE (ver. 19). 1. His government is absolute. His authority is not delegated, it is absolute. 2. His government is universal. "It is in the heavens," over all. As the heavens encompass the earth, His government embraces the universe, over all matter and over all mind, over all loyal citizens and all rebels, all heavens and all hells. II. It is ENTHUSIASTICALLY INTERESTED IN THE UNIVERSE AND ITS GOD. 1. It is enthusiastically interested in the universe. "Bless the Lord, ye His angels," etc. "All His hosts," etc. "His ministers," etc. "All His works," etc. "In all places." 2. It is enthusiastically interested in the universe because of its God. Piety is supreme love to God; and hence its supreme desire is that all should love and praise Him. If I love an artist, I am interested in his painting. If I love a father, I am interested in his children. If I love God, I have a deep interest in

His universo. III. Although it gives an enthusiastic interest in the universe, it does NOT DEADEN THE SENSE OF INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY. "Bless the Lord, O my soul." Though I may wish the whole creation to praise Him, let me not forget that I am bound to do so for myself. (*Homilist.*) *The dominion of God:*—Jehovah's dominion is here proclaimed as universal. I. SOME GENERAL PROPOSITIONS FOR THE CLEARING AND CONFIRMING THIS GLORIOUS FACT. 1. We must know the difference between the power of God and His authority. As God is Lord, He hath a right to enact: as He is Almighty, He hath a power to execute. His strength is the executive power belonging to His dominion. 2. All the other attributes of God refer to this perfection of dominion. His goodness fits Him for it, because He can never use His authority but for the good of the creatures. His wisdom can never be mistaken in the exercise of it; His power can accomplish the decrees that flow from His absolute authority. 3. This of dominion, as well as that of power, hath been acknowledged by all. It is stamped upon the conscience of man, and flashes in his face in every act of self-judgment. 4. This notion of sovereignty is inseparable from the notion of God (Heb. xi. 6). II. WHEREIN THE DOMINION OF GOD IS FOUNDED. 1. On the excellency of His nature. God being an incomprehensible ocean of all perfection, and possessing infinitely all those virtues that may lay a claim to dominion, hath the first foundation of it in His own nature. On this account God claims our obedience (Isa. xlv. 9; Jer. x. 6, 7). 2. In His act of creation. He is the sovereign Lord, as He is the almighty Creator. 3. As God is the final cause, or end of all, He is Lord of all (Prov. xvi. 4; Rev. iv. 11). 4. The dominion of God is founded upon His preservation of things (Ps. xcv. 3, 4). 5. The dominion of God is strengthened by the innumerable benefits He bestows upon His creatures (Isa. i. 2; 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20). III. THE NATURE OF THIS DOMINION. 1. Independent. 2. Absolute. (1) In regard of freedom and liberty. Thus creation is a work of mere sovereignty; He created, because it was His pleasure to create. Preservation is the fruit of His sovereignty. Redemption is the fruit of His sovereignty. (2) In regard of unlimitedness by any law without Him. He is an absolute monarch, that makes laws for His subjects, but receives no rules nor laws from His subjects for the management of His government. (3) In regard of supremacy and uncontrollableness. None can impeach Him, and cause Him to render a reason for His actions (Eccl. viii. 4). It is an absurd thing for any to dispute with God (Rom. ix. 20). In all the desolations He works, He asserts His own supremacy to silence men (Ps. xlv. 10). (4) In regard of irresistibleness. His word is a law; He commands things to stand out of nothing (2 Cor. iv. 6). 3. Yet this dominion, though it be absolute, is not tyrannical. If His throne be in the heavens, it is pure and good. This dominion is managed by the rule of wisdom, righteousness, goodness. His throne is a throne of holiness and of grace (Heb. iv. 16). 4. This sovereignty is extensive. God is King of all the earth, and rules to the ends of it. IV. WHEREIN THIS DOMINION AND SOVEREIGNTY CONSISTS, AND HOW IT IS MANIFESTED. 1. The first act of sovereignty is the making laws. This is essential to God; no creature's will can be the first to rule the creature. Hence the law is called the royal law (James ii. 8; Isa. xxxiii. 22). The Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king. 2. His sovereignty appears in a power of dispensing with His own laws. Positive laws He hath reversed; as the ceremonial law given to the Jews; the very nature of that law required a repeal, and fell of course (Eph. ii. 14). 3. His sovereignty appears in punishing the transgression of the law. 4. His dominion is manifested as a governor as well as a lawgiver and proprietor. (1) In disposing of states and kingdoms (Ps. lxxv. 7). (2) In raising up and ordering the spirits of men according to His pleasure (Exod. ii. 3-6; Isa. xlv. 28; xlv. 5). (3) In restraining the furious passions of men, and putting a block in their way. (4) In defeating the purposes and devices of men (Job v. 12, 14). (5) In the means and occasions of men's conversion. (6) In disposing of the lives of men. CONCLUSION. 1. How great is the contempt of this sovereignty of God. 2. How dreadful is the consideration of this doctrine to all rebels against God. 3. What matter of comfort and strong encouragement for prayer. (*S. Charnock.*) *The dominion of God:*—I. THE PROPER CHARACTERISTICS BY WHICH THE DIVINE DOMINION IS DISTINGUISHED. 1. It is founded upon unimpeachable right. 2. It occupies a vast extent. 3. It is regulated by infinite moral perfection. 4. It is destined to accomplish the noblest purposes. (1) The glory of the Governor. (2) The well-being and happiness of the governed. 5. It is established for perpetual duration. II. THE VARIOUS OBLIGATIONS WHICH THE CHARACTER OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT IMPRESSES UNIVERSALLY ON MANKIND.

1. Men are under obligation to render praise to God, by whom this dominion is exercised. 2. Men are under obligation to render obedience to the laws by which the Divine government is sustained. 3. We are under obligation to exercise confidence that all the events which transpire within the sphere of the Divine dominion must be managed wisely and for the best. 4. We are under obligation habitually and daily to anticipate those great purposes in connection with the government of our own world which yet remain to be fulfilled. (*James Parsons.*) *The Lord rules over all*:—The Lord rules over all. All things belong to His kingdom, and are under His dominion. Nothing is more plain and express in Scripture than both His reign and the extent of it. For the first, Ps. xciii. 1, 2; xcvi. 1, 2, where we have His royalty, and His throne, and the basis of it; and Ps. xcix. 1. For the extent of it, see 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12. I. **THE ACT.** To rule includes—1. Authority (Rom. xiii. 1; Rev. i. 5). 2. Power (Ps. lxi. 7; Rev. xix. 6; xi. 17). 3. The actual ordering and disposing of what is under Him, for the ends of government—the actual exercise of power and authority for this purpose. God is not like an artificer, who, when he has made a clock, and set it in order, and hanged weights upon it, leaves it to go of itself; but more like a musician, who, knowing his instrument will make no music of itself, does not only tune it, but actually touch the strings, for the making of that harmony which pleases him. II. **THE OBJECT OR SUBJECT OF HIS GOVERNMENT.** 1. He rules both heaven and earth (Isa. lxvi. 1). The glory of His kingdom appears most in heaven, but the power of it reaches the earth, yea, and hell too. That is the proper place of rebels indeed; but He has them in chains, and shows that He is their ruler by executing justice upon them. They would not obey the laws of His government, and therefore the penalty is inflicted on them; and this is an act of government, as well as enacting laws and propounding or giving rewards. 2. He rules not only heaven and earth, but all the parts thereof; the whole world, and every part of it (Ps. cxiii. 5; Col. i. 16; 2 Chron. xx. 6; Dan. v. 20, 21; iv. 32, 34, 35). 3. He rules not only great things, but small (Gen. xxxi. 11, 12). Things so mean and inconsiderable as we mind them not, judge them not worthy of our thoughts, care, or regard, they are all under the government of God, and He actually orders and disposes of them. 4. He rules not only all beings, but all motions (Acts xvii. 28). 5. He rules not only actions, but events, so that acts and undertakings have not such an issue as they promise or threaten, but such as the Lord pleases to order (1 Kings xx. 11; Eccles. ix. 11). 6. He rules and orders not only the substance, but the circumstances of things and actions (1 Sam. xxv. 32, 34; Matt. ii. 6; Ezek. xxi. 20, 21). 7. He rules and disposes both end and means (Hosea ii. 21, 22; Isa. x. 12; 1 Kings xvii.; 2 Kings ii. 24). 8. He rules and disposes not only things orderly, but such as seem most confused (Gen. xiv. 4–8; 1. 50). The Lord once, out of chaos, brought a well-ordered world. He rules still; and can, when He pleases, out of mere confusion and darkness, bring forth a new heaven and a new earth, wherein righteousness may dwell. 9. He rules and orders things, both necessary and contingent or casual. Things necessary, such as proceed from necessary causes, which act in one certain uniform way, and cannot of themselves vary nor proceed otherwise; such are the course of the heavens, the eclipses of the luminaries, the seasons of the year, the ebbings and flowings of the sea. The Lord gave law to all these, and keeps them to the observance of it, yet overrules them, and gives them other orders when He pleases. The Red Sea and Jordan are evidences that He who rules all can overrule anything. So things contingent and casual, which fall out uncertainly or accidentally, which those who know not God ascribe to chance and fortune, the Lord orders them, they fall out as He pleases. 10. He rules and orders not only that which is good, but that which is evil and sinful (Ps. cxviii. 12; Acts xiv. 19). (1) He limits and bounds it, so that it proceeds not so far as Satan and the depraved will of man would have it. (2) He overrules it to good ends, and disposes it to excellent purposes (Acts iv. 27, 28; ii. 23). 11. He rules things natural and voluntary. (1) Natural, such as have their next causes in nature, the hand of God rules them, as in thunder and lightning (Job xxxvii. 2, 3); wind and rain (Jer. x. 13; Ps. cxlviii. 7). (2) But more particularly He rules things voluntary; such are intelligent and rational beings. Man in special is the subject of His government. He takes order about His conception, formation, and birth (Job x. 9–11; Ps. cxxxix. 14–16). He fixeth the period of his life, and determines how many his days shall be upon earth (Job xiv. 5). He orders what his state and condition shall be while he lives (Ps. lxxv. 6, 7; 1 Sam. ii. 7, 8; Ps. cxiii. 7, 8). He rules the mind and heart

(Prov. xxi. 2; Ps. cxix. 36; and cv. 25). No heart so obstinate but He can bend it; none so fast closed but He can open it (Acts xvi. 4). III. **THE MODE OF GOD'S GOVERNMENT.** 1. It is a supreme sovereignty. He that rules over all has none above Him, none co-ordinate with Him, none but such as are below Him, indefinitely below Him, none but what are subjected to Him, and under Him at an infinite distance. 2. He rules absolutely; His government is unlimited, for who can bound Him who rules over all? 3. He rules irresistibly. None can give check to His orders, nor hinder Him from accomplishing His pleasure (Isa. xlv. 10, 11; Dan. iv. 35; Job ix. 12, 13). 4. He rules perfectly. There is not the least weakness or imperfection in His government, as there is in that of other rulers; nothing of error or mistake; nothing that the most excellent prudence would order otherwise; nothing defective for want of judgment as to things present, or want of experience as to things past, or want of foresight as to things to come; for He has all things, past, present, and to come, clearly before His eyes, in every act of government, and in His ordering of every particular (Ps. cxlvii. 5). 5. He rules all at once. The multiplicity of them is no more distraction to Him than if He had but one thing in hand. 6. He rules easily. He takes care of all without any solicitousness; He orders all, without any toil; He acts all, without any labour; he does it continually, without any weariness. 7. He rules continually. If He were but to withdraw His governing hand a moment, all the wheels of the great fabric of the world would stand still or fall to pieces. (*D. Clarkson.*) *The providence of God in the natural world.*—By the natural world, we understand the whole mass of matter, which is variously disposed into a multitude of shapes and forms, and different sorts of creatures, as sun, moon, and stars, air, earth, and sea; with all the vast variety with which they are stored, and by which they are inhabited. God's providential kingdom is absolutely universal, and over all. But at present, consider the providence of God, as the preserver and sovereign disposer of all things, in the natural world only. I. **THAT THERE IS A PROVIDENCE,** which presides over the whole course of nature, and all the world of creatures, may be argued—1. From the perfections of God: and of those we need only single out His knowledge and His wisdom, His goodness and His power; for if we believe that God is infinitely possessed of such perfections as these, it will hardly be possible for us to stop short of believing His providence. For will not His wisdom and goodness incline Him to take care of His creatures, and govern them in the best manner? 2. Express testimonies of Scripture, for the proof of a Providence. It is said that God upholdeth all things; and that they continue according to His ordinance. "He appointeth the moon for seasons" (Ps. civ. 19). He bringeth the winds out of His treasure (Ps. civ. 24, 25, 27). God is the supreme governor among the nations. This providence of God presides not only over great and important affairs, but it reaches to the minutest creatures (Matt. x. 29, 30). I will only further hint to you one article of the doctrine of Providence, which we learn from Scripture, viz. that the kingdom of Providence is administered by Christ our Saviour. It is by Him that all things consist (Col. i. 17). And to Him is all power given (Matt. xxviii. 18). The whole administration of Providence, over all creatures, and all worlds, is committed into the hands of the Mediator, Jesus Christ; which speaks both the dignity of His person, and the safety and happiness of His friends and people. 3. Appeal to the appearance of things: to the frame of nature, and the continued order and harmony of the whole creation; where we have as good testimonies to a Providence, as to the very being of a God. Can it be only by chance, that day and night, and summer and winter so regularly succeed to one another? (Gen. viii. 22). II. **EXPLAIN AND ILLUSTRATE THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IN THE NATURAL WORLD,** by some of the principal acts of it. 1. The providence of God is exercised in preserving His creatures. (1) In the preservation of the several species or kinds of animal creatures; so that though all the individuals die, one after another, yet no species is lost out of the creation. And this is truly wonderful, if we consider what a natural enmity there is betwixt some animals and others, and with what diligence men have endeavoured, in all ages, to destroy some whole kinds of them. The due proportion of the various inhabitants of the world to one another, and especially of the males to the females, which is so constantly preserved throughout the animal creation, is a very sensible instance of providential care. (2) God preserves them by His providence in their individual beings, until the end has been answered for which He made them. It is God that holdeth our soul in life. In Him we live. We are the living instances of Divine preservation: hitherto God has helped us. Nor

is God's providential care confined to man. "He heareth the young raven cry. Not a sparrow falls to the ground," etc. 2. As God preserves, so He also disposes of, and governs His creatures and their actions by His providence. (1) The inanimate creatures. He who fixed the laws of nature in the first creation, does still by His providence continue their force and power. Thus does God keep the springs of universal nature in His own hand, and turns them which way soever He pleaseth. 2. The whole animal creation. "The beasts of the forest are His, and the cattle upon a thousand hills;" they are all His creatures, and the subjects of His providence. What but a Providence could direct every beast, bird and insect where to seek its food and its habitation? Or teach every parent-animal how to take the properest care of its young? Or, what is it that conducts those birds, who shift their country and climate at certain seasons of the year, in their passage to some distant land, where multitudes of them never were before? III. Some of the most REMARKABLE PROPERTIES OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE, as it appears in the natural world. 1. The wisdom of Providence. A property so remarkable, that one may apply those words of the apostle to the mysteries of Providence, as well as those of grace: "O the depth of the riches!" How is the wisdom of God displayed in His preserving and governing the whole frame of nature! It is by this the "sparrow is directed to find a house, and the swallow a nest for herself." How admirably is the wisdom of Providence displayed in the different instinct of the various tribes of animals! Or, if we hearken to the voice even of storms and tempests, they will further declare to us the admirable wisdom of that God whose word they obey, and whose designs they execute. 2. The goodness and kindness of it (Ps. xxxiii. 5). "These all wait upon God, and He giveth them their meat in due season" (Ps. civ. 27, 28). God extends His kind regard to many thousands of creatures, who have no capacity of knowing and praising their Benefactor (Jonah iv. 11). "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle" (Ps. civ. 14, 15). And as God has plentifully stored the earth with the blessings of His goodness, so His providence kindly directs us to find out the various uses, whether for food or physic, for necessary support, or for convenience and delight. 3. It is very powerful. God upholdeth all things by the word of His power. The continued harmony of nature, and the constant and regular revolutions of seasons, are sensible demonstrations of the power of God (Ps. cxix. 90, 91). IMPROVEMENT. 1. To raise our admiring thoughts to the great God. What a great and mighty Being must He be, who is able thus to wield and manage the whole frame of nature! 2. We may infer, how terrible the wrath of this great and mighty God must be, and of what importance it is to secure His favour. So Pharaoh and the Egyptians found it. 3. Let the reconciled friends and people of God learn from hence to trust and acquiesce in Providence (Rom. viii. 32). 4. Let us learn to observe and adore the providence of God in all that befalls us, and to bless Him for all our enjoyments and comforts. (S. Jennings.) *God's universal rule*:—David said, "His kingdom ruleth over all." Our Saviour, as Creator, is also the God of providence. His kingdom has no limits. In Detroit, in the State of Michigan, the last place where I was before coming home, wife and child and self frequently crossed the river into Canada, just to see the old Union Jack for a bit of change from the Stars and Stripes. There is the boundary; the black, solemn deep Detroit, on which Indians paddled their canoes not so long ago. The States ended at the one shore, and when you got to the other there was another flag, another kingdom, another ruler. But no man ever yet found the limits of God's kingdom; no angel on mighty wing ever passed the boundary of God's providential kingdom. Why, the very Devil as he tumbled to the pit never got beyond the kingdom of the God against whom he had rebelled. In hell God reigns. (John Robertson.)

Vers. 20–22. **Bless the Lord, ye His angels.**—*On ministering spirits*:—I. The lowest occupation of tutelary beings upon the earth consists in THE PRESERVATION OR DELIVERANCE OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD FROM SITUATIONS OF DANGER. To be conscious, that whithersoever we may bend our steps;—in the midst of the throng, or in the solitary path,—these celestial protectors are at all times beside us,—to encompass as with a shield, and to cover as with a canopy,—must doubtless be an animating and soothing reflection. Yet this is no fanciful supposition (Ps. xci. 11, 12; xxxiv. 7; lxxviii. 17; cxxxix. 3). II. Another office, in which guardian spirits are engaged, is that of BEARING CONSOLATION TO THE AFFLICTED. To diffuse a holy calm throughout the troubled mind;—to pour forth into the wounded bosom their pitcher of refreshment, drawn from the rivers of Paradise;—to suggest con-

siderations which recommend submission or fortitude;—are employments not unsuitable to that heavenly host, concerning whom we know, that one of them stirred the pool of Bethesda, in preparation for the cure of the maimed (Acts i. 11). III. Those ethereal spirits are greatly occupied, as MESSENGERS OF GRACE IN TIME OF TEMPTATION;—as servants sent forth by the Holy Ghost into the breast, suggesting good, or banishing unholy thoughts;—as turning away the eye from the seductive spectacle, or sealing the ear to accents of delusion. We speak of sorrows, of sicknesses, of afflictions, of a place of graves, as means of grace;—wherefore, then, should not we, in like manner, speak of angels as its dispensers? It is in the highest degree reasonable to believe, that the office of transmitting the suggestions of grace may be imposed on them, on their own account, as intelligences, whom it becomes to praise the Father of the Universe, and to purify and approximate towards perfection their own natures, by active services as well as by hymns of adoration. It is natural to suppose, likewise, that pure and benevolent beings, permitted to witness the affairs of this lower world, should feel deeply interested for the favourable issue of the spiritual conflict sustained by those who may become their future and eternal associates:—and, if by any means possible, that they should exert themselves in promoting that issue. IV. If to bear from above the emanations of grace be an office in which pure and kind intelligences may be supposed to take high delight, with still greater satisfaction, may it further be presumed, do THEY WING THEIR WAY BACK TO THE COURTS OF HAPPINESS, CARRYING TIDINGS OF THE SUCCESSFUL RESULT OF THEIR EMBASSY (Tobit xii. 13; Rev. viii. 2, 3). V. This welcome report of the pure and upright behaviour of faithful sojourners upon earth, being circulated throughout the mansions of bliss, we cannot doubt that THE GLORIFIED HOST OF THE HAPPY WILL LISTEN TO IT WITH COMPLACENCY AND DELIGHT;—that they will congratulate each other on the triumph of good;—on the prospect of an increase to their band;—on a new advancement of the glory of the Most High (1 Pet. i. 12; Luke xv. 10). VI. When the awful hour which awaits every child of Adam, the hour of dissolution, approaches;—when the eye is about to close on those objects of fond affection, of whom it cannot take leave with indifference, ANOTHER INTERESTING OFFICE OF GUARDIAN SPIRITS WILL CONSIST IN WHISPERING WORDS OF PEACE TO THE DEPARTING FOLLOWERS OF JESUS;—in removing the film and dimness from the sight of faith;—in rolling back to its view the curtain of the skies, and permitting it to descry those seats of boundless felicity where it will speedily be, and where it will be as the angels. (*J. Grant, M.A.*) *Angels real:*—Some of the eminent doctors, in Rowland Hill's day, said that there were no such beings as angels; that they were only Oriental metaphors. "Very well," said Rowland Hill, "then it was a company of Oriental metaphors that sang at the birth of Christ, 'Glory to God in the highest.'" Angels are Oriental metaphors; then it was an Oriental metaphor that slew 185,000 of Sennacherib's army in a single night. Angels are Oriental metaphors; then it was an Oriental metaphor that appeared to Peter in prison, that knocked off his chains, and led him through the streets. "Truly," said he, "these Oriental metaphors are wonderful things!" (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 22. *Bless the Lord, all His works in all places of His dominion.—The illimitable vastness of the universe:*—How does our conception of the universe differ from that of David? It differs, among other things, mainly because we know, and he did not know, of infinite time, peopled with innumerable existences, on infinite space, crowded with unnumbered worlds. To David the earth probably seemed comparatively a thing of yesterday. We know of ages when the earth may have been a nebulous mass; of ages more when it was certainly one tangled growth of gigantic vegetation; of ages more when it was trodden by huge and fearful lizards—dragons of the prime, tearing each other with lethal armour of incomparable deadliness. We look at a piece of chalk, and we know that to form it took the spoils of millions of living organisms; and the man sinks powerless before the effort to conceive the years which it must have taken, by ordinary processes, to build up the white ramparts of our coasts. Yes, the knowledge of the deeps which geology reveals, so far from rendering too dim for us, tends only to brighten for us the image of a Father's love. We know that that Father is caring for us now, and geology has simply proved to us that He was caring for our race, it may be, a billion of years before it appeared upon our globe. But if science has thus widened for us the horizons of time, still more illimitably has it widened for us the horizons of space; still more completely has it annihilated

man's self-importance about his race, and about the globe on which he lives. To the ancients, for instance, the world was a very centre of all things, and a very image of immovable stability. To us it is an insignificant speck in the heavens of no material importance, and with no centrality about it; and, so far from being fixed, we know that it is rolling, with incessant revolution, on its own axis, whirling, at immense velocity, round the sun, "spinning," as one has said, "like an angry midge, in the abyss of its own small system, of which it is but one out of one hundred planets and asteroids, and of which the farthest of these planets rolls three hundred thousand millions of miles round the sun upon its sullen and solitary round." Again, to the ancients, and to David, the moon was but an ornament of the night, a silver cresset hung by God's hand in heaven, to illumine the darkened earth. To us it is, indeed, this, and we thank God for it, and also for its services, unknown to our forefathers, of attracting the waters, and so causing to roll, from hemisphere to hemisphere, that great tidal wave which purifies the world. But we have also learnt with amazement what the moon is. We know that it is a small world, in structure like our own; but without atmosphere, without clouds, without seas, without rivers, rent with enormous fissures, scathed and scorched with eruptive violences, a burnt-up cinder, a volcanic waste, the wreck, for all we know, of some past home of existence, a corpse in night's highway, naked, fire-scathed, accursed; and if, in the complications of her silent revolutions,

"She nightly, to the listening earth,
Repeats the story of her birth,"

yet that story presents us with so blank a mystery, that it forces our acknowledgment that it may seem as if its one blank hemisphere was only turned to this earth and its science in mocking irony, as though to convince us, against our will, that what we know is little—what we are ignorant of immense. Then, once more, turn to the sun. The ancients saw its splendour; they felt its warmth; they thanked God for its glory. To David it was, as you know, "as a bridegroom cometh forth out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a giant to run his course." It was thought a monstrous extravagance when one of the Greek philosophers said that it was a fiery mass, and another that it was about the size of Attica. But what is it to us? Look at the bas-relief of the tomb of Newton in Westminster Abbey, and there you will see the little genius weighing the sun, and the earth, and the planets on a steelyard. Yes, we know its weight; we know its distance; we know its revolution. We know even, of late years, by spectrum analysis, of what metals and gases it is composed. No human language can express its awfulness. That great orb, as we have discovered, bursts and boils with a horrible impetuosity, such as no human imagination can conceive; and yet this vast, portentous globe of fire is made to subserve the humblest purposes of man. Once more, for a moment, turn to the stars. Turn to the millions of stars in the Milky Way. Our sun is neither more nor less than just one, and one unimportant, star in that Milky Way. To David, when he said that the heavens declared the glory of God, only were known two or three thousand stars visible to the naked eye. To us are known somewhere about fifty millions. And, yet, I say again that the Christian is not in the least appalled by all this vastness. Space is nothing to that God who extends through all extent, and in the hollow of whose hand all those worlds lie as though they were but a single water-drop. But, by the telescope, better without it—

"Man may see
Stretched awful in the hushed midnight,
The ghost of his eternity."

But yet, happily, perhaps, for us, simultaneously with this abyss of non-existence beyond man, God has revealed to us an infinitude of life below Him. Take an animalcula, and Pascal will tell you that, however small its body, it is yet smaller in its limbs, and there are joints in those limbs, veins in those joints, blood in those veins, drops in that blood, humour in those drops, vapour in that humour, and an abyss even below this—an immensity of invisible life; so that man, we say, is suspended between two infinities—an abyss of infinity below, and of nothingness above, him. He is a mean between the nothing and the all—nothing compared to the infinite, infinite compared to the nothing. Is not this, at least, a lesson of humility? Should it not compel man rather to contemplate in silence

than to inquire with presumption? "Such knowledge is too deep and wonderful for me; I cannot attain to it." "What is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou soregardest him?" Here, for the Christian, at any rate, lies the solution of the dark enigma, the removal of the painful perplexity, the removal of the intolerable weight. Man is nothing in himself. He is as small, as mean, as abject as you please. He is but a fragment of the dust to which he shall soon return. Yes, but in himself nothing, in God man is everything—sacred, holy, sublime, immortal, a child of God, a joint-heir with Christ. What is vastness, then, to the Christian that it should appal him? It is nothing; it is less than nothing. It does not oppress or crush him. He is greater than those worlds. He is more immortal than all those clustered suns. They are, after all, but gas and flame; but he lives, and he is immortal, and he is created in the image of God. (*Dean Farrar.*) **Bless the Lord, O my soul.**—*The perils of the spiritual guide*:—In the two preceding verses the psalmist had similarly demanded that the Lord's works should praise Him—"Bless the Lord, ye His angels," etc. In our text, as though he would no longer invoke separately any order of being, or any department of creation, he summons the whole universe to join in the glorious work—"Bless the Lord, all His works in all places of His dominion"; and after this most comprehensive demand, is there anything else from which he can ask praise? Yes, he subjoins, "bless the Lord, O my soul." It seems as if a sudden fear had seized the psalmist, the fear of by any possibility omitting himself; or, if not a fear, yet a consciousness that his very activity in summoning others to praise, might make him forgetful that he was bound to praise God himself. Alas! how possible, how easy, to take pains for others, and to be neglectful of oneself: nay, to make the pains we take for others the reason by which we persuade ourselves that we cannot be neglecting ourselves. Religion of all matters is that which will least bear to be handled professionally: in the mere way of business or occupation. If we once come to handle spiritual things as though they were objects of merchandise or topics for essays, if we come to speak of them with the language of barren speculation, so that the description of the tongue outruns the experience of the heart; alas for the condition of the minister! But it may be well that we consider a little more in detail how that danger may be guarded against, which it has been our endeavour to expose. How shall the guide who feels his mind deadening to the influence of the natural landscape, through the frequency of inspection and the routine of describing it to strangers,—how shall he prevail in keeping his mind alive to the beauties of the scene, the wonders and splendours which crowd the panorama? Let him not be satisfied with showing that panorama to others; let him not look upon it merely in his professional capacity, but let him take frequent opportunities of going by himself to various points of view that he may study it under all possible aspects, now when the shadows of evening rest darkly on the water, now when the sunshine sleeps lovingly on the valley, now when the storm is abroad in its strength, now when the spring mantles hill and plain with its loveliness, and now when winter reigns in coldness and desolateness. Let him not be content with expounding the Bible, or with studying it with a view to his professional duties; let him be careful that he have his season of private meditation, when, like the guide, he may stand on Pisgah by himself, and for himself, not considering the scene with the eye of one who has to delineate the magnificent landscape, but rather with that of one who has to find in it a spot which he may call his own, and where he may fix his everlasting habitation. The more we engage in teaching others, in setting before others the blessings procured by the interference of Christ, the more tenacious should we be of seasons of private meditation and self-examination. For such seasons become then increasingly needful, lest we fancy our acquaintance with truth perfect, or our appreciation of it adequate, and thus shall we not only keep our own lamp well trimmed, but be more than ever fitted, by the blessing of God, to shed light on those who may be walking in darkness and the shadow of death. It is he who is daily schooling himself who is most likely to be instrumental in guiding others to God; the note struck within will produce the greatest vibration around; if I would waken an anthem of praise, I must first attune to thanks the chords of my own soul. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

PSALM CIV.

Vers. 1-35. O Lord my God, Thou art very great.—*A hymn of praise to God in Nature.*—I. **THE UNIVERSALITY of God's workings in Nature.** 1. In the domain of dead matter. He is operating in the waters as they sail in the clouds, come down in the showers, etc. He is operating on the crusted earth, laying its "foundations," touching its soil into verdure, and shaking it by volcanic fires. "He looketh on the earth and it trembleth," etc. 2. In the domain of living matter. (1) He works in all vegetable life—in the smallest blade as well as in the mightiest monarchs of the forest. (2) He works in all sentient life—feeds every beast of the field, etc. 3. In the domain of rational existence. God works in all moral minds, from the highest angel to the humblest soul on earth. II. **THE PERSONALITY of God's workings in Nature.** 1. He works sublimely. If we take the telescope, we are struck with mute amazement at the vastness and splendour of the stellar systems; if we take the microscope and look at the wing of the smallest insect, or even at an atom of metallic dust, what brilliancy and perfection we discover. He paints His beauty on an insect's wing, and wheels His throne upon the rolling worlds. 2. He works incessantly. There is no pause in His exertions; He neither slumbers nor sleeps, always at work, and at work everywhere and in everything. "It takes as much life," says Emerson, "to conserve as to create the universe." 3. He works benevolently. His desire to communicate His blessedness to other beings is the philosophy of the universe. 4. He works wisely. The Great Author never revises His books, the Great Architect never alters His plans. 5. He works in nature morally. (1) The inspiring of the human soul with rapturous worship (ver. 34). There is no true happiness without true worship; and God so appears in Nature as to awaken all souls into an anthem of praise. (2) To clear from the soul all moral wrong (ver. 35). God's purpose, in all His operations on the earth as well as in the truths of His Gospel, is to make this world morally better and happier. (*Homilist.*) *A psalm of Providence:*—This and the psalm immediately foregoing are closely connected. The one sings of God in salvation, the other of God in creation. The first is a hymn; the second, a poem. The first is the peculiar song of the Church; the second, of all His manifold works. The opening of the psalm conveys a sense of being bowed down with the greatness of the Divine Majesty. No description of God is attempted. Only His robe is seen. Light is the robe of God, with which He has covered Himself. And water is the robe of earth, with which God has covered it. This thought governs the chief part of the poem. It might be called the water psalm. For physical life, as we know it, water is essential. God may have creatures formed of fire and living in the fierce stars. God has, we believe, beings of a spiritual nature. But in the natural universe it is only in that small region where water can exist that vegetable, animal, and human life are found. We can but live in earth's water robe. And grandly the psalmist describes it. In clouds the waters gather above the mountains, and await the Divine bidding. Then they hasten to their appointed work. Some roll up the hill sides in mists, some stream down in rivulets; all go to the place God has appointed them. In the deep seas they dance in waves, and roar on the beach, but keep their bounds. With splendid vivacity the poet then describes the water at work in sustaining life. The wild ass drinks, and his strength is renewed. The cedars of Lebanon have their draughts. The great trees, water sustained, provide homes for the singing birds. In them the stork has her house. Grass for cattle, bread and wine and oil for men, supplying varied needs, are produced. In the far-stretching sea there is vigorous life in many and varied forms. And as thus the waters are seen to obey their first command, to bring forth abundantly, there comes the beautiful remark, "These all wait upon Thee, O God," etc. The 104th psalm is very evidently a paraphrase of the 1st chapter of the Book of Genesis. There is this great difference, the psalm before us is rather a song of Providence than of creation. It does not speak of God as completing the machinery of earth and then setting it in motion and retiring for rest. It is God ever living, ever watching, ever at work. This psalm is the necessary supplement to Genesis. In the panorama at the opening of Holy Scripture there is calm and restfulness, but in the picture here all is movement. In the one God looks, and again and again pronounces all to be good. But here there are signs of the entrance of some element

of restlessness and disorder. The mountain streams suffer rebuke—they are chased by thunder to their appointed place. When night comes the young lions are heard roaring after their prey. When the sun leads in the dawn man has to go to his toil and labour until the evening. There is something wrong. Signs of manifold wisdom are apparent, but there are darkness, want, toil, trouble, and death. A discord has evidently entered, and the perfect harmony is gone. Here then is a great mystery. Looking abroad upon nature, the prospect is that of a glorious creation, but with something wrong. It has been compared to a perfect chronometer into the works of which a pin has fallen. Science cannot but see much that is mysterious, and at times seem baffled. Creation tells of marvellous wisdom, but all is not right. It shows vast arrangements for happiness which something has marred. This world is a vase of exceeding loveliness, but it has fallen and lies shattered with jagged edges and points. The study of nature ever leads to the conclusion that it is the work of infinite wisdom, but spoiled in some mysterious manner. Everywhere are there signs of the handiwork of One who wrought for purity and peace and love, and everywhere is foulness and disorder and war. Fact or poem, Genesis gives the only solution. Sin has entered, and the splendid work is shattered. With a truer science than many of those who profess to study nature, the psalmist recognizes this and breathes the prayer, "May sinners pass away from the earth and evil-doers be no more. Bless the Lord, O my soul. Hallelujah." St. Augustine of Hippo, in his very remarkable series of sermons on this psalm, comes to the conclusion that a spiritual meaning must be sought. He will have water here to allude to "the love of God which is shed abroad on our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given us." By the world which He hath so founded "that it shall not be moved for ever and ever," he says "I understand the Church." As light is the garment of God, and water the garment of earth, so is love the garment of the Church. It is only as she is robed in this that she is attired with beauty. It is her wedding garment, for he that loveth not is not in Christ. It is in love that God lays the beams of the chambers of His home where there are many mansions. It is love that flows up over the lofty mountains and down in cascades to the humble valleys, sometimes in rushing torrents, and sometimes in hidden springs. It is love that gives verdure and refreshment, and through which souls find a home. Love which is like a mighty sea wherein live creatures innumerable. In God's works in nature are seen His glory and majesty. In the Church is manifest His love. And it is as we consider this, that with sweetest notes we sing, "My meditations of Him shall be sweet, I will be glad in the Lord." (J. H. Cooke.) *The greatness of God*:—I. IN COMPARISON WITH THE KINGS OF THE EARTH. We read of Alexander the Great, of Constantine the Great, and Frederick the Great, but, verily, in comparison with the God of heaven, their greatness dwindles into insignificance—dwindles into nothing! Have they thrones? Their thrones are upon the earth; God's throne is in the heavens, "high above all height." Have they robes? God's robes are robes of light and majesty. Have they pavilions? He stretcheth forth the heavens as His pavilion, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. Have they chariots? He maketh the clouds His chariot—He walketh upon the wings of the wind. Have they kingdoms? The whole universe is God's kingdom, and literally He ruleth over all. II. IN CERTAIN PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE WHICH SPEAK SUBLIMELY OF HIM (Hab. iii. 3-6; Ps. xviii. 6-15; Isa. xl. 12, 15-17; Rev. xx. 11, 12). III. IN CERTAIN ATTRIBUTES ASCRIBED TO HIM. 1. He is uncreated and eternal. 2. Omniscient. 3. Omnipotent. 4. Omnipresent. IV. IN THE MIGHTY WORK OF CREATION. We have spoken of His omnipotence as an attribute; here we have its sublime demonstration. How vast is this creation, and how wonderful in all its parts! V. IN THE WORLD OF REDEMPTION. This exhibits His moral grandeur; and it is this which makes Him emphatically and supremely great indeed. Infinitely great in goodness as He is infinitely great in power; infinitely great in all His moral as in all His natural perfections; so that, in the sublimest sense, it may be said of Him that "He is a God, all o'er consummate, absolute, full orb'd, in His whole round of rays complete." INFERENCES. 1. How reasonable it is that we should worship and serve this only living and true God. 2. How dreadful a thing it must be to have this great God for an enemy. 3. How blessed it is to have God upon our side. (D. Baker, D.D.) *Nature*:—Nature has two great revelations,—that of use and that of beauty; and the first thing we observe about these two characteristics of her is, that they are bound together, and tied to each other. The beauty of nature is not, as it were, a fortunate accident, which can be

separated from her use; there is no difference in the tenure upon which these two characteristics stand; the beauty is just as much a part of nature as the use; they are only different aspects of the self-same facts. It is worth observing, in the history of the mind of this country, the formation of a kind of passion for scenery and natural beauty. Though it might sometimes appear that there is nothing particularly serious in the current fashion, still the general sentiment shows a serious passion existing in the poetry and thought of the ago, which it follows and copies. What is the religious bearing, then, of this modern passion for nature in its pictorial aspect? First, then, with respect to the place which the beauty of nature has in the argument of Design from nature. When the materialist has exhausted himself in efforts to explain utility in nature, it would appear to be the peculiar office of beauty to rise up suddenly as a confounding and baffling extra, which was not even formally provided for in his scheme. Nature goes off at a tangent which carries her farther than ever from the head under which he places her, and shows the utter inadequacy of that head to include all that has to be included in it. The secret of nature is farther off than ever from what he thinks of it. Physical science goes back and back into nature, but it is the aspect and front of nature which gives the challenge; and it is a challenge which no backward train of physical causes can meet. But again, nature is partly a curtain and partly a disclosure, partly a veil and partly a revelation; and here we come to her faculty of symbolism, which is so strong an aid to, and has so immensely affected, the principles of worship. It is natural for us to regard the beauty and grandeur of nature as not stopping with itself, but bearing a relation to something moral, of which it is the similitude and type. Certainly no person has a right to fasten his own fancies upon the visible creation, and say that its various features mean this and that, resemble this or that in the moral world; but if the association is universal, if we cannot even describe nature without the help of moral terms—solemn, tender, awful, and the like—it is evidence of a natural and real similitude of physical things to moral. Nature is sometimes spoken of in a pantheistic corporeal manner; as if it were a kind of bodily manifestation of the Divine Being, analogous to that garment of the flesh which encircles the human soul, and is the instrument of expression to it. But the manifestation of the Deity which takes place in the beauty of nature rests upon the ground and the principle of language. It is the revelation of the character of God in the way a material type or similitude can be. But a type is a kind of distinct language—the language of oblique and indirect expression, as contrasted with direct. While we do not worship the material created sign, for that would be idolatry, we still repose on it as the true language of the Deity. In this peculiar view of nature there are two points in striking concurrence with the vision-language of Scripture. First, Scripture has specially consecrated the faculty of sight, and has partly put forth, and has promised in a still more complete form, a manifestation of the Deity to mankind, through the medium of a great sight. This view only breaks out in fragments in the Old Testament. It emerges into light when nature is spoken of as the garment and robe of the Deity, when the glory of the Lord covers the tabernacle; when Moses is permitted to behold from the cleft in the rock the skirts of the Divine glory. Especially does the idea of a visible manifestation come out in the prophetic visions, where the splendid gleams and colours of nature, sapphire and amber, rainbow and flame, are collected together, and combined in an emblematic figure and shape, in order to make "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." "And when I saw," says the Prophet, "I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of one that spake." But the scattered rays of pictorial representation which only occasionally pierce through the clouds of the Old Testament, are gathered into one focus in the New, they converge and are absorbed into an ineffable, eternal appearance, in which God will ever be seen as He is, and they issue in the doctrine of the *Visio Dei*. Secondly, it must be remarked, as another principle in the Scriptural representation, that the act of seeing a perfectly glorious sight or object is what constitutes the spectator's and beholder's own glory. The future life is called a state of glory in Scripture, and it is called such not only in reference to the world in which it will be enjoyed, which is a glorious world, but also with regard to those who enjoy it; who attain to glory as a personal state. This personal state is enjoyed by them on this principle, that they are glorified as spectators of glory, that beholding Majesty is their own exaltation, and adoration their own ascent. But this latter is certainly the principle of nature and it is inculcated by all who vindicate the place

and office of nature as a spectacle. No one was ever struck with wonder and admiration in beholding the works of God, no one was ever impressed strongly by the beauty and majesty of the visible creation, without at the same time feeling an accession of rank and elevation to himself from the act. (*J. B. Mozley, D.D.*) *Nature's teaching*:—Nothing is more obvious than that the writers of the Psalms were attracted by the beauty, influence, and fecundity of the earth. Now beauty, apart from all else, is something which must for ever attract us. Beauty is something so subtle, so incomprehensible, that there is no language we can employ or discover which can in any way enable us to understand what is the common root and ground out of which all the beauty springs. And this particular view of nature is very highly important in this materialistic age, when men are so disposed to teach that there is nothing beyond what we see; and so lead our minds to the contemplation of what is material, to give an explanation of all the wonders of nature, the causes of their wonderful operations, and the secret of their power. Wherever you travel with a man of science, and you draw his attention to something in the universe, he will have ready to hand an explanation of what you have pointed out, and a ready answer to the difficulties in your mind. If you are travelling, for instance, in Switzerland, and you point out the grandeur and glory of the mountain range, he will at once begin to explain to you how they arose and got their present configuration, and be extremely learned with regard to the properties of which they consist. After he has dilated at great length, with all learning and profundity, on these aspects of nature, you suddenly turn to him and say, "All you tell me may be very true; your explanation may be very profound, and your science may be very subtle, but I would like to ask you one question. Can you tell me what the beauty of the mountains is? Is it the height, or the depth; is it the light or the shade? Is it the cloud above, or the earth beneath, which constitutes its beauty?" He looks at you and says, "That is beyond me." For what is beauty? No man can describe it, or tell us what it is. It has no real existence apart from intelligence; for you must recollect that the beauty of nature is as much open and exposed to the brute as it is to you and to me. I am, therefore, left to draw a single inference, and that is this—The beauty of nature is not a mere accident; the beauty of nature is not something painted on the surface of nature. The beauty of nature is some integral part of its whole working; and while it is working as a machine it is sleeping as a picture. In the Bible you always find the writer draws the attention of the reader to the soul. The psalmist, after contemplating the glory of God, and that spectacle of light, felt there was a mystery beyond all explanation; and he called on his higher nature to rejoice. (*Canon Barker.*)

Ver. 3. Who maketh the clouds His chariot.—*The cloudy equipage*:—To understand the psalmist's meaning, you must know that the chariot of old was sometimes a sculptured brilliancy, made out of ivory, sometimes of solid silver, and rolled on two wheels, which were fastened to the axle by stout pins, and the defeat of Enomaus by Pelops was caused by the fact that a traitorous charioteer had inserted a lynch-pin of wax instead of a lynch-pin of iron. All of the six hundred chariots of Pharaoh lost their lynch-pins in the Red Sea: "The Lord took off their wheels." Look at the long flash of Solomon's fourteen hundred chariots, and the thirty thousand chariots of the Philistines. But my text puts all such occasions into insignificance, as it represents the King of the Universe coming to the door of His palace, and the gilded vapours of heaven rolling up to His feet, and He, stepping in and taking the reins of the galloping winds in His hand, starts in triumphal ride under the arches of sapphire, and over the atmospheric highways of opal and chrysolite, "the clouds His chariot." He has His morning-cloud chariot and His evening-cloud chariot—the cloud chariot in which He rode down to Sinai to open the law, and the cloud chariot in which He rode down to Tabor to honour the Gospel, and the cloud chariot in which He will come to judgment. When He rides out in His morning chariot at this season, He puts golden coronets on the dome of cities, and silvers the rivers, and out of the dew makes a diamond ring for the fingers of every grass blade, and bids good cheer to invalids who in the night said, "Would God it were morning!" From this morning-cloud chariot He distributes light—light for the earth and light for the heavens, light for the land and light for the sea, great bars of it, great wreaths of it, great columns of it, a world full of it. What a mighty thing the King throws from His chariot when He throws us the morning! Yea; He has also His evening-cloud chariot. It is

made out of the saffron and the gold and the purple and the orange and the vermilion and upshot flame of the sunset. That is the place where the splendours that have marched through the day, having ended the procession, throw down their torches and set the heavens on fire. Oh, what a rich God we have that He can put on one evening sky pictures that excel Michael Angelo's "Last Judgment," and Ghirlandajo's "Adoration of the Magi," and whole galleries of Madonnas, and for only an hour, and throw them away, and the next evening put on the same sky something that excels all that the Raphaels and Titians and Rembrandts ever executed, and then draw a curtain of mist over them never again to be exhibited! How rich God must be to have a new chariot of clouds every evening! But the Bible tells us that our King also has His black chariot, for we are told that "Clouds and darkness are round about Him." That chariot is cloven out of night, and that night is trouble. When He rides forth in that black chariot, pestilence and earthquake and famine and hurricane and woe attend Him. Then let the earth tremble. Then let nations pray. Mark you, the ancient chariot which David uses as a symbol in my text, had only two wheels, and that was that they might turn quickly, two wheels taking less than half the time to turn than four wheels would have taken. And our Lord's chariot has only two wheels, and that means instant reversal, and instant help, and instant deliverance. While the combined forces of the universe in battle array could not stop His black chariot a second, or diverge it an inch, the driver of that chariot says, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee." "While they are yet speaking I will hear." His two-wheeled chariot, one wheel justice, and the other wheel mercy. Aye, they are swift wheels. A cloud, whether it belongs to the cirrus, the clouds that float the highest; or belongs to the stratus, the central ranges; or to the cumulus, the lowest ranges—seems to move slowly along the sky if it moves at all. But many of the clouds go at such a speed that even a limited lightning express train would seem lethargic, so swift is the chariot of our God; yea, swifter than the storm, swifter than the light. Yet a child ten years old has been known to reach up, and with the hand of prayer take the reins of that chariot by the bit and slow it up, or stop it, or turn it aside, or turn it back. Notice that these old-time chariots, which my text uses for symbol, had what we would call a high dashboard at the front, but were open behind. And the king would stand at the dashboard and drive with his own hands. And I am glad that He whose chariot the clouds are, drives Himself. He does not let natural law drive, for natural law is deaf. He does not let fate drive, for fate is merciless. But our Father King Himself drives, and He puts His loving hand on the reins of the flying coursers, and He has a loving ear open to the cry of all who want to catch His attention. But there are clouds that touch the earth and discharge their rain; and, though the clouds out of which God's chariot is made may sometimes be far away, often they are close by, and they touch our shoulders, and our homes, and they touch us all over. I have read of two rides that the Lord took in two different chariots of clouds, and of another that He will take. One day, in a chariot of clouds that were a mingling of fog and smoke and fire, God drove down to the top of a terrible crag fifteen hundred feet high, now called Jebel-Musa, then called Mount Sinai, and He stepped out of His chariot among the split shelvings of rock. The mountain shook as with an ague, and there were ten valleys of thunder, each of the ten emphasizing a tremendous "Thou shalt" or "Thou shalt not." Then the Lord resumed His chariot of cloud, and drove up the hills of heaven. They were dark and portentous clouds that made that chariot at the giving of the law. But one day He took another ride, and this time down to Mount Tabor; the clouds out of which His chariot was made, bright clouds, roseate clouds, illumined clouds, and music rained from all of them, and the music was a mingling of carol and chant and triumphal march: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Transfiguration chariot! "Oh," say you, "I wish I could have seen those chariots—the black one that brought the Lord to Jebel-Musa, at the giving of the law, and the white one that brought Him down to Tabor!" Never mind, you will see something grander than that, and it will be a mightier mingling of the sombre and the radiant, and the pomp of it will be such that the chariots in which Trajan and Diocletian and Zenobia and Cæsar and Alexander and all the conquerors of all the ages rode will be unworthy of mention; and what stirs me most is, that when He comes in that chariot of cloud and goes back, He will ask you and me to ride with Him both ways. How do I know that the judgment chariot will be made out of clouds? Read Rev. i. 7.

(*P. De Witt Talmage.*) **Who maketh His angels spirits.**—*The powers of Nature*:—1. What a number of beautiful and wonderful objects does Nature present on every side of us! and how little we know concerning them! In some indeed we see symptoms of intelligence, and we get to form some idea of what they are. For instance, about brute animals we know little, but still we see they have sense, and we understand that their bodily form which meets the eye is but the index, the outside token of something we do not see. Much more in the case of men: we see them move, speak, and act, and we know that all we see takes place in consequence of their will, because they have a spirit within them, though we do not see it. But why do rivers flow? Why does rain fall? Why does the sun warm us? And the wind, why does it blow? Here our natural reason is at fault; we know, I say, that it is the spirit in man and in beast that makes man and beast move, but reason tells us of no spirit abiding in what is commonly called the natural world, to make it perform its ordinary duties. Of course, it is God's will which sustains it all; so does God's will enable us to move also, yet this does not hinder, but, in one sense, we may be truly said to move ourselves: but how do the wind and water, earth and fire, move? Now, here Scripture interposes, and seems to tell us that all this wonderful harmony is the work of angels. Those events which we ascribe to chance as the weather, or to nature as the seasons, are duties done to that God who maketh His angels to be winds, and His ministers a flame of fire (John v. 4; Exod. xix. 16–18; Gal. iii. 19; Acts vii. 53; Rev. vii. 1; Gen. xix. 13; 2 Kings xix. 35; 2 Sam. xxiv. 15–17; Matt. xxviii. 2; Rev. viii., ix., xvi.). Thus, whenever we look abroad, we are reminded of those most gracious and holy beings, the servants of the Holiest, who deign to minister to the heirs of salvation. Every breath of air and ray of light and heat, every beautiful prospect, is, as it were, the skirts of their garments, the waving of the robes of those whose faces see God in heaven. And I put it to any one, whether it is not as philosophical, and as full of intellectual enjoyment, to refer the movements of the natural world to them, as to attempt to explain them by certain theories of science, useful as these theories certainly are for particular purposes, and capable (in subordination to that higher view) of a religious application. 2. Vain man would be wise, and he curiously examines the works of Nature, as if they were lifeless and senseless; as if he alone had intelligence, and they were base inert matter, however curiously contrived at the first. So he goes on, tracing the order of things, seeking for causes in that order, giving names to the wonders he meets with, and thinking he understands what he has given a name to. At length he forms a theory, and recommends it in writing, and calls himself a philosopher. Now, all these theories of science, which I speak of, are useful, as classifying, and so assisting us to recollect, the works and ways of God and of His ministering angels. And again, they are ever most useful, in enabling us to apply the course of His providence, and the ordinances of His will, to the benefit of man. Thus we are enabled to enjoy God's gifts; and let us thank Him for the knowledge which enables us to do so, and honour those who are His instruments in communicating it. When then we walk abroad, and “meditate in the field at the eventide,” how much has every herb and flower in it to surprise and overwhelm us! For, even did we know as much about them as the wisest of men, yet there are those around us, though unseen, to whom our greatest knowledge is as ignorance; and, when we converse on subjects of nature scientifically, repeating the names of plants and earths, and describing their properties, we should do so religiously, as in the hearing of the great servants of God, with the sort of diffidence which we always feel when speaking before the learned and wise of our own mortal race, as poor beginners in intellectual knowledge, as well as in moral attainments. 3. Lastly, it is a motive to our exertions in doing the will of God, to think that, if we attain to heaven, we shall become the fellows of the blessed angels. Indeed, what do we know of the courts of heaven, but as peopled by them? and therefore doubtless they are revealed to us, that we may have something to fix our thoughts on, when we look heavenwards. (*J. H. Newman, B.D.*) *Spiritual ministries*:—The author of this psalm is deeply impressed with the manifestation of God's presence in nature. Everything reminds him of God. And the wonderful fact about his language is, that it not only conceives of material things in spiritual phraseology, but that it ascends higher than this, and describes spiritual things in the wording of material symbols. I. THE TRUEST MINISTRIES IN GOD'S SERVICE ARE THE SPIRITUAL ONES. We, in our earthliness and sense-satisfied lives, wrapped about continually with the demands of the flesh, crave creaturely minis-

tries; we want prosperity, success, and pleasure; we want material food, and physical delights, and social honour; we run after the trumpet-blare of fame, and bite at the dangling hook of influence and power. And who can wonder, when nerves and brain, and soul itself, are all enwrapped in matter, so that the touch of the senses is over all that we do? Yet right in the face of all this material and creaturely drift of our natures, we need to hear these far-off words of inspiration and command, "He maketh His angels spirits." Who does not know and feel the power and the truthfulness of this thought? II. GOD'S TRUEST SERVANTS ARE THOSE WHOSE CHARACTERS ARE AN INSPIRATION TO OTHERS. This it is which gives to history its interest and its highest meaning; it is the charm which always comes from bringing forward new men and new issues to take the place of worn-out men and times. This touch of God's inspiration is like a new incarnation of Divine power in every strong, brave, true life. Then we feel that we can conquer, because others have conquered; then we feel that we, too, can rise above self and those miserable infirmities of our existence which seem, at times, to hedge our lives into a land-locked inland sea of mediocrity of living, simply because others have threaded their way through similar narrow places, and have escaped from their moral captivity altogether. This is what makes a good piece of honest biography such attractive reading: we get bird's-eye views of this common life of ours; we get an insight into the secret working of causes which have their home in the souls of us all. (H. W. Newton.) *Ardency required of ministers*:—It is true that a man may hold out a light to others who himself does not see it. It is true that, as a concave speculum cut from a block of ice, by its power of concentrating the rays of the sun, may kindle touchwood or explode gunpowder, so a preacher may set others on fire, when his own heart is cold as frost. It is true that he may stand like a lifeless finger-post, pointing the way along the road where he neither leads nor follows. It is true that God in His sovereign mercy may thus bless others by one who is himself unblessed. Yet commonly it happens, that it is that which proceeds from the heart of preachers that penetrates and affects the hearts of hearers, like a ball red-hot from the cannon's mouth, he must burn himself who would set others on fire. (T. Guthrie, D.D.)

Vers. 5-9. **Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever.**—*Stability of Nature essential to prosperity*:—Earthquakes alone are sufficient to destroy the prosperity of any country. If beneath England the now inert subterranean forces should exert those powers which most assuredly in former geological ages they have exerted, how completely would the entire condition of the country be changed! What would become of the lofty houses, thickly packed cities, great manufactories, the beautiful public and private edifices? If the new period of disturbance were first to commence by some great earthquake in the dead of the night, how terrific would be the carnage! England would at once be bankrupt; all papers, records, and accounts would from that moment be lost. Government being unable to collect the taxes, and failing to maintain its authority, the hand of violence and rapine would remain uncontrolled. In every large town famine would go forth, pestilence and death following in its train. (Charles Darwin.) *The stability of the earth*:—The stability of the earth is of God as much as the being and existence of it. There have been many earthquakes or movings of the earth in several parts of it, but the whole body of the earth was never removed so much as one hair's breadth out of its place, since the foundations thereof were laid. Archimedes, the great mathematician, said, "If you will give me a place to set my engine on, I will remove the earth." It was a great brag, but the Lord hath laid it too fast for man's removing. He hath laid the foundations of the earth that it shall not be removed, nor can it be at all moved, but at His pleasure; and when it moves at any time, it is to mind the sons of men, that they by their sins have moved Him to displeasure. (Joseph Caryl.) **The waters stood above the mountains.**—*Land from beneath the waters*:—It results from the simplest methods of interpretation that, leaving out of view certain patches of metamorphosed rocks and certain volcanic products, all that is now dry land has once been at the bottom of the waters. It is perfectly certain that at a comparatively recent period of the world's history—the Cretaceous epoch—none of the great physical features which at present mark the surface of the globe existed. It is certain that the Rocky Mountains were not. It is certain that the Himalaya Mountains were not. It is certain that the Alps and the Pyrenees had no existence. The evidence is of the plainest possible character, and is simply this: We find

raised up on the flanks of these mountains, elevated by the forces of upheaval which have given rise to them, masses of cretaceous rock which formed the bottom of the sea before those mountains existed. It is therefore clear that the elevatory forces which gave rise to the mountains operated subsequently to the Cretaceous epoch, and that the mountains themselves are largely made up of the materials deposited in the sea which once occupied their place. (*Huxley.*) *Geology the Divine record*.—To me it seems that to look on the first land that was ever lifted above the waste of waters, to follow the shore where the earliest animals and plants were created when the thought of God first expressed itself in organic forms, to hold in one's hand a bit of stone from an old sea-beach, hardened into rock thousands of centuries ago, and studded with the beings that once crept upon its surface or were stranded there by some retreating wave, is even of deeper interest to men than the relics of their own race, for these things tell more directly of the thoughts and creative acts of God. (*Agassiz.*) **At Thy rebuke they fled.**—*God's command over the elements*.—The famous description of Virgil comes to mind, who introduces Neptune as sternly rebuking the winds for daring without his consent to embroil earth and heaven, and raise such huge mountain waves: then, swifter than the word is spoken, he calms the swollen seas, scatters the gathered clouds, and brings back the sun. (*Lorinus.*) **Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over.**—*Restraint imposed upon the sea*.—The Baltic Sea, in our own time, inundated large tracts of land, and did great damage to the Flemish people and other neighbouring nations. By an instance of this kind we are warned what would be the consequences were the restraint imposed upon the sea by the hand of God removed. Although the natural tendency of the waters is to cover the earth, yet this will not happen, because God has established, by His Word, a counteracting law, and as His truth is eternal, this law must remain steadfast. (*J. Calvin.*)

Vers. 10-18. **He sendeth the springs into the valleys.**—*The furnishing of the earth*.—1. Because the use of fresh waters was necessary for man, and necessary it was that man should have it nigh at hand unto him, for the more commodious use, the Lord broke up wells of water in several places, and made brooks and waters, and rivers and floods, like veins in a man's body, to carry from them water along to all habitable places of the earth, where God had appointed men to dwell (ver. 10). 2. Not only where men do dwell, but also where men's ordinary resort is not, the Lord hath set drinking vessels full of water, for the use of travelling men and other creatures, appointed to attend man, and some way to serve his use. 3. For the furnishing of man's house on earth, God hath provided him with parks for beasts to feed in, and trees for fowls and birds to live in, and ponds for fishes, as we will hear afterward; and these beasts and fowls, and singing birds, have their drinking vessels set for them (ver. 11). 4. The Lord hath adorned the habitation of man, with trees growing beside the waters; not only for his own proper use, but also for the use of fowls and singing birds (ver. 12). 5. Where wells and rivers are not, as in hills and high places, it is seen for the most part; there the Lord supplieth the lack of waters, by rain from the clouds. "He watereth the hills from His chambers," that is, from the clouds, wherein as in chambers He hath stored up great waters. 6. The Lord doth not dissolve the clouds all at once, but by little and little maketh them distil smaller or greater drops only. 7. There is no part of the earth, whereupon God bestoweth not so much of the fruit of His operation, as may fill it full of His glory (ver. 13). 8. The grass and herbs, and the divers sorts of them, serving for the use of beasts and men, are worthy of a room in our meditation of God's provident care for man and beast (ver. 14). 9. The Lord's allowance upon man is very large, not only for necessity, but also for delectation (ver. 15). 10. The right use of God's creatures is not to surfeit, and bury the memory of God and of the excellency of man above beasts, in gluttony and drunkenness, but to give him strength and gladness in such a measure as may encourage him cheerfully to serve his Maker. 11. God will have His excellency taken notice of in everything which is great, notable, excellent: upon which ground, great trees are called here, "The trees of the Lord." 12. The Lord hath furnished trees, not only with so much sap as might make them grow; but also with so much sap as might serve man for meat and drink and medicine, and other uses. 13. Among the trees the Lord will have us take notice of the cedars, as of a special plant of His husbandry on the earth, for their height and greatness, and durableness of the timber, and namely of those of Lebanon,

designed for the use of His people. 14. It is worthy of our marking, that for the nests of birds He hath provided high trees, where they might breed and lodge, and bring forth their young more safely and securely (ver. 17). 15. It is worthy of our observation for glorifying of God, that God hath taught weak creatures naturally to draw themselves to strong defences; and sundry sorts of them to have their several sorts of refuge (ver. 18). (*D. Dickson.*) *Mountain springs.*—My little girl gazing one day upon the brown freckled ripples of a streamlet, suddenly said to me, "Why does the water always run?" This is a question that is apt to puzzle many older minds. It seems a great mystery why hour after hour the stream should continue to flow without any diminution. You sit beside it a whole forenoon and watch a stone in its bed, and you see that the water keeps the same level along its sides. Day after day its voice is as full-toned and its sparkle as bright as ever; and you wonder from what perennial fountain comes the inexhaustible supply. Let us ascend to the source of the stream, and we shall obtain an explanation of the mystery. We see in the cushions of moss around its source the explanation of the ceaseless flow of the streamlet down in the valley. Nearly all our mountain tops have large spaces covered with dense carpets of moss. On these the snow appears early and lingers late; and during the rest of the year the clouds and mists are constantly distilling their moisture into them. They are therefore thoroughly charged with water, and give rise, wherever the ground forms a sloping hollow, to tiny rills, which drain the mossy sides of the hill, and nourish large quantities of moss along their course; and these in their turn imbibe more moisture from the clouds and mists, and conserve the gathering waters, until at last they acquire some volume, and in well-defined channels flow down to the valley in a series of snowy cascades and sparkling pools. Moss serves on our mountains which are below the snow-line the same purpose which the glacier serves on the mountains of other lands that are above the snow-line. They each afford one of the most striking examples of those marvellous adjustments which pervade the whole economy of nature. Without the intervention of the glacier and the moss the moisture that falls on the mountain summits would speedily run off in raging torrents, inundating the plains, scattering over the cultivated fields the barren *débris* of the mountains, and leaving behind after their subsidence a dry white wilderness of stones and mud. But the moss and the glacier retain the moisture of the clouds, and part with it gradually and safely, allowing it to descend to the plains so gently and continuously that, instead of destroying, it imparts beauty and fertility to the fields. Associated with the glacier and the moss in the formation of the springs that run among the hills, is the tree. The Chinese have a proverb that the grandest rivers are cradled in the leaves of the pine. Artificial springs may be created among the foldings of the hills by simply digging a hole in the ground, and sheltering it from the sun's rays by planting around it trees and bushes, when the rain that falls will drain towards this hole, and in a short time make it a source of living water. The rod of Moses, smiting the rock and producing the miraculous water from it, is thus in a line with the natural way in which the growth of the tree on the arid rock gives birth to a fountain. Periodical rains, however abundant they may be, speedily pass away and descend into the valleys with unrestrained violence, doing infinite harm. But the alpine woods retain the fallen moisture long after the storm has abated, and the surface of the hill is dried up under the scorching sun. The continued existence of moisture in these woods, and the constant evaporation from them, produce a cooler atmosphere, which in its turn attracts and condenses the vapour of the clouds and thus replenishes the springs. Nor must we omit from this wonderful partnership in the circulation of the vital fluid of the earth, the agency of rocks. Layers of sand alternating with rocky strata imbibe and retain an immense quantity of water, which supplies the source of springs. Ordinary building stones contain a large percentage of moisture. Granite and marble are highly absorbent. Limestone contains two pints of water in every cubic foot, and as it is more pierced and more easily dissolved by the carbonic acid which the rain-water holds in solution, it forms the best of all mediums for the formation of springs and wells. Hence the abundance of fountains in the Holy Land, whose geological structure is almost entirely limestone. Even the driest rock has its pores filled with moisture like a sponge. Mountain rocks are thus vast storehouses of water, which husband and equalize the supply, and replenish the springs with unfailing regularity, independently of the varying rainfall. Very mysterious seems the origin of a spring as it sparkles up from the bosom of the mountain, from the heart of the rock into

the sunshine. We do not wonder that in ancient times it should be regarded as the local haunt of some Divine presence. The sites of the Grecian oracles were always beside springs, whose water gushing up from the dark depths of the earth expressively symbolized the Divine voice speaking from the unseen world. And in harmony with the same idea, the Hebrew name of a prophet was derived from the bubbling forth of the waters of a spring, implying that his utterances were the irresistible overflowings of the Divine fountain of inspiration in his soul. Beside the well of Sychar, incarnate in human form, in visible manifestation to the eyes of men, was the great Reality to whom all these myths and symbols pointed, who thirsted Himself that He might give us to drink. And if our eyes be purged with spiritual eye-salve, we too shall see beside every spring the True Oracle, the Great Prophet, the Divinity of the waters who "sendeth the springs into the valleys which run among the hills." (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*)

Ver. 14. He causeth the grass to grow.—In the hayfield:—I. GRASS IS IN ITSELF INSTRUCTIVE. 1. As the symbol of our mortality. The whole history of man may be seen in the meadow. He springs up green and tender, subject to the frosts of infancy, which imperil his young life; he grows, he comes to maturity, he puts on beauty even as the grass is adorned with flowers; but after a while his strength departs and his beauty is wrinkled, even as the grass withers and is followed by a fresh generation, which withers in its turn. 2. As an emblem of the wicked. As the Eastern husbandman gathers up the green herb, and, despite its former beauty, casts it into the furnace, such must be your lot, O vainglorious sinners! 3. As a picture of the elect of God. How like the grass are God's people for this reason, that they are absolutely dependent upon the influences of heaven! Our fields are parched if vernal showers and gentle dews are withheld, and what are our souls without the gracious visitations of the Spirit? Sometimes through severe trials our wounded hearts are like the mown grass, and then we have the promise, "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth." Thank God for that old saying, which is a gracious doctrine as well as a true proverb, "Each blade of grass has its own drop of dew." 4. As comparable to the food wherewith the Lord supplies the necessities of His chosen ones (*Ps. xxiii.*). II. GOD IS SEEN IN THE GROWING OF THE GRASS. 1. As a Worker. The simple production of grass is not the result of natural law apart from the actual work of God; mere law would be inoperative unless the great Master Himself sent a thrill of power through the matter which is regulated by the law—unless, like the steam-engine, which puts force into all the spinning-jennies and wheels of a cotton-mill, God Himself were the motive power to make every wheel revolve. How I could fall down, and find rest on the grass as on a royal couch, now that I know that my God is there at work for His creatures! 2. As a great Caretaker. He gives grass to the cattle, and He will give grace to you. III. GOD'S WORKING IN THE GRASS FOR THE CATTLE GIVES US ILLUSTRATIONS CONCERNING GRACE. 1. Preventing grace may here be seen in a symbol. Grass grew before cattle were made. And what a mercy that covenant supplies, for God's people were prepared before they were born. Long before sin came into the world the everlasting mercy of God foresaw the ruin of sin, and provided a refuge for every elect soul. 2. Then I perceive an illustration of free grace, for wherever the ox comes into the field, he brings no money with him. There is the food ready for him, but he brings nothing with which to purchase it. So I, poor needy sinner, having nothing, come, and receive Christ without money and without price. 3. And why is it that God gives the cattle the grass? The reason is because they belong to Him. "The silver and the gold are mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." How is it that Christ is provided for God's people? Because "the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *God's care for the lonely and obscure:—*Grass does not merely grow where men take care of it, but up there on the side of the lone Alp, where no traveller has ever passed. Where only the eye of the wild bird has beheld their lonely verdure, moss and grass display their beauty; for God's works are fair to other eyes than those of mortals. And you, solitary child of God, dwelling unknown and obscure, in a remote hamlet, you are not forgotten by the love of Heaven. He maketh the grass to grow all alone, and shall He not make you flourish despite your loneliness? He can bring forth your graces, and educate you for the skies, in solitude and neglect. The grass, you know, is a thing we tread upon, nobody thinks of its being crushed by the

foot, and yet God makes it grow. Perhaps you are oppressed and down-trodden, but let not this depress your spirit, for God executeth righteousness for all those that are oppressed: He maketh the grass to grow, and He can make your heart to flourish under all the oppressious and afflictions of life, so that you shall still be happy and holy, though all the world marches over you; still living in the immortal life which God Himself bestows upon you, though hell itself set its heel upon you. Poor and needy one, unknown, unobserved, oppressed and down-trodden, God makes the grass to grow, and He will take care of you. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 16, 17. **The trees of the Lord are full of sap.**—*The trees of the Lord:*—The cedars are amongst the most beautiful of the trees—majestic in appearance, towering in stature, and enormous as to girth. Being indigenous to Palestine, they are fitly called trees of the Lord's planting, for no human hand has fixed them on their heights. Moreover, it must be God who waters them, from the river that is always full. Despite their exposed position, they are ever green, and always fragrant: they never shed their leaves, and from every branch and spine exudes a sweet aroma. "The trees of the Lord are full of sap." And that sap is sweetly scented. "The smell of Lebanon" is most delightful, and the cedars themselves are the noblest and the royalest amongst the trees of the forest. Let us give glory to God, as we view every object of His care, every token of His power. The cedars are a fitting type of the people of God. I. The first likeness that I trace is AS TO OWNERSHIP AND POSSESSION. The cedars are "the trees of the Lord." They are His peculiar property; His mark is on them, if I may so speak. We own no proprietorship but that of God Most High. His we are, and Him we ought to serve. "The Lord's portion is His people." The Lord has planted the cedars and His Saints; therefore He owns both. If there is any beauty in us, any blossom on us, any promise of fruit, any shadow or shelter for our fellows, it is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. If we are members of Christ's Church through faith in Him, it was His Spirit that planted us upon the hills of God. II. God's people resemble cedars because of THEIR BEAUTY AND MAJESTY. I associate those two adjectives, for it takes at least two to describe the peculiar charm of the cedar tree. It is possessed alike of grace and grandeur. So should it be with Christians. There should be about every lover of the Lord a tender spirit, a loving disposition, the beauty of holiness, the charm of grace: and there should be withal a sacred dignity, a laudable ambition, a holy audacity, high up-holding of the head—not in selfish pride, but in simple trust. III. The feature of these trees to which our text specially directs us is THEIR VITALITY. They are "full of sap." The sap of the tree is as the blood of the body—and "the blood is the life thereof." It is this same sap which is the secret of its growth from the sapling stage to the full maturity of which we have been speaking; and it is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the power of this blessed Book, and the influence of the good Spirit in our hearts, which make us to grow. Oh, that all my powers of heart, and head, and thought, and wish, and feeling, felt the blessed influence of the Divine life. I cannot bring forth fruit, I cannot hope to be fresh and green, unless I also am thus full of sap. IV. We shall also do well to seek to be like the cedars as to THEIR UTILITY. I venture to class under this head their ornamental character. We get into a habit of dissociating these two qualities—ornament and usefulness. I cannot at all see why a thing cannot be both ornamental and useful. If it can be only one, I know which I prefer. Away with the mere ornamental, and let us have what is practical and serviceable. But if we can combine the two, so much the better: what say you? The cedars are both ornamental and useful. We have spoken of their charm and grace, and I put that down as one of their uses. Do you not think God designed that some eye should be gratified by a look at His cedars? You know that wherever trees are, the adjoining country is rendered much more fertile through their presence. Some lands have been quite transformed by the patient planting of trees. Oh, where the Church exists, if the members are often of this sort, there will be blessing all around. The wide-spreading cedars gave grateful shade. This was the beauty of their branches, that 'twixt them the sunshine could scarcely filter through; and in those hot lands it was gratifying indeed to get beneath those boughs. Have you shaded anybody? Have you tried to help the sick, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to teach the ignorant? That is your work. Do it for Jesus, and your reward is sure. The cedar trees were useful, too, for building purposes. The woodwork of the House

of the Lord was of cedar-beams. You know what this meant for the cedars—the axe had to be plied upon them. They must needs be cut and planed and squared, that they might have their place in the Sanctuary. The Lord make us content even for this. If we can serve Thee better, let Thine axe come upon us; let us know the sharp edge of sorrow, and the heavy tool of trial. What matters it if we by so suffering can take honourable place in the building of God, and help to glorify the Name of Jesus! (*T. Spurgeon.*) *The trees of the Lord*:—I. As the sap is the vital principle of vegetation, so is **THE HOLY SPIRIT THE LORD AND GIVER OF LIFE**—of all life in every realm where living things move and have their being. But the life of man is the highest outcome of His vital force, revealing itself in his physical, mental, and emotional energy. From Him and from Him alone has come that most wonderful of all forces, which can arrest the moral decay within the souls of men and transform them into living trees of the Lord's right-hand planting. 1. The creation of the Christian Church was an evidence of this Divine energy. 2. Another evidence of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Church is its imperishable vitality. He has enabled it to grow through all these centuries, to survive the wear and tear of years, the storms of persecution—still clothed with foliage, and laden with fruit for the healing of the nations. 3. If the presence of the indwelling Spirit accounts for the existence and indestructible vitality of the Church, it also explains the marvellous variety of its forms of life. II. The movements of the sap are suggestive of **THE METHODS BY WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT CONVEYS HIS LIFE TO MEN**. 1. There is a mystery in His operations. Nature in all her works for ever "half reveals and half conceals the soul within." So is it with the energy of the Lord and Giver of Life. His ways are past tracing out, nor can it be otherwise. He is a Spirit, moving with absolute freedom whosoever He listeth on whomsoever He pleaseth, in whatever manner He may choose. 2. A second analogy between the movement of the sap and the energy of this spiritual life lies in its gentleness. 3. The impartiality of the Holy Spirit's influence. The sap leaves no part of the tree unvisited. The unseen network of roots and fibres, the pillared stem and its bark, the branches and their twigs, with the innumerable leaves—all receive their supply. It is so with the individual—the mind, will, and affections, aye and the body also, are penetrated by the Divine influence. It is so when the Divine grace descends upon a congregation—it reaches the richest and the poorest, the youngest and the oldest, the learned and the illiterate. It will be so when it enters the open heart of the habitable world—for we may perceive by the very trees of the wood that God is no respecter of persons! III. Returning once more to the trees of the Lord, we see in their abounding fulness **THE RESPONSE THEY GIVE TO THE SPRING LIFE IMPARTED**. They are filled—they are satisfied. The human heart is not like the three things of the wise man—the grave, the thirsty earth, the flame of fire—insatiable. It longs and craves and seeks, but there is a supply. "We cannot hope from outward forms to win the passion and the life whose fountains are within," but the Holy Spirit brings to the soul that inward stream of life to fill it with all the fulness of God. Then are we satisfied, as the trees are, and for similar reasons. Their yearnings are appeased—the impulse to unfold themselves in form, colour, movement, is met, and that mysterious ecstasy of travail to bear fruit is abundantly fulfilled. (*E. J. Brailsford.*) *The trees of the Lord* (a Spring discourse):—They are "trees of the Lord." I. **ON ACCOUNT OF THE PECULIARITIES OF THEIR STRUCTURE**. They reveal a new idea of the creative mind. They are neither Phanogams, or flowering plants, nor Cryptogams, or flowerless, and have many points of alliance with club-moss. They combine the highest appearance with the lowest structure, and are thus links binding together the two great orders of vegetation. In them we have an example among plants of a common principle in God's moral procedure towards His creatures, choosing the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and giving more abundant honour to that which lacked. Into the earthen vessel of the humble organization of the cedars He has poured the glory of the highest development, that the glory may be seen to be all His own. And in this wondrous combination of types in the "trees of the Lord" we have a dim foreshadowing of "Him who dwelt in the bush"; who united in Himself the highest and the lowest, God and man, in one person for ever; and who still, though in the midst of the throne, dwells with the man that is of an humble and contrite heart. The cedars are "trees of the Lord." II. **ON ACCOUNT OF THE ANTIQUITY OF THEIR TYPE**. Of this class Preadamite forests were principally composed. In every stratum in which

arborescent fossils occur we can trace this antique tree pattern. We burn the relics of extinct cedars in our household fires, as the microscopic investigation of the coal formation reveals. They form the evergreen link between the ages and the zones, growing now as they grew in the remote past, inhabiting the same latitudes, and preserving the same appearances in bulk and figure. Universal in space and universal in time they are monuments of the unchangeableness of the Ancient of Days—proofs indisputable that the vegetable kingdom did not commence as monads, or vital points, but as organisms so noble and complicated that even the most bigoted advocate of the development theory must admit that they could not have been formed by the agency of physical force. During untold ages the cedars were the sole examples of forest vegetation. They afford an illustration of a general law of the deepest philosophic import, namely, that the first introduced animals or plants of any class have been combining types. From the side, as it were, of those Preadamite cedars God took the ribs, of which He made the graceful palm-tree to yield its welcome shade and fruit in the thirsty desert, and the beautiful apple-tree to clothe itself with its bridal dress of blossoms under the smiling, tearful skies of the northern spring. Thus is illustrated that the ceaseless working of the Creator hitherto has been exercised only in the eternal unfolding of the original conception. The cedars are "trees of the Lord." III. ON ACCOUNT OF THE MAJESTY OF THEIR APPEARANCE. Religion and poetry have sounded so loudly the praise of the cedar that it has become the most renowned natural monument in the world. At an elevation of six thousand feet, with their roots firmly planted in the moraines of extinct glaciers, with their trunks riven and furrowed by lightning, with the snows of Lebanon gleaming white through their dusky foliage, who can fail to feel the force of the psalmist's words, "The trees of the Lord are full of sap," etc. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*) *The abundance of the trees*:—In A.V. the words "of sap" are added by the translator; in R.V. the translation is, "The trees of the Lord are satisfied." I think that the true meaning is indicated by A.V. without the addition of the words "of sap," which the translators added. It is not contentment which the trees suggest to the writer; it is not merely abundance of moisture or sap in their veins; vegetation suggests fulness, abundance. The trees of the Lord are full of everything—full of sap, full of leaves, full of blossoms, full of fruit, full of shade, full of singing-birds, full of seeds for new trees. It is very strange that men should not understand the message which the abundant provision of God in nature has for them. If this teeming earth were cultivated, and all that she offers in her palm were freely distributed, there would be no hungry men in all this globe of ours. But if God thus provides for the body which to-day is and to-morrow is not, does He make only niggardly provision for the soul? No, no. The trees of the Lord are full—always full (2 Cor. ix. 8). 1. The grace of God is like the vegetation of the earth, in all places. Climb the Alp, and far up on its side you pluck the edelweiss. God was here before you. Go out upon the desert, and far out in that sterile plain you find the waving palm growing beside the spring. God was there before you. Go with your message of cheer to some down-town ward where men are crowded together thicker than corpses in a cemetery, and between the chinks in the pavement are seen blades of grass. God was there before you. As in nature, so in grace. God's prophets are not all confined to Judaism; God's grace is not all confined to Christendom. Wherever a man has been found bowing the knee and lifting up the heart, there God's grace has been responding; for God's grace reaches unto all them that call upon Him, by whatever name, through whatever form, in whatever service. 2. As God's grace is everywhere, like the trees, God's grace is freely offered unto all, as the forest offers its shade alike to the wild beast and to the domestic animal, and its shelter for nests alike to the large and the little, and drops its fruit alike into the hands of the good and the evil. 3. The grace of God, like the trees of God, is everywhere, and for every one; and it is clothed with a great, great power. Ask the child what is the greatest manifestation of force in the world. Perhaps he will summon you to the battlefield. "Listen," he will say, "to all these cannon belching out their thunderous tones; what power there is." Perhaps he will carry you to the factory. "See," he will say, "this ponderous engine driving its great wheels, and stirring all this factory with its vibrating life." But when he is wiser he will go to the forest, where there is no sound of hammer or of saw, no buzz or bustle of wheel, no bang as of cannon; but in one great forest more power is wrought, it is said, than in all the factories in the world put together. The power of God is the power of a

silent love. The still, small voice is more than the fire, the tempest, or the earthquake. Not in Sinai, but in Calvary; not in deluge of water or destroying flame, but in the manger and the cross, is the power of God witnessed. 4. "My God shall supply all your need." There is scarce any physical need of man which the carpoted and sheltering earth does not provide. And this is what the abundant trees whisper, bending their leaves to you, to repeat the message: "God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you at all times, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound unto all good works." We need not wait for the great transition, but here and now we may walk by the river of the water of life, we may walk under the shade of those trees whose leaves are for the healing of the nations, and we may pluck the fruit of that only tree that bears its fruit every month. Other trees lie bare and sere through the long winter; other trees drop their fruit only in the autumn time; but this tree of life, of which they are, after all, but a poor symbol, gives forth its fruit in every month, and every manner of fruit for every manner of need; and here and now we may harvest them, fed on food more life-giving and sheltered by shade more comforting than the Garden of Eden ever knew. (*Lyman Abbot, D.D.*) **The cedars of Lebanon, which He hath planted.**—*The cedars of Lebanon*:—If Solomon were here, who spoke of all trees, from the hyssop on the wall to the cedar that is in Lebanon, he would greatly instruct us in the natural history of the cedar; and, at the same time, uttering similitudes and proverbs of wisdom, he would give us apples of gold in baskets of silver. But since Christ, according to His promise, is with us, one greater than Solomon is here, and we trust He will speak to our hearts concerning those who are "planted in the courts of the Lord," and, therefore, flourish like cedars. Let the venerable cedars of Lebanon serve as witnesses concerning them. And these reveal—I. THE ABSENCE OF ALL HUMAN CULTURE. For—1. They owe their planting entirely to the Lord. No human hand had any part in this work, neither delving the soil nor dropping in the fruitful cone. How those giants of the grove came to be where they are, none can tell. The early planting of these mighty trees is among the secrets which belong unto God. And this is quite true of every child of God. We are not self-planted, but God-planted. 2. Nor are they dependent upon man for their watering. The trees in the plain are fertilized by little canals running at their roots, and therefore are they green: but these, on the top of Lebanon, who shall find a stream for them? And so is it with the Christian who has learned to live by faith. He sings, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." And—3. No mortal might protects them. They are planted on a mountain ridge no less than six thousand feet above the level of the sea. The snow frequently lies upon their branches in enormous masses. They are in the most exposed position conceivable. Deadly dangers have threatened them from the very first. They are left unprotected, and yet the veterans survive. It is precisely the same with the Christian. He is not a hot-house plant, sheltered from temptation; he, too, stands in most exposed positions, and innumerable perils compass him about. But still he is able to say, "In all these things we are more than conquerors." 4. And they are utterly indifferent to human gaze. For thousands of years no human eye may have looked upon them. Moses desired to see them. David sang of them. But they heeded not. And so with the Christian: he cares nothing for the smiles of men, and he cares as little for their frowns. He walks not before them, but "before the Lord." He leans not upon any arm of flesh, but understands how to stand upright. Out upon the piety which depends upon the public eye. I am not to have a religion like a dog-collar, which I may slip off and on, and be glad to be rid of it; it must be part and parcel of my being. It must not be the Pharisee's paint and finery which he puts on in the public place, and privately laughs at when he gets alone. 5. Their exultation is all for God and not for man. In vine and other fruit trees man has had some share in the product: not so here. It is all of God. The cedars have not a green leaf to magnify man with, nor a single cone with which to make him proud. And so in the Christian: there is nothing in you that can magnify man. All your thanks are due to God. You are the Lord's trees from first to last. 6. The cedar is independent of man in its expectations. They never expect man to care for them or to help them. Arab and Turk do their best to ruin the whole grove, but yet there they stand, expecting as little help from man as, in fact, they get. That is your case, O Christian. You are to depend on God alone. God is ever seeking to strike away from us all our human props and buttresses upon which we are so apt to lean. He would woean us from the world. II. THE CEDARS OF LEBANON ARE A GLORIOUS

DISPLAY OF DIVINE CARE. 1. In the abundance of their supply. "The trees of the Lord are full." They are saturated with moisture. 2. They are always green. 3. See their grandeur and size. In "The Land and the Book" it is said that some of them measure forty-one feet in girth, and are a hundred feet high. Supply direct from God is better than all else. 4. Their fragrance. 5. Their perpetuity. 6. How venerable they are. III. THEY HAVE FULLNESS OF LIVING PRINCIPLES. "They are full of sap." Now this is—I. Vitally necessary. 2. Essentially mysterious. 3. Radically secret. 4. Permanently active. 5. Externally operative. 6. Greatly to be desired. Think, what glory to God a full-grown Christian brings to God! Let us have this fullness of life. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

The cedars of Lebanon:—The cedar is the tree *par excellence* of the Bible—the type of all forest vegetation. Religion and poetry have sounded its praises so loudly and repeatedly that it has become the most renowned natural monument in the woods. For untold ages it covered the rugged slopes of Lebanon with one continuous forest of verdure and fragrance, and formed its crowning "glory." The ravages of man, carried on century after century, in the most ruthless manner, laid its proud honours low; and now only a few scattered groves survive amid the fastnesses of the highest valleys to tell of the splendour that had perished. But what a magnificent relic the one grove of Kadisha is! Each huge trunk, scarred and hoary with the elemental strife of hundreds of years, still spreads out its great gnarled boughs laden with emerald foliage and exquisite cones, "full of sap" in the freshness of undying youth, so that we cannot wonder at the superstition of the awe-struck Arabs, who attribute to the cedars not only a vegetative power, which enables them to live eternally, but also a wise instinct, an intelligent foresight, by means of which they understand the changes of the weather, and provide accordingly. No temple of Nature can be grander than the interior of that grove, where the natives of the neighbouring villages celebrate mass annually in June. It is a spot unique on earth. The sacred associations of thousands of years crowd around one there. In the fragrance of the cedars comes up the richness of Bible memories; each sight and sound suggest some incident alluded to by psalmist or prophet, and a feeling of awe and reverence, such as few other scenes can inspire, fills the soul to overflowing. There, at an elevation of six thousand feet, with their roots firmly planted in the moraines of extinct glaciers, with their trunks riven and furrowed by lightnings, with the snows of Lebanon gleaming white through their dusky foliage, with the stillness of earth's mightiest powers asleep around them, who can fail to feel the force of the psalmist's words, "The trees of the Lord are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon which He hath planted." (H. Macmillan, D.D.)

Graciousness of a devout soul:—A traveller tells us that in the wood, hark, and even the cones of the cedar there is an abundance of resin. They are saturated with it, so that he says he can scarcely touch one of the cedars of Lebanon without having the turpentine or resin of them upon his hands. That is always the way with a truly healthy Christian, his grace is externally manifested. There is the inner life within, it is active, and by and by when it is in a right state it saturates everything. You talk with the gracious man, he cannot help talking about Christ; you go into his house, you will soon see that a Christian lives there; you notice his actions and you will see he has been with Jesus. He is so full of sap that the sap must come out. He has so much of the Divine life within, that the holy oil and Divine balsam must flow from him. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Where the birds make their nests.—*Little birds and cedars:*—John Ruskin makes bold to say that "every real triumph of natural science is anticipated" in this, the 104th, psalm. By which he means that the Hebrew poet has found out the "bright shoots of everlastingness" that flash for ever behind the veil of nature, while physical students of our day are too much absorbed in examining and admiring the veil itself. "The cedars of Lebanon" show more than the pretty playfulness of blind force; they are parts of a living whole. "Little birds"—such the word signifies—prove more than the skilfulness of mechanical adjustment; they prove that God likes a pretty little thing, and cares for it well. These tiny, roving minstrels of the air find a happy home in the venerable trees of God's planting. The little and the great are fitted for each other: the great give the home, the little give the song. Wings and flowers, feathers and leaves, are adjusted to meet mutual wants and cultivate mutual trade. So God wills. I. NO GREATNESS IS SELF-COMPLETE. The spirit of the angels has been given largely to the forces of nature—"are they not all ministering spirits?" Is not the sea a servant, the wind a servant, and the sun

a servant to the needs of man? Does he not count the lightning and the breeze and the moon among his maidservants? Had God created a larger sun than that which lights us now; had He made its face more clear, its heart more fiery, but had not given it a ministering spirit, that would be a worthless sun. If the sun we now have had been more independent, rising and setting according to its fancy, making winter in a fit of bad humour, and making summer after coming to itself again; if it burned its fires without caring anything for the comfort of the worlds under its government, there would be no longer any Cosmic life. But the sun knoweth its going down; and its light and heat have been blessed with the spirit of the angels—the spirit of generous service. The best minds of the world do not gather knowledge to keep it for themselves, but to share it with all. The best thinker that ever trod the earth was the young teacher of Nazareth, who was not ashamed to publish the highest truths of heaven in a common and popular language. His parables are meek and gentle enough to come in at the door of the poorest cottage. Had Christ been less a servant He would have been less a God. His generosity of intellect has made Him the Teacher of the ages. The best disciples of God are the best teachers of men. II. A TRUE CHRISTIAN LIFE DELIGHTS IN THE SERVICE OF OTHERS. To the religious idler the chapter of excuses is a very interesting chapter; and there are many in the Church to-day who know every verse of it by heart. What could the cedars of Lebanon say if they wanted to refuse shelter to the little birds? 1. They might say that they were too venerable to serve such poor little things. Is there not a murmur like this on the lips of the Church? saying under its breath that it is too venerable "to go out into the highways and hedges" to search for the wounded poor? the way is too rugged and too far to go after the lost sheep. That is not the speech of God. Eternity was not too far away for Him to think of saving man. No Church can live on its past history. When it gives itself too much to the reading of "the genealogies of the family," its decay is beginning. 2. They might say that there were other trees in plenty who could serve the little birds. One of the chartered texts of Carlyle was that the world had made the value of a soul to be nothing. And his severe way of putting the truth calls for the solemn thought of the Church. "Souls" are lost in the "congregation"; and we forget that the salvation of one soul is worth a life of toil and weariness and sacrifice. "You have laboured for twenty years and have made only one convert yet," said a man unmercifully to a quiet, hard-working minister. "Have I made one convert?" was the noble answer; "here are twenty years for the next one." One pearl won by thee for the Redeemer's crown will shine through all heaven! 3. They might say that the little birds often went away to sing. Many a village church teaches its children well, and then the glitter of city life takes them away from it before they have paid anything in return. Many a father and mother have placed the noblest sacrifices on the altar to give their boys to the world. There is a sound of loss in every home and in every church—the birds gone away from the nests. The teachers of our Sunday schools have to change their scholars often; the old leaving and the new coming. Is there not a moaning among the cedars of Lebanon for the music that is lost, the sweet carollings that have been hushed there for ever, the morning hymn and evening song silent, and the little homes empty and cold? When shall they return? This only teaches every honest workman in Zion to leave the harvest unreaped until he has reached home. The creation has been too skilfully fitted together for any good to get lost in it. If the song has forsaken the cedar where the young soul was nursed, the music of the world is richer somewhere. The hymn learned on the hallowed hearth keeps a longing in the mind for heaven. There the songsters, separated and scattered here, will meet again; and to hear them sing among the branches of the tree of life in Paradise will more than repay for the grief and distress of the parents, and the teacher, and the minister who lost them here. (H. E. Lewis.) *Lessons from nature*:—This psalm is all through a song of nature, the adoration of God in the great outward temple of the universe. Some in these modern times have thought it to be a mark of high spirituality never to obscure nature; and I remember sorrowfully reading the expressions of a godly person, who, in sailing down one of the most famous rivers in the world, closed his eyes, lest the beauties of the scene should divert his mind from scriptural topics. There may be persons who think they have grown in grace when they have attained to this; it seems to me that they are growing out of their senses. "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common," and nature, unlike ourselves, hath been clean from the beginning.

And it is a mark not of strength but of weakness in the Divine life to forbear the study of nature. As it was a sign of weakness and not of strength for monks and hermits to shut themselves out from the world in which God had placed them. Now, let us learn from the psalmist's contemplation of nature as given in our text—I. **THAT FOR EACH PLACE GOD HAS PREPARED A SUITABLE FORM OF LIFE.** For the fir trees, the stork; for the high hills, the wild goat, and so on. Now, the teaching of this is clear. 1. Each age has its saints. So has it been, and so it ever will be. 2. And every position. From the palace to the poor-house, the Christian religion is adapted to all conditions. 3. In every Church. 4. In every city. God has an elect people everywhere. II. **EACH CREATURE HAS ITS APPROPRIATE PLACE.** They look wretched enough out of their place. See the animals in the Zoological Gardens. Each creature looks best in his own place. So we each one are best in the position where God has placed us. 1. Provisionally. We think otherwise, oftentimes; we say, "Oh, if we were only in such a position, how much better it would be." 2. Experimentally. God has not made two creatures precisely alike. No two leaves are: and it is so in Christian experience. Many distress themselves because they have not the experience of certain good people of whom they have read. "Have I felt precisely thus? Have I felt exactly that? If not, I am lost." But how vain all this is. 3. The same holds good as to individuality of character. God gives to one man one temperament: to another man another. As Luther and Melancthon; Peter and John. Let no man wish to be what another is. Be yourselves in your religion. III. **EVERY CREATURE THAT GOD HAS MADE IS PROVIDED WITH SHELTER.** See the declarations of the text. If, then, He has so cared for the lesser creatures, can He have left man's soul without shelter? IV. **FOR EACH CREATURE THE SHELTER IS APPROPRIATE.** And—V. **EACH CREATURE USES ITS SHELTER.** I never heard of a stork that when it met with a fir tree demurred as to its right to build its nest there, and I never heard of a coney yet that questioned whether it had a right to run into the rock. Yet the sinner does not recognize the provisions of his Saviour. He asks, "May I?" and "I am afraid it is not for me." O sinner, come, believe in Jesus and find salvation now. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 23. **Man goeth forth unto his work, and to his labour, until the evening.—***The day's work:*—The psalm from which our text is taken is one of the most complete and impressive pictures of the universe to be found in ancient literature, and it breathes the very spirit of the Hebrew race. It has been called the Psalm of the Cosmos. It moves through all creation, and begins and ends with praise. In our psalm until we reach the text, the Deity is represented as working alone, causing the grass to grow and giving to the wild beasts their food; but man goeth forth—goeth forth a self-conscious, self-acting being, a distinct person, a sovereign soul with power to shape the course of his own life and activity. And this going forth of man is not only the summing up and end of a creation, but the beginning of a new creation. Marvellous as is the material universe, in man is hidden a glory beyond that of all things visible. Because he thinks and wills, and loves, he is kindred to the Infinite Mind and Will and Heart—kindred to God; not only a creature formed and sustained by the Creator's power, but a Son of God, begotten not made, and therefore more to God than vast worlds and burning suns. He has his origin and home in the Eternal Fatherhood with all its thought and labour and sacrifice. I. **WHY ARE WE HERE IN THIS WORLD AND WHAT FOR?** Has the question never occurred to you? Rather has it not come up often in your experience? It has been at times only a vague and fleeting curiosity. Why are we here and what for? He is a little man in a little world who thinks that he can give a complete answer to this question. Why did the Creative power send forth man into this world at all? What if he were not and never had been? Can his work and labour in his brief mortal day count for much or anything in the universal plan? The mystery is great, but it is plainly the purpose of the mystery to challenge our courage and to lead the human mind onward step by step to the conquest of the unknown. We have not drifted to the place where we now find ourselves. We are not accidents, chance appearances in the world, a mass of solitary creatures unrelated to anything truly great and significant beyond and above ourselves. Of one thing we may be certain, that the whole purpose and order of the world must have some relation to our lives, and our lives some relation to the whole purpose and order of the world. We are here, must it not be? as parts of this great creation, to fill our place in it as faithfully as we can. In childhood many of us

were taught that the chief end of man is to glorify God. It is a sublime answer to our question, and cannot be improved upon, if we only put the true meaning into it. We glorify God when we give ourselves to His purpose in the world and in our human life, to His will and work. St. Paul describes himself and his companions in service and sacrifice as fellow-workers with God. In his controversy with John Stuart Mill, the French philosopher Comte said, "My Deity (Humanity) has at least one advantage over yours—he needs help, and can be helped." Mill met the charge by saying that the theist's God is not omnipotent, "He can be helped, Great Worker though He be." But we are not compelled to doubt or deny the omnipotence of Deity before we can believe that our part in the Divine movement of the world is not a passive one, that we are not simple recipients and blind instruments, but allies and helpers of the Eternal Power. There prevails here and there a kind of belief in the power of God which makes all human effort appear to be unnecessary and superfluous, and which if acted on would deaden the sense of duty and be the paralysis of energy. On the other hand, what the philosopher described as the feeling of helping God, has always been cherished by the most sincere and earnest believers in the power of God over all. No one believed in the sovereignty of that power more than St. Paul, but his belief in it did not prevent him from putting forward the claim again and again, to be a fellow-worker with God. To be a fellow-worker with God may appear to be too vast and impossible an idea of the purpose of human life in this world; yet nothing is clearer and more certain than that He who made and meant man and sent him here to work and to labour until the evening has left many things for man to do in fulfilling His plans and completing His works. The Divine power in the world is not an abstract, impersonal energy, not an unembodied and wandering spirit. God in the world creating and perfecting it means His power and spirit dwelling in and working through industrious, righteous, faithful, beneficent lives. The unit of power in the world is not God isolated from man and not man isolated from God; but God and man united, working purposely and continuously together; God quickening and inspiring man and man opening his life to be a part of the Divine life of the world. How we have lost sight of this truth! And what confessions and miseries have come of our searching and effort to find God in the world outside of and apart from man; from placing God and man over and against each other as though their spheres of activity were separated by the chasm of an infinite difference! Deity has been conceived as a majestic Being dwelling apart from the universe, over-seeing it and intervening now and again by special acts, but working as a rule in profound and mighty isolation, outside of and apart from the world, outside of and apart from His children. Men have sometimes wrought and fought against the evil of the world as if they had no Divine companion at their side, and felt no need of any other help than their own. Again, at other times, they have imagined that God would do it all, that they had no place in the Divine work, that it was their place to stand by and wait and pray. In this vast order of things we often count ourselves of little worth and significance. But our littleness is only seeming. We can think the Creator's thoughts, be conscious of His purpose, and take some intelligent part in fulfilling that purpose. It must surely be more honouring and pleasing to Him who made us to pray and strive to be something. Our unreal and morbid self-depreciation cannot be acceptable to Him. We were not made to be nonentities, and the pietistic cry to be "nothing, nothing," must be hateful in the ear of Him who created us in His own image and sent us forth to work and to labour until the evening. II. WE ARE HERE TO SHARE THE WORK OF GOD IN CREATING THE WORLD—called not only to subdue and control, but to create. "God made the heavens and the earth," said the ancient seer; but when God made the world He did not finish it. Creation is not finished, but is always proceeding. We stand in the midst of an unending Genesis. We do right to expand the six days of the Hebrew story into the whole life of the world. "My Father," says Jesus, "works continuously, and I work." And in this continuous and never-ceasing work of creation man can help or hinder, develop or retard, the creative purpose and process. Things have been made possible, but man has to make the possible into the actual. The world into which he is born has all the raw material prepared to his hand, but he is here to work it into new and nobler forms. Nature is a wilderness; he must work and labour to make it a garden. Some of you are familiar with the pathetic picture which Plutarch draws of a man of the earlier period addressing the men of a later age: "O how you are cherished of the gods, you who

live now! How fortunate is your time! All Nature is engaged in giving you delights. But our birth-time was mournful and barren. The world was so new that we were in want of everything. The air was not pure, the sun was obscured, the rivers overflowed their banks, all was marsh and thicket and forest; we had neither inventions nor inventors, our misery was extreme." The immense change which has taken place in the environment of man since the time Plutarch recalled has been due entirely to the co-operation of successive generations of mankind with God. What we behold as we look back is God creating through man, improving and completing His world, making it more habitable and home-like, less rude and barren, fairer and more fruitful. The one great teaching of modern knowledge is that not anything above a certain low level of excellence comes by natural law unaided by man; that all best things in the world of Nature to-day are the result of his thought and toil. An eminent geologist has written a book that bears the title, "The Earth as Modified by Human Action," and one has only to read it to see the wide range of human power and to discover how closely man is in partnership with God in carrying out and completing the creative process which is still going forward on a vast scale. True! he can do nothing without God; he can create no new force; neither sun nor soil, nor plant nor seed are of his making; all the material with which he works Nature has furnished him; but what can he not do with that material, and what has he not done? He has modified climate, made the rivers change their course, the ocean its shore, made forests grow and made new ground for them to grow in, made the parched ground a pool and the thirsty land springs of water, changed useless ore into iron and sand into glass clearer than Nature's crystals. Eight hundred years ago, for example, there was no such country as the Holland of our day; God had made it possible, but men had to give it frame and form. The map of Holland now is not even what it was at the beginning of last century. It has about 120,000 more acres of land than it had then. Thus does man work with God, thus does God work along the lines of human life, thus is the ancient miracle of creation repeated—"The waters under the earth were gathered together and the dry land appeared." Man is not only a factor in evolution but an instrument. Not without him does Nature evolve. He has his contribution to make towards the finishing and perfecting of the material universe. The message of evolution to man is, "Thou art God's fellow-worker." Through the animal world we see him working with creative touch, carrying out the Creator's purpose, improving the type and elevating in the scale of being the creatures God has made. To bring flowers and fruits to their perfection the labour of man must be joined to the labour of God, and man must improve and finish what God begins.

III. IN HIS OWN MAKING AND SAVING, IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONAL FACULTY AND CHARACTER, MAN IS CALLED TO WORK AND TO LABOUR UNTIL THE EVENING. What he can do for the earth and for the creatures and things which live upon it, he can do for himself—fulfil and finish the Creator's purpose and plan. God makes nothing right-away and perfect at once. Like the rest of His work man was left unfinished that man himself might complete what God began. All creation moved by steady gradation up to man, and from age to age man has been moving upward, slowly finding himself, becoming more and more an intellectual and moral being, more and more a son of God able to know the truth, to discern and do the right, and to love and serve the Infinite God. Not alone and not out of nothing has he created language, literature, art, science, society, religion; but with the help of God and out of capacities which were hidden in him from the beginning and which contained the promise and potency of his future development. Faith in man, in what he can do and achieve, and in his power to create character, does not exclude but include God as the ground of all power, the giver of all good, and the helper of all endeavour. Our knowledge is knowledge of His ways in those laws which to the religious mind are His will. We can do nothing for ourselves without God, but God can do nothing with us, cannot bring us to ourselves, without our co-operation. To an extent practically unlimited we can make or mar ourselves. "Work out your salvation," says the apostle. We cannot be passive recipients of the divinest blessings of life. But the work of God for and with man is identified not only with the salvation of individual souls and lives, but with all work we respect, honour, and rejoice in; with art, science, literature, politics, trade, with every activity that makes for the good of the community and the civilization of nations. We must not think of Him with whom we have to do

as if we only had to do with Him in parts of our life and not in the whole of it; as if He were only interested in ministers of religion, missionaries, itinerant evangelists, in supplying theological colleges with students, in starting revivals, in the size of congregations and the amount of collections. His kingdom ruleth over all. Not long ago I read in the biography of an eminent business man that he would never engage in any commercial enterprise which he did not think to be beneficial to the community. That is what it means to work with God in the ways of common life. It is working in accordance with His will. The great duties, believe me, are never at the ends of the earth. Let us idealize our daily tasks and put them on the side of the Power who is working for righteousness and love in human society. IV. IN THE SAVING OF THE WORLD GOD SEEKS TO JOIN MEN WITH HIMSELF AND HIS CHRIST, AND CALLS THEM TO WORK AND LABOUR WITH HIM UNTIL THE EVENING. In the New Testament the work of reconciliation or atonement is spoken of as in a peculiar sense the work of God in our human world. We cannot conceive of the Eternal Goodness ever being insensate and passive, or as other than ceaselessly compassionate and helpful. The life of sacrifice is the law of love for heaven as for earth. It was not a new and strange work which His beloved Son came to do, but the work which He knew His Father was doing continuously. It is the Father's work into which the Son enters. In redeeming the world, even more than in creating it, God works through men and in human ways. God the Saviour must be helped even more than God the Creator. And we—if we have the spirit of sonship to God and live in the fellowship of Jesus Christ—cannot help sharing in the ministry of reconciliation and in the sorrow and sacrifice of that cross in the heart and life of God, which was shadowed forth in space and time in the crucifixion on Calvary. God needs strong men. His Kingdom will never come in this world without them. Men and women! what are we doing in the way of helping God to create and redeem His world? Fellow-workers with God! This is what you and I are here for in this world; this is why we are endowed with various gifts and why we ought to train them to the utmost and make the best of them; this is why we are placed in different spheres and stations, with different opportunities and duties. Fellow-workers with God! This is a vision of life at its prophetic best, and when one realizes its meaning it becomes his greatest inspiration. There is no dead line in that man's work and no slackening of effort. He keeps his faith, his freshness of spirit, his enthusiasm unto the end. (*J. Hunter, D.D.*) *Man's work-day*.—This psalm was a favourite with Humboldt. In his "Cosmos," after speaking of the views of nature given in the Old Testament, as the living expression of the omnipresence of God, he says of this psalm, "We are astonished to find in a lyrical form of such limited compass the whole universe, the heavens and the earth, sketched with a few bold touches." The section of the psalm with which our text is connected begins with the nineteenth verse and ends with the text. It is occupied with the uses of the seasons, of night and day, and the preciousness of time. These natural divisions of time fulfil high moral ends. I. "Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening"—in the first place BECAUSE THE VERY EXISTENCE OF GOD MAKES WORK A UNIVERSAL AND ETERNAL ORDINANCE. The first chapter of George Gilfillan's "Alpha and Omega" is entitled, "The Solitary God Inhabiting Eternity." But that is unthinkable. The first essential conception of God is activity. "My Father worketh even until now, and I work," said Christ. And in my conception of God work must be a universal and eternal law. He is the God of the tiniest mote dancing in the sunbeam, as much as of the archangel standing in His presence; and in the creative design each was meant for the other, and all meet in and answer to something in man. God's plan is one, and unity is the reigning idea. Thus all existence is in indissoluble connection with Eternal Being: and the law of work is stamped upon mineral, vegetable, animal, man, and angel—all work, led on by the great Eternal Father who is for ever working with all the ceaseless energy of almighty and unslumbering love. II. "Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening," BECAUSE NOT TO WORK IS SIN. Idleness, indeed, often makes a business for itself. But the first blush of eternity will turn this seriousness about trifles into shame and contempt. Paul speaks of some who were "learning to be idle." They were learning to be fussy about nothing—to be talkers and busybodies." For idleness is not mere inaction. Every life without power and effect is an idle life, and every work is an idle work in proportion as it is not done as well as we can do it. The idler sins at once against himself, the creation, his fellows, and his God. III. "Man

goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening," and is BLEST IN AND BY HIS WORK. There is a close connection between the habit of industry in secular and in spiritual things; and when our daily work is performed in the spirit of love to God and man it becomes the business of eternity. All faculties are given to be cultivated for ever, and all powers to be used at their best; therefore let your best to-day be but the starting-point for something better to-morrow. Sir Joshua Reynolds sat at one time thirty-six hours before the canvas that he might bring out in beauty "the human face divine." You are doing more and greater than painting a human face; you are "putting on Christ," making an immortal soul divine, and therefore you are under obligation to "Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." He who does this finds his very creed steeped in love.

IV. "Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening." THIS ORDINANCE FINDS ITS HIGHEST DEVELOPMENT IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE. There could be no saving religion without duties to perform, powers to develop, sacrifices to make, and a personal God to love and obey. One of the greatest preachers of the past century is reported to have said that "Salvation could be secured between two ticks of the clock." Now, while that is true, it requires so much explanation to guard it from misconception that perhaps it were better it never had been said. Salvation in the sense of the pardon of sin is a free gift bestowed the moment the sinner believes in Jesus Christ. But it is one thing to get into the way that leads to heaven, and another to pass through life's dangers, fulfil life's duties, and accomplish life's work, so that the verdict of the God of Truth shall be, "Well done, good and faithful servant." True success only comes with all-round endeavour of head, hand, and heart. Half-heartedness is wasted power. Only at the Cross do we obtain motive power enough to do our work well. But here being is more than doing. "If," says one, "you do a great thing and lose your temper in doing it, you are like a man who toils up a hill to find a shilling and loses a sovereign on the way." If we would do more, we must be more. Do you know this high and holy meaning of life? The Kingdom of God has come nigh unto you, but have you entered into that Kingdom? Our opportunities are great and precious, but the better the opportunities the worse the waste. The prodigal was ruined by the portion of goods falling to him. God's gift of time is sufficient; there is plenty of time for work, but not an hour for waste.

V. "Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening." Yes, MAN. "More than men," says John Pulsford, "you cannot be; and if you are less, your own nature will never forgive you." And forget not that the greatest thing we shall ever see in earth or heaven is a man—"a Man upon the Throne." "Until the evening," for after all no man is given to see his work through. Until the evening bell call the worker home. Soon, and sudden as a tropical night, may the shades of the evening fall. Then, I would rather be found working than resting. (*Hugh M'Gahie.*)

WORK.—I. WORK IS A DUTY. "Six days shalt thou labour," is as much a Divine ordinance as is the command to do no work on the seventh. He who is idle seven days is as out of harmony with God's law as is he who toils without a break. Paul's command, "That if any man would not work neither should he eat," represents the ideal to which society, as it grows perfect, will tend. The idle man is neither happy nor healthy. Says Carlyle, "To make some nook of God's creation a little fruitfuller, better, more worthy of God; to make some human hearts a little wiser, manfuller, happier,—more blessed, less accursed! It is work for a God." II. WORK IS A RIGHT. While some will not work, many who would cannot get it to do. And men and women are in poverty, and near to starvation, who would gladly toil had they the chance. We need to have the teaching of Christ applied more broadly to this than it has ever yet been. No employer has a right to think simply of getting all he can out of his men, and then to discharge them when trade is slack, while he himself is living luxuriously on the fruit of their toil. III. WORK HAS, OR OUGHT TO HAVE, A LIMIT. "Until the evening." "Come ye apart," said Christ, "and rest awhile." That is a need of life. No labour is right that does not allow it. No man does himself justice or gives God His due service when he lets his work monopolize his life.

IV. WORK MUST HAVE A TERMINATION. Just as the hours hastening on limit opportunity, and the shadows lengthen until the evening comes and work is ended; so life's days go, carrying with them openings that can never be ours again, and the shadows draw out, and the sun sets, and the day is at an end, and its work is done—good or bad it must stand for ever. How man will toil when he knows that on it depends home with its rest and happiness. And shall not we toil earnestly

in the Master's service when we know that on our faithful labour depends the home beyond with its bliss. (*F. Smith.*) *Non-working and over-working the curse of modern England:—I. HUMAN LABOUR IS A DIVINE INSTITUTION; AND THEREFORE NON-WORKING IS AN EVIL.* 1. Nature does not supply man with what he requires, independent of his own agency. (1) As a mere physical existence, does he not require food, raiment, and a dwelling? But does nature yield these to him as he requires them, either for his physical well-being, or his physical preservation, without his effort? No. (2) As an intellectual being, it is the same. Man must work for the knowledge he requires. (3) As a moral being, having obligations to discharge, spiritual powers to develop, a God to love and serve, he must inevitably perish without labour—agonizing labour. 2. Man is endowed with working powers admirably fitted to get from nature whatever he requires. There is the investigating and planning intellect; and there is the executive hand; and there is the varied impulse of animal appetite; social affections, and progressive aspirations, rising every moment like a tidal force in the soul, pressing the faculties of the mind, and the members of the frame, into action. He is made for the work required. 3. The Bible teaches that human labour is the ordination of Heaven. (1) Non-working is a moral wrong. Inaction, where there is the power of action, is a crime. (2) Non-working is a positive injury. To the individual himself. Muscular inactivity enfeebles the body, mental the intellect, moral the soul. To others. The idle person is a social thief. II. *MAN'S LABOUR HAS ITS PROPER LIMITATIONS, AND THEREFORE EXCESSIVE WORK IS AN EVIL.* 1. Overwork involves an infringement of the laws of health. The spring will bear so much pressure and no more without danger or ruin. Too much weight will bend the lever and strain the engine. 2. Overwork involves a violation of the claims of mind. Over the door of every room, office, shop, warehouse, manufactory, where excessive labour and long hours prevail, you may write, "Within, are intellects fitted to tread in the footsteps of illustrious sages, explore new regions of truth, and enrich posterity by their discoveries, losing their vision and their vigour;—within, are hearts containing germs of sentiment and wells of sympathy, the sublimest gifts of Heaven, undergoing the terrible process of ossification;—within, are souls that must outlive the stars and yet be young; sacrificed to matter and to mammon." 3. Over-work involves a wrong to humanity in general. The advancement of the race depends upon each individual contributing his part to the general intelligence and virtue—the two great uplifting forces. Society advances by the increase of these Divine elements, and in no other way. Every true thought from every brain, every noble sentiment from every heart, every honest word and deed, serve to augment these elevating forces of the world. But what opportunity have the over-worked men and women of England to do their part in a mission so indispensable and glorious? (*Homiliat.*) *Work:—"Man goeth forth."* And thus tents and ships have, from time immemorial, charmed the attention of young and lively minds. The ocean and the desert have ever been the pathways along which the most adventurous spirits of our race have travelled; and the most romantic and imaginative have transported their thoughts over the same mysterious fields—hailing any means of escape from the present monotony. We are the subjects of Divine, or of merely natural, sometimes infernal, restlessness; and, in truth, we do not much prize the lymphatic and indifferent beings who sit still in their chimney-nook, and take no interest in the great world roaring around them. I. *WORK IS THE TRUE SACRAMENT OF LIFE.* It has been truly said, "a man cultivates himself by working." Very plainly God has put us into such a universe that He only can shape us by,—destiny only spins its purpose out of us by,—work. Every toil may be the platform for a higher toil; and all toils point to the consummation and perfection of the worker, the invisible, but living, personal soul. Work! it never ends with its act; it has a great beyond, and there is a great beyond to thee. It is from brave labour that life rises, "rises the God-like force, the sacred life-essence breathed by God. It is by labour, by work you rise to all nobleness—you rise to all knowledge." This is the work of nature, to which man goes forth. In the kingdom of grace there is work too. Understand, as has been said, the Gospel does not abrogate works, but it provides for them. Man goeth forth to his work and labour from the morning of the world to its evening. II. I turn from the thought of the work as a fact, to *THE SPIRIT IN WHICH IT SHOULD BE ENGAGED.* A nobleness of soul looks out from the words, "go forth!" The view of labour is not only great objectively, it is subjectively also. Some men's souls are like a French drawing-room, all looking-glass, whichever way they look they see themselves. It is not

so with noble souls; they see their work, and not merely the little piece which lies before them, they see its end. So man goeth forth. The blessed glow of labour spreads over the man. "He goeth forth"; and it means that he calls to patience, courage, perseverance, and to that simple, weak-looking little faculty, good temper, to wait upon him. "He goeth forth"; then what to him are the doubts and difficulties that beset him? "Doubt of any kind—it is extinguished by action," and difficulties retreat as the man goeth forth. As the ploughman drives his team through the stubble, and knows it is for the harvest,—the sailor waves a farewell to the shore, and knows it is for the freightage,—as the builder rears the scaffolding and knows it is for the building, so man goeth forth; so the Christian goeth forth, refreshed by prayer; "the crooked becomes straight" before him, "the rough places plain," "the valleys are exalted," "the mountains brought low." Have you not heard in some of those old wild legends of the Middle Ages, how, while men slept, some of the old church towers and spires rose in the night—invisible builders working in the air: so rise the towers and the spires of our life—a mystic building: so it is also with our life. Or, say it is like a building, the design of the architect hidden behind the scaffolding; but, at last, the building is complete, the scaffolding falls, and all stands revealed. (*E. P. Hood.*)

Work:—This psalm is the creation-story of Genesis, set to music and brought down to our own day and our own doors. As in Genesis, so here, the crown and master of creation is man. We must never let go either the dignity or the responsibility of this. Since the Incarnation, when the Infinite Worker Himself stepped forth into the midst of human affairs, creation itself, with our own place and part in it, has a new meaning for us—a tenderness, a livingness, a sacredness, which nothing else we can conceive could have given it. I. **HUMAN LABOUR IS UNIVERSAL.** Let a tribe be just clear of the grade of savagism: you find the men, with fishing-net, or fowling-gear or rude implements of husbandry, earning a regular livelihood by labour, while the women fill up the blanks in the daily toil by the lighter occupations which best them. Let a people be rising in civilization: you find fewer idlers, less of wandering, less of mere sport or mere fetching of food, and more of settled labour. And let a people be standing high in the ranks of humankind: you note that labour has become general, varied, skilful, steady, honourable, more evidently a thing which speaks of manhood at its best. "Man goeth forth unto his work." II. **HUMAN LABOUR BELONGS TO THE REGULAR SYSTEM OF THINGS.** Man was made for work; he did not fall into it. He fell into sin, and sin has cast its shadow upon his work as upon all else that concerns him. "The curse of labour," then, means no more than that particular part of the shadow of the general curse of sin which lies upon labour, as one of the most important and essential and radical elements in human existence. For labour, work, belongs to humanity as humanity, and not to merely sinful humanity or to human sin. We may be tempted often to sigh for a life that has no labour in it. But do not permit your work to overbear and oppress you thus. In the best sense of the words, you must keep above your work, and must keep your work beneath you. You must never feel it a thing you have to endure, to put up with, to slave to or to serve. Do not degrade your work to task-work. Let it be work to you still—a thing honourable, a thing appointed, a thing human, a thing amid which you are able to lift up your head in God's creation as a being who is thus, and now, claiming and affirming your likeness to the Divine. III. **HUMAN LABOUR HAS UPON IT GOD'S EYE AND GOD'S SMILE.** He sets our work for us, and He looks on continually while we do it, with no indifferent gaze, but with His great fatherly approval when we do it well. He would have us to seek His help in it, and His blessing upon it. Every day, it is certain, He knows well what we are doing, what we have done, and how we have done it. His interest in our work, in ourselves as workers, is deep and unwearied. We wrong Him and ourselves if we think of our daily work as being of no account to Him—if we cut it off from Him because we deem it too lowly, too secular, too common, too much our own needful affair, for Him to trouble Himself, or to be troubled by us, concerning it. It is the balsam of a labouring life—it is oil to every wheel in our daily round of toil—this felt interest of God in it all, and this unearthly geniality touching it all with a holy sweetness of dignity and peace. IV. **Human labour is MAN'S ORDINARY METHOD OF SERVING AND GLORIFYING GOD.** Men speak of doing "God's work" when they are doing work which bears closely upon the spiritual welfare of their fellow-men; and worthy work it is, and momentous, when done in wisdom and love and humility. Men talk of "Christian work" when they

mean the definite doing of good around them upon plans and motives that recognize the kingdom of Christ in the world; and all success to every one who puts his hand to it thoughtfully for the Lord's sake. But really, ought not all our work to be made "God's work"? "Christian work"? It shall be just this if it be done for God and for Christ. Let us "go forth unto our work" when the morrow breaks, let us stay our labour when the morrow closes, let us go forth and return as morning and evening pursue each other along our little life, making each day a day of Gospel work, of evangelic labour, "until the evening" of our earthly sojourn itself closes in, and we "go forth" into our Lord's eternity, at our Lord's bidding still—go forth to "our work," our true life-work, which has so little of "labour" in it, and so much of rest—the work of the day which shall always be brightening in its happy perfectness, and always be fresh in its cloudless peace. (*J. A. Kerr Bain, M.A.*) *Our labour and God's order*:—1. The world in its peace and gladness is a compound of many activities set in motion by God: the seasons, night and day, sun and rain, and the labour of man. 2. Our labour, springing from our free choice, is most closely connected with the moral order, for which the physical order was established. 3. This daily toil may include, as a part of it, a direct attempt to join hands with God in His moral and providential work. 4. This was meant to bring out our humane and religious character. (*F. Noble, D.D.*) *Work*:—The grammarian will tell you that work means prolonged exertion of body or of mind, to attain some desired end. It implies conscious efforts;—the strain and stretch of mind or body. Even the most slothful are sometimes constrained to work; and very many human beings do very little else than work, through all their waking hours, to earn food and clothing and shelter for themselves and their children. We wrest our livelihood from the elements and from society by labour. It has been well said that labour is at once the symbol of man's punishment and the secret of man's happiness. And it has been well said, too, that the Gospel does not abolish labour, but gives it a new and nobler aspect. "The Gospel abolishes labour much in the same way as it abolishes death: it leaves the thing, but it changes its nature." 1. One good end served by work, and served most effectually when work is felt most hard and painful, is this: it all goes to keep us in mind that we are fallen creatures,—to keep us in mind of the evil of sin. Man was at first intended for work; and afterwards, when he fell, doomed to work. The distorted form of the miner, labouring in peril and darkness that we may have our cheerful fires; the stiffened limbs of the sailor, drenched with the wintry spray; the lined face, the grey hair, the frail unmuscular body, which speaks of the over-driven brain; what do all these remind us of, but that sin is bitterly hateful in the sight of God? Sin brought all suffering, and all suffering should remind us of the evil of sin. 2. A second reason why our Saviour has set "to every man his work," doubtless is, that in so doing He provided effectually for the health and sound estate of our bodies and our minds. We cannot be happy when we are idle. The machine, body and soul, is made for working, and in a little, the appetite for occupation revives again. Many of us would be lazy enough if we had it in our power: let us thank God that He has saved us from that temptation. Where is it that we shall find the grossest forms of vice and folly, but among those who by their circumstances are freed from the necessity of labour? 3. A third advantage to the Christian of having suitable work to do is this: that in faithfully doing his work, and doing it in a right spirit, he is doing what tends to make him grow in grace: he is working out his salvation all the while. Our Redeemer has appointed us to labour as we do: and so labour must be the right thing. It has its temptations, like everything on earth: but the Holy Ghost will help us through them, if we do but earnestly ask His blessed guidance. (*A. K. H. Boyd, D.D.*) *Work and leisure*:—The great God of Nature who has appointed, as this psalm tells us, a season, a use, a function, a duty, for every created thing, has ordained for man the day wherein to labour, and the evening wherein to rest. Work and leisure alternately are His ordinance. I. *Work*. Wise men, such as Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero taught that it was unworthy of a free-born citizen to engage in trade or commerce; and agriculture which, with the sanction of Socrates, held longest an honourable place among civic avocations, came also at last to be regarded with contempt. Any profession that exchanged its products for money was despised. Even intellectual work, done for money, was counted unworthy of respect. "The freeman was degraded by acting as tutor or schoolmaster. Only the liberal arts, such as medicine, philosophy, architecture, commerce on a large scale, were regarded as

honourable and suitable to the position of citizen." But, in contradistinction to this pagan teaching, our Bible puts the highest dignity on work. Our first parents, even in their innocence, were "to dress and keep" the garden. The Lord of Glory Himself worked as a carpenter. St. Paul—the free-born Roman citizen—deigned to soil his hands at tent-making. In his epistles he again and again comes down, as with a shattering sledge-hammer, on the idleness of some professing Christians. "If any will not work, neither let him eat." The law of work is, moreover, stamped on our being. The anatomy of our body shows that work is a necessity for its health and vigour. "It is not work," says Beecher, "that kills men; it is worry. Work is healthy; you can hardly put more upon a man than he can bear." Work is not only a negative good, saving us from the "mischief" which "Satan finds for idle hands to do," but it is also a positive good. Besides keeping us physically healthy, it also calls out our intelligence; and when done honestly, it strengthens us in many a virtue such as patience, courage, endurance, fidelity. These moral gains we may find as readily in sweeping the street or performing trivial household duties as in sowing our grain or in attending to a piece of delicate machinery.

II. LEISURE. By many a voice God says to each of us in the words of the poet, "Work like a man, but don't be worked to death!"

1. The leisure of the evening is appointed for rest. The machinery of our body is such that it soon wears out under too lengthened physical toil; and the balance of our mind is such that it is liable to give way under the monotony and overstrain of too many hours of application.
2. The leisure of the evening is appointed for wholesale recreation. The bent mind, like the bow, needs to be occasionally unbent for a while. And innocent amusement for the man who has been working hard is as a strengthening medicine. But alas for the recreations of some! It is more killing than their work.
3. The leisure of evening is appointed for spiritual improvement. Were we only physical beings, then it were right that we should only live to eat—to secure the comforts and luxuries which are dear to our animal appetites. Or were we only the social creatures of a day, then it were pardonable that we should give the great bulk of our leisure hours to gratify our selfish taste for exciting amusements and companionships. But if it be true that we are undying souls in need of salvation, and of that sanctified fitness which must be acquired for the heavenly state, then surely there ought also to be daily leisure for spiritual meditation and private prayer. (*T. Young, M.A.*)

Work and labour contrasted:—Work and labour are not the same. Work is the operation of body or spirit: but labour is not simply work, but work attended by fatigue, weariness, and pain. It is said that man goeth forth to his work and to his labour, because, for us, work and labour run into each other; we cannot have the former without the latter; what we do in this world, from the morning of our days until the evening, is done with toil and care, and amid difficulties and vexations. But it was not so from the beginning, and it shall not be so, with us, for ever (Rev. xiv. 13). Now, it is not necessary to prove that the Christian, as such, has a work to do. But it is, perhaps, a less familiar thought, that the Christian's work, being that of man here in this world, is not a work only, but a labour also; that it is not easy nor light; that it is hard to do, and costs, like all labour, much toil and fatigue, and weariness of heart and flesh; not because the service of our Master is, in itself, intrinsically, a hard and painful one, but because we make it such, and cannot help making it such, by that native opposition to it, and reluctance to do it, which every life exhibits. If any one finds it sweet, delightful and easy, to bear the Cross, and mortify the flesh, to resist temptation and school himself in silence and submission, to practice self-denial, and feel the burden and heat of the day, to go and come in season and out of season, where good is to be done; let him be thankful; but, with most of us, it is not so. In all our work, whatever intention hallow it, we find labour; and it seems hard, in certain respects, and sometimes so very hard, that we are all but ready to give out; and this is so whether we be working for ourselves or for others. And yet we dare not rest, or cease from work, until the end come: because the work is to live and to be imputed to us, eternally, for weal or woe. We must endure the pain and weariness, as knowing that without these, as accompaniments, the work cannot be done; and that, unless the work be done, we shall have nothing to follow us at the last, nothing to show when we are called to account, and therefore nothing to reward. For the sake of the work that shall remain, we must sustain the labour which is to end. This is, of course, the practical conclusion, which they should be urged to consider who find it a great effort

to do their duty, and who think perhaps that they will never improve. To them we say: You ought to know, that it is of the nature of things that your struggle is what it is. Labour, pain, toil, and everything most repugnant to your self-indulgent spirit, attend upon, and are inseparably united to the work which is set before you to accomplish. It is so, it must be so, it always will be so. We must accept our lot, and do what we can, and wait for the hour when the labour and the work shall be separated, and the former shall cease and be forgotten, and the latter shall remain with us, the proof of our fidelity and the guarantee of an eternal reward. (*Morgan Dix, D.D.*) *Occupation a blessing*:—Physical occupation is an excellent aid to a happy and contented mind. I have seen a stage coach driven by a man of £10,000 a year, because he was wretched without regular muscular exertion. I have heard of a nobleman who, for the same reason, bargained with the cutler of the village to be allowed for a certain time every day to turn his grinding wheel. If you visit the Louvre in Paris you may see with your own eyes the anvil at which Louis XVI. was in the habit, with a smith's apron on, of making locks, in order to divert his mind. (*J. Thain Davidson, D.D.*) *Working hours of a man's life*:—Did you ever calculate that the number of working hours in the mature part of life is only 135,000? Rest a moment on that thought. Between twenty-five years, which pass in the early part of life without much fruit, and the seventieth year of life, there are forty-five years of life which we call mature. Now, suppose that a man throw away in every year fifty-two days for Sundays, thirteen days for illness, vacation, and other interruptions; and suppose that for forty-five consecutive years he works 300 days a year—a large average—that would give a man in the mature part of life, 13,500 days. Supposing that a man have health and industry enough to work ten hours in each of these 13,500 days, he will have 135,000 mature working hours. A man who is forty, however, has but 90,000 hours left; a man who is sixty has so few hours left that I don't want to shock you by mentioning their number. (*Joseph Cook.*) *The daily round*:—Life to every one is a common round of continual beginnings and endings. Each day is a little circle returning where it began. Each year is a wider circle linking on its last day to its first. We lived within the same limited, circumscribed horizon. We have to perform, day after day, the same actions, to repeat the same duties, to go round and round in the same routine of daily tasks. Our range is as narrow as that of the ox that treadeth out the corn among the heap of sheaves. And all this is apt to become monotonous and wearisome. Some are so consumed by *ennui* that life has lost all relish for them; and some have grown so tired of pacing the irksome daily round that they have put an end to it by violent means. But surely it gives a new zest to life if we realize that all this constant doing of the same things, this constant going round and round the same little circle of daily duties, is not a treadmill penance, a profitless labour like weaving ropes of sand, but is designed to bring out and educate to the utmost perfection of which we are capable all that is best and most enduring in us. And surely it heightens the interest immeasurably to be assured that God has not merely ordained this long ago as part of His great providential plan for the world, but that He is daily and hourly superintending the process of our discipline and education by His personal presence, compassing our path, going round with us in the circle of life's toils and duties, and causing all our experiences, by His blessing, to work together for our good. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*) *One's special work*:—There is a work for all of us. And there is special work for each, work which I cannot do in a crowd or as one of a mass, but as one man, acting singly, according to my own gifts, and under a sense of my personal responsibility. There is, no doubt, associated work for me to do; I must do my work as part of the world's great whole, or as a member of some body. But I have a special work to do as an individual who, by God's plan and appointment, has a separate position, separate responsibilities, and a separate work; if I do not do it, it must be left undone. No one of my fellows can do that special work for me which I have come into the world to do; he may do a higher work, a greater work, but he cannot do my work. I cannot hand my work over to him any more than I can hand over my responsibilities or my gifts. Nor can I delegate my work to any association of men, however well-ordered or powerful. They have their own work to do, and it may be a very noble one. But they cannot do my work for me. I must do it with these hands or with these lips which God has given me. I may do little, or I may do much. That matters not. It must be my own work. And, by doing my own work, poor as it may seem to some, I shall better fulfil God's

end in making me what I am, and more truly glorify His name, than if I were either going out of my own sphere to do the work of another, or calling in another into my sphere to do my proper work for me. (*John Ruskin.*) *Industry*:—A celebrated divine has said, "If it were not for industry, men would be neither so healthful nor so useful, so strong nor so patient, so noble nor so untempted. There is no greater tediousness in the world than want of employment. Time passes over the active man lightly like a dream, or the feathers of a bird; but the idler is like a long sleepless night to himself, and a load to his country." (*Christian Weekly.*)

Vers. 24-30. **O Lord, how manifold are Thy works.**—*The spiritual significance of the universe*.—I. THE DIVINE EXISTENCE SHOULD CONSTITUTE THE CENTRAL FACT IN ALL CONTEMPLATIONS OF THE UNIVERSE. This reflection serves—1. To disprove the speculations of Pantheism. 2. To annihilate the materialistic theory. Materialism recognizes no mind in the universe. 3. To invest the universe with a mystic sanctity. It is His handiwork. The grand and the simple, the sublime and the beautiful, will awaken corresponding emotions in the heart of the true worshipper. II. THE PRINCIPLE OF DEPENDENCE IS EVERYWHERE DEVELOPED IN THE UNIVERSE. "These wait all upon Thee." From this we infer—1. That there exists an absolutely self-existent Power. We cannot comprehend the *modus existendi*, but there is the fact. 2. That each part of the universe has its own mission. God made nothing in vain. 3. That profound humility becomes every intelligent agent. "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" III. AN INTELLIGENT CONTEMPLATION OF THE UNIVERSE IS CALCULATED TO INCREASE MAN'S HATRED OF SIN. "Let the sinners be consumed," etc. 1. Because sin mars the harmony of law. Unity is broken. 2. Because God, in having made so wondrous a universe, has proved Himself too good a Being to be disobeyed. Sin is not only a violation of law, but an insult to Goodness. What is the voice of this psalm to my heart? (1) God must occupy the supreme place in thought. (2) That I sustain intimate relationships to God. There is one relationship I must sustain; that of a dependant. But mere animals do so. The worm beneath my foot is a dependant. Am I not a son? (3) This beneficent Creator has also revealed Himself as man's Saviour. Do I love the Saviour? (4) The extinction of sin should form a prominent object in the life of the good. The greatest benefactor is he who does most to purify spiritual life, by the means which the Lord Jesus has appointed. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *A threefold aspect of the work of creation*.—I. AS THE PLATFORM OR THEATRE FOR THE DISPLAY OF THE DIVINE GLORY. It is evident that God Himself so designed it. See how the account of creation closes (Gen. i. 31). But good for what? Why, good for the display of His own glory; good for the making His name illustrious to the highest orders of created intelligence; good for the satisfying of those beneficent and joy-diffusing agencies which seem to be the very necessity of the Divine nature. We cannot conceive of God but as an energy, nor yet of His operations but as directed to one end, and that end must be the one by which His own glory is illustrated, by which He will attract to Himself the homage of every responsible spirit, by which angels, and principalities, and thrones, and powers shall both partake of His happiness, and as they stand within the circling radiance of the everlasting throne, exclaim (Rev. xv. 3). II. THROUGHOUT CREATION GOD HAS PRESERVED A CLEAR AND LEGIBLE INSCRIPTION TO HIS ETERNAL POWER AND GODHEAD. The Almighty foresaw that His Word would not have free course in the earth—some would hide it under a bushel, some would overlay it with human traditions, some would confine it to their own shores. And since its diffusion was to rest upon these human agencies, more than half the population of the globe would for centuries walk on still in darkness, and man's faithlessness and neglect might seem to put a stop to the work of God. Still, not utterly was it thus (Acts xiv. 17). The world is so constructed that it must be accepted as the product of supreme and all-directing intelligence. The ear of the untutored savage, as he is startled by the roaring thunder, fails not to recognize an emblem of the mighty power of God; the thoughtless mariner, as he plies his business on the great waters, sees a Providence in his safety, and the presence of God in the storm. Observe, too, that it is a first instinct with us to connect God and goodness. The mind's normal type of the ruling Divinity is beneficence. Evil, of whatever kind, is always an extraneous accident, its origin unsearchable, its agents unknown, its toleration the problem of all time; but, certainly, is not God, nor yet of God. III. Our admiration of this created system was to be called forth by the contem-

plation of MAN HIMSELF, WITH ALL THE ABOUNDING PROVISIONS MADE FOR HIS COMFORT AND HAPPINESS. The earth is full of provisions for man's material comforts. If our world were made for angels to admire, it seems also to have been made for man to enjoy. Man found himself placed, as it were, on the throne of this lower world. Every element in nature ministered to his wants; every department of creation was commanded to do him service. He could not touch or look upon a single object around him, of which the design was not to minister to his happiness,—to refresh the body with food, to regale the sense with beauty, to fill the mind with pure imaginings, to draw forth from the heart the same daily song of praise, "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all." "All,"—without exception;—and yet one work is there in which, more than all this wisdom of the great Creator has ever been conspicuous. And that work is man, in his creation, preservation, moral history, mighty endowments, in his lifting up from the lowest abyss of being, and in his designation to endless life. Mystery of mysteries is he in his creation. Contemplate him as a thing of reason and intelligence—a being that can reflect upon himself and his actions,—and to what a pitch of elevation have you raised him above the manifold works of God. Or contemplate him, again, in his moral relations; in his participation of the Divine nature; in his possession of that, which, by its resemblance to God, and by its community of mental character, connects him with an Infinite Mind; qualifies him to become an object of the Divine regard; fits him to discourse and hold thoughts with God. (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *The wonderful works of God in Nature*:—It is our privilege and duty to meditate upon the works of God. 1. Our privilege: as we alone of all the mundane creation are able to do this. To us alone the universe as such exists. God who makes everything beautiful in its season, takes pleasure in His works, and in that pleasure we may suppose the angels join. And we are also permitted to join, if we will, and thus become sharers with the angels in the Divine happiness. 2. Our duty: for the possession of the power carries with it responsibility for its exercise: we who are men ought not to be thoughtless as the brutes. (1) It is a duty which we owe to ourselves, for though it will not feed the body, it stimulates and feeds our higher nature. (2) It is a duty which we owe to God; he who slights the works, slights the Worker. In meditating upon the works of God, notice—I. HOW MANIFOLD THEY ARE, even if like the psalmist we keep to man's world. 1. The earth itself, with its mighty mountain ranges and ocean depths, its lakes and rivers, its ancient garment of rock strata, rent and folded, worn and renewed, recording in its present condition the history of its experiences in ages past, its rich stores of metals and minerals, furnishes a theme for lifelong meditation. 2. How pleasing and varied are the forms of vegetable life which adorn its surface from the humble lichen which discolours yet adorns the face of the rock to the lofty fir tree which overhangs it. 3. How infinitely manifold are the manifestations of animal life from the mere dot of living albugen to the specialist in biology who is investigating its chemical and vital characteristics! 4. If with the telescope we search the heavens, or with the microscope pry into the marvels of minute structures, we shall find further illustrations of the wonderful unity joined with endless diversity manifested in the works of God. II. THE WISDOM MANIFESTED IN THEM ALL. 1. This wisdom is apparent not only in the contrivance, formation, and management of the whole, but in the adaptation of each to its element and to its place in the scale of being. The fish is perfectly adapted for the water, and the swallow for the air. The marvellous instincts of the bee and ant are out of all proportion to the development of their nervous system, but are essential to them in the struggle for existence. The strength of the horse makes him a useful servant to us, but if he excelled us as much in intellect as he does in strength, he would be our servant no longer! 2. This wisdom is further manifest in the perfection of workmanship, finish and colouring even in the most minute of the works of God. The microscope shows that the wing of the moth is as perfectly feathered as that of the bird, that the joints of an insect's limbs are as perfect as those of the horse, that the sting of the bee is pointed with a smoothness impossible to the art of man. III. THEY ARE ALL THE WORKS OF GOD. "My Father made them all." Cowper well says, "Nature is but the name for an effect whose cause is God." If the scientific theory of evolution were proved completely true, which at present it is very far from being, it would only unveil to us the process by which in the ages of the past our Father wrought so as by degrees to bring about the present condition of things; and the power possessed by many creatures to adapt themselves within certain

limits to changes in their surroundings, only places in clearer light the wisdom of God in imparting to those creatures a power without which they must soon fall out of the ranks of the living. It was our Father's mind that planned, and His the hand that wrought. Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of His glory.

IV. **THEY ALL BELONG TO HIM.** "The earth is full of Thy riches." Divine ownership is not like human, acquired by inheritance, conquest, or purchase. It is original and essential, grounded upon the absolute dependence of all things upon the great First Cause. Without Him there had been no universe, and without His continued support and providential care all things would sink into their primitive nothingness. His ownership is absolute and eternal grounded in the nature of things, they must ever be dependent. He must ever be the Fountain of good to all His works. (*C. O. Eldridge, B.A.*) *God in Nature*:—This psalm has well been called "the Hymn of Creation." It is, indeed, an anthem of praise inspired by Gen. i.; for the writer, whoever he was, must have had that birth of the history of the world before him, and he follows it throughout. It suggests to him his adoring thoughts of the wisdom, the majesty, the beneficence of God. This is his chief conviction, his overwhelming impression, that justifies his song of praise to God. In the succession of the seasons, in the springs that rise in the hills and course through the valleys, in the showers that make the grass to grow for the cattle and herb for the service of man, even in the fierce instincts and the struggle of the weaker creatures who roar after their prey and seek their meat from God, in the teeming life of the great deep, in the sails that stud its bosom, in the whole order of man's existence, in his daily round of labour, even in the mysterious successions of life, in the periodical convulsions which sweep the earth and prepare it for other tenants, the psalmist sees the work of one and the same mind bestowing or revoking at will the wondrous gift of Being. And not only is the world, in the psalmist's eyes, the handiwork of a Divine Creator, but of a Creator who never ceases to work. He who made, renews the face of the earth, in Him we live, and move, and have our being. He not only has given, but He never ceases to give. From day to day, from hour to hour, He presides over all existence. He giveth to all life and breath and all things. Now, there are two opposite extremes into which our conceptions on this point may fall. We may merge God in nature, or we may isolate nature from God. I say, first of all, we may merge God in nature. And this is what a great many people continually do. They personify nature, they speak of it as if it originated its own processes, as if it aimed at certain things, as if it were conscious of its own plan. Nature, men say, does this or does that. It is not wise to allow ourselves to drop into this current laxity of language. It may easily lead us astray, and vitiate our own belief, and from a poetical personification it is easy to go on to a virtual deification of the physical universe. One corrective lies in this spiritual idea of creation as an act of will on the part of One who is outside all material being. Philosophy traces all phenomena to the action of a living will. By no mental effort can we conceive it otherwise. The attributes and personality of the Person whose will has determined that nature should be what it is demand that He must be a Person who is not Himself included in His work; He must be outside of, and above, His own creation. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." On the other hand, we may fall into the error of isolating the workmanship from the worker, of looking at nature apart from God. This is what men do when they conceive of the universe and treat it as though it taught us nothing of God, as though it were a succession of changes without meaning, or a machine supplied with a certain storage of force to keep it going, or as if it had no spiritual purpose, no one far off end towards which it was always moving, and separate the Worker from the work. But this confusion is hardly scientific, and it is most certainly irreligious. "The heavens declare," not only perfect processes of mechanism, but "the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork." We know that the word of a person has two functions. It is the organ of command conveying an act of will; it is also an organ of expression, it reveals the nature of the speaker. Now, in the creation of the universe the Word of the Lord exercises both these functions. It is absolutely inconceivable to our faculties, this genesis of matter without a Divine act of creation. Yet in this account of it there is that which accords with the experience of our own human consciousness. For I know that within the little spheres in which I too am an originator, a sort of creator, it is in my will that the primary force resides. And so that sublime succession of edicts, "Let there be light," "Let the earth bring

forth," etc. And, on the other hand, the word of a speaker, while it utters his will, must at the same time reveal his mind, it must reflect more or less consciously his inner self, his real nature. Words are the medium through which we convey to another our feelings and our thoughts, and the Word of God must be a manifestation of His nature. If He breaks silence it is to make Himself known; He cannot speak without unveiling what He is, He cannot speak but truth and beauty and goodness must be expressed. But now this revelation of God through the things that are made, great and glorious as it is, does not suffice to accomplish the grand purpose towards man—man the crowning work of His hands, the being whom He has endowed with that sublime mysterious faculty of knowing and loving and imitating Him. It is not enough to draw man into communion with Him. And this is what God seeks. He can be satisfied with nothing less. Over and above the great advertisement of deity in nature, a moral revelation was required, and a moral revelation has been given. And it is of surpassing interest to note how, up to a certain point, the new revelation proceeds upon the lines of the old. First of all, that absolute unity of plan of which science is continually perfecting the demonstration—a unity which is now known to extend as far as the planets in their spheres—bears witness that the Creator is one. More and more clearly we are learning to read the action of one and the same mind through the whole range of created things. Is not this truth in complete accordance with the voice of Scripture? The Bible proceeds from its first utterance to its last on the unity of God. Again, throughout all nature, we find a will at work whose method is to bind itself by an orderly plan of fixed law. Now, what is the revelation of the Divine will in the Bible? It is the revelation of a law and its chief end is the redemption of moral anarchy and deviation from moral order. In the God of the Decalogue, in the God of the Sermon on the Mount, we recognize the God of law intolerant of all that is arbitrary, eccentric, lawless, the God of system and obedience. And, once more, we are daily learning how patiently, and through what a long process the physical universe has been built up, as though to this eternal work a thousand years were not of any more account than a single day so long as the results are achieved by method and evolution rather than by sudden shocks and intervention. Look at the structure of our own dwelling-place. Sir Charles Lyell has even estimated the time at two hundred millions of years. The mind faints in the effort to take in these stupendous figures. But do we not find that He works in the realm of grace as in the realm of nature with equal tenacity and patience? Through long millenniums He has kept in hand the same task. He has carried on His moral creation. The education of the race has been spread over ages. By divers manners God has imparted to man the knowledge of His will, and shown him his own destiny as the heir of immortality. And yet, again, the God of nature vindicates the sacredness of the physical law by penalty for transgression of it on the part of a sentient creature. God does not interpose in nature between the cause and its consequence, and the Bible pictures God to us as equally intolerant of any breach of His moral order. He cannot connive at disobedience. "He will by no means clear the guilty." "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." "He that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done, and there is no respect of persons." Thus far it may be said that the two revelations walk abreast and proclaim one and the same message. But, thanks be to God, the second revelation goes on while the first stops. God commendeth His love to us His erring, rebellious, fallen creatures, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us; when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. In this marvellous revelation of redeeming love we clearly mount a great step above nature, we are lifted to a new and loftier plane of thought, we are passed behind the veil, we enter the inner circumference of the Divine nature. Nature does indeed declare the glory of God. But here is the more excellent glory, here the display of a higher tribute than nature can interpret. What tidings so joyful as that of the new creation, the new heaven and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness? (*Canon Duckworth.*) *God's world:*—When we read such psalms as this, we cannot help seeing a great difference between them and any hymns or religious poetry which are commonly written or read in these days. The hymns which are most liked now, and the psalms which people most willingly choose out of the Bible, are those which speak, or seem to speak, about God's dealings with people's own souls, while such psalms as this are overlooked. David looked on the earth as God's earth; we look on it as man's earth, or nobody's earth. We know that we are here, with trees

and grass, and beasts and birds, round us. And we know that we did not put them here; and that, after we are dead and gone, they will go on just as they went on before we were born,—each tree, and flower, and animal, after its kind: but we know nothing more. The earth is here, and we on it; but who put it there, and why it is there, and why we are on it, instead of being anywhere else, few ever think. But to David the earth looked very different; it had quite another meaning; it spoke to him of God who made it. By seeing what this earth is like, he saw what God who made it is like: and we see no such thing. The earth?—we can eat the corn and cattle on it, we can earn money by farming it, and ploughing and digging it; and that is all most men know about it. But David knew something more—something which made him feel himself very weak, and yet very safe; very ignorant and stupid, and yet honoured with glorious knowledge from God,—something which made him feel that he belonged to this world, and must not forget it or neglect it; namely, that this earth was his lesson-book—this earth was his work-field; and yet those same thoughts which showed him how he was made for the land round him, and the land round him was made for him, showed him also that he belonged to another world—a spirit-world; showed him that when this world passed away, he should live for ever; showed him that though his home and business were here on earth, yet that, for that very reason, his home and business were in heaven, with God who made the earth, with that blessed One of whom he said, “Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth,” etc. Think, when you are at your work, how all things may put you in mind of God, if you do but choose. The trees which shelter you from the wind, God planted them there for your sakes, in His love. The birds which you drive off the corn—who gave them the sense to keep together and profit by each other’s wit and keen eyesight? Who but God, who feeds the young birds when they call on Him? The sheep whom you follow—who ordered the warm wool to grow on them, from which your clothes are made? Who but the Spirit of God above, who clothes the grass of the field, and the silly sheep, and who clothes you, too, and thinks of you when you do not think of yourselves? The feeble lambs in spring, they ought to remind you surely of the Lamb of God, who died for you upon the cruel cross, who was led as a lamb to the slaughter; and like a sheep that lies dumb and patient under the shearer’s hand, so He opened not His mouth. Oh, that I could make you see God in everything, and everything in God. (*C. Kingsley, M.A.*)

In wisdom hast Thou made them all.—*The wisdom and holiness of God* (with Isa. vi. 3):—Every mental quality is subordinate and inferior to wisdom, in the same sense as the mason who lays the bricks and stones in a building is inferior to the architect who drew the plan and superintends the work. Wisdom should determine when we are to act and when to cease; when to disclose a matter and when to hide it; when to give and when to receive; and to provide the means to be pursued in every deliberate course of action. The wisdom which essentially and necessarily belongs to an eternal and self-existent Being, differs as to its character and extent from what He gives to man. The essential differences are as to extent, certitude, and the Divine power associated with them in the eternal God. We can perceive, both by our organs of vision and by our minds, what we specially turn our attention to; but God is everywhere, sees and knows all things everywhere, every atom of matter, every movement of mind, and hence of His knowledge and wisdom we say they are infinite, and without limit. Man has the power of reasoning upon means to an end; the reasoning may be wise or foolish; and he has the power of aiming at an end by the means he can command; but he has neither sufficient wisdom nor power to command the end he desires. The absolute and perfect knowledge of God, of all causes, and of all effects, is necessarily associated with His wisdom and power in creation, and development of all His wonderful works. To arrange and fit together the many parts of a vast and comprehensive design, so that they shall accomplish the contemplated end, is an operation demanding much wisdom; and when we apply this remark to the wide range of all God’s works, comprehended by us under the term Universe, surely, if anywhere we can find proofs of perfect, of infinite wisdom, it must be here. The infinite mind knows how to combine perfect wisdom with intricacy of execution, while the marvellous range of objects in the seas, on the dry land, in the stellar system, the ruling of the day by the sun, and of the night by the moon, exhibit to man what is nothing less than wisdom without limit. I take but one illustration, and it is of a practical character, and intimately connected with our comfort at this season of cold and rain. Our means of warmth, our coal: we

throw it on the fire and burn it, but how little do we think of it! It is the produce of the destruction of plants preserved from former worlds long anterior to the existence of man. It is the result of mortality. Primarily it is the product of a fecundity exceeding all the other uses which animals could have derived from it; and, we may safely infer, directed to the end for which it is now employed. Peat and coal are the most striking cases, independently of food, for our uses derived from the fecundity and mortality of plants. Even the globe itself, with others that in the progress of ages may succeed it, has been ordained to depend in part in its very structure and materials on the succession and destruction of animal and vegetable lives, as its surface has been committed to the labour of man, chiefly for its modification and improvement. The beauty and glory of man, of woman, and their marvellous adaptation for the happiness of one another, when their moral natures are educated and controlled, and their daily will is to promote each other's happiness, is worthy of the infinite wisdom of God; thus blessing one of the races of His creatures with a happiness which to a large extent He has put within their own power. Of the holiness of God who can speak with sufficient diffidence and reverence? we learn nothing of it from His works. It has been a necessary conclusion in the minds even of Pagans, that an intelligent Creator must be good, pure, and holy. The Scriptures everywhere proclaim it. It is to us a consolatory thought that the God we worship is holy, just, merciful, of longsuffering and compassion, and full of pity and love to the children of men. (*R. Ainslie.*) *The apparent intentions of Divine wisdom:*—I. THE PRODUCTION AND PRESERVATION OF LIFE. Wherever there is a proper receptacle or habitation, there we find suitable inhabitants; and in many states and conditions, in which we should think it impossible for living creatures to subsist, did we not find them actually subsisting. These all draw their support from the world around them, fill up their place and time, till others succeed in their room. II. THE PLEASURE AND FELICITY OF HIS CREATURES IN THE ENJOYMENT OF THAT LIFE. Even the lowest creatures have their enjoyments, and show more symptoms of ease and delight, than of pain and trouble. III. THE ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE. IV. THE ATTAINMENT OF VIRTUE AND RELIGION. (*S. Bourn.*) *Perfection in God's work:*—The ordinary daisy of the field is not the simple thing it at first appears. Seen under a powerful microscope it is really a small bouquet of flowers, each petal being a separate bloom, whilst the yellow eye is another posy massed together in the centre. God has touched with His own perfect skill and finish this homely blossom. (*H. O. Mackey.*) *Wisdom displayed in all God's works:*—Think of a wisdom that was able to form, without any suggestion or any model to work by, the eye, the ear, the hand, the foot, the vocal organs. No wonder that Galen, the most celebrated of medical authors among the ancients, fell on his knees at the overwhelming wisdom of God in the constitution of the human frame. Our libraries are filled with the wisdom of the great thinkers of all time. Have you considered the far superior wisdom which fashioned the brain for all those thoughts, of the Infinite Mind that built those intellects? But it is only the millionth part of that wisdom that has come to mortal appreciation. Close next to every discovery is a wonder that has not been discovered. We see only one specimen among ten thousand specimens. What we know is overwhelmed by what we do not know. What the botanist knows about the flower is not more wonderful than the things he does not know about the flower. What the geologist knows about the rocks is not more amazing than the things which he does not know about them. The worlds that have been counted are only a small regiment of the armies of light, the Hosts of Heaven, which have never passed in review before mortal vision. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The wisdom of God:*—The works of God everywhere show perfect wisdom in their Author. Take the air for example. If this were a few miles less in height than it is, men would soon be suffocated; if it were a few miles more, it would be unendurably hot wherever the sun's rays penetrated. Take land and water for another example. If the land were harder or softer than it is, it could not be cultivated; if softer, nothing could be made firm on the surface. If the water of the sea were heavier, the fishes would rise to the surface, and could not swim; if it were lighter, the fish would sink to the bottom, and die. Another example is the proportionate size and weight of man and the globe. If a man were conveyed to the moon, he would weigh five times less than on the earth: he might bound up like a grasshopper, and would be easily upset. If the earth were as large as Jupiter, and otherwise as now, our weight would be increased eleven times, and none of us

could walk or stand upright. (*L. Gausson.*) **The earth is full of Thy riches.**—*The munificence of Nature's God:*—The earth is God's treasure-house assigned to supply the temporal needs of man. 1. This treasure-house is full. God is not niggardly in the bestowment of His gifts. His supplies are immeasurably greater than the necessities of the human population can possibly require. 2. This treasure-house is filled with varied gifts. There is something to gratify every taste and meet every want. They stream from the heavens, flow in the atmosphere, abound in the land, burrow in the mountains, sparkle in the river. These gifts show the versatility of God's power and the wisdom of God's mind. 3. These riches are all God's property. Man is only the beneficiary, the recipient, the steward. All God's riches, of which the earth is full, should be used only as God designed they should. All abuse and waste of these riches by man is a spoiling and robbing of God. God will one day say to all guilty of malfeasance, "Give an account of thy stewardship." (*Homiletic Review.*) *The manifoldness of beauty:*—To those who have eyes to see, the works of God are instinct with delicate and intensest beauty, and the subtlest blasphemy against high Heaven is that which speaks of God's world as "a waste howling wilderness." Whether it be in the infinitely great or the infinitely little, this is one of the outstanding characteristics of nature, this the one thing that puts an arrest upon human thought and challenges human admiration. Before the gorgeous splendour of midnight stars, and the fastidious delicacy of a pencilled butterfly's wing, before the majesty of a planet's orbit and the graceful curve of a sea-gull's flight, before the infinite grandeur of tumultuous waters and the rare grace of a sensitive flower, the mind of man, with a stoop which is uplifting, bows as in the presence of beauty, whose face is unveiled and whose glory is discovered. That is the one arrestive splendour, that the continually insistent note. And our conception of this beauty is enhanced and its profound suggestiveness increased by a consideration of its manifoldness, the almost bewildering variety of its fascinating forms. Nowhere in the wide realm of beauty is this infinite variety more obvious, more pleasing, more full of subtle power than among the flowers. There is a beauty in the pomp of crowded rose-bush, as well as in the snowdrop, the first frail prophecy of coming spring. Sweet violets, fit symbols of virtues that are not noisy and aggressive, touch our hearts with the same power as the opulent wealth of the "laburnum's dropping gold." Delicate daffodils, bending like sweet nuns in breathless adoration, hold our hearts with the same magic strength as stately lilies robed in a glory which surpasses that of kings. Beauty is everywhere, but it is beauty wrought into infinite diversity of lovely forms, and by its very manifoldness widening and deepening its appeal, giving to its voice a deeper note, and to its splendour a more ravishing charm. And this great fact not only holds rare suggestions for character, but is full of vast implications—it is instinct with noble teachings for life. In the world of soul God is not a God of uniformity. Each man has his own temperament and tastes and dispositions, each has had his own cross and temptation and conflict, each has his own grace and combination of graces, and every true man is himself, and no other. In all that there is a profound suggestion of individuality. Every good man, by the tender grace of God, is to develop his life into the beauty of Jesus, according to its kind. Let not the violet quarrel with the rose, nor the rich peony mock the whiteness of the narcissus: each has its own grace, its own power, and its own appeal. (*G. B. Austin.*)

Ver. 25. So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable.—*The sea's inhabitants:*—Since the psalmist's days our knowledge of the grandeur of the seas, and of their marvellous fulness of life, has been vastly extended. The discovery of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans made the Mediterranean, that seemed to him a "great and wide sea," a little inland lake. Modern science has explored all the waters of the earth, and revealed to us the wonderful forms that exist even at the most enormous depths in the sunless abysses. The last great "Challenger" Expedition round the globe brought home treasures of knowledge, and opened up new fields of speculation, which have engaged the profound interest of naturalists ever since. Recent years have made us almost as familiar with the productions of the deep as with those of the dry land, and have taught us that there is no field so rich in illustrations of the Divine wisdom and power as the "great and wide sea." Fishes as a class partake of the grace of the waters. They are adapted to its motions. They are moulded by its requirements. A

ship is built to suit the conditions of its home on the mighty deep, and is therefore the most compact and well ordered of man's works. And so a fish has the most exquisite adaptation and concentration. Fishes are in the sea what birds are in the air, amongst the most elegant of God's creatures. They have similar beauty of colour and shape, and exhibit the same wonderful provisions and contrivances of Divine skill. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*) *Life in ocean depths*:—It used to be an axiom that there was no life in the sea beyond a certain limit of a few hundred feet. It was learnedly and conclusively demonstrated that pressure and absence of light, and I know not what beside, made life at greater depths impossible. It was proved that in such conditions creatures could not live. And then, when that was settled, the "Challenger" put down her dredge five miles, and brought up healthy and good-sized living things with eyes in their heads, from that enormous depth. So, then the savant had to ask, how can there be life? instead of asserting there cannot be; and, no doubt, the answer will be forthcoming some day. We have all been too much accustomed to draw arbitrary limits to the diffusion of the life of Christ among men. Let us rather rejoice when we see forms of beauty, which bear the mark of His hand, drawn from depths that we deemed waste, and thankfully confess that the bounds of our expectation, and the framework of our institutions, do not confine the breadth of His working, nor the sweep of His grace. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 26. *There go the ships*.—I was walking the other day by the side of the sea looking out upon the English Channel. It so happened that there was a bad wind for the vessels going down the Channel, and they were lying in great numbers between the shore and the Goodwins. I should think I counted more than a hundred, all waiting for a change of wind. On a sudden it came, and the vessels at once hoisted sail and went on their way. It was a sight worth travelling a hundred miles to gaze upon to see them all sail like a gallant squadron, and disappear southward on their voyages. "There go the ships," was the exclamation that naturally rose to one's lips. The psalmist thought it worth his while, though he had probably never seen such number of vessels as pass our coast, to make note of the fact the text declares, and we will learn now some of the lessons which the ships and the sea teach us. And, first, they teach that every part of the earth is made with some design. The land certainly is, but what about the broad acres of the sea? Assuredly it is not waste. "No," says David, and so say we—"There go the ships." Innumerable are the uses of the sea. It seems to be a grievous separation of lovers and friends, but it really unites them, for it is the highway of nations. But we would speak rather of the ships than of the sea. And—I. WE SEE THAT THE SHIPS GO. 1. They are made to go. So are Christians, but many of them don't go; they have no activity in them. Now, I wish we could launch some of you. Brunel had less trouble in launching the "Great Eastern" than we have in trying to make you go. Would that you would "launch out into the deep." 2. In going, the ships at last disappear from view. So shall we: our life is short. 3. They are going, mostly, upon business. Some few are for pleasure, but the most part have serious business in view. Have you? Have you any worthy object in life? 4. They sail upon a changeful sea. So do we. Terra firma is not in this world. II. How go THE SHIPS? Well—1. They must go according to the wind. We leave steamships out of the question. And if our port be heaven, there is no getting there except by the blessed Spirit's blessing upon us. 2. But the mariner must nevertheless exert himself. The sails must be spread and managed so that the wind may be utilized. Hence the ships are no scene of idleness, but of great industry. Some Christians think they have nothing to do; "God will save His own people." Yes. He will; but will He save them? His own people do not talk as they do. 3. The ships have to be guided and steered by the helm. Love is our helm: what we love, after that we go. Let love to God rule us, and let Christ have the tiller, and He will steer you to the haven of perfect peace. 4. Direction must be sought from charts and lights. So must we be guided by the chart of God's Word and the light that Heaven has kindled. The voyage of a ship on the main ocean seems to me to be an admirable picture of the life of faith. The sailor does not see a road before him, or any land mark or sea mark, yet is sure of his course. He relies upon fixed lights in heaven, for far out he can see no beacon or light on the sea, and no keel ever leaves a furrow to mark the way. The late Captain Basil Hall tells the following interesting incident. He once sailed from San Blas, on the west

coast of Mexico; and after a voyage of eight thousand miles, occupying eighty-nine days, he arrived off Rio de Janeiro, having in this interval passed through the Pacific Ocean, rounded Cape Horn, and crossed the South Atlantic, without making land or seeing a single sail except an American whaler. When within a week's sail of Rio, he set seriously about determining by lunar observations the position of his ship, and then steered his course by those common principles of navigation which may be safely employed for short distances between one known station and another. Having arrived within what he considered from his computations fifteen or twenty miles of the coast, he hove to, at four o'clock in the morning, to await the break of day, and then bore up, proceeding cautiously, on account of a thick fog. As this cleared away, the crew had the satisfaction of seeing the great Sugar Loaf Rock, which stands on one side of the harbour's mouth, so nearly right ahead, that they had not to alter their course above a point in order to hit the entrance of the port. This was the first land they had seen for nearly three months, after crossing so many seas, and being set backwards and forwards by innumerable currents and foul winds. The effect upon all on board was electric, and, giving way to their admiration, the sailors greeted their commander with a hearty cheer. And what a cheer will we give when, after many years sailing by faith, we at last see the pearly gates straight ahead, and enter into the fair haven without needing to shift a point. Glory be to the Captain of our salvation, it will be all well with us when the fog of this life's cares shall lift, and we shall see in the light of heaven. Then—5. Ships will go well or ill, according to their build. With the same amount of wind, one makes more way than another. Now, there are some Church members who are so queerly shaped that somehow they never seem to cut the water, and even the Holy Spirit does not make much of them. They will get into harbour at last, but they will need a world of tugging. The snail got into the ark: I often wonder how he did it; and so there are many Christian people who will get to heaven, but Heaven alone knows how. I suspect that many of them have by degrees become like the "Great Eastern"—foul under water. They cannot go because they are covered with barnacles. They want laying up and cleaning a bit, so as to get some of the barnacles off. It is a rough process, but it has to be done. When I saw those ships go I happened to be near a station of Lloyd's, and I noticed that they ran up flags as the vessels went by. I suppose they were asking questions, as to their names, cargo, destination, and so on. So, then—III. LET US SIGNAL THE SHIPS. And—1. Who is your owner? Some, in spite of all their profession, belong to Satan: their names are such as these: Self-Righteousness, Pride, from the port of Self-Conceit, Captain Ignorance. They belong not to Christ. 2. What is your cargo? Some high-sailing craft prove by that fact that they carry nothing. Big men, very important individuals, who float high, are common enough, but there is nothing in them. If there were they would sink deeper in the water. Some are in ballast; they have a deal of trouble, and they always tell you about it. Some carry a cargo of powder. You never know when an explosion may take place. But it is well to be loaded with good things. Some are emigrant ships. They have a cargo of blessed souls on board who have been brought to Christ by some faithful ministry. Thank God, I have sometimes had my decks crowded with passengers who have from my ministry received the Gospel. 3. Where go the ships? Some of you are bound for the port of peace, the Lord be praised. But alas! some ships which bid fair for heaven are lost on the rocks, or on the sands: others founder; others become derelict. Where will you all go? It is a fine fleet I am looking upon. I hope all will be found in the great harbour of heaven. Give me a hail when you get into port. But it is a dreadful supposition, and it may be worse than a supposition, that some of you will have to cast anchor for ever in the Dead Sea, whose waves are fire, and where every passenger feels a hell. Let it not be so; pull down the black flag, and run up the red flag of the Cross, and be Christ's for evermore. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Heavenward bound*:—What a noble thing is a ship! In bearing how majestic, in mechanism how wonderful! Have you ever thought as you have seen it lying quietly at its moorings, or sailing gallantly across the mighty deep, how much of art and science there were needed to produce such a complicated piece of mechanism? Have you ever thought how much of our Lord's ministry was associated with the sea and with those who go down to the sea in ships? A few illiterate fishermen were the companions of our Lord's ministry and the founders of that religion which has revolutionized the world. 1. Both in voyaging over the sea and on the ocean of life, how important

it is to keep ever before our minds to what haven we are bound, to what port we are homing on. It is this want of fixed and definite purpose and thought of the end that makes shipwreck of so many lives that would otherwise sail bravely and brightly over life's ocean. What may be called our sailing or steering orders are plain, direct, explicit. "Strive to enter in," the onward movement. "Set your affections on things that are above," the upward or heavenward movement. 2. Not only must we know whither we are bound in the great voyage over the ocean of life, we must continue sailing, we must persevere in our work with our eyes steadily fixed on the pole star—fixed on "Hope's bearing star." If the sails are to be unfurled, we must be at our post, whatever be the tide; if the rigging has become tangled we must never think it too much trouble to go aloft and set it right. We must have the lamps trimmed, though the oil be difficult to get, and the lights burning, though the trimming may soil our fingers. We must constantly be advancing, sailing onwards over life's ocean. For if we do not attend to this onward movement the tide will carry us back, and, it may be, dash both ourselves and our craft on the rocks of indolence. 3. We must not only know whither we are bound, we must not only keep in constant activity and show unflagging zeal, but we must make for the haven. Heaven is our haven. We are voyaging still. To that port and haven is our vessel bound. Oh! let our lives be conformable to the great, momentous, and immortal destiny before us. And, amid all the changes and chances of life, let us ever remember whose we are, and whom we serve. Once upon a time, there was a great storm at sea—the ocean was rolling mountains high, and the vessel was in imminent danger of shipwreck. The passengers were rushing wildly over the deck, or sitting clothed with despair in their cabins. Nothing but disorder and terror prevailed. Only one little boy was quiet and calm and unconcerned, and when an agitated and affrighted spectator asked how in such a storm he could be so calm, he quietly replied, "Father is at the helm." This fact we have ever to bear us up. "Our Father is at the helm." (*J. B. S. Watson, M.A.*) "*There go the ships*":—That is not a bad text for a seamen's society. "*There go the ships*." Yes; that is quite true, but ships do not go of themselves. The ship implies its builder, its captain and a crew. Sailors, then, are necessarily connected in our minds with the ships. 1. Sailors have a claim upon our gratitude. What should we do without them? Think what our island would be if there were no ships, or if none were allowed to enter our ports. If we are to be thankful to any class of men—I believe in being thankful to all who do good work—we should specially be so to sailors, for among all those whose labour contributes to the wealth and prosperity of our country, there is no class more deserving our gratitude than seamen. 2. They also deserve our sympathy. The life of sailors is not a pleasant one. A ship is not a home, nor has it the comforts of home. And then there are the perils of the sea. The sailor's life is a dangerous one, for he has a treacherous element to deal with. There are the winds and the waves to control if possible, or to battle with their rage. Danger may arise at any moment, and when he is least prepared for it. If there is any class of men who carry their lives in their hands it is the seamen. But the sailor is exposed to perils of a more serious kind. He has his own special forms of temptation. Not so much on the sea, but, shut up as he is in uncongenial society, he is the more prone to give way to those perils besetting his path when he lands. He finds himself in possession of means of indulgence, and solicitations to vice pressed upon him. 3. Sailors deserve our help. Sympathy is of no use, or very little, unless it takes a practical character. Pity itself is pitiful unless it extends the helping hand. If we feel grateful to the sailor, and sympathy for him, we must show it by trying to help the seaman to realize his position in God's universe, to become a true and faithful man, and a true and living child of God. We ought to make his surroundings better than they have been. (*J. D. Burns, D.D.*) *Ships*:—What boy is not fond of hearing and reading about ships? I am not, however, going to talk about any wonderful discovery, but wish to compare my young friends to three different kinds of ships. I. A MAN-OF-WAR. This is for fighting purposes, and speaks both of the defensive and of the offensive, not the fighting some boys like to indulge in, either with tongues or fists; but I want every one of my readers to be fighting for the Lord Jesus. Many are unknowingly fighting against Him—they resist the strivings of the Spirit; they admire Him, and like to hear about His deeds, and to know of Him; but they do not know Him (*John xvii. 3*) or receive Him (*John i. 12*). Now, first you must be able to say, "The

Lord is on my side," etc. You will then need strength to stand your ground, and, though helpless of yourself (John xv. 5), yet with Him, note your power (Phil. iv. 13). A man-of-war ship must be properly armed: it is not built to play at soldiers, but to defend the country from invaders. Notice on chart, how it is armed, and for what purpose. Try to bring others into submission (read 2 Chron. xxx. 8). 1. Submission. 2. Admission. 3. Commission. II. MERCHANT SHIPS. A merchant ship is used for bringing cargoes, etc., from one port to another, sometimes many miles. The cargo, however, has to be stored away in the hold. Show how, if we have God's Word (which speaks of Life, Light, Pardon, Peace, and Power) stored into our hearts, at whatever port we may land in our life, we shall have blessings to leave. Sometimes we cannot ourselves go abroad, but, by the pennies we raise, we are enabled to send missionaries to take the Gospel to the heathen. III. PASSENGER SHIPS. The passenger ship would be for passengers. Let us remember what has been done for us: how it has been all of grace. The fare has been paid: so then let us seek to lead others to the Haven of Perfect Peace. Andrew brought Peter (John i. 42). Little is said about the former, but never mind though your name does not appear, if Christ be glorified. In Matt. ix. 2, four brought the one to Christ. Be more occupied in the One to whom you bring the sinner than in the method adopted. (*Newton Jones.*) *The voyage of life*:—"There go the ships." Each of them has got a name of its own. Each has a starting-place where it began its life; each an end to which it is going. It may be a tragedy. Each has a different register. It is not every one that is "A1 at Lloyd's." When a ship is first built, and has been surveyed, and certified to be equal to all the emergencies which a ship ought to be fitted for, it is registered as "A1." And when it has made some voyages it is inspected again; and next time it goes out it will have to be registered again. This time it may be "A2," or lower still, and as the ship gets older she becomes of less value and a greater risk. That is so with a ship, but it need not be the case with men. There are men who began twenty years ago as "A1 at Lloyd's," and they stand the same to-day. Instead of falling, there is nothing to prevent us from rising in value as we get grey hairs. "There go the ships." We see that all of them have a different tonnage. The one of two hundred cannot carry as much as the two thousand, but she can venture where the other dare not follow her. And there are different ways of usefulness that men can get out of littleness. A great preacher has a glorious history, but it takes a great deal to make him what he is, and it takes more to keep him right. The more water the ship draws the greater is the danger if she gets into shallow water. Some of us are little ones, and we shall never be anything else all our lives. But we can go where the big ones dare not. And if you subtract from the total work done for the Truth all the work that is done by small people you will sink the total very much. "There go the ships." Every one has got a cargo. They all carry something: some of them carry precious freight; some of them carry that which enriches the world. Look at that ship going with a cargo of cotton. It means work for nimble fingers and bread for hungry children. And after it has been spun, woven, and worn, it will make rags that will be used for paper that will make Bibles and books. She carries something valuable, does that ship. What cargo are you carrying then? Are you a ship in ballast? A ship must carry something. She must be a certain weight or they cannot sail or steer her. And if they cannot get a cargo they fill up with stones and clay. And up in Sunderland yonder, there is many a hill made of ballast brought by ships that have taken out cargoes of coal, and had nothing else to bring back. And it costs just as much to sail her with ballast as with a cargo. It costs God Almighty just as much to keep a useless man as to keep a useful one. Have you been carrying ballast? There is no need. You may be filled with a cargo, if you will come alongside this wharf—a cargo that shall bring pleasure and blessing wherever you go. Where go the ships? To fortune or to failure; to harbour or to ruin? Ah! you need not go many miles to find these wrecks of manhood. You can remember some; I can remember others. Some ships have foundered because they have set out before they were ready for a voyage. We need all of us to remember, "Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil." But there are some vessels lost by striking hidden rocks, and others by striking rocks that may easily be seen. How many have gone down and become wrecks through the rock we call Drink! And what numbers are ruined by gambling! Wrecks! How are we to be delivered from such things? There are other things we might have said about these wrecks, but

how are we to be delivered from them? First, we must take care who the skipper is. Make sure that you get hold of Captain Credence. If you want to see what voyagos he has made look in the Epistle to the Hebrews; and there you will read: "By faith . . . By faith . . . By faith . . ." Captain Credence will take charge of you, and always bring his own hands aboard, and he will place them in every part of the ship. At the helm stands Obedience, an able-bodied seaman is he. He takes his orders here. You want to have Obedience, who always works by the words of the Chart. And then, like Joseph, when tempted, you will hear him say, "I cannot. Helm hard-a-port! Do you think I am going to the other side?" Captain Credence always brings with him Conscience, and puts him as the look-out. He has keen sight; he needs no spectacles. He can see the land before any one else sees it; he can see the sand-banks before anybody else sees them, and the rocks. If you only put Captain Credence aboard, he will bring all the hands with him who have sworn obedience to Jesus. Some day, if only you hold on by Christ, your ship will reach the good land. It is a land within reach of every one of us, a land that is fairer than day. (*T. Champness.*)

Vers. 27, 28. **These wait all upon Thee; that Thou mayest give them their meat in due season.**—*The waiting world supplied*:—Often the poet, rather than the scientist, is the true interpreter of nature. Mystic links which the scientist kens not, bind the universe to God. The devout poet hears God in the thunder; sees His touch on the smoking volcano; beholds His glory in sun and stars; hears the trees clapping their hands before Him: and, listening to the sounds of want and woe rising from a travailing creation, catches the accents of a universal prayer; while, in the provision made for every living thing he sees the bountiful answer from the opened hand of Deity. I. **UNIVERSAL DEPENDENCE.** "These all wait upon Thee," etc. We are dependent for life and all the good of life upon circumstances beyond our control. Earth, air, water, warmth, light, all so necessary, may all become destructive. They are all under law; but God Himself made and enforces their laws. The universe is an embodied thought of Deity, the product of His will: it runs its course sustained by the power which called it into being. The Creator is the Sustainer; the Alpha is the Omega of existence. II. **UNIVERSAL PRAYER.** "The eyes of all wait upon Thee," etc. Want looks up into the face of fulness. The sight of want and woe is a prayer to the bountiful. A drooping plant, a pining cat, or a crying babe, appeals to us all the more powerfully, because the appeal is inarticulate. Now, God is intimately connected with all forms of life, and perfectly understands the language of all His creatures. He sees the thirsty earth pining for rain; He hears the cry of the young ravens and roar of the lions (Jonah iii. 7, 8; iv. 11). But it is reserved to man as the high priest of Nature, to understand both his own wants and those of the lower creation; and to voice those needs in the heaven-taught prayer, "Our Father, give us this day our daily bread." III. **UNIVERSAL SUPPLY.** Thou openest Thy hand—the hand of infinite power, wisdom, benevolence, love—and the rain falls, the sun shines, the earth yields her fruit, "the pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn," and the desire of every living thing is satisfied. How pleasantly He prepares the table in our sight. He spreads His cloth of green: He decks it with the bloom of innumerable flowers: He permits us to watch, while His servants, the Laws of Nature, gather out of the dewdrop, the sunbeam, the atmosphere and the earth, the raw material which they compound into living food. Gradually earth is laden with the bounty of heaven. Food and decoration are here in rich profusion and golden glory. Man and beast alike are satisfied with the hospitality dispensed by the great Father of all. So also has He spread and richly furnished the Gospel table in our sight; so that we may in His Word trace the whole process of preparation: and now, for our soul's needs it is our privilege to gather what He has given. (*C. O. Eldridge, B.A.*) *The bountifulness of God in His providence*:—I. **HIS MUNIFICENCE TO HIS CREATURES IS GENERAL.** Consider—1. How large a family He provides for. 2. The variety of the provisions which He makes. 3. The regularity with which all is provided. 4. The abundance which He provides for all. 5. The ease with which He distributes the provisions. 6. He does all this gratuitously. II. **HIS SPECIAL GENEROSITY TO MAN.** This is seen—1. In His preparing the earth to bring forth fruit to the service of man. 2. In His unremitting supervision of the earth. 3. In that all the gifts bestowed upon others are intended for man's benefit. 4. In that He makes provision for man's soul. (*D. Roberts, D.D.*) *How the lower*

creatures are fed:—On the pampas, whenever grasshoppers, mice, frogs, or crickets become excessively abundant, we confidently look for the appearance of multitudes of the birds that prey on them. . . . It is plain that these birds have been drawn from over an immense area to one spot; and the question is how have they been drawn? Many large birds possessing great powers of flight are, when not occupied with the business of propagation, incessantly wandering from place to place in search of food. They are not, as a rule, regular migrants, for their wanderings begin and end irrespective of seasons, and where they find abundance they remain the whole year. They fly at a very great height, and traverse immense distances. When the favourite food of any one of these species is plentiful in any particular region all the individuals that discover it remain, and attract to them all of their kind passing overhead. This happens on the pampas with the stork, the short-eared owl, the hooded gull, and the dominican or black-backed gull—the leading species among the feathered nomads: a few first appear like harbingers; these are presently joined by newcomers in considerable numbers, and before long they are in myriads. (*Hudson.*) *Divine sufficiency*:—After a world of hungry men have fed upon Christ, He remains inexhaustible as at the beginning; like the bread in His own miracles, of which the pieces that were broken and ready to be given to the eaters were more than the original stock as it appeared when the meal began. Or like the fabled meal in the Norse Walhalla, which the gods sat down to to-day, and to-morrow there it is, all on the board, as abundant and full as ever. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Sufficiency for all varieties of experience*:—So manifold are the aspects of God's infinite sufficiency, that every soul, in every possible variety of circumstance, will find there just what will suit it. That deep fountain is like some of those fabled springs which gave forth whatsoever precious draught any thirsty lips asked. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 28. That Thou givest them they gather.—*God's giving and man's gathering*:—I. GOD ALONE GIVES; WE ONLY GATHER. He is the Sole Proprietor in the universe, and of it. We can have nothing but by His bestowal. Our industry, perseverance, skill, are only methods that we employ in gathering. We have nothing that we have not received. II. WHAT GOD GIVES WE OUGHT TO GATHER. 1. In the world of nature. The fields must be cultivated, harvests reaped, etc. 2. In the realm of grace. Truth must be apprehended, Christ believed, the Holy Ghost received. (*U. R. Thomas.*) *Gathering God's gifts*:—This text refers to the animals mentioned in the preceding verses. The birds and beasts are set forth by our Lord as examples of the providence of God. "Your Heavenly Father feedeth them." And perhaps to our minds they supply the most perfect illustration of dependence. God supplies their wants; He gives them everything; and if He did not feed them they would perish. Yet, though He gives all, they have to gather all. Not a mouthful does one of them get which it has not worked for. Now, there is a great principle of the Divine procedure here, which God observes not only in providence, but in grace. He gives, but we must gather. He is able to make His grace abound to us, so that we, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work. It is this fulness of the Divine grace, accessible and available to us, that we must think of first when we are speaking about the deepening of the spiritual life. But the other side is not to be forgotten, or the good of it all may be lost—that which He giveth we must gather. Take even the illustration of the steam-engine. You say, What would the engine be without the steam? Yes; but what would the steam be without the engine? There was plenty of stean in the world before James Watt was born. But it was not gathered. Take another illustration. Here is a rifle, exquisitely constructed, beautifully grooved inside, and with it cartridges made on the most scientific principles. You might look at it and moralize in this way: What a heavy thing; what a cold thing; how useless it would be to hit anything without the powder; it is the little thimbleful of gunpowder and the flash of fire by which everything is done. Now, this is perfectly true, and it illustrates a grand spiritual truth. It is the flash of fire from heaven that does all the execution in the wars of the Lord. Yet how important also is the other side of the truth. What would the powder be if it were not for the gun? Why, the puff of it would hardly singe a fly. It is when its force is gathered and packed close in the cartridge, and when the ball is directed on its course by the finely-grooved barrel, that it brings down the object at a thousand yards. God's power, I say, is often there; but we are not in a position to use it and to retain it. He gives, but we do not gather. This is a

principle in Christian work of every kind. Mr. Moody has been going from town to town over Scotland. Now, if you meet the ministers of some of these towns a year hence, they may tell you that the meetings were very successful, the district was stirred, the churches were filled, and there were hundreds of inquirers. But it has not come to much. The results that have lasted are small. This may be true, but what is the reason of it? In many cases the reason, I believe, is this: God has given, but His servants have not gathered. It is the same with His work in our own souls. He blesses us, but we lose the blessing. For example, I hear a Christian complaining that he is cold and not growing in grace. But I take up his Bible and turn over its leaves. They are as clean as when they came from the printer, and here and there they are actually sticking together. The man might as well construct a zinc covering over the flower-bed in his garden, and then complain that the flowers are dying for want of rain. There is plenty of rain, but he has kept it away from the plants. Or I meet a young man or woman who is at that period of life when the mind is all awake and alive, reading books, acquiring scientific methods of research, and entering into the glorious heritage of the knowledge of the past. The man complains that he is not enjoying his Bible; and the fact is his Bible is distressing him. I ask him how he reads it, and he says, "Oh, just as I have always done." "That is," I say, "you read a chapter a day, and you give five minutes to it?" "Yes." "You never spend the time on it that you do on an ode of Horace or a paragraph of Thucydides; you never study a book of it as you would a play of Shakespeare?" "Oh no, I never thought of such a thing." "Then no wonder you are getting no good out of your Bible. God's manna is there, but you are not gathering it." (*J. Stalker, D.D.*)

Vers. 29, 30. **Thou hidest Thy face, they are troubled: Thou takest away their breath, they die.**—*Views of death*.—I. DEATH DISORGANIZES AND DESTROYS OUR CORPOREAL FRAME. The words of the text merely announce the execution of the original sentence, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." II. DEATH PUTS AN END TO ALL WORLDLY DISTINCTIONS. Sometimes, indeed, they may appear to remain. One man is honoured with a splendid and imposing burial. Another has a blazoned monument erected over him. A third may have historians to record his name, and poets to sing his praise. And in contrast to all these, a fourth may be laid in the base earth, and have not even a stone to tell where he lies, and fade from the remembrance, almost as soon as he passes from the sight of that world, in which he did little more than toil, and weep, and suffer. But let your eye penetrate through those showy forms which custom, or affection, or vanity has thrown over the graves of departed mortals, and behold how the mightiest and the meanest lie side by side in one common undistinguished ruin. Receive, then, and practise the lesson which all this inculcates. It speaks to you who occupy distinguished situations in the world; and it says, Behold the nothingness of earthly grandeur, and power, and riches. Though elevated in station, be humble in spirit. The same fact speaks to you who are moving in the humble walks of life; to you it says, Why repine that you are not invested with the insignia of worldly greatness? III. DEATH TERMINATES ALL LABOUR AND ALL PLEASURE UNDER THE SUN. "There is no work, nor wisdom, nor device, in the grave;" and "as the tree falleth, so must it lie." Let no good action be unnecessarily delayed, or carelessly performed. IV. DEATH DISSOLVES THE DEAREST AND TENDEREST TIES. V. DEATH BLASTS THE FAIREST PROSPECTS OF INDIVIDUALS, OF FAMILIES, AND OF NATIONS. He teaches us to put no confidence in our own life, or in that of any of the sons or daughters of men. He teaches us to recollect how feeble are all our efforts, and how short-sighted are all our best-laid schemes, and how perishable are all our most sanguine hopes. VI. DEATH INTRODUCES US TO JUDGMENT AND TO ETERNITY. This is the most important view which we can take of it. (*A. Thomson, D.D.*) *The death of animals*.—Pain, suffering, and death, we know, may be of use to human beings. It may make them happier and better in this life, or in the life to come; if they are the Christians which they ought to be. But it seems, in the case of animals, to be only so much superfluous misery thrown away. Of the millions on millions of living creatures in the earth, the air, the sea, full one-half live by eating each other. In the sea, indeed, almost every kind of creature feeds on some other creature: and what an amount of pain, of terror, of violent death that means, or seems to mean! The Book of Genesis does not say that the animals began to devour each other at Adam's fall. It does not even say that the ground is cursed for man's sake now, much less the

animals. For we read (Gen. ix. 21). Neither do the psalmists and prophets give the least hint of any such doctrine. Surely, if we found it anywhere, we should find it in this psalm. But so far from saying that God has cursed His own works, or looks on them as cursed, it says, "The Lord shall rejoice in His works." Consider, with respect and admiration, the manful, cheerful view of pain and death, and indeed of the whole creation, which the psalmist has, because he has faith. There is in him no sentimentalism, no complaining of God, no impious, or at least weak and peevish, cry of "Why hast Thou made things thus?" He sees the mystery of pain and death. He does not attempt to explain it: but he faces it; faces it cheerfully and manfully, in the strength of his faith, saying—This too, mysterious, painful, terrible as it may seem, is as it should be; for it is of the law and will of God, from whom come all good things; of the God in whom is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. Therefore to the psalmist the earth is a noble sight; filled, to his eyes, with the fruit of God's works. And so is the great and wide sea likewise. He looks upon it; "full of things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts," for ever dying, for ever devouring each other. And yet it does not seem to him a dreadful and a shocking place. What impresses his mind is just what would impress the mind of a modern poet, a modern man of science; namely, the wonderful variety, richness, and strangeness of its living things. Their natures and their names he knows not. It was not given to his race to know. It is enough for him that known unto God are all His works from the foundation of the world. But one thing more important than their natures and their names he does know; for he perceives it with the instinct of a true poet and a true philosopher—"These all wait upon Thee," etc. (*C. Kingsley, M.A.*)

Life by respiration:—It has always been supposed that man's power to breathe lay primarily in the united action of heart, lungs and blood. But a recent scientist of recognized authority declares that this is not altogether the case. He asserts, and apparently proves it to the satisfaction of many scientific minds, that although heart, lungs and blood assist the act of breathing, and constitutes man's physical safeguard against suffocation, the actual breathing—i. e. the taking in of the oxygen and hydrogen of the atmosphere, is done by the living substance of the human body. Practically we breathe, so to speak, at every pore, and not simply by the elaborate parts hitherto looked upon as the only human agents of respiration. Plants and animals as well as men thus breathe through the living substances which severally compose them. And what is equally wonderful, perhaps, is that, as this authority declares, "the mutual action of plants, animals and men upon the atmosphere in respiration is one of the most beautiful harmonies in nature." What one gives off as waste product is taken up and utilized by the other. Truly "we are fearfully and wonderfully made"! (*Homiletic Review.*)

Ver. 30. Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created.—*The breath of the Most High God*:—The Holy Spirit is called the Breath of God, as being breathed out in a mysterious and marvellous way over His whole creation, but especially into the souls of reasonable beings, to make all in their several measure partakers of God and of happiness. The Holy Spirit is God secretly present, encompassing us about, entering into us, piercing even to the very depths of our being, like the air we breathe, unseen, but known by its effects. If this parable of Breath be well considered, it may seem to account for other like parables, so to call them, by which Holy Scripture teaches us how to think of this our most Holy Comforter. For instance, the Holy Spirit is sometimes compared to the wind, as in the discourse of our Saviour to Nicodemus: "The wind bloweth where it listeth," etc. Thus the wind, when we hear or feel it, may remind us of the Breath of Almighty God; and the effects of the wind, the clouds which it brings over the earth, the moisture which the air takes up, the dews which descend, the rains which pour down, the springs which gush out, the waters which flow over the earth; all these are in Scripture tokens of the same Spirit, showing Himself in gifts and sanctifying graces, and communicating spiritual life to His people. The Holy Ghost, one with the Father and the Son, as He is present in all His works, so is He ever in a peculiar manner abiding in those whom He has regenerated and made members of Jesus Christ,—out of sight, out of hearing, beyond all feeling or any outward sense, yet infinitely nearer and closer to every one of us than any of the things we do see, hear, or feel, or can make out by reasoning; ready at hand to all His faithful ones, at every moment of their dangerous and trying pilgrimage, to guide and comfort, to purify and refresh them. "By Him we live, and move, and have

our being," as people of God. (*Plain Sermons by Contributors to the Tracts for the Times.*) **Thou renewest the face of the earth.**—*The Hebrew genius and the spring season.*—There is a deep religious undertone in all the descriptions of nature which we owe to the Hebrew poets; there is little dwelling on the beauty of nature as it appeals to the imagination. With our modern poets the scenery is everything; the manifestation of the power, or presence, or goodness of God is nothing, or next to nothing. The Hebrew nature was too moral, too possessed with the idea of duty; of a great power overshadowing the life of man, putting His voice and mandate in the conscience within, aiding and abetting the good and destroying the evil, to give itself over wholly to the power of the beauty of the material world, to the enjoyment of purely scenic effects, to the indulgence of the imaginative or artistic faculties. It made imagination subordinate to conscience, a handmaid to wait upon and describe its intuitions, feelings, and voices; not a power that exists for its own ends or for its own self-indulgence. It is in harmony with this great characteristic of Hebrew poetry that the psalmist carries up the thought of the fertility and beauty of the spring season to the thought of God. There is no brooding on the singing birds, the bursting buds, the opening blossoms, the returning grass, the intermittent sunshine, the vernal showers, as if they had any satisfying charm in themselves. He sees them all in God, and prefers rather to look at them in and through the medium of the religious emotion, than as objects to be gazed at directly. The thought is not one of quiet resting upon the smiles in which the face of nature is wreathed, which is certainly that on which the genius of a modern poet would have lingered; but rather that He who is the joy of the soul, the restorer of righteousness, the strength and stay of the upright, has been the great cause of this wonderful transformation from desolation to loveliness; and, therefore, that He and not it should be rejoiced in and thought of. And so we find that after a description of God's wonderful doings in the world the poet concludes,—as if that was what his review should lead up to (vers. 33, 34). (*James Forfar.*) *The parable of Spring.*—Nature is God's mirror, in which the "invisible things of Him" can be "clearly seen." Spring is God's parable, in which He speaks as the Saviour did when He turned our attention to the lilies of the field. I. IN THE WORLD AROUND, AND IN THE WORLD WITHIN, THERE IS A CHANGE WHICH ONLY THE CREATOR'S POWER CAN BRING ABOUT. Nature apart from God is but a name. The truth may be used as an instrument, the chances and changes of life may be pressed into service, and the ministries of pastors, teachers, and parents may be employed; but after all we have to say, "Thou renewest." It is only "He that" sitteth "upon the throne" that can say, "Behold, I make all things new." II. LIKE THE RENEWAL OF THE FACE OF THE EARTH, THE SPIRITUAL RENEWAL IS OFTEN GRADUAL AND WITHOUT CLEARLY MARKED STAGES. We do not trouble about the almanack when we see the bursting blossoms and hear the song of birds. And you need not trouble as to how the "beauty of holiness" came to you, or when the "new song" was put into your mouth; it is enough that you sing and make melody in your heart unto the Lord, and that the new life is yours. III. IN BOTH CASES GOD'S RENEWING WORK SEEMS OFTEN RETARDED BY HINDRANCES, AND PROCEEDS BY WAY OF REMOVING THINGS UNSUITABLE. Buds of promise may be nipped, flowers of grace may be withered, fruits of holiness may be retarded in their ripening; but He who worketh hitherto will work, He will not "fail nor be discouraged," for the fulness of the Spirit is with Him. (*T. Hind.*) *Voices of the spring.*—I. THE DIVINE EXISTENCE AND PRESENCE WITH US IN HIS WORKS. "All His works praise Him," but the works He is now working in such profusion around us sing to Him the sweetest song of all the year. They sing it not only to Him, but to us. They tell us He is near; that the living earth is a fair new robe of the living present God. II. THE DIVINE FAITHFULNESS. Every spring is with God the keeping of covenant (Gen. viii. 22). That is the general promise, and how true He is in the keeping of it! He is, as it were, conducting an argument as to His own fidelity. The argument is increscent and cumulative. It grows in length and strength year by year. The green fields to-day make it stronger than ever it was before. It will be stronger next year than it is to-day, although to-day it is strong enough for the trust of all the world. III. GOD'S GREAT GOODNESS. It is not morely that He made a certain promise four thousand years ago, and must keep it. It is that He made the promise and loves to keep it. IV. DIVINE TENDERNESS. Did God raise with His own hand that flower on its stem, with all those rich minglings of colour? Then He must love beauty.

Did He call out in the grass and buds and flowers that exceeding delicacy of texture, that softness almost ethereal, which will vanish if you touch it, which seems to quiver almost if you draw near? Then God must be very tender Himself. The tenderest and dearest things we have we can bring to Him—our wounded feelings, our trembling hopes, our brightest joys, our children when they are sick, or when they are seeking salvation, our own souls when they are all sensibility—all these we may bring to Him whose mercy is "tender" mercy, whose kindness is "loving" kindness, who "pitieeth" them that fear Him, and who gives new proof of His tenderness, love, and pity every spring. V. A VOICE OF GOOD CHEER TO ALL WHO ARE SERVING GOD FAITHFULLY, and seeking good ends for themselves or for others, although as yet with little apparent result. For when does it come? Immediately after the winter. The darkest, bleakest, dearest season of all the year is followed by the freshest and most reviving, as if to show us every year anew that nothing is impossible with God. VI. A VOICE WHICH SOUNDS AWAY INTO THE FAR FUTURE, and foretells "the time of the restitution of all things." God, in renewing the face of the earth, seems to give us a visible picture and bright image of that blessed moral renovation which is coming in the fulness of the time. If you were in the country you could not fail to be struck with the universality of the vegetative power, and with its resistlessness. You would see it everywhere—climbing up to highest places, and blooming down in lowly dells, invading the most hidden spots, embracing with its green arms the roughest rocks, healing the scars of winter. A type, I say, of the universality of the springtime of the world, when it comes. It will be everywhere. VII. Another voice—giving announcement of THE GENERAL RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD. VIII. Another voice tells us that ALL OUR EARTHY TIME IS THE SPRING SEASON OF OUR EXISTENCE. Every day we are sowing. And we must sow on to the end. To a certain extent we are reapers too, but summer prime and harvest wealth are not here. (A. Raleigh, D.D.) *Spring*.—I. LET US GO FORTH INTO THE FIELD TO MEDITATE: meditation is often better than books. Our own thoughts will do us much more good than the opinions of others. Danger often attends our perusal of the works of men; but there is no hazard in pursuing knowledge among the works of God. II. IT BECOMES US NOT ONLY TO OBSERVE NATURE, BUT TO OBSERVE IT DEVOTIONALLY, AND AS CHRISTIANS. There is a difference between our studying them as mere admirers and philosophers, and applying them as men formed by Divine grace for a life of communion with God. See a Christian among the works of nature. He looks after God in all—for He needs Him in all: and he is enabled to find Him. Though familiar with the effect, he does not disregard the cause. He also makes them images to remind him of better things. The rising sun brings to his thoughts "the Sun of Righteousness arising with healing under His wings"; a flowing spring, the influence of the Holy Ghost; the rain and the dew, the doctrine of the Gospel. Thus, by a holy chemistry, he extracts heaven from earth. III. LET US OBSERVE AND ADORE THIS WONDER-WORKING GOD IN RENEWING THE FACE OF THE EARTH. How many times has He done this since the creation! He does it every year. Let us remember, that He who renews the face of the earth, can renew the Church. Think of any particular cause—however depressed, He can revive it; however small, He can increase it. He can also renew the soul. We read of the "renewing of the Holy Ghost"; and of being "renewed in the spirit of our minds." Thus "God beautifies the meek with salvation"; and the change in nature is an imperfect representation of the change made in the soul by Divine grace. (W. Jay.) *Spring a symbol of spiritual renewal*.—The seasons have a moral contagion in them. The autumn breathes upon us a spirit of pensiveness, producing a sweet sadness because of the spirit of change and decay that rests upon all beautiful things. The spring, however, breathes upon us the spirit of hope and promise. There is the influence of new beginnings, new energies, and new efforts. I. THE SPRINGTIME IS A PERIOD OF RESTORED VITAL ENERGY. Life is starting from every pore of Nature. The whole face of the earth heaves and throbs with an exhaustless tide of life. Every spot teems with new existence. We are impressed with the infinite affluence of the "Fountain of life." Spring is really a new display of God's presence and power—a renewal which comes from the putting forth of Divine energy. And what He does in the natural world He also does in the spiritual realm. There are times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord—veritable springtimes—which come both to the Church and to the individual soul. For such times we should pray, and expect them to come. A time of

depression and barrenness should be succeeded by a time of new life and new spiritual energy. II. THE SPRINGTIDE IS A PERIOD OF RENEWED AND BUCYANT ACTIVITY. Restored vitality must put on new forms of activity. It is only natural that where there is real life there should be vigorous effort. III. THE SPRINGTIDE IS A PERIOD OF RESTORED BEAUTY. The beauty of the Lord is upon the face of nature, and that beauty is as fresh and full as if there had never been a springtide before. The minutest form of life has its wonder and beauty in structure, form, and hue. Beautiful, too, is the boundless variety and distribution of the whole. "The earth is full of Thy riches," and these are true riches, because they bring a wealth of life; they minister energy, beauty and joy to every living creature. What is the Gospel of Christ but the intention of God to impart to our life and character the beauty of holiness, the beauty of God's own being? The work of the Spirit is to produce in us meekness, gentleness, patience, charity—all of which go to form real loveliness of life. The springtime should have a message and influence for us on this part of our life. IV. THE SPRINGTIDE IS A PERIOD OF RENEWED JOY AND HOPE. (G. Avery.) *Spring life*:—I. HIDDEN LIFE. II. QUIET-LIFE. As we pass out of the striving town, with its trampling feet and rumbling vehicles, ringing hammers and roaring machinery, into the country, what a contrast we find! We hear the buzz of many insects, the music of many birds, and the occasional bleat of sheep and low of cattle; but this only serves to emphasize the prevalent stillness. The trees, grass and flowers do their work in absolute silence. But what a change is wrought in a few weeks or even a few days. There is life in a factory, where men are hurrying about with bared arms and spindles are flying and wheels are whirring, but the life is just as deep and full in the quietly springing grass and the noiselessly opening flowers. So applying this thought to spiritual things—there may be life in the Salvation Army barracks, but there may be life also in a Quakers' meeting. Noise, fire, smoke, are not the only signs of life: as life is strong and rich, it tends to become subdued. The brook babbles and makes a great noise, but it is very shallow, and there are only little minnows in it; the river sweeps along in silence, but it is deep and full of varied life. III. BEAUTIFUL LIFE. It goes without saying that the spring life is beautiful. Firm Christian principles are a good stout trunk, stern moral qualities are good sturdy branches, Christian graces are the leaves, and blossoms, and fruit, which adorn life's tree with beauty. IV. CONSTANT LIFE. The origin of life is an insoluble problem for science. If you give the scientific man a bit of protoplasm, he will build you up any creature whatever in an astonishing manner, but he cannot bridge over the gulf between life and no life. Years since, however, the psalmist could account for the origin of life, "Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit," etc. The corn which waved in the fields last autumn is gathered in and consumed or soon will be, so the fruit; the winter has killed off thousands of birds and animals, human creatures are continually ending their days. You see where this would soon lead us. But presently the blade will shoot through the ground and again the fields will be laden with golden corn, and the trees with fruit. Young birds will come from their nests to take the place of those dead. The human family is not only maintained but increases. Life is like a lake with an outflow at one end, but at the other end there is a stream continually flowing in. The life of the world is continually renewed. The trees which yielded you apples last year, have come under the sleep of winter, but they will yield you apples this year; the bush from which you gathered roses last year will yield you roses this year. And as spring after spring, the face of the earth is renewed, so is it in God's Church. (T. Pitt.) *Lessons from the spring*:—1. It bids us be content and patient, and believe that God has never forgotten any of our need; that His care and providence girdle our lives everywhere. 2. It fills us with joy and gladness, and bids us break away from the spell of dark moods and rejoice with all nature when "the mountains and hills break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field clap their hands." 3. It teaches us, by the objects of tenderness and beauty which it places everywhere before our eye, to make our own lives beautiful, and to excite nobler tastes and simpler emotions in the minds of our fellow-creatures. 4. But the one I would most impress upon you is reverence for the buds. Cherish your worthiest purposes and impulses as most sacred things. Do not think lightly of even your loftiest dreams and imaginings of a perfect and holy life. They will come to fruition. They will be presently realities. Here on earth you will see many of them translated into fact, and

you have a hope beyond earth. (A. J. Griffith.) *The lessons of spring*:—I. A PROOF OF OUR ENTIRE DEPENDENCE UPON GOD. By a suspension of His power He might in a moment stop the varied mechanism of nature; or, by applying that power in a different way, He might produce the very opposite of the expected and desired results. Now let us only reflect how fatal would be the consequences should spring altogether cease, or should it even for any length of time delay its coming. Let the frost of winter continue to bind the earth in its iron fetters: let its snows continue to fall, its cold to blast, and its feeble sun to struggle in vain with the ice-bound fields; and then the seed which was intended to produce a future harvest must remain unscattered; the hopes of the husbandman must give place to despair; plenty must soon be exchanged for famine. II. SPRING AS EMBLEMATIC OF MISERY FOLLOWED BY HAPPINESS. It is but a very limited experience any of us can have of the progress of the cause of righteousness during our stay upon the earth; but when we look back on the centuries which are past, and consider the advancement which has undoubtedly been made, we see enough to persuade us that the world's winter is surely, though slowly, passing away, and that even now we may be treading on the confines of its promised and expected spring. III. SPRING AS EMBLEMATIC OF A COMING RESURRECTION. IV. SPRING AS EMBLEMATIC OF YOUTH. The husbandman, we know, is fully alive to the duty and necessity of diligently employing the days, and even the hours, of spring. If he trifle or loiter in spring, it will be vain that he is active and industrious in summer. Now, the point of analogy in this respect between youth and spring is plain, and it should suggest a most important lesson both to parents and children. It warns all parents that if they neglect their children when young, no future efforts will compensate for the loss. (A. Roberts, D.D.) *Spring*:—I. Spring, in the simple fact of its return, proclaims to the world God's FAITHFULNESS. Our tendency is to forget this. Because we know something of the way God gathers the rain into the chambers of the clouds, we are apt to forget that it is the gift of God; because we have learnt something about the growth of corn in the furrows, we almost forget that the harvest is from God; because we have heard that the earth revolves upon an axis, and that spring, like everything else, is produced by adequate means, we are in danger of saying, It is no gift; it is nothing to be thankful for. There is no benevolence in it whatever. Let us not thus deny the great Father's love, but as we mark that God's method is orderly, let us the more adore His wisdom, and bless His faithful, fatherly care. II. Spring instructs us as to THE MANNER OF GOD'S WORKING. God works not as man works. Man must display his power, must blow a trumpet before him when about to perform some great work. Not so God. With the quietness that belongs to strength; with the gentleness, the noiselessness, the secrecy that pertains to mightiest power, He has wrought the wondrous change. His working has been silent as the fall of dew, it has been gradual as the dawn, it has been tender, yet mighty, as the light. III. Spring proclaims that GOD IS A LOVER OF BEAUTY. IV. Spring teaches us by its profusion THE INFINITE WEALTH OF GOD'S RESOURCES. Power, wisdom, beneficence, seem to have spent themselves upon the earth's teeming life. No ocean tide has ever rolled in upon its shore so proudly, so grandly, so full in volume, as the tide of life that has now touched our world. No thoughtful mind can watch it without awe! (H. Wonnacott.) *Springtime: Divine renewal*.—I. GOD IN THE RENEWAL OF NATURE. Canon Mozley bids us think of nature both as labouring as a machine, and as sleeping as a picture—to regard its uses, and its impressions. In both these aspects we may regard the Divine renewal of the earth. 1. As working secret causes of change in the revolution both of the earth and of the whole solar system that has its effect in making one primrose blow. 2. As effecting a change in the appearance of things making the earth's "face" express Life, Love, and Joy. II. GOD IN THE RENEWAL OF MAN. His work here is illustrated by His work in nature. 1. There is secret work at hidden causes—repentance, regeneration. 2. There is the effecting of change in outward appearance, the character, like the spring, has Life, Love, Joy. For illustration of this look—(1) At the individual. Natural childhood and youth is a renewal of the face of the earth. The huddings of childhood's intellect, the bursting forth of youthful love. The beginnings of spiritual life. The glory of God seen by any soul in the face of Jesus Christ awakens new life in that soul. In raising to immortal life after death. That is the renewal of which spring sings to us in graveyards and cemeteries. (2) At the race. As flowers and fields seek the sun, we may all say to Christ, "All men seek for Thee." In the time of the

restitution of all things it may be said literally, sung gloriously, "Thou renewest the face of the earth." (*U. R. Thomas.*) *God's renewals*.—I. **THE POWER OF GOD.** What power there is displayed in making the trees and plants grow forth from the ground! So little is this power within the power of man that, until he saw it, he could not suspect such a thing. And not only in growth itself, but in the shape and feature of the growth, there are equal marks of the power of God. When the seed grows, it grows according to certain fixed laws, and those laws cannot be changed. They may be enlarged, but not altered. This power is none the less apparent in the variety in each species. How weak, how powerless is man in this sphere again! Even if he had creative power, could he create? Would he not have to copy servilely from what he saw? Could he make a blade of grass or a leaf of a tree so distinct that there should be no other blade of grass, no other leaf of a tree exactly like it? Could he even imagine how it should be done, much less do it? II. **THE GOODNESS OF GOD.** God foresees for us. He is never in a hurry; He is never after His time. God begins His provision in spring, that we may have it in due time in the autumn. And how richly does He provide! How ungrudgingly! How equally! He sends the sun to flood the whole world with its life-giving beams. And He gives not only necessary food, but enjoyment and luxury. He gives not only bread to strengthen man's heart, but wine to make his heart glad, and oil to make him a cheerful countenance. He scatters enjoyments in every sphere; for every sense He finds delight. III. **THE BEAUTY OF GOD.** When we look into the face of nature, now all renewed, do we not trace some of the Divine features of the great Creator and Renewer? And oh, if this beauty can be traced in this fallen nature, how much more could it be traced in unfallen Eden! (*E. Browne, M.A.*) *Contemplations in the spring of the year*.—I. **WHAT A DIVERSITY OF ANIMATION SURROUNDS ME!** What a stirring and bustling! Everything in motion, above, below, in the air and on the ground! How powerfully everything is at work, within itself and without, through all and upon all! Yes, the vivifying energy of nature, or rather of the Author of nature, is ever new, ever active, is inexhaustible! Oh let us adore this eternal, never-failing source of life! Thence we may draw eternal life and the fulness of joy! II. **THE ORDER OF NATURE IS INVARIABLE.** It is therefore a constant, speaking witness to the being of God, His superintendence over all, His providential care for all, His vital influence in all. He is and works on all sides; in the scarcely visible moss as in the tall and stately cedar, in the mitre as in the eagle, in the creeping worm as in the spirit that worships before the throne of His glory. And where He is and works, there is order, connection, harmony, beauty, perfection; there is the most accurate correspondence between ends and means. III. **JOY AND HAPPINESS IS THE FINAL AIM OF ALL THE REVOLUTIONS AND PHENOMENA IN NATURE, OF ALL THE REGULATIONS WHICH GOD HAS ESTABLISHED.** Whichever way ye turn, do ye not now walk in a paradise of delights? And what salutes your ear on all sides but sounds of mirth and exultation, the celebration of the grand festival of nature? IV. **INNOCENT, SEDATE ENJOYMENT OF NATURE, AND PROFOUND INWARD ADORATION OF THE GOD OF NATURE ARE THE MOST HONOURABLE AND PLEASING OCCUPATIONS.** Yes, this is enjoyment, unalloyed, truly worthy of the man, which never draws after it either surfeit or repentance. Thou art the priest of nature, O man, and the temple of thy God, the gorgeous fabric of the universe is everywhere filled with votaries, who ask thy ministration. V. **THE RENOVATION AND EMBELLISHMENT OF THE FACE OF THE EARTH, THE RESUSCITATION OF THE LIFE OF NATURE IS A GLORIOUS TYPE OF THE FUTURE RENOVATION AND PERFECTION OF THE HUMAN RACE, of the general resurrection of the dead to the superior life.** What a scene of most astonishing revolutions and transformations! What diversity of life and enjoyment of life, of thoughts never yet conceived and emotions never yet imagined! What a harvest from the sowing of all ages, of all the thousands of years that have elapsed since the first to the last of mortals! What a glorious unravelment of all that appears to us now mysterious and incomprehensible in the ways of Providence and the fortunes of mankind! (*G. J. Zollikofer, D.D.*) *A spring homily*.—I. **SPRING IS AN AWAKENING.** So is the turning of a soul to God. It was a soul asleep; it is a soul awake. It is opening its eye on a new world, a new time, new thoughts, new possibilities, a blessed new life. II. **SPRING IS A MANIFESTATION OF LIFE.** How full, how manifold is this new life in a converted soul! Thoughts which came and went without God before, are now alive with God. Hear how the birds are singing in the actual woods! That is nothing to the song of a soul on whom the spring of a new life has

descended. See how the verdure hastens to clothe the naked branches of the trees! That is nothing to the glory which decks the hitherto bare and dead powers of a converted soul. See how the fields are aglow with flowers! That is nothing to the beauties of holiness in a regenerated soul. Oh, the joy of spring! Oh, the better joys of conversion! Oh, the newness, the freshness, the deliciousness of the hum of the singing of birds! Oh, the more blessed newness, freshness, and deliciousness of a soul attuned by grace to God! The summer which follows spring is not more truly a natural sequence of spring, than holiness, trust, love, righteousness, prayer, joy in the Holy Ghost are natural outcomes of the awakening we name conversion. Why is this not always experienced? Because we will not believe the truth of God, and will not taste and see that God is good: because we refuse to be filled with the Spirit, and are slack to go in and possess the land. III. SPRING IS A GATEWAY. It is the gateway to the harvest—seedtime first, then harvest. At the gateway of the year, a promise; at the end, fulfilment. A gateway!—A way into the King's highway; a way to bread and wine, and milk and honey; a way to joy and wealth, and labour and the reward of labour. Wordsworth speaks of "the harvest of a quiet eye." But every new-born faculty in the life of the converted gathers a harvest for itself. The life becomes fruitful; and the several powers of life bring forth fruit to God. In every form, and along every line by which it comes, we owe to Christ the renewal of life, which leads to these harvests of the soul. His blood was the price He paid for our joys. The death that was ours, He took upon Himself, that we might become the heirs of the life that is His. (*A. Macleod, D.D.*) *The spiritual aspects of spring*:—I. AS A REVELATION OF GOD. 1. The profuseness of His vital energy. 2. His wonderful tastefulness. 3. The calm ease with which He carries on His work. 4. The regularity of His procedure. II. AS THE EMBLEM OF HUMAN LIFE. Both in spring and in human life—1. There are vast capabilities of improvement. 2. There is remarkable changeability. 3. There are many fallacious promises. 4. There is nothing that can substitute for the present. III. AS A SYMBOL OF MORAL RENOVATION. The new spiritual life is like the spring—1. In the season from which it has emerged. 2. In the tenacity with which the past seeks to maintain its hold. 3. In that it tends to a perfect future. IV. AS A TYPE OF THE GENERAL RESURRECTION. 1. A resuscitation. 2. A resuscitation from apparently extinct life. 3. A resuscitation against which many antecedent objections might have been raised. (*Homilist.*) *The message of the springtime*:—From the dawn of literature, poets have sung the praises of the spring. Chaucer, the earliest of the great English poets, tells us that nothing could take him from his studies

"Save certeynly whan that the monethe of May
Is comen, and that I here the foules syng,
And that the floures gynnen for to sprynge,
Fairewel my boke and my devocioun."

So also Wordsworth sings—

"To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

But whether we are poets or not we may yield ourselves to the gentle influences of the spring. How welcome it is after the ice-bound winter. You may see the welcome on many a pale face and in the weary eyes of the invalid to whom it will be the coming of a new life. You may hear it in the happy laughter of children who can now go out to play in the meadows and to gather cowslips by the river's brim. Spring has the peculiar charm of anticipation. It is like the rosebud to the rose. Not the tired dusty veteran laying his weapons down, but the young and ardent soldier buckling on his armour for the war. Spring is the truest emblem of childhood, and childhood is a springtime which is always with us if we look for it. There is always a new world in the cradle and in the playground. A new generation travels across the planet every thirty years. It is the merciful provision of God by which He stirs up the stagnant pool of our thought and interest. It would be sad indeed if we saw around us the evidences of the mighty power of God in nature, if we felt that sinful and guilty men were like dead branches which nothing could renew. But the Word we preach is a gospel of

infinite hope. The infinite love of God, the mercy of a Saviour, and the power of the Spirit hover around the hardest heart and the most deified life seeking to renew and cleanse and to impart the Eternal and Heavenly Life. "Thou renewest the face of the earth," but it is only a renewal and a repetition of those forms of life which have appeared year after year and age after age. They seem now to us and no doubt culture does introduce some fresh varieties, but practically we look upon the same world as the psalmist did when he wrote these words. And to apply the analogy to human life, we find that there is "no new thing under the sun." They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage in the days of Noah when the flood came upon the earth, and so will it be when the Son of Man shall come. "Thou renewest the face of the earth," but it is only the face. The earth itself remains the same. The ripples pass over the face of the great deep. It may even roll in great billows, but beneath is the undisturbed ocean. So while there are processes wrought by raging fires in the heart of the earth which we know little about, while a lonely rock is upheaved or sunk suddenly here and there in some lonely sea, the general configuration of mountain and plain, land and water is unchanged. Or if we go down through the earth's crust we find that the geological strata were formed long before the historic period. Granite was still granite, coal was still coal, chalk was chalk, and the old red sandstone was still there. Or to carry it further back, the ultimate elements of matter were the same as now and subject to the same laws. In exactly the same way, while the face of human life is renewed, in its depths it is very old. If we measure it intellectually, it has never varied. None of our inventions can add a single ounce to the human brain, or a single capacity to the human mind. We know better how to use the forces of light and heat and electricity, but if we go back to the age which knew none of these things we find teachers as wise, thinkers as subtle, and poets as sublime as those of to-day. The moral and spiritual needs of man are unchanged. Sin and sorrow and death cast their shadow on his path; he is a victim to the same fears; he is facing the religious problems of 3,000 years ago; he lives in the same wonderful relation to the unseen; his most urgent cry is still for God. Therefore the world can never outgrow the answer which Christ offers to its cry. Every age, every condition and period of life may rest upon the rock, which is Christ, just as the wintry ice and the spring flowers rest upon the same substratum of earth. (*J. H. Shakespeare, M.A.*) *The feeling for nature*.—In experiencing the rapture of spring, not a few of the excellent rejoice with trembling. They are hardly sure if those who desire to walk close with God should permit themselves to delight in nature. Indifference to earthly beauty has so long been regarded as an almost indispensable condition of viewing the heavenly glory that their hesitation is hardly surprising. The monk who on his journey down the Rhine shut his eyes lest the beauty of the scene should steal away his heart from God was by no means singular in his strange notion. Our Puritan forefathers are charged with holding a somewhat similar view. Possibly by their prohibition of the celebrations of May-day and other festivals of the seasons they may have done something to impair the feeling for nature. Though, truly, if the price to be paid for its cultivation is the restoration of the unrestrained and licentious revels of the Middle Ages, we had better continue without it. But more is due to the attitude which their ideal of the religious life caused them to assume. It is enshrined in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." This world lies in the wicked one. In it the Christian is a stranger and a pilgrim. To participate in the joys and pleasures of this world is to delay his progress to the loved eternal city, and even to jeopardize his final entrance into it. Even though nature should display parts of God's ways, there was the clearer and fuller revelation of the Scripture and in Christ. Seeing then that that which is perfect is come, where is the wisdom of troubling about that which is in part? A yet more considerable factor is to be found in the philosophic view of God then current. Deism held the field. God was practically outside His universe. Creation displayed the skill of the Creator in the mechanical adaptation of means to end. Design was utilitarian, the design of a carpenter making a tool. Against this hard and unsympathetic presentation of God, those who loved Nature for her own sake, and felt that she was not a machine, but was throbbing with life, revolted with their whole heart; the notion of such a God they flung away, and, like Shelley, proclaimed themselves Atheists. Thereupon also rose a new school of investigation of nature, the standpoint and earlier conclusions of which seemed to run counter to the current interpretation of Scripture. So it came to pass that in

earnest Christian circles research into nature was deprecated as likely to result in the abandonment of the Evangelical faith and the denial of God. But times are changing. Denizens of the crowded cities, with their restricted field of vision, their unpleasing and unnatural objects of sight, and their unwholesome atmosphere, begin to cry out against such cruel bondage of their elemental feeling, and to long for open spaces and green swards, for woodland and hill, for stream and valley, for singing birds and the sounds of the country. On grounds of both tradition and tendency, therefore, a somewhat timid and tepid enthusiasm for nature would seem the path of discretion. But is there really sufficient cause for such a position? Indifference to nature is not, and never has been, of itself a sign of spirituality, neither is a quickened pulse in the spring the proof of total depravity. Surely, of all men in the world, the people of God should be most sensitive to the works of God. Those who know Him most intimately should be in closest accord with all that He has created and made. The children of the Old Covenant, as well as the nation that knew not Israel's God, celebrated the great epochs of the year with festival and sacrifice. They waved the firstfruits of the earth's increase, and gave thanks for the completed harvest, rejoicing before the Lord in their feast. Search the literature of any nation or any period, and you will find it hard even to equal the appreciation of the majesty, the beauty and the manifold wonder of the works of God as shown in many of the Psalms. I say it reverently—What a Child of Nature was the Lord Jesus Christ. How He delighted in the country and loved the fresh air. His discourses are redolent of the open field. Is it not indeed truer to say that to understand nature you must be a learner of Christ? The more fully you know Him and the power of His resurrection, the more fully nature will yield to you her secrets and increase your pure delight in her companionship. To an inconsiderable degree the new feeling for nature is itself the outcome of the Evangelical Revival. That is the true order. See God in Christ, and you have the key that unlocks the mystery of God everywhere. Already the Christian lives in a new heaven and a new earth; not merely in anticipation, but in experience. "If any man be in Christ, there is a new creation, old things pass away, behold all things become new," the old world along with them. The world on which he now looks forth all speaks to him of the Father. Despite the sin and the darkness, he obtains joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing flee away. (*F. L. Wiseman.*) *The message of the spring:*—One need not be a nature student to be conscious of the charm of spring. The town dweller misses much of its glory, but no less than the more fortunate countryman he feels its genial and irresistible spell. Nevertheless, in springtime the country draws. The restriction of one's vision by the long and tedious rows of houses is never so irksome as then; nor the roar of the traffic, the clang of the bell, and the vulgar hoot of the motor-car ever so irritating. One longs for a wide and uninterrupted prospect, and the rich colours of the young grass and the bursting foliage. But the Christian, while he delights in the spring for what it is in itself, delights in it still more for what it suggests. He looks beyond the picture to the painter, through the music to the composer, through the work to the worker, through nature to nature's God, and his attitude is one not of mere sensual enjoyment, or even of intelligent appreciation of wondrous wisdom and skill, but of adoring gratitude, and glad and thankful worship. "All Thy works praise Thee, O God, and Thy saints give thanks unto Thee." It is no part of my present business to discuss how far nature witnesses to the existence of God, or what is the character of the God whom it reveals. To these questions the Christian has found the answer elsewhere. In the Gospel he has learnt to trust and rejoice in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. To him, therefore, the witness of nature is not evidential, however clearly it may pronounce upon the great ultimate facts, nor even corroborative, although such might, at times, be highly serviceable, but rather is illustrative. He has seen God in Jesus Christ, and that same God he now sees everywhere present and active. Like the Gospel, the spring is always new. It is a somewhat saddening reflection, but as true as it may be disheartening, that novelty quickly wears away. There is nothing to which we do not get accustomed by use and repetition. But spring, though it never fails to appear at the set time, retains its freshness. Previous experiences, far from removing its charm, seem only to heighten the wonder of its appearance. This very year they have found more gladness in the blossoming trees, in the primroses and daffodils, in the song of the birds and the gambols of the lambs, than ever before! How like the Gospel of the grace of God! That, too, is

always fresh. Again, how suggestively spring reminds us of the great saving truths of the Gospel, every year setting before us the great Gospel facts of birth into a new environment, death, resurrection, and glorification. I am not contending that the analogy is perfect, or that it "proves" anything. There is no death, hints the spring, but re-birth, resurrection, abundant life. Christ hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light. Think once more how the spring sets its seal to the Christian doctrine of God as Father. I do not say that it reveals the Father—Christ does that. But when you have learnt the fact from Christ, you see therein, also, the attributes of a Father. What Fidelity is here, what Power, what Bounty, what Beauty! The God of the spring-tide is a Covenant-keeping God. Seedtime and harvest have never failed. He cannot lie. He abideth faithful. And what power is here! Brother Laurence goes into the field in the winter, and, "seeing a tree stripped of its leaves, and considering that within a little time its leaves would be renewed, and after that the flowers and fruit appear, received a high view of the providence and power of God, which has never since been effaced from his soul." Which brings me to my last thought, the peculiarly Christian qualities inspired by the spring. It is pre-eminently the season of joy and gladness, that sentiment so characteristic of "the spring of souls." It strongly inculcates the abiding Christian qualities, faith, hope, love. Who but finds his faith reinforced through contemplating the works of this covenant-keeping God of grace? (*Ibid.*) *Spring an image of youth*:—The newness, liveliness, fair appearance, exuberance of the vital principle, rapid growth—such are the flattering points of likeness. But there are also less pleasing resemblances—the frailty and susceptibility, so peculiarly liable to fatal injury from inauspicious influences, blights and diseases. Those who have to watch over infancy, childhood, and early youth, can often see, in smitten plants and flowers, the emblems of what they have to fear for their charge. As in spring, the weeds, the useless and noxious vegetables, the offensive or venomous animals thrive as well as the useful and salutary productions; and that too, not only without attention to assist them, but in spite of efforts to repress or extirpate them. How many a rich bloom of the trees comes to nothing! How many a field of corn promising in the blade, disappoints in the harvest! Under this point of the analogy, the vernal human beings are a subject for pensive, for almost melancholy contemplation. There is one specially instructive point of resemblance. Spring is the season for diligent cultivation; so is youth. What if the spring were suffered to go past without any cares or labours of husbandry! But see how the parallel season of human life is, in numberless instances, consumed away under a destitution of the discipline requisite to form a rational being to wisdom, goodness, and happiness. It may be added, as one more point in this parallel, that the rapid passing away of the peculiar beauty of spring gives an emblem of the transient continuance of the lively and joyous period of human life. (*J. Foster.*) *The Holy Spirit's continuous energy*:—Here we learn that, while death is incessantly destroying the numerous forms of animal and vegetable life, and decomposition reducing them to unorganized matter, the Holy Spirit is constantly supplying a power which replenishes the wastes of nature, and thus renews the face of the earth with successive generations. This vital energy, though, like gravitation, it is unseen, is everywhere present, everywhere active and efficient. Without it all animal existence would soon perish, and be reduced to unorganized matter; but it is the Divine idea and purpose that the ravages of death and dissolution should be counteracted by a perpetual reviviscence of dead matter, and the Holy Spirit's vitalizing energy, everywhere present and everywhere active, doth accomplish this, and thereby He perpetually "reneweth the face of the earth." Without the Spirit's reproductive energy, death would bring universal ruin in a single generation; but the Spirit's reviving energy arresteth death and disorder, replenishing the earth with continuous life, and clothing it with endless forms of animation and beauty. Moreover, the Spirit's vitalizing and reproducing energy, in thus neutralizing the ravages of death and disorder, is accompanied by a conserving power which displays His presence and agency in all organized existence. I select one evidence of this—that of instinct. It is evidence of mind, yea, of a high order of mind, and of one presiding and directing mind, everywhere present and everywhere active, pervading every creature, great or small, in earth, air, or ocean. What, then, is this invisible, intangible, inaudible, and ubiquitous presence? If not in the creatures themselves as an attribute of their own nature, it must be in the all-wise beneficent Creator; and the Creator

is, as we have seen before, God the Holy Spirit. It is He who in the beginning moved upon the dark chaotic mass of matter and formed it into order and beauty; it is He who hath garnished the heavens and preserved them in constant harmony and grandeur; it is He who continually "reneweth the face of the earth" by His vitalizing energy; and it is He who thus conserves the creatures He has made, by unerringly directing them to perform those remarkable functions which indicate a wisdom not in themselves, and which therefore directs the thoughtful observer to a source higher than the creatures, to that Infinite Source from which all good is derived. (*W. Cooke, D.D.*)

Ver. 31. The Lord shall rejoice in His works.—*God's joy in His works:*—With the spirit in which the psalmist penned these words, it may be, we have too infrequent and imperfect familiarity. Compelled to frequent acquaintance with grief, we may find the avenues of joy not sufficiently opened up to us. I. **CONSIDER THEN THESE "WORKS OF THE LORD" WHICH REJOICE HIM.** Some of them rejoice us, when we see their use, their beauty, their perfectness. There is a treasure of satisfaction in some of the commonest works of God: they need little interpreting, they speak their own and their Maker's praise. How they transcend in perfectness all the exactness of art; how orderly are all their encircling movements, rebuking the waywardness of our fickle endeavours; how unselfish is their aim; how lavish their bounty. Nothing purposeless, however incomprehensible to us; nothing without some special mission to accomplish; all depending upon the one loving Will by which they were called into being. II. **BUT NATURE'S GLORY AND MEANING NEED INTERPRETING.** It may be said that this is the poet's office. Not quite so, although we justly celebrate our Hebrew bards. Theirs was a real inspiration. The creations of the poet differ in character from the visions of the spiritual seer. And it is not alone to the gifted that this insight comes. Not as the songs written out of the soul of the age do I regard the various rhapsodies of inspired penmen. There must be some deep underlying basis of authority for the pledges their words give us. We are charged by them to believe that the works of God are all tending to some grand issues; that God has given to man to be nature's lord, so that we must take into our thought what God is doing for him, to read rightly the purpose of all creation. And, to know the secret of nature, we must know the mystery of human life and its apparent failures. The groans of creation await the glory to be revealed in the sons of God. As the ages revolve, they bring all created life nearer to its goal. The throes of the past and the present need to be read in conjunction with the final development and harmony, when the many "works" shall be as one grand work of the Divine Artificer. Faith is not only a struggle against appearances; faith is also a broad generalization, which looks to the ultimate end of all things, and can sing in sympathy with the spirit of the psalmist: "The Lord shall rejoice in His works." Must we not look to manhood if we would understand infancy? III. **WHAT ABOUT THE GLORY AND THE JOY OF GOD IN RELATION TO THOSE WORKS AND WAYS WHICH IT IS THE SPECIAL FUNCTION OF THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER TO UNFOLD AND ILLUSTRATE?** Before His presence shall stand dove-like peace, gentle charity, chaste innocence, meek faith, and patient hope, in all the lovely forms they have assumed; here, in maiden modesty and sweetness; there, in martyred truth and righteousness; here, in youthful consecration caught up with its dews fresh upon it; there, in mature devoutness sprinkled over with the snows of venerable age; here, childlike lives, mere buds of moral loveliness taken to blossom amid winterless scenes; there, lives of quiet beauty, readily passed by amid the loud cry for sensational piety. All these form but part of His manifold works, over which, as treasures safely gathered, He will breathe the eternal spirit of unutterable peace; and in which, discerning His reflected image, He will rejoice. Fruits these of His redeeming grace, trophies of His all-conquering mercy, for eternal rejoicing. (*G. J. Proctor.*)

Ver. 32. He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth.—*God can shake the world:*—Earthquakes certainly teach us that human existence in this world is entirely dependent upon God. Probably no natural experience impresses the mind as completely with the sense of utter insecurity. A traveller in South America gives a graphic account of his own helplessness during one of these terrible convulsions. He was in the street when the ground began to rock under his feet. His first impulse was to seek refuge inside a house, and it tumbled into ruins before him.

He turned toward the shore, and there was the sea tossing and foaming as if in a storm. He glanced at the hills, but even they were shaken like trees with the wind. All he could do was to stand still, and look towards heaven, which alone was unmoved amidst the upheavings of the globe. He did well, for in God only is perfect safety. All other refuges save His mercy and power are refuges of lies. But none need fear whom He protects. One gladly recalls the remark of the good old lady mentioned by Mr. Spurgeon in a sermon. When her neighbours were in mortal terror, owing to certain vibrations of the ground, she remained quite calm. "Are you not afraid?" they asked her. "Afraid? No!" was her answer; "I rejoice to know I have a God who can shake the world." (*Sunday Companion*.)

Ver. 33. **I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live.**—*A joyous faith*.—The Oriental life differed in a very marked degree from our modern life. For one thing, it was spent more in the open air than is possible in these colder climates; it was a simpler life, coming into contact with nature, open to the influences which nature is sure to have upon the sensitive mind. We gain something, possibly, by living in great cities, but we certainly forfeit something also; we know man better, we are brought more into contact with our fellow-men, but we lose sight of a great deal which might speak, and which does speak to us of the wonderful works of God. The frame of mind in which we live habitually, as well as our surroundings, will have much to do with the spirit of our worship. We may be in the condition of men who are overwhelmed by the thought of man and his works, or of money and its influences, immersed in the noise and smoke until the very heavens themselves are hidden from us, and then the charm of creation is gone, or we may do, what some men never seem to do, possess our souls in the midst of it all. It is something to have seen the works of God, to have taken note of them, even if it be only a glance on a starry night at the wonders of the firmament above. And when we look at the world and at life in this way, with eyes of devotion, and see the Lord there, realized as having a personal existence and share in it all, having to do with its being and its well-being, then it becomes impossible to be silent in His praise. The psalmist has not to reason himself into a right feeling about God; the right feeling is there, and so the psalm begins with an outburst of praise. He is a singer because he is a seer. And because he sees, he is full of devoutness and adoration, and sings as easily and naturally as birds sing when they have entered into the gladness and joy of coming spring. "When I think of God," said Haydn, "my heart is full of joy, the notes dance and leap. I write according to the thoughts I feel." And Handel, when he wrote his "Hallelujah Chorus," said he almost saw heaven opening before him. Devout and joyous worship, then, can only arise from a conception of a world and of a Deity like this. Absence of it in men is fatal; to them, as Hazlitt once expressed it, "the heavens have gone farther off, and become astronomical." The ladder that linked heaven and earth has disappeared; they are not likely to say with David, "The earth is satisfied with the fruit of Thy works," or, with Jacob, "How wonderful, how dreadful is this place!" And yet the duty of man remains. If he understands his true position he will worship, he must worship. But only in right thoughts and devout meditations will be found the secret of a lifelong praise such as the psalmist promises. "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight." A spirit like that may rejoice even in a world like this, and He rejoiced in spirit, for it is the soul which makes the music of life; and therefore fitly and properly this psalm begins and ends, as many another psalm, with: "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" (IV. *Baxendale*.) *Singing to the Lord*.—I. THE PSALMIST'S DETERMINATION. 1. That he will sing. He felt that God had given him a voice capable of singing as well as of speaking; that the power to utter sweet sounds in song, and the ear to delight in sweet sounds in song, was a noble faculty of his nature, and that this faculty was to be used in the Divine service. 2. That he will sing to the Lord—not for his own gratification and pleasure merely, nor to amuse his friends. He believed God heard his voice in song as much as He heard his voice in prayer. 3. That he will sing to the Lord as long as he lives. II. It is instructive to observe HOW OFTEN, AND IN HOW MANY DIFFERENT WAYS SINGING IS MENTIONED AND ENJOINED IN THE SCRIPTURES. 1. It is enjoined by Scripture command and precept. Moses and Miriam, David and Asaph, all unite in similar precepts,—“Sing unto the Lord all the earth, sing unto Him, sing psalms unto

Him," is the burden of their frequent utterance. Gospel precept accords with Old Testament command. The apostles are careful to exhort to the practice (Col. iii. 16; Eph. v. 19). 2. Singing is enforced by Scripture argument. We always find this duty of singing to the Lord linked to and connected with other moral duties. The psalmist unites singing and prayer together. In the same psalm we read, "O come, let us sing unto the Lord," "O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." Here singing and prayer are conjoined (James v. 13). 3. Singing is enjoined by Scripture example. Moses both pens a psalm, viz. the 90th, and sings a holy song. Miriam led a number of Israelitish women in a joyful song of triumph to the Lord. David earned for himself the title of the Sweet Psalmist of Israel, alike for the psalms he composed and sung. Asaph and Heman, Jeduthun and Ethan, were eminent for the service they rendered to the psalmody of the Temple-worship. Turning to the New Testament, we find the singing of sacred hymns enjoined by the highest example of all (Matt. xxvi. 30). The apostles were addicted to the same practice (Acts xvi. 25). (*J. Shillito.*) *Singing*.—1. Singing is the music of nature. The Scriptures tell us "the mountains sing," "the valleys sing," "the trees of the wood sing before the Lord." The air of summer is filled with melody of birds. 2. Singing is the music of the Ancient Church. Pliny makes mention in a letter he wrote to the Emperor Trajan, that the Christians of those times being gathered together before day, sang hymns and praises to Christ as God. Paulinus testifies that this practice overspread every province of the Western Church. Justin Martyr tells us that in his time they sang and sent up prayers to God. Beza confesses that at his first entrance into the congregation, hearing them sing the 91st Psalm, he felt himself exceedingly comforted, and did retain the sound of it afterwards upon his heart. St. Augustine reports of himself, that when he came to Milan and heard the people sing, it was the occasion of his conversion. His words in his Confessions are, "When I remember my tears at my conversion under the melody of Thy Church." 3. Coming to more modern times, we find the same practice not only in vogue, but also of greater practical advantage. The reformation in Germany, under Martin Luther, was greatly promoted by singing. Luther taught the children to sing hymns, expressing the great truths of the Gospel. The children went about the streets singing these Gospel hymns, and thus conveying the truth on every hand. The Romanists said "Luther has done us more harm by his songs than by his sermons." The followers of Wickliffe and Huss were named psalm-singers. In later times the great religious movements and revivals, which have greatly aided the spread of religion, have been more or less connected with singing to the Lord. 4. Singing is the music of heaven. The glorious saints and angels express their praises in this way, and make one harmony in their state of blessedness. This is set forth in many passages of the Book of Revelation. (*Ibid.*) *The soul on the wing*.—Birds are seldom taken in their flight; the more we are upon the wing of heavenly thoughts the more we escape snares. (*T. Manton.*) *Chiming Christians*.—"Clocks converted to chiming"—such were the words that caught the writer's eye in an advertisement of a watchmaker's wares. "Conversion to chiming" is precisely what many need now-a-days. In the midst of gloom and worry, what a call there is for bright Christians who can advertise the grace of God, which is able to dispel all sorrow and care! Many are converted who yet are far from chiming, and they require the change which can fill their lives with a music never dying, ever singing. Then there is a thought in the chime which may stimulate us. Chimes are striking constantly—often every quarter of an hour, always every hour. How about our testimony for Christ? Is that as frequent as it ought to be? Are we not often silent instead of chiming Christians? (*Signal.*)

Ver. 34. My meditation of Him shall be sweet.—Meditation upon God:—
I. THE MEDITATIONS OF A PIOUS MAN—HE MEDITATES ON GOD. Meditation is the action of the thoughts upon subjects which present themselves to the mind. As man is by nature, the quality of his thoughts is said to be evil. The Redeemer, when on earth, pointed out the connection existing between the heart and the deportment of life (Matt. xii. 34). 1. The pious man meditates upon the excellency of the Divine character. His holiness, His justice, His truth, His love, His mercy, His grace, His faithfulness, are all great parts in His infinite goodness. 2. The pious man meditates upon the works of God as they are seen in creation. Here every object has the mark of Divine power stamped upon it. These wou-

derful mountains, whose tops point to the clouds; these vales, these fields, and majestic forests; the whole of this earth which is beneath our feet, and the whole of yonder heavens which are above our heads, declare the glory of God, and show forth His handiwork. Now, a good man does not pass through the world without observing these things; and, in all these works, the Christian can behold his God. 3. The pious man meditates upon the goodness and wisdom of a Divine providence in the wonderful and ample provisions which He has made. Though there are mysteries deep and dark in the dispensations of Divine providence, yet the goodness of its character is evident. 4. The pious man meditates upon the love, the grace, the mercy, and the wisdom of God as they are manifested in the glorious plan of human redemption. This is the principal feature, the grand bearing of Scripture: to reveal God, to reveal Him in that lovely character, the God of grace—yea, the God of all grace. II. THE CHARACTER OF THE PIOUS MAN'S MEDITATION. "My meditation of Him shall be sweet." 1. To meditate upon the Lord gives strength to the mind. The more we know of God the more will we trust in Him; the greater will be our spiritual courage, and the more feeble will be our own fears. 2. Meditation of a pious nature upon God will give pleasure. Indeed, there is nothing that gives pleasures of an immortal nature but religious meditations. The very poorest of individuals, straitened in circumstances and despised by men, yet, if he loves God and meditates upon the Most High, he has more real pleasure of soul than the greatest of impious monarchs upon earth. 3. Religious meditation in a pious frame of mind will enable the Christian to forget his other cares—not to forget them so as to be carelessly unmindful of the necessary duties and lawful concerns of life, but he forgets them so as not to be spiritually injurious to his soul. (*D. V. Phillips.*) *The sweetness of meditation:*—Meditation is the calm and quiet dwelling of the mind upon a great fact, till the fact has time to get into the mind and pervade it with its influence. It is the quiet thinking on single truths; the dwelling of the mind upon them; the steady setting of attentive thought, drawn away from other things, and concentrated on this alone. I. THE TEXT IMPLIES A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP—that is, the relation of the human person who thinks towards a Divine Person on whom he meditates. All through the psalm, from end to end, it is not a thing, nor an abstract truth, but a living being who is presented. The psalmist speaks of things indeed. The objects from which he derives illustrations of the glory of God are taken from the realm of nature, although it is evident to a sanctified intellect that the writer uses the wonders of nature to express the yet deeper wonders of grace. He speaks of the glories of the sky; but it is God who covereth Himself with light, who maketh the clouds His chariot and walketh upon the wings of the wind. Sweeter yet should our meditation be, in proportion as our knowledge is greater, and the acts of love on which we have to dwell are more marvellous. But the ground of joy must be the same to us as it was to the psalmist. We see God not only as Creator, but as Redeemer. Not the doctrine, but Himself; not the Book, but the august Jesus, whose grand figure fills it from Genesis to Revelation; not the Church, but He in whom the Church believes—Jesus Himself, with none between the soul and Him; Jesus is our all in all. II. WHENCE COMES THE SWEETNESS OF THIS EXERCISE? It is sweet to think of the love of Christ, and especially to realize that we, with all our conscious unworthiness, are the objects of it. That love is wonderful in itself, wonderful in its freedom and spontaneity, wonderful in its eternal duration, wonderful in the depth of suffering it led our Lord to endure, wonderful in the tenderness and affectionate sympathies of His heart towards the wants and weaknesses of His people. Again, it is sweet to dwell on the love-tokens of our absent Saviour. If a loved one be far parted from us, have we not pleasure in the letters which tell us of constant love and undying affection? Yet what are they to the actual intercourse, daily maintained between Christ and His people? Can we not tell Him of our love in prayer and praise? What are the sacraments but meeting-places with Christ, the salutations of His mercy and His love? Is it not sweet to think of the bonds which knit us together with Him in a union indissoluble as His immutable promises? Lastly, is it not sweet to anticipate the time when we shall meet Him, "whom, not having seen, we love," etc.? We shall see Him face to face in the reality of His presence, and dwell with Him for ever. (*E. Garbett, M.A.*) *The sweetness and profitableness of Divine meditation:*—I. WHAT THIS MEDITATION IS. In Scripture it is called a thinking upon God (Ps. xlviii. 9), a remembering of God (Ps. lxxiii. 6), a musing on God (Ps. cxliiii. 5). Meditation is the work of the whole soul. The mind acts, and the

memory acts, and the affections act. "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart:" it is an intense and a vehement application of the soul unto truth. II. HOW AND IN WHAT RESPECTS MAY A MAN BE SAID TO MEDITATE ON GOD? 1. When a man doth meditate on the name, nature, titles and attributes of God, then he is said to meditate on God. 2. When a man doth meditate on Christ the Son of God, then he is said to meditate on God, for Christ is God; and therefore saith the apostle (Heb. iii. 1). 3. When a man doth meditate on the Word of God, the law and statutes of God, then he is said to meditate on God (Ps. i. 2). 4. When a man doth meditate on the works and concernments of God (Ps. lxxvii. 11, 12). III. HOW MAY IT APPEAR THAT IT IS A SWEET THING TO MEDITATE ON GOD? Is it not a sweet thing to enjoy God? Enjoyment of God is the life of our lives. And how do we enjoy God? Sometimes God doth come down into our souls; sometimes there is an ascent of the soul unto God. And what is the ladder whereby we ascend unto God, and take our turns in heaven with God, but believing meditation? It is a sweet thing for a good and gracious man to meditate on God and the things of God, because it is natural to him. Natural works are pleasant works. It is a help to knowledge, thereby your knowledge is raised. Thereby your memory is strengthened. Thereby your hearts are warmed. Thereby you will be freed from sinful thoughts. Thereby your hearts will be tuned to every duty. Thereby you will grow in grace. Thereby you will fill up all the chinks and crevices of your lives, and know how to spend your spare time, and improve that for God. Thereby you will draw good out of evil. And thereby you will converse with God and enjoy God. And I pray, is not here profit enough to sweeten the voyage of your thoughts in meditation? But hard work, you say, and therefore how can it be delightful? The harder the nut is to crack, the sweeter the meat when it is cracked; the harder the Scripture is that is to be opened, the sweeter is the kernel, the truth when it is opened. Would you meditate on God and the things of God with sweetness? When you are most fearful, put your thoughts upon that in God which is most cheerful; when you are most cheerful, put your thoughts upon that in God which is most dreadful; evermore divide your thoughts if you be to meditate on God, and the name, and nature, and attributes of God. In case you would meditate on Christ the Son of God, be sure of this, that you think on Christ, and meditate on Christ as your great example as well as your gift, and your gift as well as your example. In case you would meditate on the works of God, be sure of this, that you look upon all the works of God as enamelled and embroidered with so many attributes of God; for the more you see the attributes of God shining forth upon His works, the more sweetness you will take in the meditating thereof. (*W. Bridge, M.A.*) *The work and way of meditation*.—I. IT IS OUR WORK AND DUTY TO MEDITATE ON GOD AND THE THINGS OF GOD. Wicked men are blamed that God is not in all their thoughts (Ps. x. 4). Good and holy men are commended and rewarded for this (Mal. 16, 17). It is our duty to praise the Lord. Not only to be thankful to God upon the account of benefits received, but to praise the Lord upon the account of His own excellencies. And how should the heart be tuned and framed unto this praising of God, but by meditation on the name and nature and titles of God? (Ps. xlviii. 1). How doth he tune his heart to this praise? "We have thought of Thy lovingkindness, O God." II. THIS WORK OF MEDITATION IS EVERY MAN'S WORK, IT IS EVERY DAY'S WORK, AND IT IS THAT WORK THAT IS CONSISTENT WITH EVERY BUSINESS AND CONDITION. 1. It is every man's work. (1) It is the work of the wicked, for it is their first step to conversion. (2) It is the work of the godly. For, either he is weak or strong. If weak, he has need of it that he may be strengthened; if strong, that he may be quickened. If a beginner, he ought to meditate, that he may proceed; if a proficient, that he may be perfect; if perfect with Gospel perfection, that he may hold on his perfection. 2. It is every day's work. Is the Sabbath Day unfit for it? No; there is a prayer for the Sabbath (Ps. xcii.), to meditate on the works of God. Is the week day unfit for this work of meditation? No. The Sabbath Day is our market day; and then after we have bought our market on the Sabbath, we should roast it by meditation on the week. We do not go to the market on the market day, to buy meat into the house only for the market day, but for all the time until the market day comes about again. 3. As it is every day's work, so it is that work that is consistent with every business and with every condition: a garment that will fit the back of every condition. What dunghill condition, but this flower of meditation may grow thereupon? III. WHAT HELP OR WHAT MEANS TO THIS WORK

OF MEDITATION? 1. Be very sensible of your want, and of your neglect herein. 2. Labour more and more for a serious spirit. 3. A fixed spirit. 4. Intenseness of affection. 5. If you would indeed meditate on God and the things of God, be sure that you lay out such objects as may give entertainment to your thoughts. For if there be no corn in the quern, what grinding will there be? 6. If you would meditate on God and the things of God, strengthen your love and delight; for meditation grows upon the stalk of love and delight: and the more a man doth love God and the things of God, the more he meditates thereon. 7. Labour to get a deep impression of the things of God upon your heart and souls. 8. Take heed that your hearts and your hands be not too full of the world, and the employments thereof. 9. Go to God for this skill of meditation. IV. HOW SHOULD THIS WORK OF MEDITATION BE CARRIED ON WITH SWEETNESS AND SUCCESS? 1. In all your retirements be sure that you retire into God Himself. 2. Take heed that you be not legal in this work. 3. Be sure of this, that nothing fall within the compass of your meditation, but what falls within the compass of the Scripture. 4. In all your settled meditation, begin with reading or hearing. Go on with meditation; end in prayer. For as Mr. Greenham saith well: Reading without meditation is unfruitful; meditation without reading is hurtful; to meditate and to read without prayer upon both, is without blessing. 5. If you would have this work of meditation carried on with profit and sweetness, join with your meditation the examination of your own souls. 6. Observe what those times and seasons are that are most fit for meditation, and be sure you lay hold thereon. 7. Though there is a great deal of profit and sweetness to be found in this work of meditation, and it is every day's work, yet take heed that you do not so meditate on one of God's excellencies as to neglect another; nor so spend your whole time in the work of meditation, that this work of meditation should eat up other duties: God would have us rise from this work of meditation, as from any other duty, with a hungry appetite. (*Ibid.*) *Spiritual meditation*:—I. THE PROPER OBJECTS OF IT. The truths revealed in the Word of God, the doctrines and precepts, the invitations and warnings, the promises and threatenings of the Gospel, in all their hearings and relations to the temporal and eternal concerns of mankind, and more especially with reference to our own spiritual state. II. THE BENEFITS RESULTING FROM IT. It is by reflecting often and earnestly upon holy things that the affections become excited, and the heart filled with a sense of their unspeakable importance. III. THE BEST METHOD OF PROMOTING AND CONDUCTING IT. 1. Meditation should be regular and frequent. 2. To make our meditations profitable, we should pray and strive to be enabled to conduct them with holy and devout affections. 3. We should cultivate all the powers of the spiritual understanding, and all the graces of the renewed heart. 4. We should learn to reflect upon the blessings treasured in the Gospel in connection with our own wants, and should endeavour so to ascertain the reality of our religious character as to feel that we are not uninterested spectators, but real inheritors of all that we survey. (*Anon.*) *On meditation as a means of grace*:—Meditation is much neglected. And perhaps to that change in the manners and habits of religious people, which has brought family instruction comparatively into disuse, is it to be attributed that meditation is so little practised. Owing to a variety of causes, the Christian has been drawn of late years more into public life; and time has been occupied in forwarding the spiritual good of others, which, in former days, would have been devoted to reading, meditation, and prayer. I. THE NATURE OF MEDITATION. Meditation may be set, and at regular times, or habitual and unprepared. And doubtless those Christians who are favoured with a contemplative habit of mind, have much enjoyment in its exercise, and find it very profitable. While engaged in the ordinary business of life, they can maintain the recollection of spiritual things in the mind. And where persons are so constituted as to possess, in a considerable degree, the power of abstracting themselves from other things, there is never a want of time, place, or subject for meditation. But meditation, in the usual sense of the word, means deep, close, and steady thinking:—retired and secret contemplation. It is not self-examination nor self-communion, though intimately, if not necessarily, connected with both. It is the settled, quiet, serious thinking over any point or subject;—ruminating upon it;—pondering it in the mind. It is in the beautiful language of the psalmist "musing": "I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Thy works; I muse on the works of Thy hands." In considering meditation as subservient to the best interests of the soul, the subject on which it is employed must be spiritual; some of the

"things by which men live, and in which is the life of the Spirit." The state of our own souls,—our past lives,—the dealings of God with us,—and the various truths of God revealed to us in the Scripture, may well form subjects for profitable meditation. And by meditation on truths, we would understand the remembering, and retracing, and dwelling on such in our minds, as we have been previously taught, and made acquainted with, rather than the investigation of points which as yet we are but feeling after. II. THE USEFULNESS OF MEDITATION. 1. The practical influence of the truth can only be known and felt, when it is habitually present to the mind. A truth absent from the mind is for the time of no more influence than if it were altogether unknown, or disbelieved. Whatever be the direct tendency of any truth,—whatever be the effect which it is calculated to produce,—whether peace in the conscience,—joy in the heart,—mortification of sin,—the raising of the affections to high and heavenly things,—love to God and Christ,—the patient suffering and cheerful doing of the Lord's will,—it cannot have that tendency in us,—it cannot produce that effect in us, if it be as a forgotten thing. But it is not possible that any truth should be thus habitually present to us, unless it be more or less the subject of meditation. The mind does not otherwise become fully imbued with it: though we do understand it, and acknowledge it, and believe it; we are not leavened with it; it is not become a part and parcel of our own minds. If the acquisition of knowledge be compared to the reception of food, then meditation is as digestion, which alone converts it into the means of sustenance and vigour. It is thus also, in no slight measure, by the mind dwelling upon spiritual things, that men become more and more spiritual. The contemplation of the character of our Lord, as revealed in the Word of God, is the ordained means of conforming His people to His likeness (2 Cor. iii. 18). 2. Again, it is by meditation that we apply to our own cases the things which we hear and read. Great excitement, or impression and conviction, may be produced by preaching, and yet, unless recalled and revived by meditation, may very soon entirely pass away. Who has not been a wonder to himself, that he should remember so little of a discourse which, at the time, pleased and interested him; and yet in a week scarcely any traces are retained;—a dim, indistinct, general notion is all that remains floating in the memory. The simple reason is, because it was never digested; never by subsequent meditation made our own. Like a language imperfectly learned, it is soon forgotten. 3. Meditation is useful, and a means of grace, as it is a medium of holding communion with God. The psalmist said, "My meditation of Him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord." And though, doubtless, the love of meditation has, in some instances, degenerated into the error of those who make the whole of religion to consist in a meditative habit of mind—in quiet contemplation—still we must not forget that it is a means of grace, and that the people of God often enjoy much blessed intercourse with Him in thought, in solitude and in silence. 4. Meditation is also useful, as preparatory to other duties; for instance, prayer. We should consider beforehand our object in prayer, and what we intend to make the subject of our requests. III. HINTS ON MEDITATION. 1. It is difficult. Scarcely is any duty more repugnant to the natural man. He cannot bear to shut himself up to commune with his own spirit, and with God alone. And at this we need not be surprised; though it is not to our present purpose to show, that in his ignorance and unbelief, regarding God as his enemy, "he therefore likes not to retain God in his knowledge." But whence the difficulty to the Christian believer? Meditation is difficult to many persons, because it is with them almost an impossibility to think steadily, and intently, and continuously on any subject, for any length of time. They cannot control and concentrate their minds. They have thoughts, but they cannot think. The mind flies off, and will not be fixed down to one point. And besides, it is difficult to meditate on spiritual things, because of the sad reluctance of even the renewed mind, through the influence of remaining evil, to be occupied with what has more immediate reference to the soul, to God, and to eternity. Hence it is, that time, which was sincerely intended to be passed in meditation, is to our sorrow and shame not unfrequently frittered and trifled away in vagaries, vain and profitless. 2. As to the most suitable time for meditation, that depends altogether on circumstances. They who cannot command opportunities, will be enabled at those intervals, which even the busiest can create, to settle their thoughts in pious meditation; and in the wakeful hours of the night to revolve in their minds the words and the works of God. "I remember Thee on my bed, I meditate on Thee in the night-watches." Those, whose time is at their own dis-

posal, should choose that portion of it which, by experience, they find most advantageous. Bishop Hall and Mr. Baxter loved the tranquil evening-hour, the twilight stillness; and the latter speaks thus on the subject: "I have always found the fittest time for myself is the evening, from the sun-setting to the twilight." And, lastly, let us never forget, that if meditation is to be a means of grace, it must be made effectual to that end by the power of the Holy Spirit. In common with all other means, it is entirely dependent on His grace and blessing. (*Christian Observer*.) *Religious meditation*.—I. MEDITATION UPON GOD IS A HIGH AND ELEVATING MENTAL ACT, BECAUSE OF THE IMMENSITY OF THE OBJECT. "Behold the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee," said the awe-struck Solomon. Meditation upon that which is immense produces a lofty mood of mind. Says the thoughtful and moral Schiller: "The vision of unlimited distances and immeasurable heights, of the great ocean at his feet and the still greater ocean above him, draws man's spirit away from the narrow sphere of sense, and from the oppressive stricture of physical existence. A grander rule of measurement is held out to him in the simple majesty of nature, and environed by her great forms he can no longer endure a little and narrow way of thinking. Who knows how many a bright thought and heroic resolve, which the student's chamber or the academic hall never would have originated, has been started out by this lofty struggle of the soul with the great spirit of nature; who knows whether it is not in part to be ascribed to a less frequent intercourse with the grandeur of the material world, that the mind of man in cities more readily stoops to trifles, and is crippled and weak, while the mind of the dweller beneath the broad sky remains open and free as the firmament under which it lives." But if this is true of the immensity of nature, much more is it of the immensity of God. For the immensity of God is the immensity of mind. The infinity of God is an infinity of truth, of purity, of justice, of mercy, of love, and of glory. II. MEDITATION UPON GOD IS A SANCTIFYING ACT, BECAUSE GOD IS HOLY AND PERFECT IN HIS NATURE AND ATTRIBUTES. The meditation of which the psalmist speaks in the text is not that of the schoolman, or the poet, but of the devout, saintly, and adoring mind. That meditation upon God which is "sweeter than honey and the honey-comb" is not speculative, but practical. That which is speculative and scholastic springs from curiosity. That which is practical flows from love. All merely speculative thinking is inquisitive, acute, and wholly destitute of affection for the object. But all practical thinking is affectionate, sympathetic, and in harmony with the object. When I meditate upon God because I love Him, my reflection is practical. True meditation, thus proceeding from filial love and sympathy, brings the soul into intercourse and communion with its object. Such a soul shall know God as the natural man does not, and cannot. True meditation, then, being practical, and thereby bringing the subject of it into communion with the object of it, is of necessity sanctifying. For the object is Infinite Holiness and purity. It is He in whom is centred and gathered and crowded all possible perfections. And can our minds muse upon such a Being and not become purer and better? III. MEDITATION UPON GOD IS A BLESSED ACT OF THE MIND, BECAUSE GOD HIMSELF IS AN INFINITELY BLESSED BEING, AND COMMUNICATES OF HIS FULLNESS OF JOY TO ALL WHO CONTEMPLATE IT. Mere thinking, in and of itself, is not sufficient to secure happiness. Everything depends upon the quality of the thought, and this again upon the nature of the object upon which it is expended. There are various kinds and degrees of mental enjoyment, each produced by a particular species of mental reflection; but there is no thinking that gives rest and satisfaction and joy to the soul, but thinking upon the glorious and blessed God. There is a strange unearthly joy, when a pure and spiritual mind is granted a clear view of the Divine perfections. It rejoices with a joy unspeakable and full of glorying. All finite beauty, all created glory, is but a shadow in comparison. (*G. T. Shedd, D.D.*) *Meditation on God*.—I. THE EXALTED, INCOMPREHENSIBLE NATURE OF HIM WHO IS THE OBJECT OF OUR MEDITATION. 1. The source of being, the author and parent of all that exists. If the acts of almighty power should produce reverence and awe—if the displays of unerring wisdom should excite admiration and esteem—if the exertions of unbounded goodness should command gratitude and love—devout meditation on the Source of being should be attended with feelings of pure delight. 2. The source of all moral excellence. What beauty is, in material objects, moral excellence is, among rational beings: it is that which renders them at all attractive, and to the reflecting, and cultivated mind, is the direct object of esteem and love. 3. Let us recollect that these excellencies exist

in One with whom we are most intimately connected, and that they are all continually exercised in our belief. 4. In surveying the circumstances of ourselves or others, we cannot shut our eyes on the painful and trying situations in which, by the providence of God, men may at times be placed. But this presents another most amiable view of the Supreme Being as attending to the different circumstances of His creatures, and accommodating His dealings to their respective characters, and situations. 5. There is yet another character in which He appears, that claims our most attentive regards, and which must call up our most ardent affections. And this is—As the Saviour of His offending and wretched creatures. Doomed to death, and destined to return to dust, He is to raise us from the grave, free us from all imperfections, place us beyond the reach of sorrow or the possibility of suffering, enlarge our powers, extend our knowledge, perfect our characters, introduce us into the society of angels, and crown all His gifts with everlasting life. II. IN ALL THESE CHARACTERS OUR MEDITATION OF HIM SHOULD DELIGHT THE SOUL; because all that is great, and excellent, and glorious, and good, and attractive, passes before our minds in contemplating the character, the works, the ways, and the purposes of God; objects, the contemplation of which, not only gives scope for the exercise of its noblest powers, but excites all the most pleasing affections of the soul; reverence, esteem, love, gratitude, faith and hope. (*R. Bogg, D.D.*) *Meditation on God, the pleasure of a saint*.—I. How we SHOULD MEDITATE ON GOD. 1. We should meditate upon the perfections of God: His immensity and eternity, to fill us with fear and reverence; His power, as our protection and defence; His wisdom, to fill us with praise and admiration; His holiness, to excite us to imitate Him, and to abhor sin; His truth, to encourage our belief in His promises; His justice, to make us dread being obnoxious to His wrath, and to magnify His judgments to ourselves and others; His goodness, which is the sweetest theme to employ our thoughts upon, it being His most amiable perfection. Well might David say (Ps. xlviii. 9). 2. Upon His works. (1) His works of creation. Thus we read: "The works of the Lord are great," etc. (Ps. cxi. 2; viii. 3; Job xxxvi. 24, 25). (2) His works of providence. How wisely and graciously God governs, preserves, and provides for His creatures, and upholds the world He has formed, and His special providences towards ourselves, and keep a memorial of them! (3) The work of redemption. Herein the perfections of God are wonderfully displayed. 3. Upon His Word. Christ requires it (John v. 39). In this is the godly man's delight (Ps. cxix. 11, 92). Moses recommended it to the children of Israel (Deut. xi. 18; vi. 6, 7). The Word of God should dwell in us richly: it should be often in our hands, but oftener in our hearts. 4. Upon the future glory of God. If heaven were more in our thoughts, we should lead a more heavenly life. II. AT WHAT SPECIAL TIMES WE SHOULD MEDITATE ON GOD. He desires to be in all our thoughts, and the continual companion of our minds, and the delight of our souls. But we should meditate upon Him more especially—1. In our seasons of private retirement: then the mind enjoys itself most, and then it may enjoy God most (Gen. xxiv. 63). 2. In the time of trouble and affliction (Jonah ii. 7; Hos. v. 15). This is a time when we can think more impartially of God, of the things that are above, and of the true interest of our souls. On a bed of sickness, it gives delight and refreshment, strengthens the weak heart, and sweetens the bitterest pains. 3. By night on our beds (Ps. xlii. 8; lxiii. 6). Paul and Silas (Acts xvi. 25). We should endeavour to close our eyes in the love of God, and in peace with Him, that our slumbers may be sweet. III. THE HAPPINESS ARISING FROM SUCH MEDITATIONS. The soul is insensibly warmed with love to God, while it views Him, and runs over his adorable perfections. The thoughts of His power establish and strengthen him. The thoughts of His wisdom resign him to all His providences. And the thought of His eternal love and goodness fill him with triumph in hope and joy. The more we are with God, the more shall we have of God and of His image in us. Moses came down from the mount with a heavenly brightness on his countenance. Holy meditation will prepare our hearts for every duty and ordinance. Finally, it will help us to live above the world, and be a means for fitting us for death and eternity. (*T. Hannam.*) *David's contemplation*.—I. THE PERFORMANCE IMPLIED—Divine meditation. God's servants are much employed and taken up in the thought of God, in holy and Divine meditation. Reasons—1. The gracious and heavenly frame and temper of a Christian soul, being sanctified and renewed by grace. 2. The servants of God are much in thoughts and meditations of Him, because as their hearts are made like unto Him, so (which also follows thereupon) fastened

upon Him. 3. They are much employed in Divine exercises, prayer, reading and hearing the Word, etc.; and these performances suggest holy thoughts and meditations. 4. From the Spirit of God dwelling in them. II. THE QUALIFICATIONS EXPRESSED—pleasantness or sweetness. 1. The attributes of God, there's a great deal of delight in thinking upon them in their several kinds. (1) The power of God, how much sweetness is there in that to a Christian that shall seriously consider it and think upon it, that God is almighty, and all-sufficient, and can do whatsoever He pleases both in heaven and earth, as the Scripture represents Him. (2) The goodness and mercy of God, there's a great deal of sweetness in that also to be sucked out by us in meditation, that the Lord is gracious, and merciful, and long-suffering, and pitiful; there is very much contentment in it. (3) The wisdom of God, to meditate on that also, that He is great in counsel, etc., and the Scripture proclaims Him, that He can foresee all events, and discern all hearts, and search into the secret corners of the soul. (4) The truth and faithfulness of God, the God that keeps covenant and mercy, that is true to all His promises, and that performs whatever He undertakes. 2. The Word of God which is a part of Himself, the meditation on that is sweet also. If we look into Scripture we shall find variety of gracious intimations suited to particular conditions; now, these cannot but be very comfortable to those that are in them, in sickness, in poverty, in captivity, in temptation, and the like, and we cannot better provide for our own comfort, and contentment in them, than by thinking and meditating upon them in our own minds; and where we are not furnished with particulars, yet at least to close with the generals, which have a miraculous sweetness in them also: I mean such promises as are made to God's children at large; that God will give His Spirit to them that ask it. That no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly, that He will never leave them, nor forsake them. That all things shall work together for good to them that love Him. 3. The works of God, the meditation on them also, it is very sweet, and that in all kinds. (1) His works of creation, to consider of them, as they are all very good and beautiful considered in their nature and kind, so the contemplation on them is also remarkable (Ps. viii. 1, etc.). (2) The works of Providence, how sweet it is to meditate on these also, to reflect upon all ages, and to consider what great things God has done for His Church and people in them. What mercies He has bestowed upon them, what deliverances He has wrought for them; and that also sometimes after what a strange and miraculous manner: it is very delightful to think of it. (3) The works of redemption, how sweet is it likewise to meditate on these: to meditate upon God in Christ (2 Cor. v. 18). This is the sweet meditation of all, and without which we cannot meditate upon God without any true comfort or contentment. III. THE QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED. 1. A savouriness and heavenliness of spirit, as it is this which must put men upon such meditations, so it is this only which must make them relish and take delight in them. 2. A special love to God. 3. A persuasion of the love of God to him. 4. A special sense of a man's own wants. (*T. Horton, D.D.*). *The sweetness of meditation on God:*—The Hebrew word which is here used signifies three things especially, and each of them very considerable of us. First, meditation; secondly, prayer; thirdly, discourse. According to the former notion, it signifies the sweetness which is in Divine and spiritual contemplation, and the musing on heavenly matters; according to the second notion, it signifies the sweetness which is in Divine and spiritual communion and converse with God in prayer. According to the third notion, it signifies the sweetness which is in holy and religious conference, and the speaking of God one to another. All of them very useful and profitable duties, and such as are to be practised by us. I. First, take it in the first sense: MEDITATION ON GOD IS SWEET. And the sweetness of it should stir us up to the putting of it in practice. We have very great cause to be careful what we meditate and pitch upon in our thoughts, which are of great importance to us, and that as they are a very great discovery of the frame and temper of our hearts. There's nothing which does more show what men like, than their meditations. Flittering and transitory thoughts, which do pass through the mind, but do not stick, they are not such an infallible discovery, because they may not have that tincture and impression of the soul upon them. But meditations they have much of the will in them, and are carried with more deliberation attending upon them. And therefore it concerns us to look to them, and to see what they be in us; and of this nature that we now speak of, we should cherish in ourselves as much as may be these holy and heavenly meditations which

are of God, and things belonging to Him, as being such as He takes special notice and observation of in us (1 Tim. iv. 13, 14). First, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, and then meditate upon these things. And so much of the first notion of this word, which is here used in the text, as it denotes Divine contemplation, and meditation on the things of God, there's a great deal of sweetness in this. II. The second is, as it denotes, CONVERSE AND COMMUNION WITH GOD IN PRAYER. There's no friends that have such mutual complacency and contentment in one another's society as God and His servants have in one another; it is pleasing to them to think of God, but to speak to Him, and He to them is a great deal more comfortable; when the heart opens itself at any time to God, and He again returns upon it, there's most unspeakable contentment in it. III. The third notion of this word in this text is DISCOURSE, which refers to the communion of saints, and the converse of Christians one with another. Christians find a great deal of contentment in holy and religious communication; not only when they think upon Him within themselves, which is meditation, not only when they speak unto Him, which is done in prayer, but also when they speak of Him, and about Him in converse, and Christian discourse. (*Ibid.*) *Meditation on God*.—I. A VERY PROFITABLE EXERCISE—MEDITATION. Do not imagine that the meditative man is necessarily lazy; contrariwise, he lays the best foundation for useful works. He is not the best student who reads the most books, but he who meditates the most upon them! he shall not learn most of divinity who hears the greatest number of sermons, but he who meditates the most devoutly upon what he does hear; nor shall he be so profound a scholar who takes down ponderous volumes one after the other, as he who, reading little by little, precept upon precept, and line upon line, digests what he reads, and assimilates each sentiment to his heart by meditation,—receiving the word first into his understanding, and afterwards receiving the spirit of it into his own soul. 1. Meditation is the couch of the soul, the rest of the spirit. 2. Meditation is the machine in which the raw material of knowledge is converted to the best uses. 3. Meditation is to the soul what oil was to the body of the wrestlers. Who are the authors to write your books, and keep up the constant supply of literature? They are meditative men. They keep their bones supple and their limbs fit for exercise by continually bathing themselves in the oil of meditation. How important, therefore, is meditation as a mental exercise, to have our minds in constant readiness for any service! II. A VERY PRECIOUS SUBJECT. "My meditation of Him shall be sweet." To whom does that word "Him" refer? I suppose it may refer to all the three Persons of the glorious Trinity: "My meditation upon Jehovah shall be sweet." And, verily, if you sit down to meditate upon God the Father, and muse upon His sovereign, immutable, unchangeable love towards His elect people,—if you think of God the Father as the great Author and Originator of the plan of salvation,—if you think of Him as the mighty Being who, by two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for Him to lie, hath given us strong consolation who have fled for refuge to Christ Jesus,—if you look to Him as the Giver of His only-begotten Son, and who, for the sake of that Son, His best gift, will, with Him also, freely give us all things,—if you consider Him as having ratified the covenant, and pledged Himself ultimately to complete all His stipulations, in the ingathering of every chosen, ransomed soul, you will perceive that there is enough to engross your meditation for ever, even were your attention limited to the manifestation of the Father's love. Or, if you choose to do so, you may meditate upon God the Holy Spirit. Consider His marvellous operations on your own heart,—how He quickened it when you were dead in trespasses and sins,—how He brought you nigh to Jesus when you were a lost sheep, wandering far from the fold,—how He called you, with such a mighty efficacy,—how He drew you with the bands of love which would not let you go. But I prefer rather to confine this word "Him" to the person of our adorable Saviour: "My meditation of Him shall be sweet." Ah! if it be possible that the meditation upon one Person of the Trinity can excel the meditation upon another, it is meditation upon Jesus Christ. Jesus may be compared to some of those lenses which you may take up, and hold in one way, and you see one light; you hold them in another way, and you see another light; and whichever way you turn them, you will always see some precious sparkling of light, and some new colours starting up to your view. Ah! take Jesus for the theme of your meditation, sit down and consider Him, think of His relation to your own soul, and you will never get to the end of that one subject. III. A VERY BLESSED RESULT. "My meditation of Him shall be sweet." What a mercy that

there is something sweet in this world for us! We need it, I am sure; for, as for most other things in the world, they are very, very bitter. "My meditation of Him shall be sweet;" so sweet, that all the other bitters are quite swallowed up in its sweetness. Have I not seen the widow, when her husband has been called away, and he who was her strength, the stay and sustenance of her life, has been laid in the grave,—have I not seen her hold up her hands, and say, "Ah! though he is gone, still my Maker is my Husband; 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away;' blessed be His holy name"? What was the reason of her patient submission to the will of God? Because she had a sweet meditation to neutralize the bitterness of her reflections. And do I not remember, even now, seeing a man, whose property had been washed away by the tide, and whose lands had been swallowed up, and become quicksands, instead of being any longer profitable to him? Beggared and bankrupt, with streaming eyes, he held up his hands, and repeated Habakkuk's words: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom," etc. Was it not because his meditation on Christ was so sweet, that it absorbed the bitterness of his trouble? And oh! how many, when they have come to the dark waters of death, have found that surely their bitterness was past, for they perceived that death was swallowed up in victory, through their meditation upon Jesus Christ! (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The sweet and the sweetener*.—I. First let us talk about *THE SWEET*: "My meditation of Him shall be sweet." "Of Him"—that is, of the Well-beloved of the Father, of the Well-beloved of the Church, of the Well-beloved of my own soul; of Him who loved me, in whose blood I have washed my robes, and made them white;—it is meditation "of Him" that is sweet; not merely of doctrine about Him, but of Him, of Himself; "my meditation of Him"—not merely of His offices, and His work, and all that concerns Him, but of His own dear self. There lies the sweetness; and the closer we come to His blessed person, the more truly we have approached the very centre of bliss. But let me dwell a minute on that first word: "My." Not another man's meditation, which is afterwards related to me, but my own meditation of Him shall be sweet. Make meditation of Christ to be your own personal act and deed; grasp Him for yourself, and hold Him by the feet. II. Now let us turn to the second part of the subject, *THE SWEET AS A SWEETENER*: "My meditation of Him shall be sweet." That is to say, first, it shall sweeten all my other sweetnesses. If thou hast honey, and thy hands are full of it, be cautious how thou eatest of it, for thou mayest eat honey till thou art sick of it; but if thou hast a great store of honey, put something sweeter than honey with it, and then it will not harm thee. I mean, if God has given thee joy in thy youth, if thou art prospered in business, if thy house is full of happiness, if thy children sing about thy knee, if thou hast health and wealth, and thy spirit danceth with joy, all this by itself may curdle and spoil. Add to it a sweet meditation of thy Lord, and all will be well; for it is safe to enjoy temporal things when we still more enjoy eternal things. If thou wilt put Christ upon the throne, to rule over these good things of thine, then all shall be well. But I need not say much about this point, because, at least to some of us, our very sweet days are not very long or very many. The comfort is, that this sweetness can sweeten all our bitters. There was never yet a bitter in the cup of life but what a meditation upon Christ would overcome that bitterness, and turn it into sweetness. If thou art poor, get thee to Him who had not where to lay His head, and thou wilt even seem to be rich as thou comest back to thy place in the world. Hast thou been despised and rejected? Do but look on Him on whom men spat, whom they cast out, saying that it was not fit that He should live, and you will feel as if you never had true honour except when you were, for Christ's sake, despised and dishonoured. You will almost feel as if it was too great an honour for you to have been contemned for His dear sake, who bore the shame and the spitting and the cruel cross for your sake. Yes, the best sweetener of all temporal troubles is a meditation upon Christ Jesus our Lord. One thought more. Our text might be read thus, "My meditation shall be sweet to Him." We are going to uncover the table of communion directly; you will have nothing to think of but the body and the blood of Him by whose death you live. That meditation will, I trust, be very sweet to you; but this fact ought to help to make it so, that it will be "sweet to Him." Jesus loves you to love Him, and he loves you to think of Him. (*Ibid.*) *Meditation*.—There are reflective moments in all lives, but set times for meditation are not as frequent as they might be. I. *MEDITATION IN GENERAL*. It is not the pressing act of mind, as when pursuing knowledge, or seeking to unravel some mystery, but the mind,

in its own seclusion, dwelling calmly and seriously on matters affecting life and death. 1. *Retrospect.* We have a wonderful grasp of the past in spite of the ravages of time. Sometimes meditation produces a profounder impression than the event itself. The lesson which this teaches is our sense of responsibility. We cannot wipe out the past. Inasmuch as there is a possibility of the present becoming past, care should be taken that its memories shall be sweet. 2. *Intro-spect.* To dwell on things around us in a cool moment is of great value to life. Men who live by rushes often make mistakes. The busiest man would facilitate his work by reflection on the nature of things immediately affecting life. The true estimate comes after a calm examination. 3. *Prospect.* In nature the future is the sequence of the present,—summer follows winter. Human life is built on the same plan, therefore the acts of to-day ought to be considered in relation to the morrow. II. *RELIGIOUS MEDITATION IN PARTICULAR.* God can only be known to us through His works. Certain portions of the work are beautiful, and they lead us to a contemplation of God, as the consummation of every attraction. Some translate the words,—“My meditation shall be acceptable to Him.” 1. When centred upon Himself. It is not an uncommon thing that children who have left home, after a while forgetting to write. After the lapse of years they have need to write, and how acceptable to the parents to hear from them. The Divine Father delights to see the wandering heart coming home again. To think upon, when reconciled to Him, is the sweetest thought that can enter the human breast. “Call upon Me, and I will answer thee.” 2. When we think according to His own will. Meditation may take a wrong turn, and dwell upon matters in the wrong spirit. Many people brood over their cares, and make their lives miserable. The train of thought which brings sweetness to the breast is the fact that by every step He draws us nearer to Himself. The nearer the fountain the clearer the water. The highest joy of the soul is communion with God. 3. When our meditation ends in a closer walk with Himself. There can be no virtue in recalling matters, or causing the mind to dwell on objects which have neither an intrinsic nor a relational value. Let us meditate upon one Jesus Christ—our Prophet, Priest, and King. The theme is endless. Nothing can surpass the beauty of the Rose of Sharon. In eternity the soul shall dwell on the glory of His person, and join in the anthem of His praise. (*Weekly Pulpit.*) *Christian meditation*:—1. Let there be greater solicitude cherished, so to meditate on the presence of Christ as to make us conscious that we are with Him. Then the thought of His presence will be connected with a subduing power and friendly influence. 2. To meditate, and so to meditate on the character of the Shepherd of Israel, until we are sensible that He is leading us in the paths of righteousness, for His name's sake. To protect and sustain, are views of Him eminently calculated to impart the feelings of safety and supply. 3. Meditate, and so meditate on the power of subduing grace, until it is felt that the dominion of sin is becoming increasingly weak. 4. Meditate, and so meditate on the ability and qualifications of Christ as the great Teacher, until the soul feels at home with His instructions. What a teacher, and what instructions! One who is infinite in knowledge teaching the ignorant. How patient and compassionate is the great and loving Instructor! How ready to open the understanding and the heart! 5. Meditate, and so meditate on the love of Christ until that love is felt in the heart,—felt as a heavenly impulse bearing the soul onward and upwards,—felt in its hallowed and stirring emotions, as a heavenly fire kindled upon the altar of the broken and contrite heart, and burning there night and day. 6. Meditate, and so meditate on the promised Spirit of Christ, that there may be now the earnest of what is to come. Meditation on the work and office of the Spirit of Christ, is to find that there has been not only a work finished on Calvary, but that there is a work also going on in the believing heart. It is to know that there is not only wealth and light in Him, but to have that wealth and light within. (*Anon.*) *Meditation on God a delight*:—Foster, the essayist's natural tendency to solitary meditation never showed itself more strikingly than in his last hours. Aware of the near approach of death, he requested to be left entirely alone, and was found, shortly after he had expired, in a composed and contemplative attitude, as if he had thought his way to the mysteries of another world. *I will be glad in the Lord.*—*The province of the will in Christian experience*:—The Christian, in common with the great majority of men, recognizes the force of the will in the realm of circumstances. We cannot say, I will be rich, I will be great, I will be successful—this would be presumptuous and vain; yet in

the realm of circumstances we allow the reality and significance of willing. We can hope to be little or to do little without firm purpose and resolution. So far as character is concerned, the Christian maintains the sovereignty of the will. In fierce and bitter temptation we are bound to interpose our resolution and keep ourselves pure. The sanctified will is equivalent to all practical righteousness. But as Christians we do not sufficiently recognize the force of will in regulating the soul's moods. We sit down as perfectly helpless, and permit sentiments of coldness, fear, and melancholy to rule us in the most despotic fashion. "I will be glad in the Lord." Often we resign ourselves to sadness and gloom; we feel that to fight with melancholy is to smite with a sword the fluid air. But the psalmist thought otherwise: he felt that he could command the sunshine. We too may vanquish these moods of the night and walk in the day. We acknowledge, as I say, the dominion of the will in all questions of conduct; we have power to speak what is true, to do what is kind, to act in consistency with wisdom and righteousness. But we must not forget that there is a morality of feeling as well as of conduct. In a true sense coldness of heart is a sin equally with a lapse in action, fear is a sin as well as dishonesty, and sadness is a sin as well as selfishness. The will has a wider dominion than we sometimes think, and we are responsible for our moods as well as for our doings. 1. To will aright gives the mind the right attitude. How important this is! We fail to secure various blessings because we have not the proper attitude and bias of soul. To will aright is to put the soul in position to see great truths, to receive precious gifts. It is part of the preparation of the heart, without which we cannot receive the answer of the tongue. 2. To will aright fixes the mind on the right objects. In coldness think of God's love and beauty; in fear sing of His faithfulness; in every sorrow remember the word of grace strong as that which built the skies, the hope of glory which shall not make us ashamed. Your miserable moods will vanish then as ghosts before the morning lights. 3. To will aright gives to the mind the right impetus. The will is a cause, a master cause. What amazing vigour a resolute volition shoots through the whole of Christian life and experience! (IV. L. Watkinson.)

Ver. 35. **O my soul.**—*The soul* (to children):—I. **YOU HAVE A SOUL.** A stone can be seen and felt, weighed and measured; but it has no life. A flower is superior to a stone, because it has a certain kind of life. A dog is more valuable than a flower, because he possesses a higher form of life. He has all the five senses which you have. He has also instinct and sagacity, by which he does a great many wonderful things. Now, your bodies are not so hard as the stone; they are not so beautiful as the flower; and there is no little boy here who could run as swiftly as the dog. Nevertheless, you are far more valuable than the stone, the flowers, and the dog; yea, you rise above everything that is material, vegetable, and animal, because you have souls within your bodies. It is your duty to care for both. Try to preserve your bodies from everything that would injure them. Be very anxious about the salvation of your soul. II. **YOUR SOUL IS FULL OF LIFE.** This life is not to be compared to that which is either in the flowers or in the animals; it does not depend for its continuance, as they do, upon such things as light and heat, wind and rain. The soul, under the blessing of God, moves itself, and the body too in which it dwells. It is your souls which cause your eyes to see, your ears to hear, your tongues to speak, your hands to work, and your feet to walk. Now, you all know that everything in which there is life requires food. Our bodies could not live unless they were nourished from day to day. As it is with all these things, so is it with the soul. Unless it is strengthened with food it must become exceedingly weak. You also know that the same kind of food will not suit everything in which there is life. What kind of food, then, does the soul require? The truth as it is in Jesus, and the truth about Jesus, is the food for the soul. III. **YOUR SOUL IS DISTINCT FROM AND INDEPENDENT OF YOUR BODY.** When the Spaniards went first among the Indians they were on horses. And what do you suppose the poor, ignorant Indians thought? They thought that there was no difference between the horse and the rider, but that both were the same person. Even so, there are many men who have the conviction that there is not any distinction between the soul and the body. They believe that both are composed of the same material, and that both are buried in the same grave. This is a dangerous error. You have all heard of the telescope. The astronomer looks through it to the sun, the moon, and the stars.

If the telescope were taken from the astronomer and destroyed he would no doubt be grieved, but that would not destroy him. Well, the body is the telescope through which the soul looks out upon men and things. It is, as Dr. Watts has said, "the harp of a thousand strings, which keeps in tune so long." It is, as Eliphaz said many years ago, the house in which the soul lives. When death comes, and takes away the beauty, the strength, and the life of the body, that does not interfere with the soul. During that hour the soul goes away, like the Arab from his tent, or the bird from the cage, to the place in eternity for which it has been prepared. **IV. YOUR SOUL HAS A NUMBER OF WONDERFUL POWERS.** 1. There is the understanding. As it is with the eyes of the body that we see the things by which we are surrounded, so it is with the understanding that we perceive truth and error. The two disciples who were walking towards Emmaus with Jesus had their understandings opened by Him. This enabled them to comprehend the meaning of the Scriptures as they had never done before. If you pray to Jesus for the same blessing, He will grant it, for—"Ask and ye shall receive." 2. There is the judgment. As it is with the hand that the farmer sometimes separates the chaff from the wheat, so it is by the judgment that we distinguish right from wrong. A good judgment is most invaluable in a world such as this is. In order to secure it, be close observers of all you see and hear; think for yourselves upon every subject which comes before you, and keep the company of those who are older and wiser than yourselves. 3. There is the memory. We might compare it to a museum, for we have hung up around it the pictures of the places we have seen and admired, and the portraits of the persons we have known and loved. We might also compare it to a book, for we write upon it the figures and the names, the facts and the truths, which we wish to retain. Trust your memories as much as possible. By this means you will strengthen them, and in after years they will be to you faithful and useful servants. 4. There are the affections. You have seen the ivy. It is deeply rooted in the soil; it entwines itself around the old tree or the old cottage, and adds considerably to their beauty. Your affections resemble the ivy. With these you can grasp persons, places, and books. "Set your affections on things above." Love to be truthful, honest, benevolent, and pure, in thought, word, and deed. 5. There is the conscience. A judge in a court of law sits calmly upon the bench. He watches all that is done, he listens to all that is said, and then he pronounces the verdict either by setting the accused person free, or by sending him to prison for a certain time. Conscience is very much like the judge. It observes all your thoughts, words, and actions; and while it smiles upon the good, it frowns upon the bad. Listen to the voice of your conscience. It is a good guide; keep on good terms with your conscience by hating every wrong thing, and only doing that which is right. This will contribute largely to your peace of mind. 6. There is the will. The will is the commander-in-chief, both of the body and the soul. Learn to obey your parents cheerfully, promptly, and continuously. This will prepare you to obey others with pleasure who shall be over you when you go out into life. **V. YOUR SOUL WILL NEVER DIE.** Abel's soul is still living, and so is Cain's. There was a time when your souls were not in existence, but the time will never come when they shall cease to be. Prepare, therefore, to meet God, by giving your hearts and lives to Christ, that you may be perfectly happy in eternity. **VI. WHEN YOUR SOUL LEAVES THE BODY AT DEATH, IT WILL GO TO SEE JESUS THE JUDGE.** Time does not dim the eyes of the soul, affliction does not touch them, and over them death will have no power. How soon after death will you see Jesus? In a very short time. He said to the penitent thief upon the Cross, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." (*A. McAulane, D.D.*)

PSALM CV.

VER. 1. Make known His deeds among the people.—*God in Jewish history, an object of worship.*—**I. GRATITUDE FOR HIS MERCY** is demanded. 1. The greatness of His favours. 2. The disinterestedness of His motives. **II. THE CELEBRATION OF HIS WORKS** is demanded (ver. 2). 1. Publicly. 2. Rapturously. **III. DELIGHT**

IN HIM is demanded (ver. 3). If a noble son rejoices in his father because of the nobility of his character, the greatness of his influence, the superiority of his attainments, natural and acquired, the greatness of his resources, how much more should a true man delight in the Infinite Father, the Fountain of all goodness. IV. PURSUIT OF HIM is demanded (ver. 4). 1. For this we were made. 2. This alone is our happiness. V. THE REMEMBRANCE OF HIM is demanded (ver. 5). There are here two subjects for memory. 1. God's wonderful works for man. 2. God's wonderful utterances to man. God has spoken to humanity many things, many times, in many lands—wonderful thought! These words should be remembered by all men. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 3. **Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.**—*Christian joy:*—**I. WHO ARE TO REJOICE?** Only those who seek the Lord. When are you to seek? Now. Where are you to seek? In His Word, His promises, His ordinances. Remember, the real seeking of God is when you are drawn by the Holy Ghost. **II. THE GROUNDS UPON WHICH BELIEVERS WHO THUS SEEK, AND YET HAVE NOT ALTOGETHER FOUND, CHRISTIAN JOY AND REST, MAY UNDOUBTEDLY REJOICE.** Not only is there the certainty of success in the event, but that success implies eternal life. **III. WHY WE ARE BOUND TO MAKE IT A MATTER OF CONSCIENCE THAT WE SHOULD REJOICE IN THE LORD.** 1. The honour of God Himself is concerned in it. 2. The extension of the Redeemer's Kingdom requires it. 3. Your own personal usefulness, strength, and power to resist evil, is concerned (Neh. viii. 10). **IV. BUT THERE ARE HINDRANCES TO THIS JOY.** 1. The great hindrance is, unbelief in the real provisions made in the Gospel of Christ. What is the first idea which crosses the mind of the sinner when he is told that he will have perfect joy? The first idea that arises in his heart is, the news is too good to be true. What is that? It leads to nothing more nor less than that there is unbelief in the promises of the Father. Too good to be true! What does St. John think of this? He who believes this makes God a liar! Too good to be true! It was the very news He was sent to proclaim; it was the good tidings of salvation, and nothing short of salvation, Christ published. Beware, then, of unbelief, for it is a hindrance to all joy. 2. Again, you cannot have joy and indulge in your own sins. Joy in the Lord and joy in the devil cannot go on together. If you love your sin, you hate God. (*Bp. M. Villiers.*)

Vers. 4-6. **Seek the Lord and His strength: seek His face evermore.**—*Public recognition of God:*—**I.** After glorious success abroad, and in the most desirable affluence and security at home, it is the duty both of prince and people to have then a particular regard to the public worship of God established amongst them, and to attend it with a religious and devout disposition of soul. This the Holy Spirit demands from us by the pen of David, requiring us to exhort and encourage one another in our public assemblies for the worship of God; to "Seek the Lord and His strength." **II.** A solemn commemoration of God's particular mercies to a nation He has chosen so to bless by distinguishing favours is a proper subject for such religious and acceptable service: "Remember His marvellous works," etc. **III.** In all such public acts of worship, we are each of us to consider ourselves in our public capacity and national relation, as being closely united to our sovereign, to our superiors, equals, and inferiors, who are our contemporaries, yes, and with our ancestors and posterity too, so as to sustain but one single person in all God's providential dealings with us. We are not in these holy and solemn gratulations to contract our minds, nor confine our prospect to the present personal satisfactions and benefits we reap from such exercises of our faith, and gratitude, and adoration; but we are to enlarge our thoughts, and extend our view backward and forward, whilst we celebrate the praises of God, the common Lord, Deliverer, Benefactor, and Father of us all. Thus the psalmist carries the thoughts of the then worshippers of God, in his new tabernacle, to a contemplation of His lovingkindness which had been ever of old, even as far backward as to the ages of Abraham and Jacob. Do this, "O ye seed of Abraham His servant," etc. (*IV. Needham, B.D.*) *The face of God:*—This hymn is the first recorded strain of the psalmody of public worship. On the day when the ark was brought to its tent in the city of David, "David delivered first this psalm to thank the Lord." It was sung in the presence of this sacred object, which was the ancient symbol of the presence of God. To those who heard it that day our text explained what the ark meant. "Seek the manifestation of your God, who shines upon you from over its mercy-

seat. Magnify and seek His awful power, of which you are reminded by this ark of His strength. And constantly meet Him around this central depository of the covenant between your God and His congregation." The ancient symbol is gone, being done away in Christ. Those days have come concerning which Jeremiah predicted, "They shall say no more, the ark of the covenant of the Lord." We must remember every one of these memorials; for, though they are gone, they eternally teach their lessons. The Epistle to the Hebrews shows us this. It takes us into the old temple to teach us the mysteries of the new.

I. THE GOD WHOM WE WORSHIP BIDS US SEEK HIS FACE. The word is one which runs through the entire Scripture as a most attractive figure. But it is more than a figure, and suggests to our thought a most blessed reality. First, we cannot help perceiving that by such a phrase as this we are taught to approach a personal Being, supreme over all His creatures, and eternally separated from them by His essence, yet having something in Himself that is common to them and to Him. He is an individual Spirit to whom our spirits may draw near. He asks us as persons to come to Him a Person. His ways indeed are not as our ways; His thoughts are not as our thoughts: but only because they are higher and nobler than ours. There is a sense in which the same things are true in us and in Him. The Bible does not use the abstract term personality or person with reference to the Deity; but it everywhere means this. God can say Thou to me, and I can say Thou to Him. No language could more touchingly declare this than "Seek His face," which is literally, "Visit ye your God!" The face is the expression of our individual self. Now, there are two great errors under which the world has groaned in all ages, which are swept away by this simple testimony. A certain philosophy has always found it impossible to understand how the Infinite Essence can be distinct from the creature. Almost from the dawn of religious thought a system has been constructed, called Pantheism, which makes everything God and God everything: without a personal Face towards the creature; for He and the creature, or what we call the creature, are one. He is not a Person Himself, though He gives birth to millions of personalities, which appear for a little while, and then vanish back into His bosom, the infinite abyss of being. How glorious is the religion of the Bible in contrast! "In Him we live, and move, and have our being;" but only as "His offspring," who are children invited to seek their Father, and live in Him. An opposite error, or the same error under another form, has multiplied the universal Creator and Upholder of the universe into ten thousand manifestations: "gods many and lords many." This has always been a kind of compromise between Pantheism and the doctrine of a Supreme First Cause. It gropes after one great being behind all the rest, but makes almost every force in nature a lesser god bringing that great abstraction near. The Christian worship is an eternal protest against these most destructive errors. We have inherited from Moses and the prophets the doctrine that there is one God. This is the foundation of all the devotions of this house. We visit every time we come up to it a Personal God, one Supreme Being, who summons us to His presence. He is afar off: filling and transcending all space, so that the heaven beyond the visible heavens cannot contain Him. But He is also nigh at hand: He is in all the infinity of His being present in every place, and in all His Godhead present here. Yet, though we approach one God, whose name is One, there is a Trinity of sacred Persons in that unity. And the term we consider veiled a mystery which is now fully manifested. The face of God is the Incarnate Redeemer, and its manifestation is by the Holy Ghost. This was veiled and typified by the ark of the covenant, a covenant not for Israel only, but for all flesh. The term itself implies a mediator. Now Moses was not that mediator, nor was Aaron. It was the Son of God made man in the fulness of time. It pleased God to set forth that truth under types and shadows while the ancient temple remained. Approaching from without none could behold the place of the ark without sweeping the altar of sacrifice. Their inseparable union signified that God dwelt among His people only because the great sacrifice had opened the way to Him: had enabled Him to return to man and man to return to Him. The ancient secret is fully revealed now. Our Lord Himself expressly tells us, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." The Person of Jesus through whom we approach is the very face of God to whom we approach. "God," says St. Paul, "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The whole system of mediation is now fully disclosed. But it was in

virtue from the beginning. The face of God made man was marred for the suffering of death for us. It then became resplendent in glory, and is now the very outbeaming of the reconciled Godhead. But that sacred face is withdrawn: we could not now behold it and live. A glimpse of it has a few times been seen as it were to assure us of its glorification. We worship God in the Spirit while we rejoice and are glad in the face of Jesus. We approach not Christ in the flesh: His Person is glorified, and we must seek it and find it by the Holy Ghost. This revelation is to all and to each. We come up together to see the face of our God, but every one of us must enjoy the privilege in order to this common enjoyment. Then seek now your privilege; lift up your heart for your own blessing. "Cause Thy face to shine upon us and we shall be saved." We proclaim in the name of God, "He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent and unfeignedly believe His holy Gospel." II. From the face to the strength of God the transition is easy: **THE LIGHT OF HIS COUNTENANCE IS THE STRENGTH OF GOD IN THE SOUL.** The ark, however, was called emphatically the ark of His strength, and the people were called to visit it for two reasons: to acknowledge the glory of the Divine power in their midst, and to seek its manifestations within themselves. Our supreme business in this house, and in all worship, is to extol the Divine name: the noblest employment of those who have seen the Divine face in reconciliation. The strength of God is the assemblage of His perfections, of which omnipotent power was the representative. This was the attribute that came nearest to the ancient people, and of it the ark was a constant remembrancer. Jehovah was called "the Strength of Israel." It was His Right Hand that had delivered them from the beginning. They extolled His power especially, while they also remembered His wisdom, fidelity, and other perfections which were behind. "Give unto the Lord glory and strength: give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name." In all their worship, the glory of God was the uppermost sentiment. The ark, so awfully shut in and dwelling in such unapproachable light, kept that evermore before them. The glory due unto the Supreme the ancient worshippers offered as worthily as we can offer it. But there is a sense in which they did not so perfectly offer it, because His being was not fully known. The Three-one Deity had not been revealed. That secret was kept back, though it could scarcely be hid. Although the "Holy, Holy, Holy!" is not surpassed even in the New Testament, yet this was the Name by which Jehovah was not known to the fathers. To us the Triune name and the Triune perfections are one in the glorious works of the Redeeming God. And when we hear the words, "Declare the wonders that He hath wrought," of what do they remind us? The ark told the Israelites a marvellous story; it had witnessed all their triumphs and all their disgraces; it was the will of God that with it should be attached the thought of His mighty interpositions. We have no visible symbol; but of what does our house of prayer remind us, what does that table silently commemorate, what is the burden of this hymn book, what is the high subject of the New Testament? We have that to remember and extol which dwarfs the Jewish annals to utter insignificance. But we cannot more effectually adore the strength of our God than by seeking its manifestation. He does not only wait in His holy Temple for our tribute, as if He had only to receive and we to give. Whoso offereth Him praise glorifieth Him, but equally he that honours his God by seeking and trusting in His power. The ark was a perpetual token that there was a reserve of strength in the God of Israel at the people's service. In the New Testament the word is, "Where two or three are gathered together there am I in the midst of them." There is no limit to the power of the Spirit in the assemblies of His people who pray. His strength is everything here; we must only seek it in the consciousness of our utter impotence. The only power in our assemblies is the power of the Lord. The ark was a perpetual remembrancer of that. It humbled the people by reminding them that when God was not with them they fled before their enemies; that it was only when He was with them that they conquered. We have no symbol to remind us, nor do we need it. God Himself speaks and bids us remember that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves. "Without Me," said the Lord, "ye can do nothing." But God is here in His strength. The ark was the pledge that the ancient God of the people was with them. His name was still, while they trusted in Him, the Strength of Israel. The measure of His strength among His people is "the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead," the "exceeding

greatness of His power." The standard to us is, "According to your faith be it unto you." Then we must seek it in prayer for the carrying on of the work of salvation in our midst. There is a power in this place for the conversion of every sinner that ever enters it. Our common supplication must plead for it, our common faith must expect it, and we shall then have the desire of our heart. Enlarging our view we should remember that we belong to the catholic temple of the Church. If you study our psalm you will see how it embraces the heathen throughout. "Fear before Him all the earth." "Give unto the Lord, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength." This is prophetically to them. To us it is, "Declare His glory among the heathen; His marvellous works" of redemption and grace "among all nations." This we do by our missions abroad, and we do it by our prayers at home. This house which we have dedicated to God must never forget that He is the God of the whole earth. Once more I must remind you that the strength of God which is sought in His ordinances is altogether a personal energy within the individual soul. There is indeed a common manifestation, a shedding forth of Divine influence, which sometimes overpowers the whole congregation, and surprises those who neither sought it nor expected it. But every one after all must lay hold on the strength of God for himself. The promise is of a Divine power put forth in the inmost secret of our nature. Hear the apostle's prayer that "He would grant us according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." But this is according to our own personal faith. So St. Paul says, "I can do all through Christ which strengtheneth me." Our righteousness He is as a free gift; but our strength He is through our own faculties. Seek it then and find it in your inmost spirit. Let it be your constant exercise everywhere to make the Divine omnipotence your own. Strength to do and strength to suffer, strength to resist and strength to overcome, strength to command mountains out of the way, and strength to uproot the long-standing tree of sin: all is yours. If your religion has been scanty and feeble it is simply and solely your own fault.

III. We must not forget THE EMPHATIC MANNER IN WHICH THE EXPRESSION "EVERMORE" IS ADDED, BOTH AS EXHORTATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT. The actual assemblies we must delight to visit, and be found in our place continually. Here, as in everything else, we have great advantages over the people of the ancient covenant. They came up only by their representatives three times a year, and on certain other set occasions. During the intervals they could only "remember Zion." We have constantly recurring opportunities. Every Christian sabbath we are invited to assemble; and on certain evenings in the week we may join the congregation in the services which are held around the invisible altar and ark. There are some special occasions when the members of Christ's discipleship gather around the table of the Lord; if I may so speak, nearer than usual to the ark, and its mercy-seat, and its glorious face. Never be absent then, unless the Lord Himself keep you away. Seek His face and seek His strength continually. But this last word reminds me that there is a sense in which the true Christian is never absent from the house of the Lord, "Whose house are we." We are not commanded to come up at set times to obtain a glimpse of His face, have our sins forgiven, gain a renewal of strength, and then go away for an interval of absence. We dwell in His house. We live and move and have our being in the mystical temple. The word of the text seems to say, "Seek Him here, but seek Him continually," in our private devotions, in the midst of our duties, in our family worship, and everywhere. This "evermore" echoes in eternity. It is not necessary that we should determine how far the Hebrews understood the reach and meaning of this word. Whatever they believed, or hoped, or felt in presentiment, we have the full revelation that our worshipping assemblies are earnest of an everlasting fellowship of more perfect worship in the house above. There is an eternal temple awaiting us where we shall not need to seek the face nor to seek the strength of our God. Both shall have been found in their utmost blessedness, to be lost no more for ever. The countenance of God in Christ shall be the eternal joy of the redeemed. Meanwhile the commandment is to seek His face for ever. Count time and all its opportunities of seeking the Lord as given for one sole purpose, the preparation for that eternal fellowship. (W. B. Pope, D.D.)

Vers. 7-15. **He is the Lord our God: His judgments are in all the earth.—**
God in Jewish history, working for His people:—I. HIS ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGNTY

(ver. 9). The selection of Abraham to distinguished privileges is only an example of what has been going on in the history of men in all times. All men are not alike endowed, nor alike distinguished in privilege. Some have more health, more beauty, more talent, more enjoyments, than others. Shall any find fault with this? "Who art thou that repliest against God?" We should, however, always remember that God's sovereignty is not arbitrary power, not capricious impulse, but is evermore the free expression of His heart, and that heart is love. II. HIS INVIOLENT FAITHFULNESS (ver. 8). Men fail to fulfil their promises from one of three reasons—either because they were insincere when they made the promise, or because they subsequently changed their minds, or because difficulties occurred which they never anticipated. None of these reasons can be ascribed to God. III. HIS TERRITORIAL PROPRIETORSHIP (ver. 11). Let all landowners remember that the acres they call their own are only borrowed property, they are only tenants at will, or rather stewards, responsible for the use they make of every foot of ground. IV. HIS COMPASSIONATE SUPERINTENDENCE. He watched over them. 1. When they were few (ver. 12). How He watched over Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, only three! We lose individuals in the mass. To Him the individual is the object of interest, the individual is His offspring, representative, fountain of immeasurable influence. "Unto that man will I look." 2. When they were wandering strangers (ver. 13). Though unknown, ignored, it may be despised, the few wandered amongst ten thousand strangers, His eye was upon them, and His sympathies were with them. 3. When they were threatened (vers. 14, 15). (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 15. **Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm.**—*The inviolable Messiahs and prophets:*—I. EVERY CHRISTIAN IS A MESSIAH. Jesus was the Christ, the Messias, because that Divine Spirit dwelt in Him without measure. And if we are Christians in the real sense of the word, then, however imperfectly, yet really, and by God's grace increasingly, there is such a union between us and our Saviour as that into us there does flow the anointing of His Spirit. And, there being a community of life derived from the Source of Life, it is no presumption to say that every Christian man is a Christ. II. EVERY CHRISTIAN IS A PROPHET. The word is connected with a root which means "to boil, or bubble, like a fountain." It expresses, not so much the theme of the utterance as its nature. The welling up, from a full heart, of God's thoughts and God's truth, that is prophecy. The patriarchs were prophets, in the sense of being bearers of a Divine Word, breathed into them by that anointing Spirit, that it may be uttered forth by them. That sort of prophetic inspiration belongs to all Christians. Every one who has been anointed will be thus gifted. A silent Christian is an anomaly, a contradiction in terms, as much as black light, or dark stars. If Christ is in you He will come out of you. If your hearts are full the crystal treasure will flow over the brim. III. EVERY CHRISTIAN, IN HIS DOUBLE CAPACITY OF ANOINTED AND PROPHET, IS WATCHED OVER BY GOD. There is no real harm in so-called evil. That is the interpretation that Christianity gives to such words as this of my text, not because it is forced to weaken them by the obstinate facts of life, but because it has learnt to strengthen them by the understanding of what is harm and what is good; what is gain and what is loss. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 19. **Until the time that His word came: the word of the Lord tried him.**—*God's promised tests:*—There is a contrast drawn between two "words," "his" (*i. e.* Joseph's) and God's. Joseph's word, which delayed its coming, or fulfilment, was either his boyish narrative of the dreams that foreshadowed his exaltation, or, less probably, his words to his fellow-prisoners in the interpretation of their dreams. In either case the point to which our attention is directed, is the period when that word came to be fulfilled, and what my text says is that during that long season of unfulfilled hope, the "word of God," which was revealed in Joseph's dream, and was the ground on which his own "word" rested—did what? Encouraged, heartened, strengthened him? No, that unfulfilled promise might encourage or discourage him; but the psalmist fixes our thoughts on another effect which, whether it encouraged or discouraged, it certainly had, namely, that it tested him, and found out what stuff he was made of, and whether there was staying power enough in him to hold on, in unconquerable faith, to a promise made long since, communicated by no more reliable method than a dream, and of the fulfilment of which not the faintest sign had,

for all these weary years, appeared. It proved the depth and vitality of his faith, and his ability to see things that are not as though they were. Will this man be able continually through years of poverty and imprisonment to keep his eye on the light beyond, to see his star through clouds? We do not know how long his Egyptian bondage had lasted, nor how long before that his endurance of the active ill-will of his surly brothers had gone on. But at all events his chrysalis stage was very long, and one would not have wondered if he had said to himself, down in that desert pit or in that Egyptian dungeon, "Ah, yes, they were dreams, and only dreams," or if he had, as so many of us do, turned his back on his youthful visions, and gained the sad power of being able to smile at his old hopes and ambitions. Cherish your youthful dreams. They are often the prophecies of capacities and possibilities, signs of what God means you to make yourselves. The trivial, short-lived anticipations which do not look beyond the end of next week are far less operative in making strong and noble characters than are those, of whatever kind they may be otherwise, which look far ahead and need years for their realization. It is a blessing to have the mark far, far away, because that means that the arm that pulls the bow must draw more strongly, and the eye that sees the goal must gaze more intently. Be thankful for the promise that cannot be fulfilled in this world, because it lifts us above the low levels, and makes us feel already as if we were endowed with immortality. The Word will test our patience, and it will test our willingness, though we be heirs of the Kingdom, to do humble tasks. Because Joseph was sure that God's long-lingering word would be fulfilled, he did not mind though he had to be the lackey of his brothers, the Midianites' chattel, Potiphar's slave, Pharaoh's prisoner, and a servant of servants in his dungeon. So with us, the measure of our willing acceptance of our present tasks, burdens, humiliations, and limitations is the measure of our firm faith in the promise that tarries. It was for Joseph's sake that the slow years were multiplied between the first gleam of his future and the full sunshine of his exaltation. And it is for our sakes that God in like manner protracts the period of anticipation and non-fulfilment. "If the vision tarry, wait for it." Is not the delaying of the blessing a means of increase of the blessing? And shall not we be sure that however long "He that shall come" may seem to tarry ere He comes, when He has come they who have waited for His coming more than they that watch for the morning and have sometimes been ready to cry out: "Hath the Lord forgotten? Doth His promise fail for evermore?" will be ashamed of their impatient moments and will humbly and thankfully exclaim: "He came at the very right time and did not tarry." (*A. MacLaren, D.D.*) *Joseph: a sermon to young men*:—Joseph's was a monumental and magnificent life, not so much because of the great station and good fortune that he won as because of the coherence and completeness of his career, character, and work being wielded together, and crowned with the fitting close. It was a sunbright, victorious life! Yet a life of public action and manifold dangers and responsibilities, through which no mere cleverness could have carried him successfully. Nothing but right-mindedness, together with capacity, could ever have borne him onward to so great and just renown. That right-mindedness was truth, honour, faith, love.

I. **THE DREAMS OF HIS YOUTH.** Possibly we find it difficult entirely to sympathize with this part of the record, because we have a not unreasonable objection to precocious children and their egotism. But, notwithstanding this general prejudice, we should remember that genius is wont to be precocious and self-conscious. Moreover, in this child of genius egotism had no unpleasant expression. His narratives are far too artless and ingenuous to be charged with conceit. We must also recognize that his dreams arose from the growing consciousness of power, and were apprehensions of that immense capacity which he afterwards displayed. Oh, a few more dreams will not hurt our young people to-day—such dreams—dreams of honourable success, of usefulness, of widening influence! It is not surprising that young people in their first endeavours to realize themselves should make some mistakes—that they should carry themselves awkwardly, and fail in self-measurement. But after all, better this, a thousand times, than that they should not be at all aware of the day of nature's visitation, nor imagine glorious possibilities from being alive, and more and more alive every day.

II. **THE DISCIPLINE OF LIFE.** If Joseph had nourished a too luxuriant imagination, time and circumstance soon clipped the tendrils. There is something as touching, as dramatic, in his being so suddenly "dropped out of the bright world" into the dark pit in the desert, and then hurried away into a slavery that might have been

worse than death—cut off at a stroke from the care of his father, from the patriarchal home with its princely privileges, and reduced, politically, below the status of a man. Here was a fate overwhelming enough to bring a young fellow to despair, or to a degradation worse than that! But there was in him that quality of moral fibre which is braced and not weakened by lonely adversity. He has virtue, and he has faith, and these united shall prevail, so that there shall be nothing more admirable in all biography than the patience, cheerfulness, and fidelity with which he fulfils his lot. Adversity is a ladder, up or down, as we will. You can, so to speak, do what you like with your troubles, or let them do what they like with you; so that they shall either be stepping stones, upon which you shall rise to a clearer, graver view of God and life; or they shall be stones of stumbling and rocks of offence to cast you down to that limbo where the craven and futile whimper their lives away. But some of you are thinking that it was hard that Joseph should have to suffer for refusing to do wrong. I would counsel you to be very slow in saying that anything is hard, if you mean as a matter of providential treatment. A little faith and patience, and God will take care of it all. III. THE MAN THAT EMERGED. Joseph came forth from prison with faith in God unimpaired, with the old sweetness of temper, and clearness and fixity of moral equilibrium. He is "not ashamed to stand before kings," and there is the unerring accent of modesty and faith in his words: "It is not in me. God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." But I desire especially to point out the essential Christianity of the man, whom the word of the Lord had tried, so that he was made manifest to his generation as a pre-Christian Christian. That forgiveness of his brethren, so frank and free, without a thought behind, so foreign to every ancient code of obligation, shows him at a glance possessed by the spirit of Christ. Again in his large humanity he became an earthly Providence, and an expositor of the philanthropy of God our Saviour, not only nourishing his own family, and those brothers who plotted his ruin; but bearing the burdens of all the people, and with such benevolence and sympathy that, in the great language of that time, he was called "the Saviour of the world." Finally, in his faith he saw something of Christ's day. Loyal to his family and race, he was loyal also to the ancestral hope; and in his final charge showed clearly enough that his soul had her last anchorage there. "By faith he gave commandment concerning his bones;" and when, long centuries after, his people departed out of Egypt, they carried with them these dumb tokens of their great ancestor's faith in the covenant of promise. This was a great life—pure, gracious, wise, imperial. All was on the grand scale; but all the goodness thereof grew out of the virtues of his youth. "The child was father of the man" in reverence, and human kindness, and faith. So let it be with you. (*A. H. Vine.*) *Trial by the Word*.—I. THE IMPORTANCE OF TRIAL. 1. Because trial and persecution test men's professions, they are used as the winnowing fan in the Lord's hand. "He will thoroughly purge His floor." In persecution, the mere professors, the camp-followers and hangers-on, soon flee away, for they have no heart to true religion when the profession of it involves the cross. They could walk with Jesus in silver slippers, but they cannot travel with Him when His bleeding feet go barefoot over the world's rough ways, and therefore they depart every man to his own. Oh, man, if thou be a child of God thou art like a house which He is building with gold, and silver, and precious stones; but by reason of thine old nature thou art mixing up with the Divine material much of thine own wood, and hay, and stubble; therefore is it that the fire is made to rage around thee to burn out this injurious stuff which mars the whole fabric. If the Holy Spirit be pleased to bless thine afflictions to thee, then wilt thou be daily led to put away the materials of the old nature with deep abhorrence and repentance, and thus shall the true work of God, which He has built upon the sure foundation, stand in its true beauty, and thou shalt be builded for eternity. 2. Every good man is not only tested by trial, but is the better for it. To the evil man affliction brings evil, he rebels against the Lord, and, like Pharaoh, his heart is hardened. But to the Christian it is good to be afflicted, for, when sanctified by the Spirit, trial is a means of instruction to him second to none in value. In the case of Joseph—(1) It corrected the juvenile errors of the past. (2) He learned in his trial much that was good for present use. That God could be with him, even in a dungeon. That temporal things are not to be depended upon. To "cease from man," etc. (3) The chief use of trial is very often seen in our future lives. It gave Joseph power to bear power. It trained him to bear the other dangers of prosperity. In the prison

he learned to speak out. His whole course had been a rehearsal fitting him to be bravely truthful before the king. II. **THE REGULARITY OF THE TRIAL.** "The word of the Lord tried him." How was that? Potiphar tried him, and the chains tried him, but did the word of the Lord try him? Yes. But there is a previous question—how did he receive any word of the Lord? His dreams were to him the word of God, for they were communications from heaven; the instruction he received from his father was also the word of God to him; his knowledge of the covenant which God had made with Abraham and Isaac, and his father Jacob, was God's word to him. Moreover, the secret teachings of the Holy Spirit quickened his conscience and afforded him light on the way. When there was no written Word the Divine Spirit spoke without words, impressing the truth upon the heart itself. All these were to Joseph the word of God. How did it try him? It tried him thus,—the word said to him in his conscience, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Without that word he would not have been tried, for nature suggested compliance with his mistress's desires. The test, however, he could bear: grace enabled him to flee youthful lusts and to cry, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" The trial which arose out of his innocence must have again tested him by the word of God. There he is in prison—for what? Why, for an action so pure that had he been set on a throne for it he would have well deserved it. Do you not think that many questions perplexed him while he lay in prison? What problems were put before him—Is there a moral governor of the universe? If so, why does He allow the innocent to suffer? Why am I in fetters, and the lewd woman in favour? Could not an omnipotent God deliver me? Why then does He leave me here? Could Joseph in the face of such questions still cling to the faithful word? He could, and he did; but the word tried him, and proved his constancy, his faith, and his integrity. Then, too, the word of the Lord which he had heard many years before would come to him and try him. His trembling heart would say, Has God ever spoken to you at all? Those dreams, were they not childish? That voice which you thought you heard in your heart, was it not imagination? This providence of God which has prospered you wherever you have gone, was it not after all good luck? Has the living God ever revealed Himself to one who at length became a slave? Look at your fetters, and ask if you can be His child? III. **THE CONTINUANCE AND THE CONCLUSION OF THE TRIAL.** Trial does not last for ever. Cheer up; the tide ebbs out, but the flood will return again. He who counts the stars also numbers your sorrows, and if He ordains the number ten your trials will never be eleven. The text says, "until"; for the Lord appoints the bounds of the proud waters, and they shall no more go over your soul when they reach the boundary of the Divine "until." "Until the time that His word came"—the same word which tried Joseph in due time set him free. If the Lord gives the turnkey permission to keep us in prison, there we must remain, "until." He sends a warrant for our liberation, and then all the devils in hell cannot hold us in bondage for an instant longer. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *God's promise as a refining fire*:—"Tried" is in the Hebrew "smelted," and "word of the Lord" refers to the promise of greatness given to Joseph when a lad. This vision smelted his soul. How? It resulted in—I. **A PURIFIED FAITH.** Before imprisonment, Joseph worked and God helped; the prison shut him in to God alone. Faith is this reaching Godward, and the Godward side of a man determines character. II. **A STRENGTHENING CHARACTER.** The youth who entered came out a tried man. More strength is increased power, and power is valuable. III. **AN ENHANCED VALUE.** He became worth more—to himself, to Pharaoh, to God. The promises of God Incarnate come to you in definite language. He offers you pardon, help, a growing likeness to Himself. Have you accepted? Are you holding fast? Your soul is in the furnace of the promises. Shall it come forth metal or slag? (*Homiletic Review.*) *Trial by the Word of God*:—His trial arose from "the word of the Lord." The evils of his lot were great in themselves, but their magnitude was increased in consequence of the Divine intimation that he should be raised to greatness and honour. His faith was put to a rigorous test, his patience was severely tried. I. **OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE DIVINE WORD IS A MEANS OF TRIAL.** It tests our character, and it does this by leaving us without much we expected to receive, and imposing on us burdens from which we would fain be free. What forms, then, does this trial assume? 1. It is seen in relation to our belief, the Bible demanding our assent to truths which are beyond the range of human discovery. As Bishop Butler has said, "There seems no possible reason to be given why we may not be in a

state of moral probation with regard to the exercise of our understanding on the subject of religion, as we are with regard to our behaviour on common affairs. The former is a thing as much within our power and choice as the latter." 2. The next form of trial is in relation to our conduct. The Bible demands from us the discharge of duties which are not congenial with our nature, and large numbers who are ignorant of speculative difficulties feel strongly those that relate to Christian practice. We cannot practically "fulfil the law of Christ" without strenuous exertion. We must surrender pleasures we have prized and accept toils for which we have had no relish. We shall never be able to follow Christ unless we "deny ourselves and count all things as loss for His sake." Is it not notorious that many, very many, refuse submission to the Gospel on this ground? And thus "the Word of the Lord" tries them. 3. The Word of God tries us in our experience or in respect to the fulfilment of its promises. We do not realize them at the time or in the manner we expect, many even "dying in faith" without seeing that for which they have waited. II. THE TRIAL IS OF LIMITED DURATION. It lasted "until His word came," but no longer. As there came an hour of deliverance to Joseph, so there will to us, premising, of course, that we continue faithfully in the path of duty. Never will God alter the truth we are to believe, relax the duties to which He summons us, or modify the essential character of His promises; but our relation to His Word shall become such that the trial, the element of pain and disappointment shall pass away. 1. When we accept the truth of Christ on sufficient evidence, although its substance is immutable, although we may never find it to be logically explicable, it will yet gain our assent in an ever-increasing degree. It will quicken and purify our spiritual perceptions, removing the blindness thrown over us by sin. It will restore our nature to a holy condition, sanctifying us and imparting the power of recognition which comes from sympathy. 2. The duties to which we are summoned will not always be uncongenial. We shall be empowered with strength equal to our need. Our souls will become more able for works of righteousness. By reliance on God, by resolute perseverance, our work will lose its irksomeness and become a service of gratitude and joy. 3. The promises of Scripture may not secure the results we expect. That which we rightly look for may be delayed. But we shall be assured that God is doing for us the thing which is best, that He is adapting His mercy to the necessities of our condition, that He is leading us from one stage of glory to another, and will, in due time, "perfect that which concerneth us." (J. Stuart.) *The trial of man by the promises of God.*—By the "word of the Lord" that "tried him," the psalmist evidently refers to the dreams of his future destiny which were sent to Joseph from God; and in saying that they tried him "until His word came," he evidently means that his faith in those promises was tested by his long imprisonment, until the day of his deliverance dawned. I. GOD'S PROMISES MUST TRY MAN. 1. By revealing his secret unbelief. 2. That He may accomplish His own purposes of discipline. II. GOD SENDS THE HOUR OF DELIVERANCE. 1. Sometimes by death. Elijah. 2. Sometimes by transforming the height of trial into the height of blessing. The three youths in Babylon. 3. Sometimes by the glance of love on the falling soul. Peter. 4. Sometimes by continuing the trial, but increasing the power to endure it. Paul. III. GOD MAKES THE TRIAL BY PROMISE FULFIL THE PROMISE ITSELF. We hope not for an Egyptian kingdom, our dream-vision is of a heavenly inheritance, and the palace of a heavenly King. But every temptation resisted, every mocking voice of doubt overcome, is an aid upwards and onwards. Trials, sufferings, struggles, are angels arraying the soul in the white robes of the heavenly world, and crowning it with the crown that fadeth not away. And when the end comes, then it will be seen that the long dreary endeavour to hold fast the dream-promise—the firm resolute "no" to the temptation to disbelieve, are all more than recompensed with "the exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (E. L. Hull, B.A.) *From the pit to the throne.*—I. THE SEVERITY OF HIS SUFFERINGS. Confined in a stifling, fætid prison, his feet bound by fetters. His religious notions added greatly to his distress. What had he gained by his integrity? Could there be any truth in what his father had taught him of good coming to the good, and evil to the bad? Was there a God who judged righteously on the earth? You who have been misunderstood, who have sown seeds of holiness and love to reap nothing but disappointment, loss, suffering, and hate, you know something of what Joseph felt in that wretched dungeon hole. Then, too, disappointment poured her bitter drops into the bitter cup. What had become of those early

dreams, those dreams of coming greatness, which had filled his young brain with splendid phantasmagoria? Were these not from God? He had thought so—yes, and his venerable father had thought so too, and he should have known, for he had talked with God many a time. Were they the delusions of a fevered brain, or mocking lies? Was there no truth, no fidelity, in heaven or earth? II. **THESE SUFFERINGS WROUGHT VERY BENEFICIALLY.** Iron entered into his soul. The iron crown of suffering precedes the golden crown of glory. I may be asked, Why does God sometimes fill a whole life with discipline, and give few opportunities for showing the iron quality of the soul? Why give iron to the soul, and then keep it from active service? Ah, that is a question which goes far to prove our glorious destiny. "There is service in the sky." And it may be that God counts a human life of seventy years of suffering not too long an education for a soul which may serve Him through the eternities. III. **JOSEPH'S COMFORT IN THE MIDST OF THESE SUFFERINGS.** 1. "He was there in the prison, but the Lord was with him." The Lord was with him in the palace of Potiphar; but when Joseph went to prison, the Lord went there too. The only thing that severs us from God is sin; so long as we walk with God, God will walk with us; and if our path dips down from the sunny upland lawns into the valley with its clinging mists, He will go at our side. 2. Moreover, the Lord showed him mercy. That prison cell was the mount of vision, from the height of which he saw, as he had never seen before, the panorama of Divine lovingkindness. It were well worth his while to go to prison to learn that. It was in prison that Bunyan saw his wondrous allegory, and St. Paul met the Lord, and St. John looked through heaven's open door, and Joseph saw God's mercy. God has no chance to show His mercy to some of us except when we are in some sore sorrow. 3. God can also raise up friends for His servants in most unlikely places, and of most unlikely people. "The Lord gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison." All hearts are open to our King; at His girdle swing the keys by which the most unlikely door can be unlocked. 4. There is always alleviation for our troubles in ministry to others. Joseph found it so. A new interest came into his life, and he almost forgot the heavy pressure of his own troubles amid the interest of listening to the tales of those who were more unfortunate than himself. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *Changes of fortune overruled*:—The chief lesson to be learned from the swift and violent alternations of fortune, to which he was subject, is not that men are like shuttle-cocks, tossed up and down by random blows, either of blind chance or of hostile men, but that they are moved and guided by one loving will, which weaves malice and murderous intents into its great web, and uses unconscious men and women to effect its purposes. The point of a wheel that is at the top at one moment, is at the bottom at the next; but the wheel moves on steadily on its course, and the revolutions advance it to its goal. The naked boy in the pit, the sad captive in the prison, the favourite of Pharaoh, were equally set in these places by God, though envy and baulked lust and a despot's whim were the immediate occasions of the violently contrasted conditions. Life's bewildering mutations would look very differently if we habitually grasped the calming confidence that opposite states, such as joy and sorrow, elevation and depression, gain and loss, came from one source, and tended to one end, as surely as the opposite motions of two cog-wheels, working into each other, result in the forward motion of the hands of a watch. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 22. **To . . . teach His senators wisdom.**—*Wisdom-taught senators*:—I. **GOD'S INSTRUCTION OF SENATORS.** God's education of Joseph became the Divine education of the senators of Pharaoh; so we learn how statesmen are taught by God in all ages. 1. By the life-work of the great and good. The knowledge of Joseph's biography would spread from the throne to the humblest tent in the land. An apprenticeship is needed for every great teacher and ruler of men. 2. By the events in a nation's history. The Hebrews were now an incipient nation, of which Joseph was a member. Israel shall teach Egypt, and Egypt Israel. Whilst the Bible is the statesman's great manual, the facts of all history, rightly interpreted, are a high education in anticipative experience, and in the philosophy of life. The barbaric, feudal, and constitutional periods through which all nations pass, are intended by God to educate the statesman. 3. By insight into a nation's needs. Joseph saw and taught what was coming upon Egypt, therefore he economized its resources. Valuable is vision and revelation! England needs men like Joseph, and those who learnt of him, in her senate-house; then should we

obtain needful education, emigration, economy, and national unity. II. GOD'S PURPOSE IN THE INSTRUCTION OF SENATORS. Every highly-gifted man is the bestowment of God upon the age in which he lives, and upon all subsequent ages. Joseph, Moses, David, Daniel, in Judæa; Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Demosthenes, in Greece; Cicero, Marcus Aurelius, Boethius, in Rome; Goethe, Schlegel, Fichte, in Germany; Burke, Pitt, Peel, in England. God's purpose in giving such men to a nation is—1. The entire well-being of a country. Physical, mental, spiritual, domestic, social. 2. Advancement in scientific achievement. Egypt was scientific. The physical and spiritual resources of the universe are the gift of God for our development. God intended us to possess railways, telegraphs, machinery, and all other appliances of human progress. 3. Perfection of His creation. Perfect righteousness is the result of His will, and of all He has willed to create; therefore shall all things be gathered together in Christ. Inquire—(1) How far have we wisdom-taught statesmen? (2) How far is our nation a wise and understanding people? (*W. N. Percival*.)

Ver. 87. **He brought them forth also with silver and gold.**—*A stanza of deliverance*.—Egypt may very fairly represent those states of sorrow and sadness, depression and oppression, into which God's people come far too frequently. Specially is the house of bondage a true picture of our condition when we are convinced of sin, but are ignorant of the way to escape from its guilt and power. Then sin, which was once our Goshen of pleasure, becomes the iron furnace of fear. Glory be to God, He has now brought us out from that state of slavery, and we can sing of freedom given by His own right hand! I. OUR DELIVERANCE IS BY DIVINE POWER. When Israel came out of Egypt, it was Jehovah who brought forth her armies. When any man is saved from spiritual bondage, it is the Lord Jesus who looseth the captive. But this does not exclude the use of means, or the action of the will. The Lord brought Israel forth; but they had cried unto the Lord by reason of their sore bondage, and they did not receive the blessing without desiring it, yea, and sighing for it; and when it came, they joyfully accepted it, and willingly trusted themselves with him whom the Lord had made to be their mediator and leader, even Moses. They did not share the honour of their deliverance with God, but still they gave their hearty assent and consent to His salvation. Willing as they were to move, it was still true, "He brought them forth." We can never escape from the bondage of sin by our own power. If we are ever set free from sin and Satan, it will be eternally and infinitely true that the Lord brought us forth out of the house of bondage. "Salvation is of the Lord." There is no true liberty but that wherewith Christ makes you free. "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Do you know what it is to be brought out of prison by a miracle of grace, by a revelation of the Holy Ghost, by the blood of Jesus shed for many? If so, you will join with all the saints in singing, "As for His people, He brought them forth." II. OUR DELIVERANCE WAS ATTENDED WITH ENRICHMENT: "He brought them forth also with silver and gold." The natives as good as said, "Take whatever you please of us, for we have all treated you ill. Only leave us alone; for plagues and deaths fall upon us thick and fast so long as Pharaoh detains you here." However, this is not my point. I am dealing with more spiritual things. When God brings His people out of bondage, they come out enriched in the best and most emphatic sense. Trials and afflictions, which threaten to kill us, are made to sanctify us; and sanctification is the best form of enrichment. How much we owe to sorrow and sickness, crosses and losses! Our bondage ends in our coming forth with much that is better than silver and gold. 1. Thus do we come forth from conviction of sin. "Now tell me," says one, "what does a man gain by being in a desponding, sorrowful condition, convinced of sin, and full of fears?" By the work of the Holy Spirit he will gain much. He will obtain a clearer knowledge of the evil of sin. An awful sense of guilt, an overwhelming conviction of sin, may be the foundation stone of a gloriously holy character. The tried and tempted man will also see clearly that salvation is all of grace. He can do nothing, and he knows it. When a child of God can spell grace, and can pronounce it clearly, as with the true Jerusalem accent, he has gained a great deal of spiritual silver and gold. Such persons gain by their soul trouble a fund of healthy experience. They have been in the prison, and have had their feet made fast in the stocks. "Well," says one, "I do not want to feel that sort of treatment." No, but suppose you had felt it, the next time you met with a brother

who was locked up in the castle of Giant Despair, you would know how to sympathize with him and help him. Where this is the result of severe trial, we may well say that the Lord has brought them forth with silver and gold. 2. Thus do saints come out of persecution. The Church is refined by the fires of martyrdom. Individual piety is also deeper, stronger, nobler in persecuting times than at other seasons. 3. Thus do believers come out of daily afflictions. They become wealthier in grace, and richer in experience. A man of God, whose life has been full of mental exercises and spiritual conflict, as well as outward tribulation, becomes, through Divine grace, a man of large wealth of knowledge, prudence, faith, foresight, and wisdom, and he is to the inexperienced like some great proprietor, by whom multitudes of the poorer class are fed and guided, housed and set to work. Those who have been much tried are in the peerage of the Church. 4. When you and I reach the shores of heaven, thus shall we come into glory. When we come forth out of our graves, it will not be with loss, but with enrichment. We shall leave corruption and the worm behind us, and with them all that earthly grossness which made us groan in these mortal bodies. God will bring us forth also with silver and gold. What golden songs will we sing! What silver notes of gratitude will we pour forth! III. OUR DELIVERANCE IS ACCOMPANIED WITH HEALTH AND STRENGTH: "There was not one feeble person among their tribes." 1. This fact is typical of the health and strength of the newly saved. The Lord's people, at conversion, are as a rule wonderfully strong in their love to Jesus, and their hatred of sin. In most cases our young converts, when they have truly come to Christ, even if they are a little timid, are vigorous, much in prayer, abounding in zeal, and earnest in speaking out the Gospel. Many of them, I believe, would die at the stake readily enough, while they are in their first love. In their earliest days nothing is too hot or too heavy for them, for the sake of Christ. 2. Full often it is so with the persecuted. A man who has fulfilled an apprenticeship to this hard master, is likely to be a man indeed. If he has endured hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, he will be fit to become an officer in the army, and an instructor of recruits. 3. It would be a glorious day if it were so with all God's people, that there were none feeble. We should, as a Church, labour to reach this high standard. We would have the weakest to be as David, and David as the angel of the Lord. We would have our babes become young men, and our young men fathers in Christ. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 41. **He opened the rock.**—*The rock at Horeb*:—I. THE SOURCE WHENCE THE WATERS ARE SAID TO HAVE SPRUNG. A rock is in many respects an appropriate emblem of Christ. 1. It suggests the ideas of stability and unchangeableness. 2. Chosen by God Himself. 3. Smitten. II. THE USES FOR WHICH THEY WERE DESIGNED. 1. To save from death by thirst. 2. To purify. 3. To refresh. "Hungry and thirsty," we are told, "their soul fainted in them." But the same waters that saved them from perishing, renewed their strength, and enabled them to prosecute their journeyings to Canaan with fresh vigour and alacrity. And is it not thus with the weary and heavy-laden traveller to Zion, when supplies from the Redeemer's grace are afforded to his soul? III. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE WATERS FLOWED FROM THE OPENED ROCK. 1. Abundantly. So it is with the grace of Christ. It is "exceeding abundant." Its efficacy to save, to purify, and to refresh our souls is inexhaustible. 2. Freely. So with the blood of Christ. It is open even to the vilest and guiltiest. 3. Constantly. No drought could exhaust nor cold arrest the waters which the Israelites enjoyed in the wilderness; so neither shall any worldly trial deprive the true Israel of the reviving streams of the Redeemer's grace. Goodness and mercy shall surely follow the ransomed of the Lord through all their earthly pilgrimage. (P. Grant.)

PSALM CVI.

VERS. 1-5. **Praise ye the Lord.**—*The true in praise, religion, and prayer*:—I. TRUE PRAISE AND ITS REASONS (vers. 1, 2). This call to praise Jehovah is binding on all intelligent and moral creatures, because of—1. The goodness of

His nature. 2. The permanency of His mercy. 3. The immensity of His works. II. TRUE RELIGION AND ITS BLESSEDNESS (ver. 3). What is true religion? Keeping to the right at all times. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." The only hymn of praise acceptable to the ear of the Infinite is a life of rectitude. Now, this is happiness (Ps. i. 1). III. TRUE PRAYER AND ITS DESIRES. What is the grand desire of true prayer? All may be summed up in one sentence—identification with the excellent of the earth (vers. 4, 5). A desire to be identified with the rich, the powerful, and the distinguished of the earth is common, is "of the earth, earthy"; but a desire to be vitally associated with the morally excellent of the earth is rare and of heavenly origin. May this be our grand aspiration! (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 4, 5. **Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people.**—*Sharing the blessings of God's people:*—I. WHO THE LORD'S PEOPLE ARE. They are a people who, deeply sensible of their own guiltiness and vileness, rest simply upon Jesus as their Saviour from the wrath to come. They are a people led also by the Spirit of the Saviour they believe in; actuated by His love; conformed to His image. II. THE FAVOUR WHICH THE LORD BEARS UNTO HIS PEOPLE. 1. He sends His Spirit into their hearts to dwell with and abide in them—to work in them both to will and to do what is pleasing in His eyes. 2. He gives them His Word, full of precious things—comforts, invitations, promises, directions. 3. He makes all things work together for their good. 4. He gives them free access to Himself in prayer. III. THE PRAYER IN THE TEXT. 1. We are here taught what to do, if we fear that we have no part nor lot in the Lord's favour to His people. Pray for it. 2. Imitate the fervency of the psalmist in seeking for a clear, personal interest in these privileges. (*A. Roberts, M.A.*) *The poor man's prayer:*—I. This is an admirable prayer FOR A POOR HUMBLE CHRISTIAN. Notice with interest the first fear felt by this poor, trembling Christian. He is afraid that he is such a little one that God will forget him, and so he begins with, "O remember me with the favour which Thou bearest to Thy people." He is a true believer, but he is a sad doubter. He is on the road to heaven, but he is often afraid he is not, and that makes him watch every step he takes. I almost wish some confident professors were altogether as doubtful as he is if they would be half as cautious. Now, I am not quite sure about this good man's name,—it may be Littlefaith, or Feeblemind. Or is it Mr. Despondency I am thinking of? Or Miss Much-afraid? Or Mr. Ready-to-halt? Well, it is some one of that numerous family. This poor soul thinks, "Surely God will forget me!" No, no, dear heart, he will not forget you. It is wonderful how God does think of little things. Mungo Park picked up a little bit of moss in the desert, and as he marked how beautifully it was variegated, he said, "God is here: He is thinking of the moss, and therefore He will think of me." Observe next, that this poor, trembling heart seems to be in great trouble for fear the Lord should pass it by, but at the same time feels that every good thing it can possibly receive must come from the Lord, and must be brought to it by the Lord. Thou needest not say, if thou hast a broken heart, "Lord, visit me." Do you not know that He dwells in you, for is it not written (Isa. lxvi. 2)? Are you not the very person? Poor sorrowing heart, let me say to thee, and say in God's name, if thou lovest thy Lord, all things are thine. They are thine freely to enjoy even at this moment. The Lord denies thee no covenant blessing. Make bold to appropriate the sacred joys, for if thou be the least child in the family, yet the heritage of God's children is the same for every one. II. THIS IS A SUITABLE PETITION FOR A POOR, PENITENT BACKSLIDER. It is clear that this poor, pleading backslider feels that he has forgotten his God. Have you done that? You have been a Church-member, and you have gone sadly astray; have you quite forgotten His commandments? You thought you loved Him. You used to pray at one time: you had some enjoyment in reading and in hearing the Word; but now you find your pleasure somewhere else. You have left your first love and gone after many lovers. But, oh, if the Lord is gracious to you, you are lamenting your forgetfulness; and though you have not remembered Him, the prayer leaps to your lips, "Lord, remember me." Blessed be His name, He does not so easily forget us as we forget Him. It is He that sets thee weeping, and makes thee sorrow for thy sin. And then, I think, your next trouble will be this: you feel that you have lost your fellowship with Christ: and you are right in so feeling, for "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" How could Christ have fellowship with you in the ways of folly? "Come back, my

Lord, and visit me with Thy salvation." Is not this a prayer made on purpose for you? And, next, you observe in the text that the poor backslider is longing to get a sight of the good things which for a long time have been hid from him. He cries, "That I may see the good of Thy chosen. He has been out amongst the swine, but he could not fill his belly with the husks. He has been hungoring and thirsting, and now he remembers that in his Father's house there is bread enough and to spare. The poor backslider praying in the words of my text longs to taste once more the joy he used to feel, and therefore he says, "That I may rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation"; and, again, he wants to be able to speak as he once could—"that I may glory with Thine inheritance." Come back oven now, my brother, and get another application of the blood of sprinkling. Look again to Jesus. Ah, and I may here say, if you have not backslidden, look again to Jesus. We have all wandered to some extent. Come, let us look to those dear wounds anew. Looking, my heart begins to love, and then begins to leap. Looking, I come back again to where I stood before; and now, once again, Christ is my all, and I rejoice in Him. Have you gone through that process, backslider?

III. THIS IS A VERY SWEET PRAYER FOR A POOR SORROWING SEEKER. To begin with, it is a sinner's prayer. The dying thief rejoiced to use the words. This is the best of prayers,—"Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." Trembling sinner, what suited the dying thief may well suit you. Note, again, it is the prayer of a lost one. "Visit me with Thy salvation." Jesus Christ has not come to seek and to save those who do not want saving, but He has come on purpose to seek and to save that which was lost. Look to Him, and thou shalt find that He is the Saviour thou dost require. Further, remark that our text is the prayer of one who has a dim eye—"That I may see the good of Thy chosen." We have told the seeker to look to Jesus, but he complains, "I do try to look, but I cannot see." Beloved seeker, I do not know that you are bidden to see. You are bidden to look; and if you could not see when you looked you would at least have obeyed the Gospel command. The looking, the looking would bring salvation to you. But for dim eyes Christ is the great cure. He can take away the cataract and remove the *gutta serena*. Then it is a prayer for a heavy heart. "That I may rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation." The seeking soul moans out, "O that I had a little joy, or even a trembling hope. If it were ever so small a portion of light I should be glad." Pray for joy. The Lord waits to give it, and if you believe in Jesus your joy shall be full. And in the last place our text is the prayer of a spirit that is humble and laid in the very dust, which cries to God to enable it to glory with His inheritance, because it is stripped of all other glory, emptied of its own boastings. Practically its plea is, "Lord, give me to boast in Thy mercy and Thy goodness, for I have nothing else to boast of." Now, this prayer I would most earnestly press upon you, and I would press it upon you for these reasons. Just think for a moment. Supposing you are living now without seeing the good of God's chosen, without being saved, what a wretched life it is to live! I cannot understand what men do without God: I cannot comprehend how they live. Do you have no cares, men? "Oh," you say, "we have anxieties in shoals." Well, where do you take them? Poor man without a God, how do you keep up your spirits? What comfort is there in your life? No prayer in the morning, no prayer at night: what days, what nights! Oh, men, I could as soon think of living without eating, or living without breathing, as living without prayer. Wretched naked spirits, your souls must be with no God to cover them! But if it be bad to live without Christ—and I am sure it is,—what will it be to die without Him? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The abounding prayer:*—

I. THE IMMEDIATE REQUESTS. 1. The first solicits a specially loving Divine remembrance. He knew that general providential mercy and visible Church privilege would profit him but little, if he had nothing more, if he had not over and above a personal interest in a much more special favour, in the Lord's covenant-favour towards His own elect; and hence it was his earnest prayer, his constant prayer, to be remembered with this favour. 2. The second solicits a graciously saving Divine visit. Come, Lord, and by Thine own finger, write upon my heart the assurance of Thy love. Come, Lord, and by Thine own Spirit witness with my spirit that I am Thy adopted child. Come, Lord, and by Thine own counsel, guide me while I live; and afterwards by Thine own hand receive me, when I die, into everlasting habitations. II. THE ULTERIOR REQUESTS. 1. There is the consciousness of gracious well-being. "That I may see the good of Thy chosen." He desired to see it as the "chosen" do, with the eye of a conscious faith, of a

spiritually illumined soul; to see it so as to be sustained, stimulated, rejoiced, and beautified by it; to see it as made over to himself, so that it might become his own, just as when the owner of an estate looks over it and says, "This farm, that goodly mansion, those spacious parks, the domain all round, the whole is mine." Such was the sight which he desired, the only sight which is ever satisfying. 2. There is the experience of spiritual joy. "That I may rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation." Not see it merely, but share it too in a way answerable to its high and holy character, singing with grace in my heart to the Lord in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. 3. There is the exultation of holy triumph. "That I may glory with Thine inheritance." The heirs of an earthly inheritance are but heirs apparent or heirs presumptive, and either in one way or in another they may be disappointed of the inheritance after all. But not so here. The Lord is their inheritance, and they are His inheritance; and there can be no shortcoming of the mutual inheritance on either His part or theirs. What is it to glory with His inheritance in the Lord? It is to exalt Him highest in our affection and esteem; to claim Him as our own and only Lord; to confess Him before men; to place on Him the crown of our salvation; to give all the glory of it from first to last to Him to whom it all belongs. (*E. A. Thomson.*) *The blessed lot of the saints desired*.—I. **THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE SAINTS OF GOD.** See this from—1. The names given them. (1) The people of God. (2) His chosen. (3) His nation. (4) His inheritance. They are the richest treasures, it says, that God possesses; the prized and the loved of His soul; of all things in heaven and earth the most delighted in. 2. What they may be said to possess. (1) The good of His chosen (*Prov. viii. 20*). All the treasures of God—of Omnipotence—are at their disposal. (2) The gladness of His nation—a portion of the gladness of heaven, vouchsafed to the heirs of heaven before they get there. (3) The glory of His inheritance. II. **THE PRAYER DRAWN FROM THE PSALMIST BY THE CONTEMPLATION OF THIS BLESSEDNESS.** 1. Here is, first, a belief expressed both in the existence and in the happiness of God's people. This is generally the first step a man takes towards obtaining a part in their blessedness. It is a great point gained when we are brought really to believe that such a people exist on the earth as you have now been hearing of. Here is a proof that light is breaking in upon your minds. And what a call is here, Christian brethren, on you, for a conduct consistent with your high profession! 2. We discover in this prayer a tracing of all the blessedness of God's people to His special "favour" and "His salvation." "Remember me," the psalmist says, "with"—what? "That 'tender mercy' which is 'over all Thy works'?" that universal goodness of Thine, which shines in the sun, which falls down in the rain 'on the evil and on the good'? "No; with that 'favour,' that special favour, 'that Thou bearest unto Thy people.'" "O visit me," he says again, "with Thy salvation." And this special favour and this salvation he asks for, observe, in order that he may obtain and rejoice in "the good of God's chosen": letting us see, that all this "good" and all this "rejoicing" and all this "glory" have their origin and spring out of God's "favour" and God's "salvation." 3. We may trace in this prayer an earnest desire of making the blessedness of God's saints his own. It is, you observe, a personal prayer: "Remember me, O Lord; O visit me with Thy salvation." This is the turning-point. Such a prayer is indeed an indication of favour already gone forth for the soul that offers it. Such a prayer proceeds from grace already at work in the soul. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *Prayer for the Lord's favour to His people*.—The text contains a petition which is very expressive of the desires of the renewed soul; and which no one in truth can really offer who is not under the influence of the Spirit of God. I. **WHAT ARE THE THINGS WHICH THE PERSON, WHO SINCERELY USES THIS PETITION, BELIEVES.** 1. That the Lord has a people, a people in this world peculiar to Himself, who in an especial manner belong to Him, and in a way different from others, are His property, the objects of His care, and the sheep of His pasture. 2. That the Lord has a peculiar favour to His people. (1) Gracious and free in its origin. (2) Active in its operation. (3) Constant in its exercise. (4) Unchangeable both as to its degree and duration. It does not depend upon their feelings, neither is it the less because of their fears. II. **WHAT IS THE DESIRE WHICH THE PERSON WHO SINCERELY USES THIS PETITION, HEARTILY FEELS AND EXPRESSES.** "Remember me, O Lord," etc. Believing that the Lord has a peculiar people, and that He beareth to them a peculiar favour, he longs to be included in their number, and to participate in their privileges. Do you feel a lively interest for your own salvation, and do you

anxiously pray for your own soul? Do you look upon true religion as a personal transaction between yourself and God? Be then of good courage. If you heartily desire His favour, you have already obtained it. None but those who are His people, and possess His favour, ever thus heartily desire, and sincerely pray for these things. (*E. Cooper, M.A.*) **O visit me with Thy salvation.**—*A visit from the Lord.*—I. The psalmist here prays for SALVATION. He says, first, that God saved the people out of Egypt. There they were, a nation of captives and bond-slaves; and He began to work with a high hand and an outstretched arm to bring them out of their captivity; and though they did not understand His wonders, yet, nevertheless, He saved them. That is a salvation in which you and I also delight,—salvation by the sprinkled blood,—salvation by the Paschal Lamb,—salvation by the right hand of God and His stretched-out arm,—a salvation which reveals His faithfulness, His mercy, and His power. Let us bless God if we know experimentally what this salvation means; and if we do not, let this be the prayer of each one of us, "O visit me with Thy salvation." Further on in the psalm, the writer sings of a second salvation when the people were delivered at the Red Sea. Its waves rolled before them, and they could not tell how they were to escape from Pharaoh, who was close behind with all the chariots and horsemen of Egypt pursuing them. So it was when you and I, having cried to God for mercy, at last found it through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Then we saw our sins cast into the depths of the sea, and we were ready to dance for joy as we said, "The depths have covered them; there is not one of them left." It may be that you and I have gone further on than this. We have been saved from our natural ruin, and saved from the power of despair wrought in us by conviction; and now we are fighting with our uprising corruptions. Our inbred sin is like the deep that lieth under, and perhaps, lately, the fountains of the great deep have been broken up within us. We cannot sin without being grieved and troubled by it; it is a vexation even to hear the report of it. Oh, that we could live without sinning at all! Well, now, if you are struggling against it, let this be your prayer to the Most High, "O visit me with Thy salvation." Our text may also be used in another sense, for salvation means deliverance from grievous affliction, just as, in this psalm, when the children of Israel were brought into great distress by their enemies, then God came, and saved them from their foes. So, at this time, you may be in great distress. Whether you are suffering in body, or in mind, or in heart, God knows how to deliver you. II. VISITATION. Mark the condescension which the psalmist feels that the Lord will thus manifest. "O visit me with Thy salvation." Lord, I cannot be saved unless Thou wilt visit me. Visit me not as a saved one, but "visit me with Thy salvation." I am lost until Thou dost come to me. O come, Lord, and visit me as a Saviour. Come and visit me as a Physician, for I am sick. Pay me a visit of mercy, a visit of grace and tenderness. O thou great and glorious Lord, I beseech Thee, come and visit me. By the remembrance of Bethlehem's manger, come and visit me. And, as the angels sang when Thou didst thus descend to the lowliest of lowliness, so shall my heart sing yet more sweetly if Thou wilt visit me,—even me. It will be a great condescension on Thy part, but "O visit me with Thy salvation." And it will be compassion, too, "O visit me." I am a prisoner; yet come, Lord, and visit me. I am lame and very weak. Lord, I have not a leg to carry me to Thy house; so come to my house, Lord. "O visit me." My heart is heavy, and sorely burdened; my very wishes lag, my prayers limp, my desires halt. O come and visit me. If I cannot come to Thee, yet come Thou to me, my God." But there is more in it even than that, there is also communion: "O visit me with Thy salvation." A visit from a beloved friend,—oh, what a joy it is! Most of you must have some friends who love you so much that, when they see you at their house, they do not want to know when you are going, but, if they could, they would make you always stop there. Dr. Watts went to see Sir Thomas Abney, at Abney Park, to spend a week; but that week lasted through all the rest of his life, for he never went away from there, and he lies buried in Abney Park, and Sir Thomas is buried there also, so that even in death the friends are not divided from one another. They never meant to part after they once came together. That is the kind of visit we want from the Lord, so let us breathe this prayer now, "O Lord, come and visit me; but do not merely pay me a brief visit, but come to stay with me." III. PERSONALITY. "Visit me." This petition of the psalmist shows great necessity, great unworthiness, and great concentration of desire. If anybody says that it is selfish to pray for yourself so

much, just ask him what he would do if he were drowning? Does anybody say that it is selfish for him to strike out and try to swim, or selfish to seize the lifebuoy that is thrown to him? If you were in a fire, and likely to be burned to death, would anybody call you selfish because you looked out for the fire-escape, and climbed on to it as soon as it touched your window? And when your very soul is in danger, it is a hallowed selfishness to seek first its salvation. If your own soul be lost, what can you do for the salvation of other people? If you perish, what benefit can you be to your fellow-men? Therefore, keep to this personal prayer till it is answered, and when it is, then pray for all others as earnestly as you have prayed for yourself. IV. Notice one thing more in this text, and that is, a SPECIALITY: "O visit me with Thy salvation,"—the kind of salvation he has been describing in this psalm, the salvation wrought by omnipotent grace, the salvation of enduring love. The psalmist prayed, "O visit me with Thy salvation," and by that he meant real salvation, a radical change, a thorough work of grace. God's salvation includes a perfect cleansing in the precious blood of Jesus, a supernatural work in renewing the heart, a resurrection work in raising the dead, and giving a new life. This salvation is also complete salvation. It saves the man from the love of sin. It not merely saves him from getting drunk, from lying, and from thieving, and from uncleanness; but it saves him within as well as without. It is a thorough renewal,—a work of grace that takes effect upon every part of his nature. Lastly, and chiefly, God's salvation is eternal salvation. A good old divine was once asked whether he believed in the final perseverance of the saints. "Well," said he, "I do not know much about that matter, but I firmly believe in the final perseverance of God, that where He has begun a good work He will carry it on until it is complete." To my mind, that truth includes the final perseverance of the saints; they persevere in the way of salvation because God keeps them in it. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The visit of salvation*:—Looked at from the standpoint of a true and sincere Christian, the one great salvation which runs through all his experience presents to his mind three distinct aspects. He contemplates a salvation of the past, a fact complete in itself, the starting-point of his new experiences, the commencement of his new life. But further, he recognizes a salvation of the present, a salvation that is going forward from day to day, a salvation which is as needful to the development and maintenance of the new life as the salvation of the past was to its commencement. And he looks forward to a salvation of the future, in which the life thus received and maintained will be crowned with glory, honour, and immortality, a salvation which shall lift him into a state in which danger is unknown, and in which therefore salvation is required no longer; so we may say, a state in which salvation shall be merged in glory. Let me offer a very simple illustration. We will suppose that this country is at war with some barbarous foe, and that a soldier, in whom our King is specially interested, has been captured by the enemy and condemned to death. Such a man is in present danger, and requires an instant salvation. Our King hears that he is to be executed, and he represents to the king with whom he is at war that he is particularly anxious that this man should not die, and backs the application with the offer of a large ransom. The terms are arranged, and the ransom is accepted. That moment the man is saved, saved by the King's grace. Such is the salvation of the past, to which the believer looks back with feelings of joyous certainty and of deep and fervent gratitude to Him who has rescued him from so great a death. But let us carry our illustration further. We will suppose that on his return home from that scene of terribly close danger the soldier approaches his sovereign to offer his thanks, and that he puts it to him, "I have saved you from death; now are you willing to fight my battles for me?" Surely, if the man has a spark of gratitude in his nature, his reply will be, "I am at your service, my King, from this time. My body and my blood are yours, and all my faculties, to my latest breath. Command what you will, I am ready." "Very well," replies his sovereign, "you shall go to the battle-field and fight my battles once more." But here, to complete our figure, we must suppose a thing impossible under the conditions of modern warfare. We will suppose that the King points to a suit of armour hanging mayhap on the wall. "Put on that suit of armour," he says, "and I will guarantee that as long as you wear it you will be safe, even in the midst of the battle—safe from all danger and death." Watch that man go forth to the battle. Here he is surrounded by danger. You ask the question, "Is he in danger, or is he not?" Look at him outwardly, and he is in great and unquestionable danger. Can you

not hear the whistling of the bullets as they fly around him? At any moment he may fall, so you think, until you are let into the secret of that mysterious armour; but then, when you see him wearing that armour in the midst of every danger, you know that, since nothing can touch him or harm him as long as he wears it, in the midst of danger he is being saved. It is clear, then, that his part in this matter of his continuous salvation consists in the carefulness with which he sees to it that he never omits to clothe himself in the panoply of safety. If he becomes careless and despises his foe, or forgets that his safety is dependent upon the provision which his King has made to ensure it, he may still fall, but the fault will be his own. Even so we are being saved so long as we trust to and appropriate to ourselves the Divine provision for our safety; but when we cease to walk by faith we cease to live in safety; we are no longer being saved. Let us look at another picture. The campaign ends at last in victory; the enemy is crushed and slain; the soldier returns in triumph to his native land. His salvation is complete now, because he is not only rescued, not only armed with an impervious suit, but he is saved from all possibilities of carelessness that might have exposed him afresh to the powers of the foe. He is received into the palace, and becomes a member of the royal household, and his perils are of the past. Even so are we to be saved when the long conflict which has run through all human history comes to its close, and the latest foe is crushed under our great Victor's feet; then shall we join the great company that no man can number in the cry—"Salvation unto our God and to the Lamb." (*W. H. M. H. Aitken, M.A.*) **That I may see the good of Thy chosen.**—*The good of God's chosen*.—I. GOD HAS A CHOSEN PEOPLE. That God does choose men is beyond question. Why, how, and when He chooses them, are quite a different matter. It will be enough if we point out that the people of Israel were chosen of God, to enjoy as a nation such a good and happy lot as should serve to set forth in a figure the spiritual good of the spiritual Israel of the future. Similarly, even now, God has His chosen ones, who, like the ancient Israel, are brought into a very close relation with Himself; only that those relations with God are spiritual, where the relations of Israel with God were national and ecclesiastical. But who are these chosen ones, and how are they distinguished from others? If any of you to whom I speak imagine that you are in a position to enjoy the good of God's chosen, just because of your membership in the outward Church and your participation in the external ordinances of religion, this utterance alone is surely enough to undeceive you. Called you certainly have been, but do you wear the wedding garment? Are you clothed with that "righteousness which is of God by faith"? God dwells in hearts that are submitted—willingly and cheerfully submitted—to Him in the obedience of faith. These are God's peculiar treasures in a world that disowns and rejects Him; they are His "people of possession," and no wonder that He should reserve for them some special good, of which others can know nothing, until they too join this favoured company. II. **THESE CHOSEN ONES HAVE A SPECIAL GOOD OF THEIR OWN.** It consists primarily in the possession of God. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Surely in a world where foes are strong, and we are only too conscious of our weakness, it is no small matter to enjoy the help of Omnipotence. And in a world where trials and troubles are so numerous, it is something to have a refuge open unto us whereunto we may always resort. Why should you condemn yourselves to perpetual restlessness, when you have God's own peace which passeth all understanding within your reach? Why should you prefer the evil of God's enemies, the cruel Nemesis which they bring upon their own heads, to the good which might be yours if you were His? Have you not had enough of weariness and restless toil? Why not listen to the voice to-night which proclaims, "Peace, peace to those that are far off, to those that are near"? Why not offer the prayer, "O visit me with Thy salvation, that I may see the good of Thy chosen"? (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 7. Our fathers understood not Thy wonders in Egypt.—*Sin: its spring-head, stream, and sea*.—Great things, whether good or evil, begin with little. The river that rolls its mighty volume to the sea was once a tiny brook; nay, it started as a spring-head, where the child stooped down to drink, and, with a single draught, seemed as if he would exhaust the supply. The rivulet ripples itself into a river. Sin is a stream of this sort. It starts with a thought; it increases to a resolve, a word, an act; it gathers force, and becomes habit, and daring rebellion. I. **WANT OF UNDERSTANDING OF GOD'S WONDERS IS THE SOURCE OF SIN.** Many pro-

losing Christians of whom we have a good hope that they will prove to be sincere, never had any deep conviction of sin, nor any overwhelming sense of their need of Jesus: hence they have seen little of our Lord in His glorious offices, and all-sufficient sacrifice, and have gained no thorough understanding of His truth. They are like slovenly farmers, who have ploughed their fields after a fashion, but they have not gone deep, and the land will never yield more than half a crop. We have all around us too much surface work. II. FAILURE OF MEMORY FOLLOWS UPON WANT OF UNDERSTANDING. 1. Mercies should be remembered. It is a great wrong to God when we bury His mercies in the grave of unthankfulness. Especially is this the case with distinguishing mercies, wherein the Lord makes us to differ from others. Light, when the rest of the land is in darkness! Life, when others are smitten with the sword of death! Liberty from an iron bondage! O Christians, these are not things to be forgotten! 2. Mercies multiplied should never be forgotten. If they are new every morning, our memory of them should be always fresh. Read the story of the ten plagues, and see how the Lord heaped up His mercies upon Israel with both His hands. Even if they had forgotten one wonder they ought to have remembered others. "Forget not all His benefits." 3. The Lord's mercies ought to be remembered progressively. We should think more and more of His exceeding kindness. III. GRIEVOUS PROVOCATION FOLLOWED THEIR FORGETFULNESS OF GOD. It is a high crime and misdemeanour to sin in the presence of a great mercy. Abhor the sin which dogs your heel, and follows you even to your knees, and hinders you in drawing near to God in prayer. Oh, the accursed sin which even on Tabor's top makes us fall asleep or talk foolishly! Lord, have mercy upon us, and forgive the sins of our holy places, and let it not stand against us in Thy book that "They provoked Thee at the sea, even at the Red Sea." (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The Israelites' ingratitude to God*.—I. THEIR UNWORTHY AND UNGRATEFUL DEPORTMENT TOWARDS GOD UPON A MOST SIGNAL MERCY AND DELIVERANCE. To provoke, is an expression setting forth a peculiar and more than ordinary degree of misbehaviour; and seems to import an insolent daring resolution to offend. A resolution not contented with one single stroke of disobedience, but such a one as multiplies and repeats the action, till the offence greatens, and rises into an affront: and as it relates to God, so I conceive it strikes at Him in a threefold respect: 1. Of His power; 2. Of His goodness; 3. Of His patience. II. THE AGGRAVATION OF THEIR UNWORTHY DEPORTMENT TOWARDS THEIR ALMIGHTY DELIVERER. The baseness and ingratitude of which He casts in their teeth, by confronting it with the eminent obligation laid upon them, by the glorious deliverance He vouchsafed them: a deliverance heightened and ennobled with these four qualifications: 1. Its greatness; 2. Its unexpectedness; 3. Its seasonableness; 4. Its undeservedness. III. THE CAUSE OF THIS UNWORTHY BEHAVIOUR, which was their not understanding the designs of mercy in the several instances of it: "They understood not Thy wonders in Egypt." Now, in every wonderful passage of providence, two things are to be considered: 1. The author, by whom; 2. The end, for which it is done: neither of which were understood by the Israelites as they ought to have been (R. South, D.D.)

Ver. 8. Nevertheless He saved them for His name's sake.—Why are men saved?—I. A GLORIOUS SAVIOUR—"He saved them." Who is to be understood by that pronoun "he"? Possibly many may answer, "Why, the Lord Jesus Christ is the Saviour of men." Right; but not all the truth. Jesus Christ is the Saviour; but not more so than God the Father, or God the Holy Ghost. Thou canst not be saved by the Son without the Father, nor by the Father without the Son, nor by Father and Son without the Spirit. But as they are one in creation, so are they one in salvation. But, note here, how this Divine being claims salvation wholly to Himself. "Nevertheless He saved them." But, Moses, where art thou? Didst not thou save them, Moses? Thou didst stretch the rod over the sea, and it clave in halves. And thou, Aaron, thou didst offer the bullocks which God accepted; thou didst lead them, with Moses, through the wilderness. Wast not thou their Saviour? They answer, "Nay, we were the instruments, but He saved them. God made use of us, but unto His name be all the glory, and none unto ourselves." But, Israel, thou wast a strong and mighty people; didst not thou save thyself? Perhaps it was by thine own holiness that the Red Sea was dried up; perhaps the parted floods were frightened at the piety of the saints that stood upon their margin; perhaps it was Israel that delivered itself.

Nay, nay, saith God's Word; He saved them; they did not save themselves, nor did their fellow-men redeem them. II. **THE FAVOURED PERSONS.** "He saved THEM." Who are they? In the first place, they were a stupid people—"Our fathers understood not Thy wonders in Egypt." In the next place, they were an ungrateful people—"they remembered not the multitude of Thy mercies." In the third place, they were a provoking people—"they provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea." Ah, these are the people whom free grace saves, these are the men and these the women whom the God of all grace condescends to take to His bosom and to make anew. III. **THE REASON OF SALVATION.** "For His name's sake." 1. He saved them, first, that He might manifest His nature. God was all love, and He wanted to manifest it; He did show it when He made the sun, the moon, and the stars, and scattered flowers o'er the green and laughing earth. He did show His love when He gave the air balmy to the body, and the sunshine cheering to the eye. "How can I show them that I love them with all My infinite heart? I will give My Son to die to save the very worst of them, and so will I manifest My nature." And God has done it; He has manifested His power, His justice, His love, His faithfulness, and His truth; He has manifested His whole self on the great platform of salvation. 2. He did it, again, to vindicate His name. Some say God is cruel; they wickedly call Him tyrant. "Ah!" says God, "but I will save the worst of sinners, and vindicate My name; I will blot out the stigma; they shall not be able to say that, unless they be liars, for I will be abundantly merciful. I will take away this stain, and they shall see that My great name is a name of love." And said He, again, "I will do this for My name's sake; that is, to make these people love My name. I know if I take the best of men, and save them, they will love My name; but if I take the worst of men, oh, how they will love me! If I go and take some of the offscouring of the earth, and make them My children, oh, how they will love Me! Then they will cleave to My name; they will think it more sweet than music; it will be more precious to them than the spikenard of the Eastern merchants; they will value it as gold, yea, as much fine gold. The man who loves Me best is the man who has most sins forgiven; he owes much, therefore he will love much." This is the reason why God often selects the worst of men to make them His. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Salvation entirely free:*—God is a sovereign and jealous of His prerogative. Especially is He jealous of the undivided honour of redeeming man from the degradation and ruins of the fall. In the salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ, He has taken, as it should seem, extraordinary pains to establish and illustrate this fact; for this reason; that therein He, or His name, is more deeply interested—that thereby His name is more highly magnified and more abundantly glorified, both in heaven and in earth, than by any other of His most stupendous works. I. **THE NATURE OF THE SALVATION GRANTED TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD.** It is a spiritual and eternal salvation—a salvation of the sinner from the power, the love, the pollution, the practice, and the punishment of sin. II. **UPON WHAT GROUNDS OR UPON WHAT TERMS THIS SALVATION IS VOUCHSAFED.** "For His name's sake." By the name of God we may understand His person and attributes. For the sake, therefore, of illustrating His power, mercy, wisdom, truth and faithfulness, justice and holiness, He devised the great work of redemption. III. **IN OPPOSITION TO WHAT IMPEDIMENTS THIS SALVATION IS VOUCHSAFED.** "Nevertheless He saved them"—nevertheless what? In spite of what, according to the calculations of reason and of conscience, were utterly insuperable difficulties. But, blessed be God, His "thoughts are not as our thoughts." Notwithstanding therefore the sins of Israel were so numerous and so heinous He saved them; and to judge of their enormity you have only to consult this psalm—by which it appears they were guilty of the most abominable idolatries, of the blackest ingratitude, of the most determined rebellion. Notwithstanding all which God "saved them for His name's sake." Yes, and so likewise are we encouraged to hope that He will save us. (*Essex Remembrancer.*)

Ver. 9. **He rebuked the Red Sea also.**—*Israel at the Red Sea.*—No doubt the children of Israel supposed that now all was over; the Egyptians had sent them away, entreating them to depart, and loading them with riches. They said within themselves, "We shall now march to Canaan at once; there will be no more dangers, no more trials." "Not quite so speedily," says God; "the time is not arrived yet for you to rest. It is true I have delivered you from Egypt; but there is much you have to learn before you will be prepared to dwell in Canaan. Therefore I shall

lead you about, and instruct you, and teach you." I. The children of Israel just now had **THREE DIFFICULTIES**—three exceeding great dangers. And so I believe that every heir of heaven, within a very short period after the time of his deliverance, will meet with the same. 1. The first they had was a great trial sent by God Himself. There was the Red Sea in the front of them. Now, it was not an enemy that put the sea there; it was God Himself. We may therefore think, that the Red Sea represents some great and trying providence, which the Lord will be sure to place in the path of every new-born child; in order to try his faith, and to test the sincerity of his trust in God. 2. Then the children of Israel had a second difficulty. They would not have cared about the Red Sea a single atom, if they had not been terrified by the Egyptians who were behind them. These are the representatives of those sins of ours which we thought were clean dead and gone. The pangs after we come out of Egypt are at times even more painful than those we feel in the house of bondage; and there is usually a time of trial a little while after the new birth, which is even more terrible and awful than the previous agony of the soul, though not usually so protracted. 3. But there was a third difficulty, which perhaps wrought them more misery than either of the other two; these poor children of Israel had such faint hearts. They no sooner saw the Egyptians than they began to cry out; and when they beheld the Red Sea before them, they murmured against their Deliverer. A faint heart is the worst foe a Christian can have; whilst he keeps his faith firm, whilst the anchor is fixed deep in the rock, he never need fear the storm; but when the hand of faith is palsied, or the eye of faith is dim, it will go hard with us. II. But, thanks be to God! the children of Israel had **THREE HELPS**. Oh! child of God, dost thou discern this mystery? Whenever thou hast three trials, thou wilt always have three promises; and if thou hadst forty afflictions, thou wouldst have forty measures of grace. 1. The first help they had was Providence. Providence put the Red Sea there, and piled the rocks on either hand, while providence represented by the fiery cloudy pillar had led them to its shore, and conducted them into the defile, and now the same pillar of providence came to their assistance. They had not come thither undirected, and therefore they should not be left unprotected, for the same cloudy pillar which led them there came behind them to protect them. Cheer up, then, heir of grace! What is thy trial? Has providence brought it upon thee? If so, unerring wisdom will deliver thee from it. 2. Again: the children of Israel had another refuge, in the fact that they knew that they were the covenant people of God, and that, though they were in difficulties, God had brought them there, and therefore God was bound in honour to bring them out of that trouble into which He had brought them. "Well," says the child of God, "I know I am in a strait, but this one thing I also know, that I did not come out of Egypt by myself—I know that He brought me out; I know that I did not escape by my own power, or slay my first-born sins myself—I know that He did it; and though I fled from the tyrant—I know that He made my feet mighty for travel, for there was not one feeble in all our tribes; I know that though I am at the Red Sea, I did not run there uncalled, but He bade me go there, and therefore I give to the winds my fears; for if He hath led me here into this difficulty, He will lead me out, and lead me through." 3. The third refuge which the children of Israel had was in a man; and neither of the two others, without that, would have been of any avail. It was the man Moses. He did everything for them. Thy greatest refuge, O child of God! in all thy trials, is in a man: not in Moses, but in Jesus; not in the servant, but in the master. He is interceding for thee, unseen and unheard by thee, even as Moses did for the children of Israel. Look! on yonder rock of heaven He stands, cross in hand, even as Moses with his rod. Cry to Him, for with that uplifted cross He will cleave a path for thee, and guide thee through the sea; He will make those hoary floods, which had been friends for ever, stand asunder like foes. Call to Him, and He will make thee a way in the midst of the ocean, and a path through the pathless sea. III. GOD HAD A DESIGN IN IT. And here, also, we wish you to regard with attention what God's design is, in leading the Christian into exceeding great trials in the early part of his life. "They were all baptized," says the apostle, "unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea." God's design in bringing His people into trouble, and raising all their sins at their heels, is to give them a thorough baptism into His service, consecrating them for ever to Himself. I mean by baptism this morning, not the rite, but what baptism represents. Baptism signifies dedication to God—initiation into God's service. It is not when

we are first converted that we so fully dedicate ourselves to God, as afterwards, when some great Red Sea rolls before us. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 13-15. They soon forgot His works.—*God's praises sung; His works forgotten*:—The conduct of the Israelites, as here described, affords a striking exemplification of that spurious gratitude, which often bursts forth in a sudden flash, when dreaded evils are averted, or unexpected favours bestowed; but expires with the occasion that gave it birth; a gratitude resembling the joy excited in an infant's breast by the gift of some glittering toy, which is received with rapture, and pleases for an hour; but when the charm of novelty vanishes, is thrown aside with indifference; and the hand that bestowed it is forgotten. 1. A person unacquainted with human nature, who should witness for the first time some striking exhibition of national gratitude, would not, indeed, suspect this to be its character. Such a person, while listening to the rapturous ascriptions of praise poured forth by the Israelites on the shore of the Red Sea, would have little expected to hear them, within three days, impiously murmuring against that God, whose goodness they had so recently experienced, and so loudly acknowledged. And as little, perhaps, would such a person be prepared to anticipate the scenes, which usually attend, and follow our days of public thanksgiving. 2. Some instances, in which the works and perfections of Jehovah engage our attention; excite our natural affections; and, perhaps, call forth expressions of praise; but produce no salutary effects upon our temper or conduct; and are soon forgotten. (1) The first, which I shall notice, is furnished by the works of creation; or, as they are often, though not very properly called, the works of nature. In so impressive a manner do these works present themselves to our senses; so much of variety, and beauty, and sublimity do they exhibit; such power, and wisdom, and goodness do they display; that perhaps no man, certainly no man who possesses the smallest share of sensibility, taste, or mental cultivation, can, at all times, view them without emotion; without feelings of awe, or wonder, or admiration, or delight. But alas, how transient, how unproductive of salutary effects, have all these emotions proved! (2) A second instance of a similar nature is afforded by the manner in which men are often affected by God's works of providence. In these works His perfections are so constantly, and often so clearly displayed; our dependence on them is at all times so real, and, sometimes, so apparent; and they bear, in many cases, so directly and evidently upon our dearest temporal interests, that even the most insensible cannot, always, regard them with indifference. Here nations and individuals stand on precisely the same level. Both are equally, that is entirely, dependent on the providence of God; and both are occasionally constrained to feel and acknowledge their dependence. But the feeling is usually transient; and the acknowledgment is forgotten almost as soon as it is made. How often have we seen Christian nations, when scourged by war, pestilence, or famine, and when the help of man was evidently vain, addressing public and united supplications to Heaven for relief. And as often have we seen them, after relief was obtained, singing with apparent thankfulness, "*Te Deum laudamus*,"—Thee, O God, we praise; and then proceeding without delay to repeat those sins, the punishment of which had just been removed. (3) But once more, let us turn, for further illustrations of this subject, to our families, and to ourselves. On reviewing our personal and domestic history we shall all find too many instances, in which, though we may have sung God's praises, we have forgotten His works. 3. Men are willing to offer God praises and thanksgivings, because it is an offering which costs them nothing; and because, while it seems to shield them from the charge of ingratitude, it involves the renunciation of no favourite sin; the performance of no disagreeable duty; the practice of no self-denial. But they are not willing to make those constant returns for God's goodness, which He deserves and requires, because this is, in their estimation, an expensive offering; because it implies sacrifices, which they are not disposed to make, and an attention to duties, which they dislike to perform. (*E. Payson, D.D.*) *Spiritual declension*:—We have here some of the greatest words in human history, and some of the most vivid experiences of human life. We have all believed, praised, forgotten, and tempted. What is now our duty? If that question can be answered directly and solemnly and with due effect in the life, this will be as a birthtime, memorable through all the ages that are yet to dawn upon our life. "Then believed they His words." When He rebuked the Red Sea, and it was dried up, etc. Any credit due to them? Not one whit. "Blessed are they

that have not seen and yet have believed." This brings us into the region of personal providential deliverances, and we have all been in that hallowed region. That such deliverances do occur every man who has read his life with any attention will instantly attest. Our whole life is a providential deliverance. So blind are we, so foolish, that we expect only to see God in the miracle that is occasional, rather than in the miracle that is constant. Now the tone changes, the wind goes round to a bitter quarter—"they soon forgot His works." How easy it is to forget favours. How possible it is to give so many favours to an ungrateful person as to cause that person to imagine he has a right to claim them as his due. The giving of favours where gratitude is not kept up proportionately with the gift is a heart-hardening process. "They soon forgot." Religious impression is most transitory. Beautiful as the morning dew while it lasts, it exhales, and we see no rainbow in the sky. It vanishes, it perishes, unless it be diligently seized and wisely deepened, yea, even cultured with all a husbandman's patient care, until it blooms into flower or develops into fruit, and is fit for the Master's plucking. Frail is the thread that binds us to heaven, mean and weak the threadlet that attaches us to the altar and the Church—a breath may break it, a little splutter of flame may crack it, and then our life may be lost. Perhaps the catastrophe ended at forgetfulness? No; further reading gives denial to that happy hope. The reading is black, and proceeds thus: "They lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert." They believed, they lusted, they sang, they tempted. It is such swift oscillation that we find in our own consciousness and experience of religious things. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Evanescent goodness and inveterate carnalism*:—

I. EVANESCENT GOODNESS (vers. 12, 13; Ex. xiv. 31; xv. 1-19). 1. It leaves the soul with increased guilt. It implies an abuse of the highest influences of God. 2. It leaves the soul with a decreased capability of improvement. The longer a man continues a mere hearer of the Gospel, the less likelihood is there that he will be saved by it. What effect can the beauties of the fair creation have on one whose eyes are sealed in blindness? Or the harmonies of the universe on one whose ears are deeply closed to every sound? And what effect can Christianity have on a soul whose sensibilities are gone? II. INVETERATE CARNALISM (vers. 14, 15). The more you pamper the body, the more you pauperize the soul. A sadder sight know I not than that of an individual, family, nation, surrounded with material abundance, and yet "lean" in soul, matter governing mind, plethoric bodies the residence of starving souls. CONCLUSION.—Take care of religious impressions. Do not trifle with them. Entertain them and cherish them into holy principles of action. Take care also of material prosperity. Labour not for the bread that perisheth. (*Homilist.*) *On speculative faith, and ingratitude to God in practice*:—The same wise and good Being, who hath fitted the whole frame of this world to the various wants of His creatures, hath fitted the events of things to our reformation and moral improvement. Were they to be considered as events only, it would be folly not to learn from them; but as they are lessons intended by Heaven for our instruction, it is impiety also. Now, the obvious method of securing events of importance, both from oblivion and misconstruction, is, by appointing stated and solemn commemorations of them. God Himself hath done this, to preserve a just sense of His works of creation and redemption; but the celebration of His providential goodness He hath left, as it was natural, to human care. I. THE NATURE OF THE BLESSING WHICH WE COMMEMORATE. II. WHAT BEHAVIOUR THE GREAT EVENT WHICH WE COMMEMORATE PRESCRIBES; WHAT IS THE COUNSEL WHICH GOD HATH GIVEN US BY IT. The greatest part of the instruction, indeed, must arise from our sufferings; but the whole power of making advantage of it arises from our deliverance. And our sufferings being caused by mutual vehemence, and our deliverance being effected in peace; both may well dispose us to a mild consideration of what they teach. (*T. Secker.*) *The unthankful heart*:—Dr. O. W. Holmes says, "If one should give me a dish of sand, and tell me there were particles of iron in it, I might look with my eyes for them, and search for them with my clumsy fingers and be unable to find them; but let me take a magnet and sweep it, and how it would draw to itself the most invisible particles by the power of attraction. The unthankful heart, like my fingers in the sand, discovers no mercies; but let the thankful heart sweep through the day, and, as the magnet finds the iron, so it will find in every hour some heavenly blessings: only the iron in God's sand is gold." He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.—*Lust and leanness*:—This

passage is not only a masterly interpretation of the motive and movement of certain chapters of undoubted history, but one of those characteristic accurate photographs of human nature with which the Scriptures abound. In the language of the stage here is a transformation scene, a quick transition from joy, hope, praise, to sadness, despair, and bitter complaining. We have no difficulty in discovering the wisdom and tenderness of the Divine dealing when it intervenes for our extrication or harmonizes with our wish; we are equally ready to denounce its injustice and pitilessness when it crosses our plan. The Christian mother, praying for the recovery of her sick child, adds, as she has been taught, "Not my will, but Thine, be done." If the child recovers she devoutly gives God the praise; if it dies she says, "I cannot understand this." Yet she believes the other life to be infinitely better than this, and humbly hopes that she and all her family may one day know its joy. I speak not now of sorrow, but of rebellion and bitterness. So is it with every inferior mystery—for every other is inferior to this mystery of death and bereavement—our praises depend upon compliance with our wishes. How small and foolish the petulance and resentments of your child appear when by some denial or exaction you have done what you knew to be best! Did you ever think how exceedingly childish your bitter thoughts and complainings must seem to the Father in heaven? But here is another pregnant suggestion: "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls." You have looked upon a withered and sunken human form in the coffin, from which disease and the agony of dissolution had driven out almost the last trace of resemblance to the same form in health. Is that the suggestion here?—a shrivelled and shrunken spiritual nature, lean and ghastly, atrophied through ill-usage and neglect, withered by worldliness? Man's darling desire is often such as to interfere with God's purpose for him. We need constantly to have emphasized the truth that God's anxiety is for man's spiritual fatness and prosperity; and when the human wish refuses to yield to the Divine purpose there can be but one result—leanness of soul. The time is to come when the supreme question concerning human pleasures and pursuits will be, "Will they minister to the spiritual growth—that is, to the highest and best in man?" rather than that most commonly heard query of this day, "How will they affect the physical and material prosperity?" The lesson of this incident in the record of Israel, as well as of the passing years, is, wait for God to prove Himself; see what He will do. His past dealings being an unimpeachable pledge for the future. If we could believe that He knows what is best and will do it, that His ideals are the true ones, and the spiritual is infinitely more to be valued than anything temporal, life would have a new meaning and beauty and richness for us, and out of it would come diviner influences to cheer our fellow-men. (*W. L. Phillips, D.D.*) *Realized desires often injurious to the soul.*—The inquiry, "what is good for a man in this life?" is not easily answered, because the answer must be determined by the social condition and material circumstances, by the mental capacity and physical state of those interested in the inquiry—that is to say, what is good for one man will be questionable, or, perhaps, injurious for another. 1. Even the best of men may and do sometimes desire that which is good in itself, but which is not really good for them to receive. 2. God sometimes grants our requests even when they are not in accordance with His will, nor for our good. He permits us to realize the things desired, allows us to climb the heights upon which we had fixed our gaze. He gives us our own way, but our success is no indication of His approval, or of our wisdom, nor is it a guarantee of present happiness or future well-being. 3. Whatever we realize, however good it may be in itself, in answer to desires which have not been submitted to the Divine will, is questionable if not injurious. I. THE OPERATION OF THIS LAW. 1. The spirit which prompts a desire which we are unwilling to submit to God's wisdom and disposal, must be prejudicial to religion, whether it is entertained by an ungodly person, by one seeking to know the truth, or by one who has long known the way of righteousness, because the manifestation of such desire is expressed opposition to God, and must alienate the heart, more or less, from Him. 2. The efforts made by us to realize what we desire, but ought not to receive at the time and in the way we wish, are generally unfavourable to religion, if they do not undermine and dissipate it. That which is desired, when realized, being realized under such circumstances, must be injurious rather than helpful to a life of religion, because you have a wish fulfilled in opposition to God's will—a good received which is not good for you, and this which you desired, and now.

possess, comes between your soul and God, between your spiritual need and your greatest good. No wonder, then, that you lose interest in religion, tire of the ways of piety, and that your zeal and love and devotion decline, your joys diminish, and your hopes become darkened. II. THE GENERAL APPLICATION OF THIS LAW. And here comes before us the appalling fact that the law is universal, unvarying and potent; and we can escape it only by submitting our desires and requests to God, and by acquiescing in all His arrangements. 1. This law applies to individuals, whatever be the positions they occupy, or the circumstances by which they are surrounded. 2. This law operates not only in individuals, but in communities, in nations. Let a people thirst for glory, for distinction, for conquest, let them desire to be in advance of all other nations, and all this without consulting God's will or seeking His glory. Such a nation may realize their desires, but it is more than probable that the manners and lives of the people will be corrupted, and that religious life will sink to a low ebb or pass away altogether. 3. This law is true in respect to churches. Let a people desire a grand and imposing structure for its own sake, to gratify their vanity and pride, and to place them in advance of the churches in the locality, their ambition may be gratified, but it is more than probable that their religious life will wane, and it will be a great mercy if they have not to say in reference to their religion, "The glory has departed." III. THE TEACHING OF THIS LAW. 1. There is much in this world good in itself that we can well do without. 2. Every supposed good does not, when realized, answer all our expectations. "All is not gold that glitters." Lot knew something of this by a prolonged sojourn in Sodom. 3. It is better to be without the seeming good and retain our piety and interest in religion than to realize that good and lose the freshness and vigour of spiritual things, and endanger our everlasting well-being. 4. We should learn to submit all our desires to God. 5. Let us remember that with an increase of material good we require a corresponding measure of Divine grace. 6. In how many the text has been or will be even everlastingly fulfilled. May our desires be controlled and sanctified by our Father in heaven, and we be ever able to say, "Not my will, but Thine be done." (*John James.*) *Soul leanness*.—I. As existing in CONNECTION with material prosperity. 1. This combination is general. Everywhere we see great material prosperity associated with spiritual destitution—great physical feasting and spiritual starving, great material wealth and spiritual pauperism. 2. This combination is deplorable. A sadder sight to a holy eye there cannot be than an individual, family, nation, surrounded with material abundance, and yet lean in soul, matter governing mind—bodies living tombs of souls. II. As existing BECAUSE OF material prosperity. Why should material prosperity bring spiritual leanness? 1. Not because it is Divinely designed to do so. God does not make a man materially rich in order spiritually to starve him. The design of all His goodness to man is to lead him to repentance. 2. Not because there is any inherent tendency to do so. A man in possession of an abundance of material good is supplied with abundance of motives and facilities that tend to spiritual excellence. A condition of material prosperity is, we think, more favourable in itself to a cultivation of spiritual goodness than that of material poverty. The man of a well-fed body is especially bound to have a well-fed soul; the man with material wealth is especially bound to secure spiritual treasures. But in the case before us the material prosperity was the cause of spiritual leanness, and why? Because the material good was sought as the chief end. How general this is here in our England in this age! Desire for wealth is the all-absorbing passion, and hence souls are morally lean and dwarfed. (*Homilist.*) *Short-sighted supplications*.—I. GOD HAS IN ALL AGES REVEALED HIMSELF AS THE HEARER AND ANSWERER OF PRAYER. The Lord has not only heard the petitions of His people, and amply rewarded their faith in Him, but He has shown that "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Just as the clouds of the skies which ascend from the earth in imperceptible vapours, revisit the ground in rich and abundant showers, so prayer, which goes forth in weak and imperfect approaches to heaven, returns in full and enlarged answers. "No human creature can believe," said Luther, "how powerful is prayer, and what it is able to effect, except those who have learned by experience." Perhaps there is no one direction in which the fruit of successful prayer is so distinctly discernible as in the great sacred peace which it produces in the heart of the suppliant. II. THE WISDOM AND MERCY OF GOD ARE AS REAL IN THE DELAYS AND EVEN THE DENIALS OF PRAYER AS IN THE ANSWERS HE GRACIOUSLY

VOUCHERSAFES. Moses earnestly entreated that he might go into the good land, but it was denied him; yet the Lord showed him the earthly country, and then took him to the better land. David prayed for the life of Bathsheba's child, but he prevailed not; yet his God heard his prayer, and gave him a son honourably born, and rarely endowed. As in the Saviour's dealings with the Syrophenician woman; beneath the Lord's seeming, "No," so to us often there is hidden a better "Yes" than we have dared to hope or to think. Paul prayed that "the thorn in the flesh" might be removed; but he had to learn that the all-sustaining support of God's grace is better than exemption from suffering and trial. When our petitions seem changed in the answers we receive to them, it is for our good always. Leighton says, "God regards our well more than our will." III. WE MAY WELL EXPEND OUR CHIEF IMPORTUNITY ON THE BEST GIFTS, SINCE WE HAVE THE PROMISE THAT "ALL OTHER THINGS SHALL BE ADDED THEREUNTO." "Covet earnestly the best gifts." These are enjoyments which are congenial to our spiritual nature: they afford real solid satisfaction, their possession is perpetual, they ennoble and dignify us, they make their subject a blessing to men and glorious to God. In their pursuit we cannot be too earnest, ambitious, or covetous. IV. WORLDLY GOOD IS DEARLY PURCHASED AT THE COST OF SPIRITUAL GAIN. "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls." Many a well-spread table has proved a snare, a trap, and a stumbling-block—often injury to health is the price paid for the poor gratification, or else satisfaction and delight in the enjoyment are removed. Worse still is the case of the unhappy victim who finds worldly enjoyments to be an oil feeding the fires of corruption, which might otherwise have been extinguished. It is natural to us to desire a large measure of worldly prosperity, the gratification of our wishes, and the increase of our possessions. It is gracious to be willing to defer all to the Divine disposal, in the conviction that nothing can be a blessing which is injurious to the soul. (*W. G. Lewis.*) *Our own way not the best way.*—It is an awful circumstance, and yet it is true, that our mercies may be our curses; that our desire may prove our ruin. It may strike some of you that it is a harsh, or at least a mysterious feature of the Divine dealings with us that He may give us, or may permit us to acquire, what will work in us and for us sore mischief; and that it would be more merciful to withhold from us whatever will injure us. But let us see for a moment how far such a principle would carry us. It should be quite enough for us to know that whatsoever God doeth is right. This indeed is involved in our very conception of God, if we invest Him with the attributes of infinite wisdom, justice, and goodness. We can be more certain of the fact that God acts wisely and best, than we can be certain that our interpretations are right of any act of His that seems hard and cruel. Not to believe and trust Him where we cannot comprehend Him, is not to believe and trust Him at all, but to make our own reason the measure of our faith. If, then, we see His gifts becoming curses instead of blessings, let us not accuse Him because they are His gifts. As all man's toil is profitless without the blessing of God, so it may be said, when man succeeds in his labours and endeavours after any fancied good, God gives him his request. We have now to look at the other side of this picture. The man, you will say, who has obtained the object of his desire, whether through prayer or toil, ought to be happy. Who would not envy him? He sows and reaps abundantly; he casts his nets into the sea, and brings them up full of fish; all his bargains end in gain, he might have in his possession the philosopher's stone which turns all it touches into gold. But there is a dark set-off against all this. When you come to look down through the man's circumstances into himself, you find what the psalmist here terms leanness; and by leanness he means waste, emaciation, loss of strength and beauty; the leanness you sometimes see in a body when there is some fatal mischief at work which prevents the assimilation of the food, and day by day reduces the man until the spirit seems ready to leave its frail tenement. What is this leanness of soul? How shall we discover its presence in ourselves or in others? 1. By its trust in outward things. Grace is needed by every man, but great grace is needed by the man who gets his request. It is not easy to carry a full cup, to walk with a steady head and unfaltering step on the high places of prosperity, to have many of God's earthly blessings, and yet to trust in God alone. The eclipsing power of success is fearful. 2. Another symptom of spiritual leanness, and one of the results of having our request, is self-pleasing. How many men there are who have been earnest labourers in the vineyard of Christ during the early years of their life while they

were comparatively poor, but who now are seen nowhere among the vines, who are digging nowhere, planting nowhere, pruning nowhere, training nowhere. And it is not that sickness has disabled them, it is not that old age has called them to enjoy its well-merited rest, it is not that the arrangements of providence have precluded all further active toil. It is nothing but the melancholy consequence of their having received their request. Their very success has been their snare. 8. I will mention but one more symptom, or rather class of symptoms, which may be all ranged under one head, loss of sympathy with all that helps to build up the spiritual life. Is it possible to lose this sympathy? Possible—do we need to ask it? Is it not our besetting danger? Are we not warned against it? Have we not known it? Our text speaks to us as with the voice of a trumpet, and rings out the great and impressive truth that we cannot be too guarded in our petitions, or in our desires for merely temporal things. It is certain that in Scripture we have no encouragement to ask for any great measure of them. The necessities seem to define the limit, for in that Divine scheme of prayer our Saviour has left us we find the modest petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." Beyond these necessities all else should be sought in very humble and willing subordination to the will of God. For who of us knows what beyond these is good for us? (*E. Mellor, D.D.*) *Prayer for wrong things*:—Chactas, the blind old sachem in Chateaubriand's Wertherian romance, is made to bring the story to an end by relating a parable to his woe-fraught young listener. It tells how the Meschacebé, soon after leaving its source among the hills, began to feel weary of being a simple brook, and so asked for snows from the mountains, water from the torrents, rain from the tempests, until, its petitions granted, it burst its bounds and ravaged its hitherto delightful banks. At first the proud stream exulted in its force, but seeing ere long that it carried desolation in its flow, that its progress was now doomed to solitude, and that its waters were for ever turbid, it came to regret the humble bed hollowed out for it by nature, the birds, the flowers, the trees, and the brooks, hitherto the modest companions of its tranquil course. (*F. Jacox.*) *Prosperity and degeneration*:—A striking incident illustrating the liberty one feels when trusting Christ implicitly to supply all his needs is here related: A rich lady, when asked by her pastor to help a cause dear to her heart in her previous comparative poverty, and to which she gave one pound then, proffered him five shillings. Her pastor called her attention to the surprising and ominous change. "Ah," said she, "when day by day I had to look to God for my daily bread, I had enough and to spare; now I have to look to my ample income, and I am all the time haunted with the fear of losing it and coming to want. I had the guinea heart when I had the shilling means; now I have the guinea means and the shilling heart." (*Christian Age.*)

Vers. 16-18. They envied Moses.—*Religious envy and its doom*:—I. RELIGIOUS ENVY. 1. Envy is the chief in many respects of the principalities and powers of darkness in the soul. 2. But for many reasons religious envy is the worst kind of envy. (1) It is the most unreasonable. For in religious possessions there can be no monopoly. The man who envies another on account of his wealth may reason, "Because he has so much, I have so little"; but not so in spiritual riches. (2) It is the most impious. The more true religion a man has in him, the more he pleases and honours his Maker. To envy a man on this account, therefore, implies hostility to Heaven. II. Its doom (vers. 17, 18). It is here suggested—1. That the evil passions of mankind are offensive to the Almighty. 2. That nature is every moment at the disposal of its Maker. 3. That material events symbolize spiritual realities. Envy is a ruinous passion. It is like a whirlpool; it draws down into ruinous abysses all the faculties and powers of human nature. (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 19-23. They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image.—*The idolatry of man and the indignation of Heaven*:—I. THE IDOLATRY OF MAN (vers. 19, 20). 1. The strength of the religious instinct. Man must have a God. If he loses the true one, he will create a false one. 2. An unrighteous compliance with a popular demand. The preacher who ministers to the prejudices and tastes of his people, commits the same sin as Aaron did when he made the "golden calf." 3. The force of early habit. Before his figure they had been wont to bow in Egypt, and by the instinct of habit they cried out for his figure now in

the wilderness. To see God everywhere is one thing; to make everything God, is another. The one is right, binding, and useful; and the other is wrong, sinful, and pernicious. II. THE INDIGNATION OF HEAVEN (ver. 23). All this idolatry and forgetfulness were offensive to Him, and He determined on their destruction. Why did He not strike the fatal blow at once? "Moses His chosen stood before Him," etc. See here the marvellous efficacy of prayer. The Bible teaches that "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," and gives us many instances of this; but how it affects God I know not. Let us grasp the fact and live accordingly. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 24-31. **Yea, they despised the pleasant land.**—*The persistency of sin, the retribution of God, and the influence of saints*.—I. THE AWFUL PERSISTENCY OF SIN (vers. 24, 25, 28). You may reason with the sinner, convince him both of the folly and wrongness of his conduct. Trial after trial may come down upon him in consequence of his wicked conduct. You may threaten him with the terrors of death and the terrible retribution of the life beyond, still he continues blindly, and madly he pursues his course (Jer. xiii. 23). II. THE FEARFUL RETRIBUTION OF GOD (ver. 29). 1. It was justly deserved. How great the provocation! The conscience of every sufferer will attest the justice of his fate. 2. It was a warning to others. The punishment that befalls one sinner says to every sinner, "Take care." God punishes, not for the sake of inflicting pain, but for the sake of doing good. It is to arrest the progress of sin, which is a curse to the universe. III. THE SOCIAL INFLUENCE OF SAINTS (ver. 30). Phinehas interposed as a magistrate to suppress sin and check its progress. This act of his was approved of God as a righteous act. It was rewarded by God by a perpetual priesthood (Num. xxv. 10). It is said that "one sinner destroyeth much good," but one saint may destroy more evil. Not until the last day, if then, shall we know the enormous amount of good that one good man may render to his age and even to his race. (*Homilist.*) *Contempt of the pleasant land*.—Take the text as descriptive of the feeling of too many Christians towards that in which we all profess our faith as the life everlasting or the life of the world to come. "They thought scorn of that pleasant land." Ours is a freethinking and it is an outspoken generation. It is by no means uncommon to hear men say now, Give me earth and I will give you heaven. I cannot realize, and I see no beauty in, the life of that world. You tell me that it has streets of gold and gates of pearl. It is an orientalism of exaggeration which conveys to me no meaning at all. If it did convey a meaning, it would be an unattractive one. I greatly prefer the Old Testament phraseology. I can understand a land of wheat and barley, of fountains and streams, which God cares for, and upon which His eyes are open from the beginning to the end of the year. Such a land, with the addition of a wiping away of tears from all eyes and a cessation of pain and grief and death, speaks for itself. But you have made it so figurative, so metaphorical, so grotesque, that I cannot admire and I cannot long for it. "They thought scorn of that pleasant land." I can see many things to account for this. I can suggest perhaps a few things in correction of it. Theologians and mystics have so described that land as to make it unlovely. They have painted it to the manly and the vigorous, to the large-hearted and the active-minded, as a world of absolute repose, of perpetual quiescence. They have painted it to the feeble and the invalid and the languid and the weary as a scene of perpetual devotions, of a day never clouded and a night as bright as the day—of a praise never silent, a sabbath never ending, a congregation never breaking up. The one kind of men demanded an activity which is absolutely refused them; the other a repose, spiritual as well as physical, which is resolutely shut out. All these descriptions are quite conjectural. Scripture tells of a new heaven and a new earth, and expressly adds in explanation this particular—"wherein dwelleth righteousness." How can righteousness dwell in a land of mere inertia, mere torpor, or even unintermitted praise and song? Does not the very choice of the word suggest to us, though without detailing, a multitude of relationships, old perhaps as well as new, which shall give full scope to all the energies and all the activities which have here been coerced and counteracted alike by the weakness of the flesh and by the unwillingness of the spirit? Amongst all negatives and all conjectures, expanding the vision of the great future without stint or limit, we have one certainty and one positive—and with it we conclude. "His servants shall serve Him—they shall see His face—His name shall be in their foreheads." Whose servants? whose

face? whose name? Look above—you will find the answer in that great combination—"God and the Lamb." Yet not their servants but His servants—not their faces but His face—not their names but His name. Who now shall dare to think scorn of that pleasant land? God is there—there in a sense in which He is not here. "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty," as He can only be seen in "the land that is very far off." Who shall speak of that land in a tone half of condescension—"Yea, if I must go hence, I will consent to go thither"? Shall any one indeed find entrance there who can only say, I will not refuse—I have no objection? (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Contempt of the inheritance*:—I. THE PLEASANT LAND. Palestine was a country in many views highly desirable—in itself compact, and possessing special facilities of commerce with Asia, Africa, and Europe, all the known quarters of the globe. As to its intrinsic character, we have it portrayed in Deut. viii. 7-9. Palestine, in all the glory of culture, must have been a "pleasant land." We know, however, that this country, with all its distinguishing institutions, formed but a shadow of better things to come; and it becomes us now to be enjoying a land still more pleasant. The Kingdom of God has come to many thousands, has come with power; and its blessings, to which those of Judea were not for a moment to be compared, are brought nigh to the remotest and most unworthy. Its inhabitants He hath delivered from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them. Their depraved and perverse hearts He renovates by the agency of His good Spirit, purifying them unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Whatever fightings they may have, they have peace with God; whatever vicissitudes, an immovable kingdom; whatever sorrows, everlasting consolation; whatever poverty, unsearchable riches; whatever disappointments and repulses, victory at last over sin and death and the grave. But I would point you to another land, in which the emblem of the text finds a more perfect accomplishment. True, we are here favoured with a morning, and the morning star shines bright: yet it is only the morning, and the shadows of the night largely intermingle with the dawning of the day. But in that "better country which is an heavenly," sunshine is qualified by shadow no longer. There Jesus appears in all that glory which He had with the Father before the world was—the distinctive glory of mediatorial triumph and recompense enhancing His Divine effulgence—and "the nations of them that are saved do walk in His light." II. CONTEMPT OF THE PLEASANT LAND. "Every gift of God is good and nothing to be despised." Nay, not only are manifest mercies to be gratefully acknowledged, but we are forbidden to despise the chastening of the Lord, and enjoined to count it all joy when we fall into manifold temptations or trials. And how, then, can God look upon our conduct without anger when we treat with contempt a promised inheritance? As to the liability to this sin, it might appear that our inheritance being more valuable than that of the ancient and literal Canaan, it would be less readily and less probably disparaged. But alas! the things of God are not so appreciable to natural and unaided perception. The eye sees not their beauty, the ear hears not their melody, the nostrils smell not their odour, the tongue tastes not their deliciousness. We have had samples of heaven itself; its righteousness has come down to us; its celestial truth has been proclaimed to our guilty and perishing world; and humanity has discredited and disrelished all. III. THE SOURCE OF THE ISRAELITES' CONTEMPT. "They believed not His word." If we had only full confidence in the Saviour, if we but eyed Him with a completion and constancy of trust at all commensurate with His trustworthiness, what distressing apprehensions of Him would vanish, what ravishing views of Him would succeed! How sure would heaven become! We should feel as secure of it as if we were already there, and something like as happy. (*D. King, LL.D.*) *Heaven*:—The Israelites in the wilderness are a recognized illustration of the Christian's walk through the world. The promised land is a type of heaven. Is it not true, then, of thousands who have set their faces towards a better home, that, after a time, they think scorn of that pleasant land, and give no credence unto God's Word? Why? 1. Because the land is hard to reach. Yes, it is hard, and it is easy: hard if the heart is absorbed by the world, the flesh, and the devil; easy, if the world has once been despised, the flesh once crucified, the devil put to scorn. 2. Others think scorn of that pleasant land because they cannot see it, and therefore hardly believe that it exists at all. If we are only to believe in what we see, there will be but little to believe in. We cannot see the Father or the Son or the Holy Ghost with the human eye; we cannot see the soul; we cannot see that the dead are living: but

Jesus taught us, and our conscience teaches us to believe these things; and Jesus taught us also to believe in heaven. (W. R. Hutton, M.A.) *Despising God's gifts*:—There can be no greater slight and dishonour to a giver than to have his gifts neglected. You give something that has perhaps cost you much, or which, at any rate, has your heart in it, to your child, or other dear one; would it not wound you, if a day or two after you found it tossing about among a heap of unregarded trifles? Suppose that some of those Rajahs that received presents on the recent royal visit to India had gone out from the durbar and flung them into the kennel, that would have been an insult and disaffection, would it not? But these illustrations are trivial by the side of our treatment of the "giving God." (A. Maclaren, D.D.)

Vers. 32-40. **They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes.**—*A good man suffering for a community, and a community pursuing its way to destruction*:—I. A GOOD MAN SUFFERING FOR THE WRONGS OF A COMMUNITY (vers. 32, 33; Num. xx. 9, 10, 13). 1. The conduct of bad men has a strong tendency to disturb the moral temper of the good. (1) By disgusting the moral tastes. (2) By shaking the faith. (3) By disturbing self-control. 2. God holds the best men responsible for the loss of their moral temper. "So that it went ill with Moses for their sakes." He lost by it. Difficult as it may be for a good man to keep his temper undisturbed, it is his duty to do so, and under God he can do so. "In patience he should possess his soul." He should "trust in Him that liveth for ever." "None of these things move me," said Paul. II. A COMMUNITY PURSUING ITS COURSE TO DESTRUCTION. 1. Instead of destroying the peoples, as God commanded, they fraternized with them (vers. 34, 35). 2. Instead of serving the one true living God, they engaged in the worship of idols (vers. 36-38). (*Homilist.*) *Sins of eminent men*:—It was the sin of one occupying a high official position. You know how in armies a sentinel who sleeps on the post is shot, because great matters are weighed in the balance, great interests are at stake. Why, the ancients used to have a plan of taking a builder, and if his building crumbled and fell, they would take away the ruins and bury him there, and let the next builder put the building up upon him. They held him accountable. Persons that are in positions of authority and of office are held severely to account. Just the same way with a policeman, whose duty it is to see that the law is observed; if he violates the law, he is held to sharpest account. And so we have Moses, the great law-giver. There was an appropriateness in the fact that the great law-giver should himself be held to sharpest and closest account when he himself violated the law of God. (E. Judson, D.D.)

Vers. 40-46. **Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled.**—*Four solemn thoughts concerning God*:—I. GOD'S ABHORRENCE OF MEN'S SINS (ver. 40). God's wrath or anger is not a malign passion, but a benevolent principle, antagonism to wrong. Do not blame the sun or the moon because of the shadows they throw upon the earth; rather blame the objects that obstruct their rays. God's wrath is only the rays of His love obstructed by sin. Remove the obstruction, and all is genial and beaming. II. GOD'S DOMINION OVER MEN'S MINDS (vers. 41, 42). As the billows of the ocean in furious battle serve the grand cause of nature as well as the placid river in its majestic flow, so does the rage of wicked spirits serve the Almighty plans as truly as the loyal services of the good. "His purposes must stand." III. GOD'S REGARD FOR MEN'S PENITENCE (vers. 43, 44; 2 Chron. xv. 4). IV. GOD'S FORBEARANCE WITH MEN'S WICKEDNESS (vers. 45, 46). (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 45. **He remembered for them His covenant.**—*God's remembrance of His covenant*:—I. THEN THE COVENANT EXISTS. 1. The covenant is in its own nature everlasting. By everything that is permanent in the universe, and by everything that is permanent in the Godhead, we are made to know that the covenant of grace is a fixed and settled thing, and abides to-day as it ever has done; for there is no variableness nor turning with Him from whom every good gift comes down. The promises in Christ Jesus are Yea and Amen, to the glory of God by us. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but not one jot or tittle of the law shall fail, much less shall the covenant of Divine grace be disannulled. 2. Well may the covenant of grace be everlasting, for it was made with deliberation and foresight. God made it, knowing all that would happen in time or eternity. 3. The covenant

was sealed and ratified in the most solemn manner. Jesus has gone into heaven bearing with Him the blood of sprinkling. Can God deny His promise to His bleeding Son? 4. The Divine glory is wrapped up in it. The Lord cannot break His word, nor forego His designs, nor forget His promises. Think not so. The crown jewels of God are staked and pawned upon the carrying out of the covenant of grace. 5. Furthermore, it is not possible for God to break a covenant. When you and I stand and tremble before a Divine promise for fear it should not be fulfilled, we cast a slur upon the truth, faithfulness, and immutability of God. Has He ever changed? Has He ever been false? II. THIS COVENANT IS TOO OFTEN FORGOTTEN BY US. 1. Are not God's people at this day chargeable with forgetting the covenant by their unspiritual carelessness? 2. Sometimes, too—and in the case of Israel it was so—we get away from that covenant by wanton sin, or by negligent omission of most delightful duty. This ought to yield in our hearts a harvest of repentance. It should bind us to God with intense affection that should tend towards perpetual sanctification from this day and onward. 3. These people had forgotten their God for another reason, namely, in the depth of their sorrow. A great sorrow stuns men, and makes them forget the best sources of consolation. A little blow will cause great pain; but I have frequently heard in reports of assaults that far more serious blows have occasioned no pain whatever, because they have destroyed consciousness. So do extreme distresses rob men of their wits, and cause them to forget the means of relief. Under the chastening rod, the smart is remembered, and the healing promise is forgotten. III. Though we forget the covenant, yet God REMEMBERS HIS COVENANT: "He remembered for them His covenant." Even though these people had so grievously provoked Him, He remembers His covenant so as to find in it a reason for pardoning their sin, and dealing with them in a way of mercy. He meets the flood of their sins with the flood of His faithfulness. O friend, God must remember His covenant; for He can never forget what the making of that covenant has cost Him. It cost Him His Only-begotten: the eternal Son, the Well-beloved, must die the death of the cross that the covenant may be established. IV. If God remembers for us His covenant, LET US REMEMBER IT. What is the covenant? Here is one form of it: "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be thou perfect." The Lord God Almighty gives Himself up to be our portion, and we are to yield ourselves to Him, to walk before Him in perfect obedience. This also is the covenant: "I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Say not, "I am poor." Not so, for God is yours, and so all things are yours. Say not, "I am weak." Not so, God Almighty is yours: when you are weak, then you are strong. "But I have no wisdom." Is not the Lord Jesus made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification? He that hath God hath everything. Wilt thou belittle thy God and limit the Holy One of Israel? Come, find thine all in God. This is thy part of the covenant, to accept God as being to thee what He says He is. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 48. Let all the people say, Amen.—Amen:—The word Amen has a history full of instruction and interest. Its original meaning had reference to the material. It signified firm, durable, lasting. "I will build him a sure house." "His waters shall be sure." In course of time, like other words, Amen came to have a higher, even a social meaning. As what is firm and secure is able to bear and carry other things, it at length described carrying. "A nursing father": "Naomi took the child and became nurse." Next it was promoted to the honour of an intellectual office, and signified trustiness or skill. "He removeth away the speech of the trusty." Then it was raised to the dignity of an ethical use. As what is truthful and upright is firm, it came to mean trust and faith. "Who hath said Amen to our report?" Finally it acquired an ecclesiastical import, and is now commonly employed in the well-known sense of, "Truly; so be it; so let it be!" I. To God's COMMANDS, "Let all the people say, Amen." 1. The Divine commands are wholly right. Were we able to see absolute rectitude, looking at it as upon an elaborate architectural plan, we should find, on comparing it with the edifice of God's laws, that the latter is a wonderful and minute reflex on the former. What an inspiring thought! 2. The Divine commands are wholly beneficial. "In keeping of them is great reward." II. To God's PROVIDENCE, "let all the people say, Amen." 1. To do otherwise is thoughtless. In the Divine government there is a "balance of power." A law of compensation is at work. Weal and woe are more evenly distributed than is

commonly imagined. No person, class, or condition has a monopoly of either the blissful or the baleful. One thing is set over against another. A good man in a sea of troubles is in a condition infinitely preferable to that of a bad man nursed in the lap of luxury, housed magnificently, and faring sumptuously every day. 2. To do otherwise is useless. Where is the profit of rebelling against God's sovereign dealing? It is vain to oppose the inevitable. Nay, it is worse than useless; it is injurious. It increases, instead of alleviating, our misery. An oak that had been rooted up by the winds was borne down the stream of a river, on the banks of which many reeds were growing. The oak wondered to see that things so slight and frail had stood the storm, when so great and strong a tree as itself had been rooted up. "Cease to wonder," said the reed, "you were overthrown by fighting against the storm, while we are saved by yielding and bending to the slightest breath that blows." Yes; it is eminently advantageous to say, Amen to the darkest dispensations of Providence. 3. To do otherwise is forgetful. It ignores the oft-repeated doctrine that out of our trials God perfects our good. When we murmur at sorrow, we cease to remember that it is through "much tribulation" that all kingdoms worth occupying are entered. III. To God's GOSPEL, "let all the people say, Amen." The good news of free and full pardon through the sacrifice of Christ and in answer to prayer—be that kept intact. We must take it just as it is. Nothing must be added, nothing removed. It is neither too large nor too small, and woe to us if we attempt to alter it. (T. R. Stevenson.) *Hearty Amens*:—St. Jerome tells us that it was the custom, in his time, to close every prayer with such a unanimous consent, that the Amens of the people rang and echoed in the church, and sounded like the dash of a mighty cataract, or a clap of thunder. There are several kinds of Amens. I. THE AMEN OF HABIT. People have uttered it from their infancy, all unconscious how much was really contained in that single word. No feeling nor earnestness has accompanied the vocal sound. So far as receiving any benefit from such empty mummery, you might as well expect it from swinging the pendulum of a clock, or by winding up the machinery of an automaton. II. THE AMEN OF HOPE. Melancthon, once going forth upon some important service for his Heavenly Master, and having many doubts and fears as to his success, was cheered by a company of poor women and children, whom he found praying together for the prosperity of the Church. And so, the Amen of hope is breathed forth by the trusting soul, as it hears the Saviour's promise, "Behold, I come quickly" (Rev. iii. 11). III. THE AMEN OF FAITH. When the devout Christian who has poured forth his soul in prayer, says, Amen, it is not the mere utterance of earnest desire, but of undoubting faith in Him who is "always more ready to hear than we to pray." The same gracious Father whose promises we plead in prayer, is able, also, to perform. Faith clasps its arms around the Cross of Jesus, and looks, with undoubting confidence, for an answer of peace. (J. N. Norton.)

PSALM CVII.

VERBS. 1-31. O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever.—*Men and mercy*:—I. MEN CONSCIOUSLY NEEDING THE MERCY OF HEAVEN. Morally, we are all distressed travellers, captives, invalids, mariners. The worst feature of this moral distress is that the subjects are not conscious of it. II. MEN EFFECTUALLY DELIVERED BY THE MERCY OF HEAVEN. 1. Just in time. Each had reached the extremity. The lamp of hope was all but extinct, and black despair was settling on the soul, when mercy came to the rescue. 2. After the prayer, God listens to the cries of His distressed children. III. MEN URGED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE MERCY OF HEAVEN. 1. The mercy of Heaven is generally unacknowledged. 2. The acknowledgment of this mercy is an urgent obligation. (1) Because a proper recognition of God's mercy is essential to the extinction of the evil in man. (2) Because a proper recognition of God's mercy is essential to the generating of good in man. (Homilist.)

Ver. 2. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.—"Say so":—An overture, an

antiphon, a doxology is this psalm, and in my text the psalmist calls for an outspoken religion, and requests all who have been rescued and blessed no longer to hide the glorious facts, but to publish them, and, as far as possible, let all the world know about it. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." If you have in your heart the pearl of great price, why not let others see it? If you got off the wreck in the breakers, why not tell of the crew and the stout lifeboat that safely landed you? If from the fourth storey you are rescued in time of conflagration, why not tell of the fireman and the ladder down which he carried you? If you have a mansion in heaven awaiting you, why not show the deed to those who may by the same process get a home on the same boulevard? By the last two words of my text the psalmist calls upon all of us who have received any mercy at the hand of God to stop impersonating the asylums for the dumb, and, in the presence of men, women, angels, devils, and all worlds, say so. What a thrill went through the meeting in Portland, Oregon, when an ex-Attorney-General of the United States arose and said: "Last night I got up and asked the prayers of God's people. I feel now perfectly satisfied. The burden is rolled off and all gone, and I feel that I could run or fly into the arms of Jesus Christ!" What a confirmation would come if all who had answers to prayers would speak out! If all merchants in tight places because of hard times would tell how, in response to supplication, they got the money to pay the note! If all parents who prayed for a wandering son to come home would tell how, not long after, they heard the boy's hand on the latch of the front door! This psalm from which I take my text mentions several classes of persons who ought to be outspoken; among them all those who go on a journey. What an opportunity you have, you who spend so much of your time on rail-trains or on shipboard, whether on lake or river or sea! Spread the story of God's goodness and your own redemption wherever you go. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The duty of confessing indebtedness*.—A heart without gratitude is like a grate filled with fuel unlighted, and the room all the colder because of the unfulfilled promise of glow and warmth. A grateful heart is one in which the fire of holy love is kindled. Let those who have received favours and feel their obligation either to God or man, give some expression of it. The world is filled with illustrations of the propriety of such acknowledgments. You must have observed how in great campaigns it is customary for commanders to make honourable mention of those who have distinguished themselves by successful valour—not for the purpose of ministering to the soldier's pride or flattering his vanity, but for awarding him a tribute founded in justice and truth. It is right that the soldier who has stood upon the bloody front of battle and vindicated his valour and patriotism should receive the grateful acknowledgment of the country he has served. The leader of brave men is not content with thinking well of the prowess of those who have done nobly; he proclaims it as something due to those who have struggled and triumphed. In kind words from such a source there is both inspiration and reward. There was something pathetic in the appeal which a little boy made to his father, when he cried, "I often do wrong, I know, and then you scold me and I deserve it; but, father, sometimes I do my best to do right! Won't you let me know when I do please you?" Let the discriminating parent, pleased with the child's progress in any right direction—"say so." So, too, there are parents who have to wait long for the recognition of their devotion to their children—a devotion which gathers into itself the prayers, the anguish, the sacrifices of body, soul, and spirit. An old Virginia minister said lately, "Men of my profession see much of the tragic side of life. I have seen men die in battle, have seen children die, but no death ever seemed so pathetic to me as the death of an aged mother in my church. The children gathered around her bedside. The oldest son took her in his arms. He said, 'You have been a good mother to us.' That was not much to say, was it? It was much to her, who had never heard anything like it. A flush came over her pallid face, and with husky voice she whispered, 'My son, you never said so before!'" The text directs our thought and affection to what we owe to the very Father of mercies. "His mercy endureth for ever." How illimitably broad is the field which is thus opened before us—the field of the Divine mercy! It is like the field of creation. In that field the telescope cannot pierce to depths of space where shining worlds do not declare the glory of God—nor can the microscope search out a point which is not still bright with evidences of His handiwork. The eye of sense looks out and everywhere goodness and mercy rise before it,

until the horizon shuts down and bounds the vision. And then the eye of faith opens, and new fields, measureless and glorious, meet its gaze, until, in its turn, its powers fail. Yes, its powers fail, but the field has not failed; onward it stretches, illimitably, and over it the redeemed shall range with every new delight to all eternity. God's mercy is from everlasting, and so the treasures of memory will ever be increasing; it is to everlasting, and so the anticipations of hope can never be diminished. (*M. D. Hoge, D.D.*) *Acknowledge the goodness of God*:—We need appreciation and the expression of it in our religious life. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!" Redemption and all implied in it is surely a gift that demands acknowledgment! If you were struggling in the grip of some mysterious or deadly disease, and after many disappointments at last you found a doctor who understood your case, conquered the disease, and set you in perfect health again, what would you do? You would blazon that doctor's name abroad, you would tell everybody of his skill, you would speak of yourself as a living illustration of his healing power. *Redemption acknowledged*:—At the Istbmian Games, A.D. 197, Flaminius caused a trumpet to command silence and a crier to proclaim that the Roman Senate restored to the Grecians their lands, laws, and liberties. So astonished were the people that they asked the crier to repeat it. Then a shout arose that was heard from Corinth to the sea. (*H. O. Mackey.*)

Ver. 4. They wandered in the wilderness.—*The sinner homeless*:—The old legend of the Wandering Jew tells us how he who had struck and insulted Jesus as He left the Judgment Hall was condemned to wander homeless through many lands, a stranger, unwelcomed and uncared for, who found no city to dwell in. The legend is not without its teaching. Those who wilfully sin against Jesus and the Truth wander through the wilderness of the world out of the right way. They are in a barren and dry land where no water is—no water of life, no water of grace, no water of penitent tears. They are homeless, they find no city to dwell in. Like the Prodigal, they have left their Father's House, their true home; they have wandered from the true Food, and they are hungry; they have deserted the true Fountain, and they are athirst—"Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them." They have shut themselves out of God's House, and it is no longer home to them. (*H. J. Wilmot Buxton, M.A.*)

Ver. 6. And He delivered them out of their distresses.—*The way out*:—This psalm is an Old Testament lovefeast. In the first three verses the redeemed are exhorted to speak out their experience of the goodness of God. In response, four representative testimonies are given. Travellers who had lost their way tell how they were found and led to a city of habitation. Captives who had been brought out of dungeons repeat the story of their deliverance. Sick ones who had been restored from the gates of death speak to the praise of their Healer; and others who had been in peril on the sea declare the wonders of the Lord upon the great deep. Each recital is followed with an exhortation to praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men. There are many ways into trouble. All the people in this psalm came to distress by various ways, and the different ways led to different sorts of trouble. The travellers got lost. They strayed in the wilderness, not wilfully, but from lack of knowledge. They could find no place of habitation. Their food and water were exhausted, and they sank, in faintness and despair, a helpless prey to all the perils of the desert. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He came to their help. He led them by a straight way, that they might go to a city of habitation. They ought not to have started without a guide, but inexperience is often self-confident and apt to despise the counsels of the wise. The second class came into trouble through disobedience. They rebelled against the word of God. They held God in contempt, despised His authority, and ignored His law. It is in man's power to defy God. He rules in each life by each man's consent, and when men say they will not have Him to rule over them, He leaves them free to follow their own course. No man can break the least of His commandments without penalty and loss. To throw off the yoke of righteousness is the surest way to bondage. The third class is spoken of as fools. In the Scriptures this term is used not of mental deficiency so much as of moral perversity. According to the Old Testament method, sickness is attributed to moral delinquency; a doctrine that is considerably modified in the New. There is a close connection between iniquity and

affliction. A life of sin is ruinous to health. If we would be sound in body we must be pure in heart. They that sow to the flesh, of the flesh reap corruption. The fourth class come into trouble in the course of duty. "For He commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind." Most of our trouble is of our own making. It is often due to our ignorance and vanity, sometimes to our downright badness, and not infrequently to our folly. But trouble comes to the best as well as the worst. It meets us not only in the ways of sin, but in the path of duty. There are forces in life over which we have no control, and for which we have neither wisdom nor strength. Winds and storms, hurricanes, and disaster make no moral distinctions, and adversity and tribulation come to the upright as well as to the disobedient. Inexperience leads to wandering and hunger. Rebellion is the way to the dungeon, with its darkness and chains. Wrong-heartedness brings the soul to the gates of death. Even duty leads us into conditions which soon find the end of our wits. How helpless we are in trouble! Lost! Captive! Sick! Storm-tossed! What can we do? We must cry to another for deliverance. There are many ways into trouble, but there is only one way out. The lost could not find themselves, the bound had no way of escape, the dying had no healing power, and men at their wits' end could never save the ship. In their extremity they all cried unto the Lord. If they had consulted Him sooner most of them would never have needed to cry. It is good to cry when lost, but it is better to be sure of the way before the start is made. Herein is the mercy of God made manifest, that He bids us call on Him in the day of trouble. He makes no exceptions, and imposes no conditions. Need, not merit, is our passport to God. He does not stop to inquire how we got into trouble, nor ask for a certificate of character before He helps us out. Peril is a great leveller. Distinctions of rank and worth disappear in the presence of danger. He makes haste to help. If you are in trouble, cry! No matter how you got in, cry! It is your only chance, cry aloud! If you are lost, cry! He seeks the lost. If you are in bondage, cry! He came to open the prison doors to them that are bound. If you are sick unto death, cry! In Him is the life of men. If you are in peril, cry! Even the winds and the waves obey Him. It shall come to pass that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. The Lord our Deliverer. When there is none to help, the Lord is our Helper. In Him is deliverance for all. (*F. Wiseman.*)

Ver. 7. He led them forth by the right way.—*The way and guide to heaven:*—I. THE END for which the people of God were led forth from Egypt was that "they might come to a city of habitation"; in other words, "to a city, or cities, which they might inhabit." Are you by faith in Christ Jesus the sons of God? He, who has given you the adoption of sons here, will not withhold the inheritance of sons hereafter. II. THE WAY by which the believer is led to that city of habitation. 1. It is not the nearest. His heavenly Father knows that it is expedient for him, as for Israel, to be led about and instructed. 2. It is not the pleasantest. Like a wilderness, it is a dry and thirsty land. The soil is barren—its waters are bitter and often fail. The road is "the narrow way," intricate to discover, difficult to pursue, and having "but few that find it." 3. To all appearance, it is not the safest. An enemy's country. A snare at every step. 4. Yet it is the only sure road to those pleasures which are for evermore. III. THE GUIDE. 1. He is experienced. 2. He is fitted to sympathize with those who are toiling along the difficult road, in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted. 3. He is a watchful, careful Guide. 4. He is also a supporting and upholding Guide; not merely leading His people through every difficulty, but either removing every impediment, or enabling the pilgrim to overcome it. Conclusion: 1. See the necessity of a guide in the journey of life. 2. Is the wilderness the right way to the city of habitation? Then how easy should it make us under all the discouragements, weariness, temptations, dangers of the journey! 3. Remember that none reach that city but "the redeemed of the Lord." Is this your character? (*R. Davies, M.A.*) *The way of the redeemed:*—I. THE WAY OF THE REDEEMED. 1. Long. 2. Difficult. 3. Lonely. 4. A desert way. II. THE RECTITUDE OF THE WAY. It is "the right way." 1. It is the Divine way. 2. To what it leads: "the city of habitation." Two lessons. 1. Take an enlarged view of the Divine conduct. Remember the end of it all. 2. Ever seek the Divine guidance. God goes before; follow, trust Him. (*Preacher's Analyst.*) *The right way:*—The psalm is a series of pictures; and they are not pictures of light and joy. They are scenes of distress and uttermost extremity. The

lost traveller, ready to die in the silence of the wilderness! the reeling sailor, dashed with spray, and watching every coming billow in the fear that it may be his grave! the fettered prisoner, weeping his life away in the darkness of the dungeon! the sick and dying man, clinging still to this life, but looking fearfully on to another!—such scenes of extremity the psalmist paints; and while we are thinking that no deliverance is possible, lo! the deliverance is wrought;—the traveller is on his way; the sailor is in his haven; the prisoner is looking down to the dungeon where he lay; the sick and dying soul is filled again with life! Such are the wonders wrought by Divine goodness! I. THE COMPANY. Any considerable company of men is imposing. Nothing more quickly raises our interest than a large assemblage of human beings. The march of an army, the movement of a procession, the gathering of some great multitude for deliberation or for worship, even the rush of a common city crowd, will make the heart throb with unusual emotion. But here is a company more illustrious than any other upon earth, a company overwhelming in its vastness, and yet ever growing in numbers—calm in aspect, and yet irresistible in power—aiming at the noblest objects, manifesting the purest character, adorned with supernatural symbols of distinction, and pursuing her sublime and silent march from time into eternity under the direction of a guide invisible to all but her! II. THE LEADER. The leader of this ransomed company is the Lord himself. The Bible abounds with intimations of the nearness of God, and particularly with assurances of His actual and perpetual presence with His people as their guide, and guard, and everlasting friend (Isa. xlviii. 17; xli. 10; Matt. xxviii. 20.) III. THE WAY. Happily to some it is covered with the clouds of disappointment; to others it is bleak and cold with the gales of adversity; to others it is drenched with the rains of sorrow. It has places of heart-wringing separation from fellow-pilgrims, and even deep, dark gulfs of sin; but notwithstanding all its mystery, and all the wrongness put into it by ourselves and others, as God's way, it is always right—right in shade as well as in sunshine,—right in winter as well as in summer,—right to all alike who are in the way,—and right on to the end. IV. THE END. The idea chiefly brought before us is that of heaven as a fixed and settled home, "a peaceable habitation," "a sure dwelling," "a quiet resting-place" for ever. The way is narrow, but it leads on to the "large and wealthy place." It is rugged; but it opens at last into "green pastures," and winds beside "still waters," over which no blight or blast can come. It is a way of ceaseless toil and watchfulness; but they will be repaid by the rest that cannot be broken, by the joy that cannot end. It is long—at least in our days of suffering and dreariness we think so; but seen in retrospect, and when it has been all trodden, it will look but like the journey of a day. (A. Raleigh, D.D.) *The right way*:—This old Hebrew history is turned into a parable of our Christian life. There is a prophecy at the heart of it, and this prophecy says, "Judge not by the feeble glimmering light of human judgment. God's ways are higher than your ways; they take in higher issues, and immortal results. The Father will lead you by the right way. Press forward, for, as Quarles says, 'he goeth back that continueth not.'" I. THE MORAL SIDE OF LIFE IS HIGHER THAN THE MATERIAL. To please self is the aim of most men, yet most patent is the fact, that to deny self-indulgence to ourselves is beneficial. The very physical frame, its laws of health and vigour, declare that! It requires, however, little self-denial to give up what is simply pleasant to the taste or to the eye. These are mere outward things. The more thoughtful student of life will see that God places human life under a higher and more searching discipline. A man is placed where his pride must be denied, his mental prepossessions laid aside, his will subordinated, his inmost purpose chastened. II. THE PILGRIM SIDE OF LIFE IS ALWAYS PROSPECTIVE. It is no mere maze. We never return. Ours may be a long way, a winding way, but it is forward. A Christian man will feel with modesty, and yet with certainty, that his path is progress, that he does know more of the love of Christ, that his affections are more set on heaven, that salvation is nearer than when he believed, that the pilgrimage is one of temptation conquered, grace bestowed, and glory nearer to the soul. Spiritual pilgrimage is not a deceit in the moral sense. God is not allowing us to experience all these emotions merely that the circle of our little life may complete itself in the grave. We are nearing home, we shall soon be with Christ, which is far better. III. THE LEADERSHIP OF LIFE IS IN THE HANDS OF CHRIST. Tell me who is leader, and I can also tell you much. Men admire

sacrifice of ease and wealth, absence of bribe and advantage; and in Greece they glorified Socrates and Aristides, and in Rome, Quintus Curtius and Regulus. Men crave leaders, and can appreciate courage and self-control; only too often, alas, men do not ponder on the sacredness of the cause, the end of the ambition, the spirit of the campaign or pilgrimage. What we have to teach and to live in this age is that the Christ-led way is the right way. IV. *THE PILGRIMAGE ENDS IN THE FELLOWSHIP OF HOME.* The discontinuance of things here below is the saddest of all experiences. Vessels keep coming and going out of this little bay of life. Along the roads new pilgrims appear where others rested; they loose their sandals, refresh themselves at the wells, and rise betimes for their onward way. We are quiet spectators of such pictures, and note the effects of change and time on others. For us, too, there is change and discontinuance. What we want is permanence! It is the beauty of the Christian Revelation that it uses all the symbols of a home to give our hearts rest in the thought of departure; that is what we want, that has been dearest after all to judge and soldier, merchant and statesman, monarch and peasant—the home! Yes, no image of court or temple is so inspiring as this—my Father's house. (*W. M. Statham.*) *The right road.*—I. *THE RIGHT ROAD.* Christianity is much more than sentiment; it is right living. The road that leads to the Cross of Christ. II. *THE LEADER.* We need these elements in a leader: 1. Strength. "Who is stronger than this mighty King of kings?" etc. 2. Wisdom. "He knoweth all things," etc. 3. Tenderness. Christ taketh in His arms the little helpless child. III. *THE END OF THIS ROAD.* 1. There is no entrance to the Eternal City except by this right way. 2. The Bible is the only guide-book for the pilgrim in this way. 3. The Christian who is helped by his Leader should also freely help all weak and overloaded brethren in this way. 4. Always bear in mind the end of your journey—heaven. (*T. L. Cuyler, D.D.*) *The right in life.*—God is the leader of humanity. The way He leads is always the right way. There are many wrong ways; there is only one right. I. "The right way" IS ALWAYS GOD'S WAY. 1. His existence is the foundation of right. 2. His will is the law of right. 3. His Son is the revelation of His will to fallen man. II. "The right way" IS ALWAYS A TRYING WAY. That is, always trying to fallen man. It involves great struggles, and often much anguish. It involves the abandonment of the old and the adoption of the new. III. "The right way" IS EVER THE PROSPEROUS WAY. Right is always expedient. The path of duty is at once the path of safety and success. IV. "The right way" IS ALWAYS SUPERNATURAL. (*Homilist.*) *Present dispensations the right way to glory.*—I. *THE HAPPY PLACE TO WHICH EVERY TRUE BELIEVER IS TAKING HIS JOURNEY.* How great a satisfaction does it afford, to the weary pilgrim that has borne the burden in the heat of the day, to hear of a rest to which he shall soon arrive? a city of habitation, where he shall for ever dwell? a crown of glory which he shall ever wear? And this is the lot not only of some, but of all God's children; they shall not always be tossed with tempests. II. *THE INTERMEDIATE SPACE THROUGH WHICH THE BELIEVER IS TO PASS, IN HIS WAY TO THIS CITY OF HABITATION.* 1. This present world is a state of distance, and in this respect it may be fitly compared to a wilderness. 2. This present world through which we were passing may be justly styled a wilderness, as it is a solitary and barren way. 3. This present world through which we are passing is also properly compared to a wilderness, as it is likewise a dangerous way. III. *GOD LEADS HIS PEOPLE BY THE RIGHT WAY TO THE CITY OF HABITATION.* Let us only take a view of three particular seasons, wherein we are most apt to question the lovingkindness of our God, and we may by them determine the happy issue of all the rest. 1. Let us begin with the melancholy state and condition of those from whom God hides the light of His countenance. Were He never to hide His face, we should live upon the streams rather than the fountain; we should be too ready to say with the three disciples, "Lord, it is good for us to be here"; without pressing after any further manifestations in a better world. 2. Concerning the various outward afflictions with which the believer is exercised. They are all of them, let them arise from what quarter soever, useful to us, and necessary for us. 3. The temptations of Satan every one of them answer the same general end. The powers of darkness are suffered to dwell amongst us, for the same reason that some of the Canaanites were left among the people of Israel; that is, to try us, and show us how weak we are without Christ; and how strong we are when we depend upon that grace which is treasured up in Him. IV. *PRACTICAL REMARKS.* 1. Has God prepared

for His people a city of habitation? how great then is that grace, how free and sovereign is that love, to which this was originally owing. 2. Are we to pass through the wilderness to this city of habitation? How much need have we of a guide to show us the way, and how thankful should we be to Him who has undertaken to perform this kind office for us. 3. Is the way of the wilderness the right way to a city of habitation? How easy should this make us under all the temptations, trials, and afflictions with which we are now exercised. 4. Can none get admission into this city of habitation but the redeemed of the Lord? (ver. 2). Let this lead us to Christ Jesus, the only person who is of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption (1 Cor. i. 30). (*John Hill.*) *The Leader and the way to heaven*.—I. THE LEADER. Every true man is proud of his leader. If we had asked those brave men who lately sailed to the far north whom they followed, they would have uttered, with flashing eye, the name of their captain; if we could have asked those who fought at Waterloo who was their general, they would have answered, with eager pride, "Wellington!" So we, if the world asks us of our leader, can answer Jesus, Name which is above every Name, Name of victory, Name of power, Name of love, Name of sweetness. II. THE RIGHT WAY. There is but one way to heaven, that which God chooses for us, and where Jesus leads. That way may take us through various scenes and circumstances. Some amongst us are destined to be rich, others poor; for some the way of life lies in active scenes, for others in quiet retirement; some are frequently exposed to the fierce sun of trouble, others are more sheltered from the storms of life. Still, through whatever scenes our way of life may tend, we must strive to make it the right way. What, then, is this right way? It is the King's highway, the way of holiness. (*Anon.*) *The Leader and the way in providence*.—The way by which God led them was—I. A LONG WAY. For example, the answer to prayer is sometimes long delayed; but if the blessing tarry, wait for it,—it is worth waiting for, and will come at last. II. A DESOLATE WAY. Your way to heaven lies through the wilderness—the wilderness of His world. There is no other way, and there could be no better way. There might be a smoother, easier, more flowery, less thorny path; but such a path might lead you to lose sight of your journey's end, and of your own character as pilgrims. III. A DIFFICULT WAY. All our powers are improved by exercise; the very muscles of our bodies require labour to form and bring them to their full strength. So it is with our powers of mind; their education consists in meeting and overcoming difficulties. So it is in regard to the higher powers of the soul; they are matured and perfected by the labours and difficulties that meet us in the way to heaven. In all our labours we have a direct object in view, which may often seem very ignoble and temporary. Much of our time and effort are engaged in securing the bread that perisheth, gold that perisheth, and other things that perish in the using. But in this very labour, God has another object in view—our preparation for the active duties of heaven, and the forming in us of qualities that may fit us to act our part there. IV. A DANGEROUS WAY. Our pilgrimage, like theirs, is a warfare. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and powers of darkness. Therefore we must not only be strong in the Lord, but take to ourselves the whole armour of God. V. AN UNKNOWN WAY. (*C. G. Scott.*) *A trustworthy guide*.—A famous Swiss guide recently interviewed by a magazine writer is reported as saying: "There are guides and guides. One takes you up and trusts to luck. He is ready for anything, but does not know what is coming. He guesses where he is, when you ask: 'How far off is the peak?' I never do that. Before I start on a new track, or one I have not made before, I study it fully. I make a map of it. I watch it through the glass until I know it. When I say 'Go,' then I can see what is before me. On the mountain I must always know where I am. I'm not scientific, but I must carry my map with me and point: 'We are here.' I never start without my compass, thermometer, and aneroid, so that when you come to me at any moment and ask: 'Where are we?' I can say: 'Here, and it is so many feet from the top.'" So is it with the soul's great Guide. Jesus knows every inch of the way, has never failed a single traveller, and can say: "None lost, or ever shall be." (*H. O. Mackey.*)

Vers. 8, 9. *Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness.—Thanksgiving for a good harvest*.—The importance of the harvest season is universally known. The labour and produce of the whole year depend finally on it. A good harvest

is not a particular, but a general benefit. Bread is the staff of life; and as all mankind are maintained by the fruits of the ground, so they are all interested, either directly or indirectly, in the season of harvest. Now, the benefits we enjoy in common with our fellow-creatures are the most proper grounds of gratitude and praise to the universal Benefactor; and it is incumbent on us all on this occasion to unite in thanksgiving to Him who gives us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with joy and gladness. To awaken a still more lively sense of our obligation to God, let us consider the time at which it was bestowed. If we turn our attention from God to ourselves, from the Author to the object of this blessing, we shall see still fresh ground for religious gratitude. In estimating the kindness of a benefactor, the character of the beneficiary is a circumstance which is always to be taken into account. The unworthiness of those who receive a favour, enhances the kindness of him who bestows it, and should more strongly recommend him to their affection. If this consideration recommends the goodness of men, how much more does it enhance the Divine beneficence! Let our souls rise, then, in gratitude to that gracious Being, who is ever mindful of us, though we be forgetful of Him; who daily loads us with His benefits, though we perversely abuse them. To complete a sense of our obligation to God, let us consider our security for the enjoyment of this blessing which providence has bestowed upon us. He has not only blessed us with plenty; he has also given us peace to enjoy it. (*A. Donnan.*) *The Divine goodness illustrated*:—

I. SOME ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE DIVINE GOODNESS. 1. The Divine goodness is self-evident in the creation of the world. How beautiful, how glorious, are all the works of His hand! 2. The high dominion to which man was appointed by the Divine fiat further proves the goodness of his beneficent Creator. He was not to be a vassal, not to be placed on terms of equality, but was to have "dominion over the fish of the sea," etc. 3. The Divine goodness is further evident in the provision of the Gospel. How comprehensive is the scheme of wisdom; how glorious the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of God! II. GOD'S LEGITIMATE CLAIM. "Forget not all His benefits." The Divine goodness claims the praise of our tongues. III. THE EARNEST DESIRE OF THE PSALMIST. He would not only give praise himself, but he would be the means of leading others to see and feel that it is an important duty. (*G. Hall.*) *The wonderful works of God's goodness*:—The earnestness with which the psalmist repeats again and again this benevolent wish—as devout as it is benevolent, and expressive of the gratitude that it invokes—implies that men are remiss in paying their thanks to the Supreme Benefactor, and that they have need to be urged to the performance of that cheering duty. Not that the human heart is naturally disinclined to acknowledge God in His benefits, but because it is so easily led to forget Him altogether in the multitude of its cares and pleasures; and because it knows that it can never estimate fully the number and extent of His mercies; and because it is so apt to misunderstand the truest occasions of thankfulness, and so not pay its tribute aright. The sacred poet describes under four distinct figures the loving-kindness, of which He would impress the memory upon the minds of His people. They are fitted to represent all those examples of deliverance which are often vouchsafed, and which challenge in a peculiar manner the admiring gratitude of those who are permitted to witness them. But we perceive that they are all of one class. They all look to some extraordinary exhibition of the saving might of the Most High. If we await such as these, we shall soon be capable of appreciating none. Cases of visible and imminent peril are always rare. A long life will often stand in no need of rescue from such. But few have found themselves in the situation of the fainting traveller in search of his way. Few have been compelled or have chosen to expose themselves to such a risk. As for the second example, the preacher might address many a crowded assembly without finding one person who had felt chains upon his wrists, and sat in undeserved captivity, abandoned of all companionship, and trembling for his life. Sickness, on the other hand, we must admit, is a common visitant, and sickness of the most alarming and fatal character no unfrequent one. And yet it is almost a singularity, compared with comfortable health, and the answer, "I am well," to friendly inquiries. Then, as to the last succour named—that amidst the horrors of shipwreck—what a small proportion of people have ever undergone any personal hazard of this kind,—have ever been likely to be swallowed up in that treacherous highway, whose dust is the salt spray and its pavement thousands of fathoms down! We should have to make similar abatements and

allowances as to any other of those uncommon demands on our thanksgiving, which are the most striking to the most common minds. And when we have made all these, there is another set of exceptions that claims equal consideration. They remind us, and how truly, that such occasions as have been alluded to are not only seldom experienced, but are in the highest degree doubtful as to their result; the issue being for the most part deadly, and not gracious. The bones of the poor traveller are found in some unknown spot, or never found. The loaded captive is left to his fate. The diseased man sinks away from a bad state to a worse, till the grave is friendly enough to open its last refuge from weariness and distress. The shattered vessel goes down in the gale, and the sailor's cry of entreaty or despair is drowned in the hollow gust, as if none regarded it. What, then, is the inference? It is, that we should not found our praises of the Lord on things that are precarious in their event, and far apart in their occurrence. It is, that we should look for His "wonderful works" in those that are most constant. We should think more of our continual preservation than of a fortunate escape,—more of the benefits that millions partake of with us, than of those by which we may be for a moment distinguished,—more of the merciful laws of our being, than of its transient incidents,—more of the great truth that a parental Providence reigns, than of any fact that may seem to illustrate its singular interferences. The spirit, then, of the contemplative man should be filled with the love of the Being that fills all in all. The succession of our years should be one thanksgiving day. (N. L. Frothingham.)

Ver. 9. For He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.—*The longing soul satisfied*.—I. THE SOURCE OF TRUE SATISFACTION IS GOD. 1. The soul being made in His image has infinite yearnings which nothing finite can satisfy, and powers which can only find their due exercise in Divine worship and service. 2. The soul is fallen and therefore has need of restoration which nothing finite can accomplish. II. THE RECIPIENTS OF TRUE SATISFACTION. Longing souls—men and women who realize their celestial origin. In time past, they may have turned to the world for satisfaction, they may have hewn them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water, but now they seek to slake their thirst from the fountain of living waters (Jer. ii. 13). They may in the past have been among the dissatisfied, saying, "Who will show us any good?" (Ps. iv. 6). Now they know that blessedness consists in having the light of the Divine countenance shining upon them. III. THE CONDITION OF TRUE SATISFACTION. Obedience. The obedience which springs from filial trust and submission to the will of God. To those who hearkened to the Divine commandments the promise is (Isa. xlvii. 18). They shall be God's people, and He shall be their God. God for them, and with them, and in them shall be a source of perfect and eternal satisfaction. (H. P. Wright, B.A.) *A longing soul satisfied*.—I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN A LONGING OR HUNGRY SOUL. 1. That it wants something which it has not got. Pardon, peace, purity, God. 2. That it wants something which it cannot provide for itself. 3. That the want of this something unsettles and makes it discontented. II. WHAT IS THE SATISFACTION WHICH GOD GIVES TO THE LONGING OR HUNGRY SOUL. The gifts of God to the soul, of pardon, health, and life, are its coronation; its honour and glory; its satisfaction. Beyond this it cannot go on earth. This is being filled and satisfied with goodness. (Anon.) *The soul's thirst and satisfaction* (with Ps. cxliii. 6).—Man has a threefold nature—physical, mental, and spiritual. The soul is the nobler part of man, and needs a nobler satisfaction than the body. I. THE SOUL'S THIRST. 1. The soul comes from God, and its happiness is inseparably connected with obedience to the Divine will. 2. It is immortal. 3. It was made for God, in whom alone can it find true satisfaction. 4. It needs God, His smile, favour, and companionship. 5. How do men try to gratify this desire of the soul? (1) Some force the body to do double work to make up for the lack of spiritual food. But the body resists excess. Man was made to be something nobler than a mere eating and drinking apparatus. (2) Some with money—business. But the man who thought fifty pounds would give him complete satisfaction was unsatisfied with five hundred. Man should be better than a money-making machine, a slave to business. (3) Some with worldly pleasure, drinking constantly at the wells of worldly bliss, which only increases their thirst. You may as well strive to catch the east wind as try to satisfy immortal hunger with sensual pleasures. II. THE SOUL'S SATISFACTION. 1. The world can stimulate and excite, but cannot give

rest. 2. How may the soul be satisfied? (1) In being at peace with God (Rom. v. 11). (2) In mutual sympathy, reciprocal affection. (3) In regeneration, sanctification, moral likeness to God. (4) In doing God's will. "To do the will of Jesus: this is rest." (5) In constant communion with God. Through Christ we have access by the Spirit unto the Father. (C. Cross.)

Vers. 14-16. **He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death.**—*Song for the free, and hope for the bound*:—The deliverance here intended is one which is brought to us by redemption, and comes by the way of the great sacrifice upon Calvary. I. WHO ARE THESE FAVOURED MEN? 1. Guilty men (ver. 11). Hear this, ye sinful ones, and take heart! God has wrought great wonders for a people whom it seemed impossible for Him to notice. If they came into prison through rebellion, you would expect Him to leave them there. Yet rebels are set free by an act of immeasurable grace. The Redeemer has received gifts for men, "yea, for the rebellious also." 2. Doomed men (ver. 10). It is your condemned condition which needs free mercy; and, behold, the Lord meets your need in His boundless grace! 3. Bound men (ver. 10). You long to be delivered, but you are unable to cut the cords which hold you. Jesus Christ has come on purpose that He might proclaim the opening of the prisons to them that are bound. 4. Weary men (ver. 12). "Come unto Me," etc. 5. Downcast men (ver. 12). The Lord Jesus delights to lift up those that lie at His feet. 6. Helpless men. What a word that is—"None to help"! The proverb says, "God helps those that help themselves." There is a sort of truth in it; but I venture to cover it with a far greater truth: "God helps those that cannot help themselves." When there is none to help thee, then God will help thee. 7. They did at last take to praying (ver. 13). There is that about prayer which makes it a token for good, a pledge of blessings on the road, a door of hope in dark hours. Where is the man that cries? Where is the man that prays? That is the man of whom it shall be said, and of others like him, "The Lord brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death," etc. II. HOW HAS THIS DELIVERANCE BEEN WROUGHT? 1. By the Lord Himself. There is no salvation worth the having which has not the hand of the Godhead in it. None but the Trinity can deliver a captive soul from the chains of sin, and death, and hell. 2. Next, the Lord did it alone—"He hath broken the gates of brass." Nobody else was there to aid in liberating the prisoner. When our Lord Jesus trod the winepress, He was alone. When the Spirit of God came to work in us eternal life, He wrought alone. 3. By the Lord's own goodness. He gives the alms of His grace only to the undeserving. 4. Most completely—light, life, and liberty. 5. Everlastingly. O child of God, you were once shut up as with gates of brass, and bars of iron, and the devil thinks that one of these days he will get you behind those gates again! But he never will, for the Lord "hath broken the gates of brass." The means of our captivity are no longer available. III. WHAT IS TO BE DONE ABOUT THIS? 1. If the Lord has set any of you free—record it. Say, "The Lord hath done great things for us." 2. When you have recorded it, then praise God with all your heart, every one of you, every day. When you have praised God yourselves, then entreat others to join with you. The oratorio of God's praise needs a full choir. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Vers. 17-20. **Fools, because of their transgression and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.**—*The history of sundry fools*:—Here are four pictures, and you may find your likeness in one of the four; but, be not so unwise as to condemn yourself if you are not seen in the other three. "I never went to sea," says one, "this cannot picture me." "I never traversed a Sahara," says another, "this cannot picture me." "I never was in prison in the dark," says a third, "this cannot picture me." But it is possible that you have been a fool, and therefore the sick fool may picture you. When you find yourself in one of the pictures, you may conclude that, as the four are but variations of the same subject, all the four in some degree belong to you. I. THE MISERABLE PEOPLE. 1. They were fools. We call those fools who have a great want of knowledge of things which it is necessary to know. Where other men find their way, they are lost. Where other men know what to do upon very simple matters, they are quite bewildered and cannot tell how to act. He, too, is a fool who, when he does know, does not make right use of his knowledge. He is a greater fool than the former one. He understands that the only way to be saved is to believe in

Christ; but he does not believe. He knows that men must repent of sin if they would find mercy; but he does not repent of sin. He knows that life is uncertain, and yet he is risking his soul upon the chances of his continuing to live. We call him a fool who hurts himself without any profit—without any justifying cause. We count the ox foolish that goes willingly to the shambles; but there are multitudes of men and women who take delight in sin; and, though every cup around them be poisoned, yet they drink of it as though it were nectar. Verily, sinners are fools! We are great fools when we think that we can find pleasure in sin, or profit in rebellion. We are great fools when we displease our God,—when our best Friend, on whom our eternal future depends, is despised, neglected, and even rejected and hated by us. 2. They were not only fools, but sinners. The text says that "fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted." They began with one transgression; they went on to multiplied iniquities. There was first in their heart a transgression against God; afterwards, there were found in their lives many iniquities, both towards God and towards man. Sin multiplies itself very rapidly. It grows from one to a countless multitude. What form has your sin taken? Think of it in your own heart. But, whatever form it has taken, God is able to forgive you. "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." 3. These people had a third mischief about them: they were afflicted. Their affliction was the result of their folly and their transgression. 4. They had fallen into a soul-sickness (ver. 18). 5. They were almost dead. II. THE MERCIFUL LORD. 1. He sent the affliction. Your sicknesses, your poverty, and your misery—oh, I bless God for them! The heavenly Father has sent this rumbling waggon to bring you home to Himself. Oh that you would but come to yourself! Oh that you would but come to Him! 2. They began to pray; and here we see the Lord again; for no one seeks after God till God has put the prayer into his heart, and breathed a new life into his spirit. 3. Then, as soon as ever he did pray, the Lord heard the prayer. "He sent His word, and healed them," etc. So all that God has to do, in order to save us, is to send us His Word. He has done that by sending His dear Son, who is the incarnate Word. He sends us the Word in the shape of the Holy Scriptures; He sends us the Word in the preaching of His servants; but what we want most of all is to have that Word sent home by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Lord does not operate upon the symptoms, but upon the person; He does not deliver us from this sin, and that sin, and the other sin; but He takes away the old heart, out of which the sin comes, and gives a new heart, out of which there come repentance, and faith, and a change of life. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *A rescue from death, with a return of praise:*—In these words you have—1. The cause of this visitation, and of all the grievance he speaks of: "transgression and iniquity." 2. The kind of this visitation: "sickness." 3. The extremity, in two branches: "Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat"; and secondly, "They draw near to the gates of death." 4. The carriage of the affected and sick parties: "They cry unto the Lord in their distress." 5. The remedy of the universal and great Physician: "He saves them out of their distress." 6. The manner of this remedy: "He sent his word and healed them"; His operative and commanding word, so as it works with His command. 7. The fee that this high Commander asks for; all the tribute or reward that He expects is praise and thanksgiving. "Oh that men would therefore praise the Lord for His goodness," etc. I. THE QUALITY OF THE PERSONS HERE DESCRIBED. Why are wicked men fools? and God's children, so far as they yield to their lusts? 1. For lack of discerning in all the carriage and passages of their lives. 2. A fool is led with his humour and his lust, even as the beast. 3. He is a fool that will play with edged tools, that makes a sport of sin. 4. He is a fool that knows not or forgets his end. 5. He is a fool that hurts and wounds himself. II. THE CAUSE. "Because of their transgressions, and because of their iniquities." "Transgression" especially hath reference to rebellion against God and His ordinances in the first table. "Iniquity" hath reference to the breach of the second table, against men; and both these have their rise from folly. For want of wisdom causeth rebellion against God, and iniquity against men. All breaches of God's will come from spiritual folly. Why doth He begin with transgressions against the first table, and then iniquities, the breach of the second? Because all breaches of the second table issue from the breach of the first. III. THE EXTREMITY. 1. "Fools for their transgressions are afflicted." We by our sins put a rod into God's hand—"a rod for the fool's back" (Prov. xxvi. 3); and when

we will be fools, we must needs endure the scourge and rod in one kind or other. Those that will sin must look for a rod. 2. "Their soul abhors all manner of meat." This the great Physician of heaven and earth sets down as a symptom of a sick state, when one cannot relish and digest meat. Experience seals this truth, and proves it to be true. 3. "They draw near the gates of death." Death is a great commander, a great tyrant; and hath gates to sit in, as judges and magistrates used to "sit in the gates." (1) "They draw near to the gates of death"; that is, they were "near to death"; as he that draws near the gates of a city is near the city, because the gates enter into the city. (2) Gates are applied to death for authority. They were almost in death's jurisdiction. Death is a great tyrant. He rules over all the men in the world, over kings and potentates, and over mean men; and the greatest men fear death most. (3) The power of death. It is the executioner of God's justice. IV. **THEIR CARRIAGE IN THEIR EXTREMITY.** "They cried to God in their trouble." This is the carriage of man in extreme ills, if he have any fear of God in him, to pray; and then prayers are cries. They are darted out of the heart, as it were, to heaven. Extremity of afflictions doth force prayers: "In their affliction they will seek Me early." When all second causes fail, then we go to God. Nature therefore is against atheism. V. **THE REMEDY.** 1. "He saved them out of their distress." God is a physician, good at all manner of sicknesses. Other physicians can cure, but they must have means. Other physicians cannot cure all manner of diseases, nor in all places, but God can cure all. "He saved them out of their distress." Other physicians cannot be always present, but God is so to every one of His patients. He is a compassionate, tender, present Physician. 2. "He sent His word and healed them." What word? His secret command, His will. VI. **THE DUTY.** 1. The persons who must praise God: "Oh that men would praise the Lord." 2. The duty they are to perform: "to praise God," to "sacrifice to God," to "declare His works"—one main duty expressed by three terms. 3. For what they should praise Him: "for His goodness." It is the spring of all, for all particular actions do come from His nature. Why is He gracious, and merciful, and longsuffering? Because He is good. This is the primitive attribute. And then another thing for which we must praise Him: "for His wondrous works for the children of men." 4. The manner how this should be done: "with rejoicing and singing," as the word signifies, "declare His works with rejoicing." "God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. ix. 7), much more a cheerful thanksgiver, for cheerfulness is the very nature of thanksgiving. VII. **HELPS AND MEANS TO PERFORM THIS DUTY THE BETTER.** 1. Consider our own unworthiness. 2. Dwell not on second causes. 3. Consider the necessity and use of the favour we pray for. 4. Again, if we would praise God, let us every day keep a diary of His favours and blessings: what good He doth us privately, what positive blessings He bestows upon us, and what dangers He frees us from, and continues and renews His mercy every day; and publicly what benefit we have by the state we live in. (R. Sibbes.)

Ver. 20. He sent His word, and healed them.—*The healing influence of God's Word.*—Those who do not enjoy Divine revelation are in a very miserable state: they sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. Their habitations are full of darkness; their lives are full of sin and misery, and they have no hope in their death; for, where there is no vision the people perish. "He sends his word and heals them, and delivers them from their destructions." I. **SOME OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD.** 1. It was Divinely inspired. 2. It is necessary to discover unto us most important truths. 3. It is most profitable unto men, for the doctrines which it teaches, for the precious effects which it produces on the hearts of men, and for the reformation which it is calculated to accomplish in the world. 4. The written Word of God may be considered as a sacred trust committed to Christians, to be improved by themselves, and conveyed unto others. II. **THE MANNER IN WHICH THE WORD OF GOD, WRITTEN AND PREACHED, HAS BEEN SENT TO MAN,** and how it ought to be sent by us to the heathen, that they may be healed, and delivered from their destructions. 1. The Word of God, written and preached, was sent to man by God Himself. 2. The Lord sends His written and preached Word by the ministers of the Gospel. 3. The Lord sends His Word accompanied with the Divine Spirit, who renders it effectual to salvation. 4. The Word of God should be sent unto the heathen, accompanied with much fervent prayer for its success. III. **OBSTRUCTIONS**

WHICH THE WORD OF GOD IS CALCULATED TO REMOVE. The Word of God is excellently adapted to—1. Remove out of the world, and from the hearts of men, darkness, ignorance, and superstition. 2. Heal division, and to promote the peace and happiness of civil and religious society. 3. Heal the soul of those injuries which, by sin, it sustains. 4. Produce hope in the soul. (IV. Gould.)

Delivered them from their destructions.—*Delivered from destructions*:—What! Are there many destructions to a man? Oh yes, a great many! I have known one man destroyed by his shop, another by his wife, another by his children. Many a woman is destroyed by her clothes; many a man is destroyed by his eating; millions are destroyed by their drinking. Everything about us will destroy us unless God saves us. There are a thousand gates to hell, though there is only one road to heaven. One man may perish by debauchery; another may perish by respectability. One man may be lost in the ale-house; another man may be lost through his teetotalism, if he makes a god of it. One man may go down to hell by his want of common decency, and another by his pride, and prudery, and self-righteousness. Do not deceive yourself—the way to ruin is easy, and many crowd it. A little matter of neglect will land you in hell. But it is not a little matter of thought that will bring you to heaven; there must be a stirring up of the entire soul—an awakening of the whole man to seek after God in Christ Jesus; or else you shall perish. Surrounded, then, with destructions—snares about your bed, snares about your table, snares in your solitude, snares in the street, snares in your shop, snares at dawn of day, and snares at set of sun—you are in awful, terrible danger; and yet persons surrounded with destructions have been saved, and why should not you? They have cried to God in their trouble, and He has delivered them out of their destructions; will He not do the same at your cry? (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Vers. 23–31. **They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters.**—*Distressed seamen and the Sovereign of the sea*:—I. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE SEA. Behind the laws there is the Lawgiver. Behind the force of the winds and waves there is the Force of all forces—the great God. To regard God as the Ruler of the sea is—1. Philosophical. 2. Scriptural. 3. Assuring. We know His will is good. We bow reverently before the mystery, and wait for more light. II. MAN'S IMPOTENCY WHEN THE SEA REBELS AGAINST HIM. But even when impotent, and defeated by the warring elements, man is greater than they; for he is conscious of his impotence and defeat, while they know not of their triumph. III. MAN'S RESOURCE WHEN THE SEA REBELS AGAINST HIM. When all else fails, prayer to God is left. But is it only when you are at your wit's end that you cry unto God? What right have you to expect that He whom you seek only when you are in trouble will answer your selfish cry? IV. GOD'S ANSWER TO MAN'S CRY. God does not always literally allay the storm, and save from it those who cry unto Him. He, however, calms the inward tempest, so that the waves of anxiety and terror are still. V. MAN'S OBLIGATION FOR GOD'S INTERPOSITION. 1. God's gracious doings for man are wonderful. 2. Men are prone to overlook God's gracious doings for them. 3. Men are under the most sacred obligations to celebrate the gracious doings of God for them. (*Homiletic Magazine*.)

On the stormy sea:—I. THE SHIP SAILS FORTH. Life is a voyage. We all go down to the sea in ships, to a life of mystery and danger, of glorious privilege and responsibility. Our hearts are full of happiness as of new wine. Rejoice, O young man, but remember, be mindful of the sublime things. II. THE WIND RISES. Has it come to you already? Has there been a turn in your prosperity? Are things going wrong? Is it sickness, bereavement, financial stringency? Are the winds whistling through the cordage? Fear not! God holds the trident; the winds are in His fist. There are some anchors that will hold in the fiercest stress of Euroclydon. One is the Wisdom of God. There is nothing that happens without His cognizance. No storm comes haphazard. God understands the end from the beginning; and He makes no mistakes. Another is God's Goodness. He doth not afflict willingly. Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. But never too much. III. THE SAILORS ARE AT THEIR WIT'S END. In the margin it is, "All their wisdom is swallowed up." Then there is hope! For when I am weak, then am I strong. My strength is made perfect in weakness. IV. THEY ARE ON THEIR KNEES. Our Lord said that men ought always to pray and not to faint. But alas, men do not always pray. They will not. But they pray when the storm breaks.

And, strange to tell, God is willing to hear even the cry of desperation. He is of great lovingkindness and forbearance. For some men prayer is their vital breath, their native air. To others it is like the bell in the coal-mine, used only in time of danger. V. THE STORM IS ASSUAGED. The rule, after all, is fair weather. The storm, rage it never so fiercely, will soon be spent. Our "light afflictions" are "but for a moment." Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. There is no night without a dawn. VI. THE SHIP SAILS IN. In that day the sorest troubles of the earthly life will seem insignificant as we look back upon them. We shall understand then what the apostle meant when he called our afflictions "light," and spoke of them as "enduring but for a moment." It will be in our hearts to bless God for all the storms and the trials. (D. J. Burrell, D.D.) *The voyage of life*.—I. THE VOYAGE OF LIFE IS FRAUGHT WITH MANY DANGERS. 1. Our vessel is weak. Many have been shattered by striking on comparatively small rocks, and many have been wrecked by only just changing the tack from prosperity to adversity, or sometimes from scarcity to abundance. Others have been wrecked through too much joy, too weak to bear it; whilst the sorrows of this world have worked death to a vast multitude so weak that they are "crushed before the moth." 2. The sea is rough. Where are those that set out from the same port—nursed on the same hearth with us? Many have been crushed by the storms, but very few, comparatively, are still afloat. 3. Our course lies among rocks. Many have been stranded, but, obtaining timely help, have been prevented from becoming a wreck. It is but seldom we find any one who has not undergone some repairs at the hands of a physician. Some have been in dock a long time, and, being wonderfully restored, have been launched again into the deep. But others are seen being dashed to pieces by some disease or other; and it is a sad sight to see any one striking upon those rocks, and every blow carrying away part of the vessel, as it were, until at last the sides of the ship are laid bare. 4. The weather is foggy and dark. We know not on leaving our homes what will befall us before we return. And our safety so long is not to be attributed to our own care and foresight, but "having obtained help of God we continue unto this day." II. DIVINE GRACE HAS MADE EVERY PROVISION NECESSARY TO ENABLE US TO MAKE THE VOYAGE OF LIFE IN SAFETY. 1. An abundant supply of stores. They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. 2. Ballast in the ship to keep her from capsizing. Many have made shipwreck for the want of it. "In time of temptation they fall away." But if the fear of God be in the heart they will withstand every squall, as Joseph did in Egypt. 3. A chart to sail by. The Word of God is the rule which tells us where every danger lurks, and also how to avoid it. 4. A compass to steer by. Although the believer's vessel is tossed by the waves quite as much as any other vessel, her prow now in this direction, now in that, yet there is a principle of rectitude which governs him; he knows what point to sail for and what direction to take in the midst of all weathers. 5. A quadrant to take observations. "Faith is the evidence of things not seen." 6. A light fixed wherever there is moral danger. 7. Means of constant communication with the shore. (D. Roberts, D.D.) *The Christian mariner*.—I. HIS VOYAGE. 1. The Christian voyager, like the mariner, looks daily for guidance to his great Teacher in the heavens. The lights and landmarks along the coasts of Christian attainment; his frames and feelings, comparing himself with others, etc., which are the main guides of the religious coaster, are all discarded, and the Sun of Righteousness becomes his great Teacher and Guide. 2. He is a close student of his chart—the Bible. How it inspires courage and strengthens hope! II. HIS COMPASS. 1. The Christian's conscience, like the mariner's compass, is his indispensable and most constantly trusted guide, to be obeyed in darkness and storm, as well as in sunshine and calm. 2. The Christian's conscience, like the mariner's compass, is easily deranged, and if not frequently tested may lead him astray. The question is not, therefore, have you been faithful in following your conscience, but have you been faithful in testing your conscience by the Sun of Righteousness? 3. The Christian's conscience, like the mariner's compass, is more or less influenced by early associations. We can never permanently settle ourselves from the effects of the moral direction in which our prow was set, or the spiritual atmosphere that surrounded the laying and shaping of our keel. Because of these great channels and laws of influence no two Christians look out upon the sphere of duty from exactly the same standpoint; and we need nothing so much as charity to enable us to patiently meet and rightly construe the opinions and conduct of

others, who, though perhaps equally conscientious, may not be able to see eye to eye with us in many things pertaining to Christian character and conduct. 4. The Christian's conscience, like the mariner's compass, is frequently deranged by something taken on board. Especially is that Christian in danger who is greatly prospered in temporal matters, and wields a sort of sovereignty over all manner of wares. It indicates great strength and purity of character when such persons remain humble, conscientious, and loyal to God. 5. The Christian voyager, like the mariner, sails by his compass, though he cannot explain the mystery that surrounds it. There are mysteries about the compass which the ordinary sailor never attempts to explain or understand. He becomes possessed of its benefits, not by solving its mysteries, but by following its guidance. So the Christian's safety is secured not by understanding everything, but by obedience to Divine teaching. Hence, although surrounded by mystery, he sails by faith. 6. The Christian who, like the mariner, tests and sails by his compass, is daily nearing his desired haven. "Land ahead." "Its fruits are waving o'er the hills of fadeless green." (T. Kelly, D.D.) *Soul navigation*.—I. ITS WEATHER IS FOULER TO SOME THAN TO OTHERS. This difference is partly necessary and partly moral. A man's condition in life depends greatly both upon his temperament and upon the external circumstances under which he has been brought up. Some have temperaments that are impulsive and tempestuous; others gentle and pacific. Some are surrounded by circumstances suited to soothe and to please, others by those tending ever to agitate and distress. This difference in the temperaments and circumstances of men, whilst it reveals the sovereignty of that God who arranges human affairs after the counsel of His own will, should at the same time dispose us to act with tender consideration in all our intercourse with our fellow-men. But there is a morality in this difference that should not be overlooked. Men have power to rule in a great measure their own temperaments, and control their own circumstances. The man to whom God has given the most fiery passions He has given corresponding intellect for control. II. IT EXPOSES TO TERRIBLE DISASTERS. How many souls are shipwrecked every day! They go down into the abysses of passion, worldliness, impiety. III. THERE NEED BE NO SHIPWRECKS. In all cases man is responsible for them. 1. He has an infallible chart—a chart which reveals life true to eternal fact. There is not a danger it does not expose. It draws the very line over which you should sail if you would sail safely and meet a prosperous end. It tells you how to avoid all the perils lying beneath the wave, how to escape the fierce hurricanes, how to sail through peaceful seas and into sunny climes. 2. He might have a safe anchorage (Heb. vi. 19). 3. He might have an all-sufficient captain—Christ. (*Homilist*.) *Lessons from the ocean in a storm*.—The sight of the ocean in a storm serves—I. To impress us with THE MAJESTY OF GOD. Perhaps there is no spectacle in nature so overwhelmingly grand as that of the ocean when lashed into fury with the tempest. How great is God! II. To awe us with OUR UTTER HELPLESSNESS. How powerless we feel in the presence of such wild majesty! Such a sight may well take the egotism out of man, and bury it in the abysses of forgetfulness for ever. "What is man?" etc. III. To inspire us with SYMPATHY FOR MARINERS. How many brave men, who fight our battles, who enrich our markets, who diffuse our civilization and religion, will go down in that storm! (*Ibid.*) *A plea for sailors*.—The Roman poet has celebrated in familiar verse the courage of the heroic pioneer of civilization—the man who first trusted his fragile barque to the treacherous sea. In what striking contrast to this solitary man—brooding over the unknown possibilities of that wide and unexplored world of waters, at once inviting and alarming him, until at length his final resolve was taken and his daring venture made—are the vast multitudes who to-day do business in the great waters! They include men of all nationalities who find a point of common interest in their love for the free and daring life of the sailor. They have habits, tastes, tendencies peculiar to themselves. If we would realize how much we owe to them, let us try to imagine the island deprived of their services. That all the luxuries which are drawn to our markets from all the provinces of the world would at once be withdrawn would be a comparatively small matter, and yet that loss would be felt as seriously even by classes who are not generally regarded as consumers of luxuries. For under that term must be included many things to which even those of very moderate means have become so accustomed that they esteem them necessities of life. But the mischief would not end here. The supplies even of the staff of life would be curtailed and before very long would

cease altogether. Nor would this exhaust our calamities. We export as well as import. Our little island is the centre of a vast trade which has the world for its circumference, and at every point of importance we have our representatives. The peculiar treasures of all countries are attracted to us, and our prosperity, in truth, our very existence, depends on the maintenance of that complicated network of communications which unites us with all peoples, making us at once their debtors and creditors. Needless to insist on the passionate feeling with which England regards her empire of the sea. The sentiment has been cultivated so long, and has sunk so deep into the national heart, that it seems now to be a rooted and invincible instinct. The most popular among our national songs are songs of the sea. The most stirring incidents in our national struggles are stories of the sea. The most popular of our heroes are those whose laurels have been won on the sea. The heart of the Englishman glows with pride and gratitude as he remembers the great deliverances wrought for the nation by the gallant men who won for us the supremacy of the seas. But their services are equally great in the works of peace. There are few classes who contribute more to the fabric of national wealth and greatness than those who go down to the sea in ships. These men see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. They have a great communion with nature, and with nature in some of her most impressive and majestic scenes of which dwellers in the crowded streets of great cities know nothing. It has been said that an undevout astronomer is mad. The same might be said with much more truth of the undevout sailor. He may be said to live in the presence of the Infinite. Grandeur, majesty, mystery, are around him continually. He is away from those displays of human arrogance and conceit which hide from so many the presence and the work of God. Under few, if any, conditions is there so much to make him feel how little and how feeble man is; how great and unsearchable is God. Did we not know so much of the deceitfulness of the human heart and understand how soon familiarity with the most impressive spectacles will weaken, and step by step, by little and little, ultimately destroy their power, we might think that the effect of such scenes must be to induce faith and reverence. But where the sight of these wonders does not soften it will certainly harden; when the sailor is not devout, the danger is lest he become profane. He does not remain merely negative; he grows reckless, daring, unbelieving. Let it not be forgotten, further, that the peculiar conditions of his life withdraw him from a multitude of influences which tell in favour of godliness. It is true that the temptations which beset the path of others are during a large part of his time absent from him; but then, on the other hand, when they do assail him, they come with peculiar severity. A period of liberty, apt to degenerate into licence, has succeeded the severe restraint under which he is confined. He is thrown into the companionship of those who desire to lead him astray, without any experience of their wiles, or probably without any friend to supply the necessary word of warning. He feels as though some measure of indulgence were due to him in compensation for the perils and privations of months. Thus even his comparative exemption from the common seductions of life only becomes a source of graver spiritual danger in the time of recreation he spends ashore. When to this is added the loss of the advantages resulting from the influences and associations of home, it will be seen that he is in a position calling for special sympathy and help. For us who rejoice in the blessings of the Gospel and would fain give them to all, what remains but that we give our special thought and care to our brethren who go down to the sea in ships. (*J. G. Rogers, D.D.*)

At their wit's end. Then they cry unto the Lord.—"At their wit's end":—Nothing is more certain, or calls for more grateful acknowledgment, than the ready and merciful interpositions of God in our seasons of exceptional weakness and need. Nothing, perhaps, of a romantic kind attached to the circumstances in which we were placed; it was in the routine of trade rather than amid the excitements of travel; in the safe places of life, and not among gloomy cells or staggering ships, when, face to face with a yet very authentic extremity, we "cried unto the Lord, and He delivered us out of our distresses." It is human to "cry aloud" to God when we feel ourselves in the hands of forces we cannot control, when resource of power or of knowledge is exhausted. But when men practically only "cry unto the Lord" in moments such as these; when they only claim the friendship and help of God when all else has failed; when these words set forth an habitual state, "At their wit's end, then—I" well, I will put the matter mildly, and say, this is serious. This is to reduce the Divine friendship

to the low level of a mere selfish convenience, and, on the whole, to be rather more dis honourable before God than we would like to be before our fellow-man. The great mistake lies in supposing—and, indeed, sometimes in actually teaching—that our need of God is greatest in the critical moments of our lives. We are supposed to be fairly equal to the ordinary strain, or that the ordinary strain is in some way provided for. It is in the great trials we think, as their meritorious grasp fastens round us, that we stand in direct need of Divine assistance. Thus we say to men, "How will you do when sickness overtakes you? If your child should die, or you yourself be called upon to step down into the valley, how will you do without God then?" Badly enough, I should say. But can there be any question that it is not at such times we are tempted to forget God? In a passionate crisis the problem solves itself. It is in the common uneventful days, in the regular routine of daily life, amid faces, and scenes, and duties familiar to us as the light of the morning, it is here that the real difficulty lies. There is no question about crying to God "out of the depths." It is not in the "depths," it is in the long level flats that most men's danger lies. (*J. Thew.*) *Through stress of weather.*—I. How SLOW MEN ARE TO PRAY IN PROSPERITY. It may be written down as an axiom, that "prosperity prevents prayer." Thank God it is an equally true axiom that "adversity prompts prayer." 1. We are apt to become careless of Divine things when prosperity smiles upon us. 2. There is also a danger of becoming absorbed in the business that is thus blessing you. The more we have, the more, as a rule, we want. 3. Prosperity, too, is prone to make us lose our sense of dependence upon God. The ballast of adversity is not to be despised. II. How READY MEN ARE TO PRAY IN ADVERSITY. "Then" is a very commonplace adverb of time, but it is wonderfully expressive. Not till they were obliged to in any of these cases, not till pressed by utmost need did they cry. Not till they got to the end of the creature did they appeal to the Creator. 1. This truth, sad as it is, is noticeable in the case of temporal troubles. Those who have been thoughtless till the trouble came upon them, and prayerless too, begin to think and to pray as soon as the grief afflicts them. Thank God for the griefs that make us pray, for the troubles that drive us to the mercy-seat. Thank God that He sometimes takes the Æolian harp and puts it where the rough winds blow, for it would remain mute did not the breezes sweep through its strings. 2. Sometimes it is in spiritual matters that this experience comes to us. Do not despair; cry loudly to God, plead the merit and death of Christ, and He will save you out of your troubles. III. How WILLINGLY THE LORD HEARS THE PRAYER. True, it was belated; true, it was a small compliment to God to pray only when one was driven to it, but it does not seem to me as if God minded even that, so gracious and generous is He. He seems to say, "You are late in coming, but it is better late than never. I will heal you, I will deliver you." He does not reproach, He does not refuse, He does not even delay. They have been long in asking, but He is quick in saving. (*T. Spurgeon.*) *When at wit's end.*—"Most that are acquainted with God are taken in the briars. Jesus Christ in the days of His flesh had never heard of many, if their necessities had not brought them to Him." *Sending up a signal of distress.*—Wearied and worn, suffering from "brain-fag," from the strain of incessant service through the winter season, Brother C—and I set sail from Old England on the 22nd of May, bent on availing ourselves of the advantages of enforced rest *en voyage*, and change of scenery and associations on the Continent. Five days later, we were nearing the north coast of Germany. A wild wind and a "choppy" sea kept us later than usual on deck. Driven by sheer weariness, I retired to my berth at two o'clock in the morning; but not for long. At five I was ruthlessly roused by my friend, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God." "What's the matter?" I inquired. "We have run aground, and can't move." Hurrying up to the captain's bridge, we found him the picture of anxiety. We were (in the wrong sense) "steadfast, unmovable"—of this there was little doubt. For three hours had the captain been trying to "go ahead," then "astern," but not an inch could he move the good ship; and with one thousand two hundred tons of cargo aboard, we were evidently getting more and more deeply embedded in the sandbank. We wanted sixteen feet of draught to float us, and had but nine. As well might we try to float a "heavy-laden" sinner into the kingdom of grace on the shallow doctrines so common to-day, as to steer our ship over this sandbank. At length the captain bade "Jack" run up the signal for help. Friend C— caught at the idea, and seizing me by the arm, said, "I think we will

get to our cabin, and take the hint." There we retired, and "sent up the signal for help." Presently, addressing the steward, C—— asked, "Did you feel the vessel move?" "Not likely," he replied, "after sticking here three hours." Turning to the mate, C—— put the same question, with a similar result, "Not likely! What do you land-lubbers know about it?" Just then the vessel fairly lurched. "Did she move, mate?" "Yes," said he, with an astonished air; "but I can't understand it." By this time a tug from the coast was bearing down upon us, but reversed her course as our captain lowered his signal. When we again mounted his bridge, he was almost beside himself with joy to think we had slidden bodily off the bank, and were once more steaming into the Channel. "I am thankful we're off; but I can't understand it a little; it completely puzzles me." Said friend C——, "Shall we explain it, captain? We are firm believers in the efficacy of prayer; and seeing your trouble, we just now took your unintentional hint, and sent up a signal for help. Do you never resort to prayer in the midst of trouble, captain? God has said, 'Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me.'" (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 30. Then are they glad because they are quiet.—The quiet of the Sabbath:—
I. WHY ON THIS DAY OF REST OUGHT WE TO BE GLAD? 1. Because the week is the scene of perpetual activity. 2. Because the week is the season for impairing rather than increasing our spiritual vigour. 3. Because the week is the time in which we are exposed to the most spiritual danger. **II. WHAT THE QUIET OF THE SABBATH SIGNIFIES AND SYMBOLIZES.** 1. It does not mean mental inaction. It does not signify having nothing to think about, and nothing to do on this day of rest; but having other things to think about, and other things to do, than those which occupy and all but absorb us during the week. And not only other, but better things, things connected with the life that lies beyond the grave. 2. The quietness of the Sabbath is intended to prepare us for the toil and tumult of the week. Let a Christian man enter the house of God with this idea, and he will never find the Sabbath tedious, or its hours of public worship a weariness; he has laboured to enjoy this rest, and now he rests to be fitted for ensuing labour. 3. The quiet of the Sabbath is a happy quiet, because it is an emblem of the heavenly Sabbath: Learn—(1) The fitness of Divine ordinances to our human constitution. We must have rest and quiet: nature demands; God graciously supplies them; and he that believes enters into rest. (2) Let us remember the danger we are exposed to of forgetting the claims of the Sabbath amidst the perpetually recurring anxieties of the week. (3) Let us rejoice if in our intelligent appreciation of this day we can truly say, "This is the day the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it"; and let memory ever say, "Then were we glad because we were quiet." (W. G. Barrett.) *Memories of dangers passed:*—Thinking of the past, there may be a sense of not unwelcome lightening from a load of responsibility when we have got all the stress and strain of the conflict behind us, and have, at any rate, not been altogether beaten. We may feel like a captain who has brought his ship safe across the Atlantic, through foul weather and past many an iceberg, and gives a great sigh of relief as he hands over the charge to the pilot, who will take her across the harbour bar and bring her to her anchorage in the land-locked bay, where no tempests rave any more for ever. (A. Maclaren, D.D.) **He bringeth them unto their desired haven.—The desired haven:—****I. THE PORT.** "Their desired haven." Comforting view of heaven this! 'Tis a haven; not an "undiscovered country," not a desolate coast chafed by storms, and strewn with wrecks and lifeless bodies. Entrance ample, water deep, anchorage secure, may be taken in all weathers; no blinding haze, no dreary night, no want, no sin. 'Tis a desired haven (Heb. xi. 13, 16). **II. THE PILOT.** "He bringeth them;" not He driveth, as if behind; nor draweth, as from far-off spot, as the pole draws the needle of the compass by a cold and mighty attraction; but He bringeth, as the reaper bringeth his sheaves. Jesus bringeth! Not ahead to draw, not astern to drive, but on board to bring! Oh! is He not a Pilot? He sounded the channel, took the bearings, mastered the details, made the chart, and now goes in company with the believer to perform the voyage. You ask who erected the beacon, placed the lightship, anchored the buoy? Christ, all Christ. He unites the pilot and commander in one: never leaves nor forsakes. Oh, come to Him; "He bringeth," He only; He bringeth unto. None founder under His command. **III. THE PROVIDENCE,**

"So." "His way is perfect." 'Tis not so short as you would like it, nor so easy, nor so pleasant, but it is "so." Sometimes He brings to wit's end, makes men to stagger, and the great billows, which they think will bury them, only lift them higher up into safety and peace. (*H. T. Miller.*) *The port of glory*:—Whether we will or not, it is ours to sail across the sea of life. As the ship on the sea is subject to calms, and storms, and fair weather, and is exposed to dangers untold, and driven here and there by the force of winds and tides; so is every man's experience; and it behoves each to ask himself whither he is bound, and whether he has a good hope of reaching his "desired haven." I. It is SUGGESTIVE OF REST. It is a "haven." Fellow-voyagers, are you looking for rest? Beyond all this toil of the ocean, are you expecting the repose of the haven? II. It is SUGGESTIVE OF SAFETY. As the sailor cannot be endangered until the very harbour is destroyed; so, as long as Jehovah is, the Christian soul is safe. And this is true not only of his future, but also of his present state. Yes, God Himself is their protection. III. It is SUGGESTIVE OF HAPPINESS. Do not blame us if we sometimes turn a longing gaze towards the "fulness of joy" which is in His "presence," and to the "pleasures for evermore" which are "at His right hand." IV. It is SUGGESTIVE OF POSSESSION. He knows that when once the "desired haven" has been reached, all life's dangers will be for ever over; all life's mysteries will be for ever solved; all life's labours will be for ever crowned, and he will "enter into the joy" of his Lord. "And so shall we ever be with the Lord." (*W. H. Burton.*) *Sure sailing*:—1. The port, or harbour—"Their desired haven." The spirits of the righteous, who have vanished out of their sight, are not flung upon the coast of some dreary country, desolate and unknown, whose shores are chafed with angry storms and strewn with wrecks. They reach "their desired haven" "when all the ship's company meet who sailed with their Saviour beneath." 2. The Pilot. "He bringeth them." Adequate knowledge of the voyage is an important qualification in a pilot, and also a quick discernment or apprehension of dangers, and skill to avoid them. Every feature of perfect qualification is found in Christ, as the Pilot of humanity across the sea of life. 3. How He bringeth them is implied in this little demonstrative "so." As professing Christians, it might be well for us to single out all the trials, sorrows, and calamities which are the result of our own folly, indolence, or presumption, and distinguish them from those over which we have no control and in the production of which we have shared no part. I believe that many of our trials in secular and spiritual matters are not God's creations, but our own. (*T. Kelly, D.D.*) *Christ, the pilot's Pilot*:—An old pilot of the Hudson River Line lay dying. A minister came in and talked with him, and he was respectful but unmoved. The preacher felt he must say something that would appeal to him. Just then the Spirit of God seemed to say to him: "Present Jesus as the pilot's Pilot." And so he said: "Now, you have many times piloted your steamer away from the rocks; the current is running against you now, and the fog is on, and you need a pilot. Jesus is the pilot's Pilot; won't you take Him on board?" The man's attention had been caught and his heart won, and with tear-wet eyes he said, "I will," and with the Saviour's joy in his heart and a happy light in his eyes, Christ piloted him home. Will you take Jesus as your pilot to-day? (*Sunday Circle.*)

Vers. 33-43. **He turneth rivers into a wilderness.**—*God's management of man upon the earth*:—I. It INVOLVES GREAT REVOLUTIONS. 1. In the secular department (vers. 33-38). Sodom's fertile soil was smitten with barrenness. Canaan, at one time one of the most fruitful spots under heaven, is now one of the most worthless. How does God do this generally? (1) He does it by man. To man He has given the power to change the character of the soil, to make orchards out of wildernesses, and gardens out of deserts, and thus cause the "wilderness to blossom as the rose." (2) He does it by man, with a due regard to man's character. By the moral, the wise, the industrious man, He makes the barren places fruitful; and by the corrupt, the indolent, the foolish man, He turns a fruitful land into barrenness. 2. In the social department. (1) In families. Providence has been compared to a wheel; as the wheel goes round, those who are up to-day will be down to-morrow, and the reverse. (2) In nations. II. It REPAYS THE STUDY OF THE WISEST MEN. There is no subject for human study of such transcendent interest and importance as that of God's management of mankind. The study of this subject will serve three purposes. I. To rejoice the

good. "The righteous shall see it and rejoice." The righteous will see in the subject how wisely, how beneficently, how universally all things are managed, how "all things work together for good to them that love God," how even evil is overruled to answer benevolent ends. 2. To confound the wicked. "All iniquity shall stop her mouth." "It shall be," says an old author, "a full conviction of the folly of atheists, of those that deny the Divine providence, and forasmuch as practical atheism is at the bottom of all sin, it shall in effect stop the mouth of all iniquity. When sinners see how this punishment answers to their sin, and how justly God deals with them in taking away from them those gifts of His which they had abused, they shall not have one word to say for themselves. God will be justified, He will be clear." 3. To reveal God's infinite lovingkindness to all. (1) Human suffering, however great, is never equal in amount to that of human enjoyment. This is obvious from the circumstance that men, even in the greatest affliction and trial, earnestly desire the perpetuation of their life and struggle for it. (2) Human suffering is generally, if not always, ascribable to human conduct. Either their ancestors or themselves have broken those organic, moral, and social laws, the observance of which is the condition of happiness. (3) Human suffering may, and should, contribute to lasting enjoyment. Sufferings are disciplinary, they are only storms to purify the moral atmosphere of the world, medicated ingredients in the cup of life which, though bitter, are designed and suited to heal the diseases of the soul, and to make it happy and hale. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 43. **Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord.**—*The benefit of a wise observance of providences*.—I. THE WISDOM OF A DEVOUT ATTENTION TO THE WAYS OF PROVIDENCE. 1. They who are wise will observe those things—take notice of the hand of God in the various turns and methods of His providence. 2. A religious observation of providence is the way to improve in true wisdom. "Who is wise? Even he will observe those things," and by observing those things he will become still wiser. 3. It requires much wisdom and prudence to make right observations on the ways of Providence, and to put a proper construction upon them. (1) Let us fix in our minds a full and lively persuasion of the doctrine of providence: or be firmly assured of the reality and certainty of an overruling and governing power that reaches to all events. (2) We must attend to Divine providences with diligence; observe them with a steady and accurate eye, and deposit them faithfully in our memories to be reviewed and applied hereafter. (3) We must be cautious in our application of providences, and in our determinations concerning their immediate design. (4) Let us patiently wait the events of providence before we judge. (5) We should carefully compare one providence with another. (6) We should carefully compare the book of providence with the Book of Scripture. (7) If we would understand the providences of God let us obey the calls of them. (8) Frequently pray for direction in this matter, and for that wisdom which is profitable to direct. II. THE GREAT BENEFIT AND ADVANTAGE OF SUCH A PRUDENT AND DEVOUT ATTENTION TO THE PROVIDENCES OF GOD; particularly as it will open to us new discoveries of the Divine goodness. "Even they shall understand," etc. 1. This may refer either to public and general, or to particular and private providences. (1) It may refer to public and general providences. And then the meaning is, that by such a wise, discreet and careful attention to the ways of Providence in general, we shall soon come to be convinced that the whole earth is full of the goodness of the Lord; that His tender mercies are over all His works, etc. (2) The words have a more immediate reference to private and particular providences. 2. It may be objected that there are a thousand things in the present state, both of the natural and moral world, which we can by no means reconcile with our ideas of infinite mercy and goodness. Now, to this I answer—(1) The psalmist does not say, nor can any man presume to think, that there are inexplicable mysteries in the ways of Providence; or that there are not many things in the course of the Divine dispensations which we are not able at present to reconcile either with the goodness or wisdom of God. (2) All that the text affirms is, that they who make the wisest and justest observations on providence, will make the plainest and largest discoveries of the lovingkindness of the Lord; and may discern traces of love in those events which to others appear tokens of anger. (*J. Mason, M.A.*) *The wise observation of providences urged*.—I. WHAT IT IS TO OBSERVE PROVIDENCES WISELY. 1. It presupposes—(1) That

there is a providence. Is it unworthy of God to govern what He has created? As for the wisdom in the management of the world, they are fools who judge it folly before they see the end. (2) The faith of this providence. We must believe the doctrine of providence, if we would be wise observers thereof. (3) Providence has a language to the children of men. (4) A disposition to understand the language and design of providence. 2. It imports—(1) A watching for them till they come (Hab. ii. 1; Isa. xxvi. 8; Ps. cxxx. 1, 5, 6). (2) A taking heed to them, and marking them when they come (Isa. xxv. 9; Luke xix. 44). (3) A serious review of them, pondering and narrowly considering them. It is a mystery many times, looking at which our weak eyes will begin to dazzle. And that we may unravel the clue by a sanctified judgment (Ps. lxxvii. 6), it will be needful to call in the help of prayer, with much humility, faith, and self-denial (Job x. 2), and of the Scripture (Ps. lxxiii. 16). (4) Laying them up, and keeping them in record (Luke i. 66). We should keep them as one would do a treasure, for the time to come. Then are they experiences, which will be notable provision for after-times. (5) A practical observation of them (Micah vi. 9).

II. THE THINGS ABOUT WHICH WE ARE WISELY TO MAKE OUR OBSERVATIONS. 1. Providences may be considered with respect to their objects, which are all the creatures and all their actions. (1) Look into the invisible world, and trace providence there. (2) Look to the visible world, and trace providence there (John v. 17). 2. We may consider providences with respect to their kinds (Ps. xl. 5). The wisdom of God is manifold wisdom, and produces works accordingly (Ps. civ. 24). And each of them is to be observed. (1) Providences are either cross, or smiling and favourable. Both ought to be observed, and may be so profitably. (2) There are great lines and small lines of providence. (3) There are common and uncommon providences. 3. We may consider providences with respect to the time of their falling out. (1) We should observe the past dispensations of providence (Ps. lxxvii. 5). Towards others. Towards ourselves. Observe how God gave thee such and such education, ordered thy lot in such and such a place in His earth, and in such sort as He has done, how He brought thee into such and such company, saved thee from such and such dangers, etc. (2) We should observe the present dispensations of providence towards ourselves and others (Zech. vi. 1, 2). It is a stream that still runs by us, like those rivers that bring down the golden ore (Ps. lxxv. 11). By day nor night it ceaseth not (Ps. xix. 2). III. WHAT WE ARE TO OBSERVE IN PROVIDENCES. 1. The timing of providences, the great weight of a dispensation sometimes lies in this very circumstance, that then it came, and neither sooner nor later. And O the admirable wisdom that appears in thus jointing of them! (Gen. xxiv. 45; Judg. vii. 13). 2. The beginnings and dawns of providences (Ps. cxxx. 6). 3. The progress of providence, endeavouring always to notice the several steps of it (Luke ii. 19, 51), and to follow the thread. For God ordinarily brings great works to pass by degrees, that so men that are weak may have the greater advantage for observation (Hos. vi. 3). 4. The turns of providence. The wheel of providence is a wheel within a wheel, and sometimes it runs upon the one side, and sometimes on the other. Observe the change of the sides. For providence to our view has many turnings and windings, and yet really it is going straight forward (Zech. xiv. 7). 5. The end of providence (James v. 11; Job xlii. 10, 12). 6. The mixture of providence. There is never a mercy we get, but there is a cross in it; and never a cross, but there is a mercy in it. Observe the mixture of your mercies, to make you humble and heavenly; for the fairest rose that grows here has a prickle with it, and there is a tartness in our sweetest enjoyments. Observe the mixture of your crosses, to make you patient and thankful; for the bitterest pill God gives you to swallow has a vehicle of mercy (Lam. iii. 22). 7. The concurrence of providences. 8. The design and language of providences (Micah vi. 9). 9. The harmony of providences. (1) With the Word. (2) Among themselves. (3) With their design and end. (4) With the prayers of the people of God. IV. WHY CHRISTIANS SHOULD WISELY OBSERVE PROVIDENCES. 1. Because they are God's works (Ps. cxxxv. 6). 2. Because they are great works (Ps. cxi. 2). 3. Because they are often very mysterious works, and therefore they need observation (Ps. xcii. 5). 4. Because they are always perfect works. They will abide the strictest search and the most narrow inquiry (Deut. xxxii. 4). 5. Because they are speaking works. They speak Heaven's language to the earth, and therefore should be observed. (T. Easton, D.D.) *The operations of the Divine lovingkindness*:—Human love, we may say as a general rule, is easily understood by human creatures. Not so

the Divine love, the lovingkindness of the Lord. Guided by a wisdom to which our minds cannot reach, that often operates towards us in a way that much perplexes us. I. WHENEVER HE LOVES, HE AFFLICTS US. Either He finds us in trouble, or He ere long brings us into it—that is one of the rules He has laid down for the exercise of His lovingkindness. Are you, then, prepared to receive affliction from Him when, though conscious of a whole mass of evil dwelling in you, you can discover no indulged, no specific sins which have called down that affliction on you? Are you prepared for the storm, and the storm of God's raising, when honestly engaged in your worldly callings? Are you prepared for hunger, and thirst, and faintness of soul in God's own ways, while walking with God, following prayerfully and closely as you can the Lord's own guidance? II. HE GENERALLY BRINGS HIS PEOPLE TO AN EXTREMITY OF DANGER OR OF TROUBLE, BEFORE HE SUCCOURS THEM. We are often made to see and to see with wonder that our extremity is, indeed, God's opportunity; that His helping work begins just when we are beginning to fear there is no help for us; that He does all that is needful for us when we are brought with a sorrowful and perhaps half despairing heart to say, nothing can be done. Deliverance we may depend on, but we must not depend on it till the extremity comes. III. HE DRAWS FORTH FROM HIS PEOPLE EARNEST PRAYER FOR RELIEF BEFORE HE SENDS IT THEM. He has it in store for them, but He says, "I will be inquired of them for it before they shall have it." And this is one of His main designs in allowing our troubles to come to an extremity before He helps us—He wants to strip us of all creature-confidence; that we may be compelled to turn to Him for help, be constrained to come to Him with our difficulties and sorrows. Our prayers do Him no good, but they do us good—they bring us into closer union with Himself, the fountain of all good. IV. WHEN THE LORD DELIVERS HIS PRAYING PEOPLE IN THEIR EXTREMITIES, HE GENERALLY DELIVERS THEM SIGNALLY AND MOST EFFECTUALLY. 1. Signally. He lays bare His arm as He delivers them; makes it visible; compels them to see, and to see with grateful wonder and a thrilling delight, that their deliverance is His work and His alone. 2. Effectually. He makes the help He gives them adequate to their extremity and more than adequate to it, surpassing their necessity. He often blesses and enriches them while He delivers them. (C. Bradley, M.A.) *Providence observed*:—I. IN WHAT MANNER WE SHOULD OBSERVE THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE. 1. There should be a prevailing recollection that there is a providence; so that we live not like heathens who know not God. 2. We ought to take particular notice of special events or remarkable occurrences. 3. We should gratefully acknowledge the Divine goodness; observe particular mercies. 4. Humbly submit to the Divine chastisements. These are often heavy and severe, though wisely ordered and mixed with mercy. 5. Observe, as far as may be, the design of God in the events of His providence, and particularly what benefit you may derive from them. II. THE WISDOM AND ADVANTAGE OF A DUE OBSERVANCE OF THE WAYS OF PROVIDENCE. 1. If you observe these things you shall see God's lovingkindness prevailing in all His dealings with the children of men. 2. We may extend the application of the promise. For, according to the whole tenor of the Word of God, all the truly pious, such as they are who devoutly observe the ways of God, are really interested in His gracious regards. The Lord loveth the righteous. He receives them into His favour through the grace and righteousness of Jesus Christ. He will save them with an everlasting salvation. They shall, therefore, understand what a glorious thing it is to have an interest in God as their portion. (*Essex Remembrancer*.) *The lovingkindness of the Lord*:—If we wish to "understand" the lovingkindness of the Lord, we need not speculate, we have only to "observe"; and we have not anxiously to cast about for examples, as they are gathered and classified for us in the induction which distinguishes this inspired song. I. IT IS EFFECTUAL. Gives complete relief. No mockery of favour, no semblance of love. Deals not in half-measures, but secures complete deliverance. II. IT IS SEASONABLE. God interferes in the crisis, and waits till it come, ere He show His power and love. III. IT IS UNDESERVED. We forget Him, but He does not forget us; and when our sins expose us to imminent peril—and that peril is a righteous and appropriate punishment, even then does He "make no tarrying," but He swiftly comes to save us. IV. IT IS HANNUAL. God has special pleasure in such acts of beneficent intervention. He has often vouchsafed relief to others, and will He not to thee? "The Lord's hand is not shortened." "He daily loadeth us with benefits." V. If we take pains and still "observe these things," we shall find "these things"

all to be ACTS OF SIMULTANEOUS LOVINGKINDNESS. God is not so occupied with one case of misery as to overlook the others. All those deeds of lovingkindness may happen, and very often do happen, at one and the same time. VI. IT IS MANIFESTED IN ANSWER TO PRAYER. The spirit, in the hour of its weakness, looks up to God, and He blesses and saves. O, then, ask and wait; wrestle and triumph. VII. IT IS OFTEN STARTLING IN ITS NATURE AND RESULTS. The good it does is amazing, and the penalty it sends is confounding. These sudden and terrible reverses are meant to teach and humble—for they show the justice of God, exhibit the evil of sin, and induce man to forsake it. (*John Eadie, D.D.*)

Observation:—What are we called upon to do? To "observe." But that is a scientific word. Certainly. There is no book more scientific than the Bible. Is not science called sometimes the art of observation? Here is a religious teacher who says, Be scientific—observe. Sometimes we want a microscope, sometimes a telescope; everything depends upon the object on which we are fixing our observation; if it be minute, there is the microscope; if it be distant, there is the telescope; what we have to do is to observe,—which few men can do. There are few born surveyors. We are not to observe a little here and a little there, but we are to observe minutely, we are to observe in detail, to observe the little spectral shapes no larger than the hand of a man, and we are to observe them growing until the accumulation fills the firmament with promise of rain. It is delightful to find a word which binds us to a scientific policy. Isaac Newton said he was not aware that he excelled any one except it might be in the faculty of paying attention—shall we call it the faculty of observation? Darwin never slept; he was observing whilst he was dreaming; he left the object for a moment or two and came back to it to follow it on. And one would imagine from some of Sir John Lubbock's most useful books, packed as they are with information, that he had spent the most of his life in an ant-heap. He knows about ants—their policy, their economy, their method, their conflicts, their conquests—all their wondrous system of society. When a man observes God in that way, there will be no atheists. Atheism comes from want of observation,—not observation of a broad vulgar kind, as for example the eyes that take in a whole sky at a time without taking in one solitary gleam of light for careful and reverent analysis, but an observation as minute and detailed, and patient and long-continued, as a man has bestowed upon the habits of an ant. Who would go to a man who had never seen an ant, in order to learn from him the habits of the busy little creature? We smile at the suggestion. Yet there are men who go to professed atheists to know what they think of theology! That which would be ridiculous in science is supposed to be rather philosophical and somewhat broad-minded in the Church. We go to experts. We are right in doing so. We ought to go to experts in the study of history,—not the broad vulgar history of kings, and rival policies, and sanguinary battles; but the inner history of thought, motive, purpose, spiritual growth, and those mysterious inventions which seem to have no beginning and no ending, circumferences without visible centre, centres without measurable circumferences,—the mystery of social movement. What shall be the result of this observation: shall man see the power of God, the grandeur of God, the majesty of God? No: or through them he will see the further quality, the beauteous reality:—"Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." The exiles shall say, He was good to us in Babylon, though we knew it not at the time. The prisoners shall say, There was not one bar too many of iron or brass in the cage that held us: we see it now. Sick men shall say, In the sick-chamber where we mourned and pined in weakness God was love. And men who have been tossed to and fro on great waters shall say, The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, and His also is the fulness of the sea. They come out of all this tumult of experience, not saying, God is great, God is majestic, God is overwhelming: hear them; they come out of all this tragedy, agony, loss, saying, "God is love." (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

PSALM CVIII.

VERS. 1-18. O God, my heart is fixed.—*A threefold moral state of mind:*—**I. MORAL FIXATION OF SOUL** (vers. 1-6). This concentration of soul is unknown to unregenerate men. They are unsettled, divided, distracted, and therefore more or less unhappy. The verses point to two of the grand results of this moral fixadness. 1. The highest happiness (vers. 1, 2). All this is the language of exultation, and this exultation springs from a true decision of soul, self-unity, and concord. 2. The heartiest worship (vers. 3-5). The thoughts and affections being fixed on Him who is transcendently good, beautiful, and true, worship follows as a matter of course. **II. THE INFLATION OF WORLDLY SUCCESS** (vers. 7-9). The psalm (lx.) from which these verses are taken is a war song in anticipation of victory. The warrior is flushed by the prospect of triumph over his enemies, and looks down upon them with a heartless contempt. The tendency of worldly success is to make men supercilious and heartless; men who have won great success in any department of life, be it in war, commerce, or learning, have ever been disposed to look with contempt on those not so distinguished. The haughtiness of some is not only the most vile but the most pernicious state of mind. "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." **III. CONSCIOUSNESS OF UTTER DEPENDENCE** (vers. 10-13). This state of mind,—viz. a conscious dependence on God is right, for there is no creature more dependent than man,—lies at the foundation of our personal religion, for without it there is no looking to God, no prayer, no thanksgiving. (*Homilist*.)

Ver. 4. For Thy mercy is great above the heavens, and Thy truth reacheth unto the clouds.—*God's mercy above the heavens:*—**I. THE IDEAS INVOLVED IN THIS REPRESENTATION.** 1. Its lofty conspicuousness. (1) It is clearly expounded in the Word of God, which every one may read in his own tongue. (2) It is openly proclaimed by the ministers of God, who are commanded to preach it everywhere. (3) It is pre-eminent in the earth, as actually attracting the attention of mankind, even among the wisest and most advanced nations. 2. Its wide embrace. The heavens encompass and enclose all the earth. So that the people at the antipodes see the same sun and moon and stars that we see. What an emblem of the comprehensiveness of the Gospel! 3. The almighty sovereignty. The heavens rule the earth physically: so God's mercy governs all the events of mankind. His dominion, through Christ, rules everything in the Church, and subordinates everything in the world. Think of His benign character, His holy law, His gracious purposes: and then see how He can abase the proud, reward the wicked, avenge the just. 4. Its settled stability. Christ reigns on high, and maintains His majesty and state, undisturbed by worldly tumults, darkneses, and changes. **II. HOW TO BE CONTEMPLATED.** 1. With ardent admiration, delight, and confidence. 2. With cheerful submission. 3. With watchful care to please God: for He is over us everywhere. 4. With hope as to the future: for He must bring final victory to the good and true, and reign till all foes are under His feet. (*Anon*.) *The immensity of mercy:*—**I. THE MORAL CHARACTER AND NUMBER OF ITS OBJECTS.** **II. THE GRAND PURPOSE OF ITS OPERATIONS.** Why does it exercise itself towards this universe of sinners? In one word—to restore them to the image, the friendship, and the blessedness of God. **III. THE EXTRAORDINARY MEANS IT EMPLOYS.** 1. The gift of Christ. 2. The preaching of the Gospel. 3. The ministry of Providence. 4. The agency of the Spirit. **IV. THE COUNTLESS MULTITUDES IT HAS SAVED.** John in his day beheld multitudes which no man could number, etc. **V. THE EXHAUSTLESS PROVISIONS WHICH REMAIN.** 1. Equal to the emergency of the greatest sinner. Magdalene, the thief, Saul, the sinners on the day of Pentecost, etc. 2. Equal to the emergency of all the sinners that will ever be. (*Homilist*.)

Ver. 12. Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man.—*Help in trouble:*—**I. A VERY COMMON EXPERIENCE.** "Trouble." 1. Bodily. 2. Family. 3. Church. 4. Heart. **II. A VERY CERTAIN RESOURCE.** Betaking ourselves to God in prayer. 1. The resource itself. God. He knows all our troubles. He is ever graciously disposed to help and comfort His people. 2. How the resource is available. By prayer. It may be very short—a mere fragment. But it must

be the prayer of conscious need, and of believing supplication. III. A VERY EVIDENT TRUTH. "For vain is the help of man." Good men may give us wise counsel, and they may sympathize sincerely and tenderly, and they may pray for us, and thus be instrumental of good to our souls; but they can neither sustain us in trouble, nor sanctify our sorrows, nor deliver us out of our afflictions. 1. They cannot control our circumstances. But God can; He alone disposes of the conditions of men—raiseth up, or casteth down—enriches, or impoverishes—sends prosperity, or adversity—joy, or grief. 2. They cannot drive back our enemies. Either those in the world, or our spiritual ones; but God can; He can enable us effectually to resist both, and to triumph over them. 3. They cannot turn our afflictions into a blessing. But God can; He is able "out of the eater to bring forth meat, and out of the strong to bring forth sweetness." 4. They cannot deliver us from our troubles. Look at Abraham on the mount with Isaac! Jacob meeting Esau! Israelites on way to Red Sea! Daniel in den of lions! Hebrews in the fiery furnace! Peter in prison—Paul in the stocks! In all these cases vain would have been the skill and power of man; but God did deliver each and all of them; and He will deliver those who put their trust in Him. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *Human help is of no avail:*—About twenty years ago a fisherman on the way to his boat met his little boy, who pleaded with him to be taken on the little voyage across to the neighbouring island. The fisherman looked at the waves; they had begun to put on their white caps of wrath, and the swell of the sea had commenced, and he hesitated; but at last he allowed his boy to go. All seemed well in the smack, till half way across a sudden squall caught the canvas and flung the father and his assistant into the deep. They caught hold of the rope that attached the little boat behind the smack, and climbed in and were saved. Looking back, they saw the smack on her beam end, filling rapidly, and a pale, white little face, the face of the little boy at the cabin window. He had been sent down below when the squall had come. The father, in desperation, flung himself on the sinking smack. One blow of his strong fist shattered the window, and the little face there still looked out, but he cannot escape: what could the father do? The window is too small. The man was nearly demented; he tried to tear the beams from the sinking vessel, but they were too strong; and the little boy, in his homely Scotch, said, "Daddy, save me, help me." Deeper and deeper, the smack turned on her side; and the tears streamed down the little white face, and down the face of the despairing father. At last he cried, "God help thee, my laddie, I canna." Down went the smack, with a gurgle and a foaming bubble, and that was all. That father never went to sea again. Twenty years passed, and on his death-bed it was the same cry, "God help thee, my laddie, I canna." Dear soul, you are in greater danger than that little fisher-lad. You're sinking! God help you, your immortal soul, you're sinking; and I cannot help you, your father can't, your mother can't. God help thee (*J. Robertson.*)

Ver. 13. *Through God we shall do valiantly.*—*Assurance of the Church's victory:*—1. Whatsoever may be the variety of the exercises of faith, victory and triumph shall close the war, and crown the wrestler. 2. Albeit the means be nothing but vanity without God, yet they must be used, for they are something when they are used by us, and put in God's hand. 3. What the Lord doth by the believer as His servant, or by any other instrument, God must have the glory of it. 4. The faith of the Church's victory over her enemies is grounded upon God's engaging in the war for the Church, and against our enemies. (*D. Dickson.*) *Faith's impossible feats:*—We need the courage of those ancient soldiers who were wont to regard difficulties only as whetstones upon which to sharpen their swords. I like Alexander's talk—when they said there were so many thousands, so many millions, perhaps, of Persians. "Very well," said he, "it is good reaping where the corn is thick. One butcher is not afraid of a thousand sheep." I like even the talk of the old Gascon who said, when they asked him, "Can you and your troops get into that fortress? it is impregnable." "Can the sun enter in?" said he. "Yea." "Well, where the sun can go we will enter." Whatever is possible, or whatever is impossible, Christians can do at God's command, for God is with us. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

PSALM CIX.

VERS. 1-31. **Hold not Thy peace, O God of my praise.**—*A song of imprecation:*—I. THE MISDEEDS OF THE WICKED (vers. 1-5). II. THE IMPRECATION OF WRATH (vers. 6-20). III. THE CRY FOR MERCY (vers. 21-25). "The thunder and lightning are now followed by deep, sorrowful complaint like a flood of tears." IV. THE DISPLAY OF THE DIVINE RIGHTEOUSNESS (vers. 26-31). In this concluding strophe the cry for help is renewed, together with a confident assurance of being answered. The suppliant asks relief in such way as to show that it came from God's own hand. God's blessing is set in sharp contrast with men's cursing. The efforts of the ungodly shall end in disappointment and shame, but the Lord's servant will only rejoice. This deliverance will call forth his thanks, which will not be private, but expressed in the presence of a multitude. (T. W. Chambers, D.D.)

Ver. 4. **But I give myself unto prayer.**—*The universal suitability of prayer:*—This is the great resource of God's children. Observe the disjunctive particle "but" with which the text begins. Let others do this or that (he would say), "but I give myself unto prayer," or, as it stands in the original, But I—prayer; as though he meant to imply that prayer was everything to him;—I have no other resource, and I need none. What shall we do, asks the pious parent, to secure our children, who will soon be beyond the control of parental authority, and will have to encounter the snares of a world which "lieth in wickedness"? Give yourselves unto prayer. Let us take another case; namely, the feelings and anxieties of the junior touching the senior members of the household. Here I desire to speak a word in favour of family prayer. Give yourselves unto prayer, as Abraham did, who wherever he went, "there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord." The opening of the new year calls for a review of the past, and that review is fraught with matter for humiliation. Be humbled: yet let not humiliation take the gloomy and unbelieving character of despondency. And in order to prevent this, give yourself unto prayer. (T. E. Hankinson, M.A.) *Constancy in prayer:*—When a pump is frequently used, but little pains are necessary to have water; the water pours out at the first stroke, because it is high. But if the pump has not been used for a long time, the water gets low, and when you want it you must pump a long while, and the water comes only after great effort. It is so with prayer; if we are instant in prayer, every little circumstance awakens the disposition to pray, and desires and words are always ready. But if we neglect prayer it is difficult for us to pray, for the water in the well gets low. (Feliz Neff.)

Ver. 5. **They have rewarded me evil for good.**—*Evil for good:*—Florence, when dominated by the preaching of Savonarola, became transformed; high-born ladies threw aside their jewels and finery, men turned from evil ways into sobriety, the churches were crowded with all classes of the people, from nobles to peasants; the very children were turned into instruments of the good work, going through the streets in procession, singing hymns and collecting money for the poor—and then the tide turned, and, when Savonarola was in the crisis of his struggle with the pope, almost the whole city was against him; a mob attacked his convent of San Marco; and the great friar went to his martyrdom, with the sorer martyrdom of his heart at the thought that all his work was overturned. (Hugh Black.)

Ver. 8. **Let his days be few; and let another take his office.**—*The outcast's place filled* (for St. Matthias' Day):—The words in themselves sound simple enough; they might seem to speak of no more than all human beings must undergo, by the necessity of their mortal nature. All our days are few: they are but as grass, they are gone almost before we can count them. All our places, stations, and offices, whatever they may be, must soon pass away from us, and another take them in our place. But this, the common lot of all, is here turned into a fearful and peculiar curse, for those who slight high privileges, and betray sacred trusts. The instance of Judas is a very plain one, for showing forth the dealings of God's providence in this respect. His short life as an apostle would have been a blessing, had he been such as St. James, the first of the twelve who

came to his great reward: he would have departed, and been with Christ so much the sooner. But as it was, what judgment could be more fearful? Thus his days were signally cut short; and as to another taking his office, St. Peter reminded the disciples that the Scriptures concerning him were of course to be fulfilled, especially two which he specified: "Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein;" and, "His bishopric let another take." Now, it is a serious thought for us all, If Judas Iscariot, who, favoured as he was, had never received the Holy Ghost; if the Jewish people, whose highest privileges were but a shadow of what we receive in Baptism,—if they had their days cut off by so dreadful a sentence, and their place in God's world given over to others: what are Christians, what are Christian pastors to expect, should they prove, after all, unclean and unworthy? The nearer Christ has called us to Himself, the more dangerous surely are the first beginnings and whispers of sin; and the nearer we have ventured to approach, the greater advantage have we given to Satan, except we tried in earnest to purify our hearts and desires. No doubt, St. Matthias himself may have had trembling thoughts like these, wherewith to keep himself lowly and humble, when he was called to so great an honour, so high a place in the Church. What must have been the new apostle's thoughts, when he was thus put in mind of Judas's place! How earnestly must he have prayed in his secret heart, that such place, or a worse, might never be his own! I say a worse; for must it not be worse for those who, besides Judas's other privileges, have also that which is above all, union with Christ by His Holy Spirit, and yet fall away as Judas did? That privilege Matthias received within a few days, when the Holy Ghost came down upon the assembled apostles, and he never forfeited it; he went on glorifying God as an apostle, until he was permitted to glorify Him as a martyr. Or how can a sinner ever be thankful enough that it is not yet over with him; that he has still time, he knows not how much, to humble and punish himself heartily for his great imperfection and unworthiness; to watch and break himself of all beginnings of sin; to subdue the flesh to the Spirit in all things; to acquaint himself with God in all the ways of His Church; to fear always; and to be more faithful and true in every part of his calling towards God and man? (*Plain Sermons by contributors to the "Tracts for the Times."*)

The Apostleship of St. Matthias:—There is a fearful light, as it were, around the Apostleship of Matthias. We cannot think of him without recalling his memory who went before. Surely, we imagine, he must have gone about the work of an apostle with a fear and trembling which even Peter never knew. 1. It is remarkable that the sin of Judas was amongst those particulars of the life and sorrows of the Saviour of the world which were not obscurely predicted in the Old Testament. He was placed upon his trial; a certain position given him, a position of vast privileges. These Scriptures were amongst the means vouchsafed to enable him to maintain his station in the spiritual world, and finish the work given him to do. Now, the state of Judas thus viewed is a very correct type of our own. Consider for a moment the Christian Church itself. It stands indeed to the Jewish race, as Matthias to Iscariot. The Israelites were the first called to be God's special servants; to them was the commission given to keep alive the remembrance of His name, to make His praise to be glorious. They betrayed the trust; they adhered not to His worship; they gave His honour to another; they stoned His prophets; they rejected His Son! And then went forth the decree, "Let their days be few, and let another take their office." There is a voice from the past to the present, from the old Israel to the new, which bids us not be high minded, but fear, as those who fill a traitor's place. And when we extend our thoughts from the Christian Church to the whole human race, we find the same to hold good. There is much to confirm the idea, that the creation of man had its origin in the fall of Satan and his angels. Before us is now placed the choice which ages ago was given to Satan and his legions—the choice whether in sincerity and truth we will be the servants of the Son of God. We are on our trial now, as they were before the pillars of the earth were set up; but with this advantage, that like Judas, who sinned after their manner, we have warnings against the consequences of rebellion. He with the example of their sin and punishment, fell into the same sin, viz. the disowning the Only Begotten. We, with his example also, are called to stand where they stood, and exhibit the obedience which they withheld. 2. But there are deducible from the foregoing remarks, certain truths touching our relation to God. (1) For example, we learn in a most striking manner from what has been advanced, the sureness

with which God's will is accomplished, sooner or later. God has no need of our services; He requires not our obedience; our very sins help on His designs. If we are obedient, He will work through us; if disobedient, He equally bends us to His purpose; or it may be, blots us out of the book of the living, and calls others into existence to do that which we refused; and all without the least pause in the majestic march of His providence. If we resist, it costs Him nothing to say, "Let another take His office." (2) Again, we cannot but press upon you the wonderful uniformity of the test to which God has subjected all His creatures; the test is simply, loyalty to the Only Begotten Son. There are but two kingdoms, the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness; but two monarchs, the Lord Jesus, upon the right hand of the Father, and the outcast archangel, in the fiery abyss. And all choice between good and evil, right and wrong, is a choice between these. (*Bishop Woodford.*)

Ver. 21. *But do Thou for me, O God the Lord, for Thy name's sake.*—*An exemplary prayer*.—I. IT IS TRUE IN ITS DIRECTION. It is addressed to "God the Lord." There is but One all-suffering Being to whom we can address our prayers. Think what is requisite to be able to answer prayer at all times—infinite intelligence, unlimited goodness, universal sovereignty, etc. The petition of the psalmist indicates his belief that he was approaching such a Being. If he could but secure the help of God he would leave everything else to Him. II. IT IS PERSONAL IN ITS AIM. "Do Thou for me." Man's first business is to secure the blessing of God for himself. We should not keep the vineyard of another and neglect our own. We should not attempt to lead others unto Jesus Christ until we know Him as our own Saviour. This is not selfish, but benevolent. III. IT IS SUBMISSIVE IN ITS SPIRIT. The wise and good man leaves the means and the manner of blessing to God. He leaves the time also to God. This submission is both wise and pious. IV. IT IS POWERFUL IN ITS PLEA. "For Thy name's sake." The name represents the character of God. The honour of the Divine name is bound up with His treatment of His people. If any one trusting in God were to perish, the glory of His name would be sullied. Such a plea—1. Implies great faith in God on the part of Him who urges it. 2. Honours God by the exalted conception of His character which it implies. 3. Prevails with God. The man who honours God by believing greatly in Him is mighty with God in prayer. (*W. Jones.*) *The Christian's prayer*.—I. GENERAL REMARKS. 1. The petition may be considered as addressed with equal propriety to each of the Persons in the Godhead, who are the joint objects of religious worship, possessed of the same adorable perfections, and equally concerned in carrying on the work, and conveying the blessings of salvation. 2. Though the good man may and should pray for others, yet he is and ought to be principally concerned for himself. "Do Thou for me"; for my body, for my soul, especially the latter. Begin Thy work there in conviction and conversion, carry it on in progressive sanctification, and perfect it in eternal glory. "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." 3. The good man desires that what God does may be for him, and not against him; that He would deal by him as a friend, and not as an enemy. 4. When we desire that God should "do for us," it is proper that we should leave the way and manner entirely to Him. II. WHAT IS IMPLIED. 1. Do that for me which I cannot do for myself. Reduce my wandering heart, direct my feeble steps, teach me both the way in which Thou walkest towards me, and the way in which I ought to walk toward Thee, the way of duty and of peace. 2. Do that for me which no one else either can or will do. They cannot restore ease to a distempered body, nor comfort to a discontented mind; cannot relieve one moment from the demands of death, nor disarm it of its terrors. 3. Do that for me which Thou knowest to be necessary, and without which I must be undone for ever. 4. Do all that for me which Thou hast appointed and promised, and whereby Thou mayest be glorified. In all our prayers it becomes us to have an eye to—(1) The Divine appointments: for if our petitions do not refer to them, and are not regulated by them, they are not likely to meet with acceptance, nor to procure a blessing. (2) The Divine promises. (3) The Divine glory. III. IMPROVEMENT. 1. The prayer of the psalmist will apply not only to a state of prosperity, but adversity; not only to God's merciful dispensations, but also to those which are afflictive. "Do Thou for me," in wounding as well as healing, in casting down as well as lifting up. 2. The petition is suitable for those who have most to do for God, or their fellow-creatures; such as magistrates, ministers, masters of

families and others. There are also peculiar seasons to which it is especially suited; when our path is intricate, and our work difficult, either in the morning of the Sabbath, or in the near approach of death. 3. It is likewise necessary at all seasons, and for all sorts of persons. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *All of grace*:—Sir James Simpson, the doctor-saint, was waiting for a train at a station, and when it drew up he saw a poor lad, looking very ill, being conveyed by his mother home. He went in beside them into the carriage, and asked all about the boy. By and by he said to the mother, "Your boy might be made quite well; why don't you take him to Dr. So-and-So?" "Because," said the mother, "I haven't money enough to pay the fees." "Well," said the stranger, "I am a doctor;" and then he told his name, to the poor woman's great surprise. "Will you put him in my hands, and I will do what I can for him, and it shall cost you nothing?" The mother thankfully consented; her boy was carefully treated, and in a few weeks' time returned home quite cured. The great Physician does all His cures, bestows all His blessings, and gives all His salvation, for love's sake. And His healing is perfect. (*H. O. Mackey.*)

PSALM CX.

VERS. 1-7. *The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.*—*The King who is also Priest*:—The title ascribes this psalm to David, which is confirmed by its internal character, its laconic energy, its martial tone, its triumphant confidence and its resemblance to other compositions of the son of Jesse. Besides this is the testimony of our Lord (*Matt. xxii. 43; Mark xii. 36; Luke xx. 42*). Peter at Pentecost expressly quoted it as David's (*Acts ii. 34*). It is a counterpart to the second psalm, completing the prophetic picture of the conquering Messiah. The opening word of this spirited lyric indicates its peculiar character. It is the term almost always used to denote an immediate Divine utterance. The utterance here is an oracular address to David's Lord, *i. e.* the promised Anointed One on whom his and his people's hopes were centred. Jehovah bids this personage take His seat at His right hand, not merely as a place of honour, but as implying a participation in His power, of which the right hand is a constant symbol. This exalted position, on the same throne with Jehovah, He is to hold till His enemies are made His footstool, *i. e.* are completely and for ever subjugated. In the next verse the psalmist addresses the Messiah directly. He tells Him that His strong rod, His rod of discipline and correction, by which foes are to be subdued, shall be sent forth by Jehovah out of Zion, considered as His earthly residence, the seat of the theocracy; thus showing clearly that Jehovah acts not only for Him, but in and through Him, for the overthrow of His enemies. Hence, the poet calls on Him to take the dominion and rule, even though hostile powers surround Him and threaten His dethronement. These will prove no obstacle, nor can there be a doubt of the result. The certainty of it is still further secured by the character and number of Messiah's followers. It is not an army of mercenaries. There is no need of a conscription; they stream toward the royal banner from every direction. They are free-will offerings. By a spontaneous movement they come to consecrate themselves to service in the day when the host is put in battle array and mustered for the onset. They come, too, not with coat of mail and battle-axe, but in holy attire, with allusion to the sacerdotal dress. They are clad in sacred vestments, because they are servants of a priestly King, and belong to "a kingdom of priests" (*Ex. xix. 6*). Nor are these few in number or worn with age, but in number and character and vigour resemble

"dew-drops which the sun
Impearls on every leaf and every flower."

From the womb of the dawn there come in perpetual succession youthful warriors who delight to uphold the royal banner. There follows in the next verse the essential point of the whole lyric, the perpetual priesthood of Messiah united with a perpetual kingship, both secured by the oath of Jehovah Himself. This verse is made the subject of elaborate comment in *Heb. viii.*, the author of which

dwells at length upon the oath which founded the priesthood, upon the perpetuity of the office and upon the want of hierarchical succession. Immediately after the announcement of Messiah's priesthood, the psalm resumes its martial tone. Before, the might of the king and the character of his army were described; now we see the conflict and the victory. The Lord—who in this case is Jehovah—stands on Messiah's right hand as His defender and upholder. The consequence of Jehovah's support is that Messiah crushes not merely ordinary men but kings, and the subjects they represent. He inflicts a mortal blow, one from which there is no recovery. In the 6th verse, by a sudden turn, Messiah is spoken of in the third person. He exercises supreme control, as judge, over nations. If they resist Him they fall in slaughtered heaps over a vast extent of country, heads or princes being overthrown with all the rest. In the closing verse David paints the Conqueror as wearied with the battle and the pursuit, but not suffered to perish through exhaustion. A brook by the way revives Him, and He passes on with uplifted head, continuing His work with new vigour, and pressing forward to a complete and final triumph. The psalm is peculiar in setting forth Messiah as a priest upon His throne. He is a real priest, one that makes atonement, intercedes and blesses, and as such meets all the needs of sinful men, because He is a King, and can give effect to His sacerdotal functions, applying the merits of His sacrifice, and actually bestowing the blessing which He pronounces. And all this for ever. Christ neither has nor needs a successor. He is an unchangeable priesthood. Again, Messiah's followers are like Himself, wearing holy attire—an emblem of their cause and character. It is not a kingdom of this world to which they belong, but one heavenly and divine. They wear its uniform and seek to express its spirit. Nor are they in any sense hirelings, but rather volunteers, eager to obey and glorify Him whom they call Master and Lord. Napoleon truly said, "My armies have forgotten me even while living, but Christ has left the earth, and at this hour millions of men would die for Him." The strength of His cause lies in the character of His followers and the fulness and freeness of their consecration. A host made of such materials cannot be overcome, for it is perpetually renewed from the womb of the dawn. Once more, the final result is sure. Messiah leads forth judgment to victory. All foes are to perish. The appurtenances of ancient warfare, captured kings and slaughtered heaps, only indicate the thoroughness of the conflict and its predetermined result. Forward the royal standards go, and the issue is not uncertain. The priestly King must reign till all enemies are made His footstool, and the whole earth acknowledges His rightful supremacy. (*T. W. Chambers, D.D.*) *Jesus ascended and exalted:*—In this psalm Jesus is set forth to us as—I. KING AND PROPHET (vers. 2, 3). The rod of His strength is His Word, even His preached Gospel, accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit. II. KING AND PRIEST (ver. 4). Here the people of Jesus are directed to look to Him as the ground of their hope. For it is what He has done, and what He is still doing, for them as their Priest, that must ever be most important to them, as long as they are in their present imperfect and polluted state. III. KING AND JUDGE (vers. 5, 6; Ps. ii. 9; Dan. ii. 31-45; Rev. xix. 11-16). (*W. Hancock, M.A.*) *Christ sitting at the right hand of God:*—I. HIS HEAVENLY EXALTATION. 1. Elevation. 2. Power. II. THE STATE OF OUR WORLD AT THE TIME WHEN CHRIST WAS THUS EXALTED TO BE ITS KING. We are all by nature the enemies of Jesus Christ, as much alienated from Him as we are from His Father. This blessed Jesus was not hated in Jerusalem only where He was crucified, as though there was something peculiar in the men of that place—He was hated wherever He appeared; and had He gone out from Judæa and Galilee into other countries, He would have been hated there also; Rome, with all her boasted admiration of virtue, would have cried out for His destruction, and polished Greece would have cast Him away with scorn. III. THE MEANS EMPLOYED BY JEHOVAH TO OVERCOME THE HOSTILITY OF THE WORLD AGAINST HIS SON (ver. 2). Has the Gospel proved itself the rod of Christ's strength? That something produced a mighty effect on the world soon after our Lord's ascension is quite certain. "Rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies," says the text to Him, and in the midst of His most violent enemies Christ did rule. In the inveterate and lately infuriated Jerusalem, thousands bowed at once to His sceptre, and throughout pagan Greece and Rome His name was called on and adored. And what wrought this change? Preaching—the simple preaching of Christ's Gospel by a few determined, faithful men; holding up Christ on a cross to men, and bidding them look to Him and be saved. IV. THE HAPPY

RESULTS OF THIS INTERPOSITION OF JEHOVAH (ver. 3). Here is a description, and a beautiful one, of all Christ's real people in every age of the world. 1. They are a willing people. "Willing," we may say, "for what?" For anything and everything which Christ desires. The language in the original is stronger than in our translation. It is "willingness," the noun for the adjective—a Hebrew way of expressing a thing forcibly. This people are eager to receive Christ as their Prince and Saviour; they feel it to be their delight and joy to come under His dominion. 2. This willing people are to be numerous. In the land where the Scriptures were written, the dew is much more abundant than in our country, but even here the drops of dew as they sparkle on the trees and grass, are sometimes countless. As numerous, this psalm says, shall be the people of Christ. 3. The people of Christ are to be beautiful, and beautiful because holy—"willing in the beauties of holiness." The drops of the early dew are beautiful. The rising sun not only discovers them, it brightens and gilds them, makes them the glittering ornaments in the early morning of our gardens and fields. And what were the early Christians? Their very enemies were constrained to do them honour. They hated but they admired them. As they led them forth to persecution and to death, they wondered at their lofty and splendid characters. But their graces were not their own. The dew does not sparkle when the sun does not shine on it. Even a Christian man has no beauty, no holiness, but as Christ imparts it to him. And what is his highest beauty and holiness? It is only a faint reflection of his Lord's beauty and holiness—a dew-drop reflecting the sun. But still that dew-drop does reflect the sun; and so does every real believer in Christ Jesus reflect in some measure his Redeemer's likeness. (C. Bradley, M.A.) *A picture of Christ as the Moral Conqueror of mankind*:—

I. INVESTED WITH DIVINE AUTHORITY (ver. 1). Christ is represented as God manifest in the flesh, as One with God, as the beloved Son of Jehovah, as sitting down at the right hand of God, as exalted above all dominion and power, as King of kings and Lord of lords. His history when on earth confirms this illustrious distinction. How grand were the doctrines He propounded, how stupendous the miracles He wrought, how unexampled the moral character He exhibited, how unearthly and transcendent the spirit which He breathed.

II. ENDOWED WITH DIVINE POWER (ver. 2). This is a far mightier rod than that which Moses wielded, it is a rod that breaks rocky hearts, and makes clear for human souls the way to Canaan.

III. POSSESSED OF A SPLENDID ARMY (ver. 3). The words suggest that His army is distinguished—1. By willingness. "Shall be willing." Their services will not be compulsory, they throw themselves into the spirit of the campaign. 2. By purity. "In the beauty of holiness." They coruscate with holiness. 3. By youthfulness. "Thou hast the dew of Thy youth." They are not old and worn out, they are as fresh as the dew "from the womb of the morning." 4. By abundance. How numerous are drops of "dew." Such is the army of this Hero. Such a Chieftain with such soldiers must win victories the most brilliant.

IV. INVESTED WITH A PRIESTLY CHARACTER (ver. 4). He is a Priest by the solemn and unalterable promise of God. Melchizedek was a wonderful priest—original, final, beneficent, and royal. Christ is a Priest-King. As a Priest He is at once the Sacrifice, the Sacrificer, and the Offering. He is the Mediator, He Himself is the Atonement, the Reconciliation.

V. ACHIEVES MAGNIFICENT TRIUMPHS (vers. 5, 6). They are won not by force, but by love, they do not destroy or injure the conquered, but bless and save them. (*Homilist*.)

The enemies of Christ vanquished:—

I. THE PERSON TO WHOM UNIVERSAL DOMINION IS ASSIGNED. **II. HIS SOLEMN INAUGURATION TO HIS REGAL DIGNITY** (ver. 1; Ps. xxiv. 7-10). **III. THE ENEMIES ABAYED AGAINST HIS RIGHTFUL CLAIMS** (ver. 1). How strange a collocation of words is "enmity against God," and God in Christ! Behold His purity, His meekness, His wisdom, His kind teachings, His generous sufferings for men; the freeness and copiousness of the blessings which He has to bestow upon all who will ask of Him; and say, is there a stigma upon human nature so deep, so dark, as this,—that it is enmity to God! **IV. THE MEANS OF THEIR SUBJUGATION**. 1. The rod of His power. 2. Granting days of power. 3. The willing co-operation of His people.

V. THE GLORIOUS RESULT (ver. 3). 1. Behold this beauty of holiness among the nations. Wars, oppressions, injuries, cease. The earth, tossed and swept for ages by the storms of night, is quiet, imbibes the vivifying dew of Divine influence, and catches the glory of the brightening truth of revelation. 2. Behold it in civil society; in the beautiful order and harmony of pious families; in the charity and kind offices of

Christian neighbourhoods; in the reciprocal reverence and confidence of rulers and their subjects. 3. Behold it especially in the Church. There, indeed, it is eminently appropriate; for, "holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, for ever." It is seen in her ministry; for "her Priests are clothed with salvation," and their "lips keep knowledge." In her doctrine; for the compass, the depth, the height, the harmony, of the whole system of the Gospel being understood and professed, errors and partial views are banished. In her members; those are truly elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. (R. Watson.)

Vers. 2, 3. **The Lord shall send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion: rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies.**—*Messiah's sceptre and kingdom.*—The kingship of Christ is a twofold kingship. It is essential and it is hereditary. The one belongs to Him as God, the other belongs to Him as Mediator. The first is founded upon the Divinity of His Person, the second upon the dignity of His work. Hence the first is eternal, the second conferred. I. **THE SCEPTRE OF CHRIST, THE POWER WHICH WIELDS IT, AND THE PLACE OF ITS APPEARING.** 1. The sceptre is the symbol of royalty and is of even greater antiquity than the crown. Homer speaks of it as "that sacred rod of kings." Christ's sceptre is His Gospel. It is the Word of the Lord which is powerful, a Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation, Jehovah's rod of strength, mighty for the pulling down of Satan's strongholds. 2. This sceptre is wielded by no feeble hand. To subdue the will of an alien world required an agency yet more powerful than that which created the universe and will raise the dead. Its sentiments, prejudices, habits, interests, pleasures, sins, form a positive quantity of antagonism. Hence the conversion of a soul from Satan to God is a miracle of miracles. The humanly impossible becomes the Divinely accomplished. The Holy Ghost wields the sceptre. 3. This sceptre was to appear out of Zion, and from thence by gradual conquests extend its influence over the entire earth. On Zion the apostles received their commission to preach; there they remained until power came upon them; there the first Gospel sermon was preached, and at the first swaying of this sceptre three thousand souls were added to the Lord; there the first Gospel Church was founded, almost under the shadow of the recent cross, and from thence this mystical sceptre went forth into all lands. II. **THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HIS KINGDOM.** The psalmist describes its position and its people. 1. Its position. (1) It is a position of conflict. Rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies. In heaven He rules in the midst of friends. "All the angels of God do worship Him." Here His kingdom is a beleaguered kingdom. (2) It is a position of conquest. He rules. The sceptre has civilized where it has not converted men. It has quickened the conscience and entered into the life of nations. Education, liberty, philanthropy, and the sanctities of domestic life have resulted from its benign rule. (3) It is a position of continuance. The positions thrown up against it are airy fabrics. Reared by vanity, they will be overthrown by time. 2. Its people. (1) Their disposition—willing. (2) Character—holy. (3) Influence. The meaning of the similitude is that the people of Christ, full of a young and ardent vigour, should appear upon the earth in multitudinous number and fertilizing influence as the drops of dew at the dawn of day. (E. T. Carrier.)

Ver. 3. **Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power.**—*Christ subdues a people to Himself.*—The glory of a king consists in the multitude of his people. Messiah is a king, but He is described as ruling in the midst of His enemies. Has He, then, none but these over whom He is to reign—none that willingly do Him service? Was He to spend His labour in vain, His time and strength for that which profiteth nothing? No! He should see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, and the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in His hand. Jehovah promises to Him, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power." I. **THE CHARACTER AND CONDITION OF MESSIAH'S SUBJECTS.** They are His people—1. Because they are given to Him by the Father. 2. Because they are bought with a price, even with His own precious blood. 3. Because they are created anew by His Holy Spirit, and so fitted for His service here, and for the full enjoyment of heaven hereafter. II. **THE PREDICTION REGARDING THEM.** They "shall be willing." Worldly kingdoms have often been established by violence—they rule over the body only, they govern by fear and terror. In all these respects, Christ's kingdom

is not of this world. His people are willing to enter into His kingdom in the way of His own appointment, they are willing to obey the laws of His kingdom, and they are willing to submit to that discipline which His infinite wisdom sees meet for them. **III. THE TIME WHEN, AND THE MEANS BY WHICH, THEY SHALL BE MADE WILLING.** "In the day of Thy power." The exertion of Messiah's power is requisite to bring the most amiable of the human race cordially to submit to Him as their rightful Lord; and by the exertion of this power, the most hardened rebel may be transformed into a willing subject. (C. Greig, M.A.) *Christ's triumph and our glory*.—**I. CHRIST'S TRIUMPH.** 1. Christ triumphs through us, manifesting His power to destroy sin in the flesh, and to restore the God-like image. He works in us, enabling us to will and to do His good pleasure. 2. His triumph waits upon us. Because He lives, His people shall live for ever. 3. There will come a day when we shall be willing—(1) To learn of Him. To receive with meekness the truth; to be taught of Him. (2) To suffer with Him. We shall be willing to humble ourselves, and sacrifice every heart's desire and ambition to His glory. (3) To follow Him, in going out after all the lost and erring ones. (4) To do His will, promptly and perfectly as the angels, who stand around the throne, awaiting His bidding. **II. OUR GLORY.** We have a victorious Leader. Our King will come forth in the beauties of holiness. His reign will be refreshing and quickening as dew, every drop reflecting all heaven. He will lead His people gloriously, while they shout their song of triumph. Christ is also our royal priest, the mystery of His birth and succession being prefigured in the person of Melchizedek. His Word is our battle-axe, which strikes devastating blows in the ranks of the enemy. We read of the triumphal entrance of Pompey into Rome, when for two days the procession moved along the Via Sacra. At the head of the procession were carried the brazen tablets, engraven with the names of the conquered nations, the record of the wealth amassed, and the vast increase in the revenues of the empire. The captives followed the triumphal chariot, and as many trophies were displayed as there had been victories gained, either by Pompey or his officers. But how vastly more magnificent and dazzling will be the procession of the heavenly hosts of the redeemed of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues as they enter the New Jerusalem with their King of kings, to crown Him Lord of all. (J. B. Donaldson, D.D.) *Soldier priests*.—We have here the very heart of the Christian character set forth as being willing consecration; then we have the work which Christian men have to do, and the spirit in which they are to do it, expressed in that metaphor of their priestly attire; and then we have their refreshing and quickening influence upon the world. **I. THE SUBJECTS OF THE PRIEST-KING ARE WILLING SOLDIERS.** We are all soldiers, and He only has to determine our work. We are responsible for the spirit of it, He for its success. Again, there are no mercenaries in these ranks, no pressed men. The soldiers are all volunteers. "Thy people shall be willing." Constrained obedience is no obedience. The word here rendered "willing" is employed throughout the Levitical law for "freewill offerings." This glad submission comes from self-consecration and surrender. **II. THE SOLDIERS ARE PRIESTS.** "The beauties of holiness" is a frequent phrase for the sacerdotal garments, the holy festal attire of the priests of the Lord. So considered, how beautifully it comes in here. The conquering King whom the psalm hymns is a Priest for ever; and He is followed by an army of priests. The soldiers are gathered in the day of the muster, with high courage and willing devotion, ready to fling away their lives; but they are clad not in mail, but in priestly robes, like those who wait before the altar rather than like those who plunge into the fight, like those who encompass Jericho with the ark for their standard and the trumpets for all their weapons. "The servant of the Lord must not strive." We cannot scold nor dragoon men to love Jesus Christ. We are to be gentle, long-suffering, not doing our work with passion and self-will, but remembering that gentleness is mightiest, and that we shall best adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour when we go among men with the light caught in the inner sanctuary still irradiating our faces, and our hands full of blessings to bestow on our brethren. **III. THE SOLDIER-PRIESTS ARE AS DEW UPON THE EARTH.** There are two points in this last clause which may occupy us—that picture of the army as a band of youthful warriors; and that lovely emblem of the dew as applied to Christ's servants. As to the former—there are many other words of Scripture which carry the same thought, that he who has fellowship with God, and lives in the constant reception of the supernatural life

and graco which come from Jesus Christ, possesses the secret of perpetual youth. If we live near Christ, and draw our life from Him, then we may blend the hopes of youth with the experience and memory of age; be at once calm and joyous, wise and strong, preserving the blessedness of each stage of life into that which follows, and thus at last possessing the sweetness and the good of all at once. We may not only bear fruit in old age, but have blossoms, fruit, and flowers—the varying product and adornment of every stage of life united in our characters. Then, with regard to the other point in this final clause—that emblem of the dew comes into view here, I suppose, mainly for the sake of its effect upon the earth. It is as a symbol of the refreshing which a weary world will receive from the conquests and presence of the King and His host, that they are likened to the glittering morning dew. We are meant to gladden, to adorn, to refresh this parched, prosaic world, with a freshness brought from the chambers of the sunrise. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *A willing people and an immutable Leader*.—I. A PROMISE MADE TO CHRIST'S PEOPLE. Here is a promise of time: "in the day of Thy power." Here is a promise of people: "Thy people." Here is a promise of disposition: "Thy people shall be willing." Here is a promise of character: "Thy people shall be willing in the beauties of holiness." And here is a majestic figure to show the manner in which they shall be brought forth. By a very bold metaphor, they are said to come out as mysteriously as the dew-drops from the womb of the morning. We know not how, but they are produced by God. Philosophy has laboured to discover the origin of dew, and perhaps has guessed it; but to the Eastern, one of the greatest riddles was, out of whose womb came the dew? Who is the mother of those pearly drops? Now, so will God's people come mysteriously. It will be said by the bystander, "There was nothing in that man's preaching; I thought I should hear an orator; this man has been made the means of salvation to thousands, and I thought I should hear an eloquent man, but I have heard a great many preachers far more intelligent and intellectual than he; how were these souls converted?" Why, they have come from the womb of the morning, mysteriously. Again, the dew-drops—who made them? God speaks; He whispers in the ears of nature, and it weeps for joy at the glad news that the morning is coming. That is how God's people shall be saved; they come forth from the "womb of the morning" divinely called, divinely brought, divinely blessed, divinely numbered, divinely scattered over the entire surface of the globe, divinely refreshing to the world, they proceed from the "womb of the morning." II. A PROMISE MADE TO CHRIST. "Thou hast the dew of Thy youth." Ah! believer, this is the great source of Gospel success, that Christ has the dew of His youth. Jesus Christ, personally, has the dew of His youth. Certain leaders in their young days have led their troops to battle, and by the loudness of their voice, and the strength of their bodies, they have inspired their men with courage; but the old warrior hath his hair sown with grey; he begins to be decrepit, and no longer can lead men to battle. It is not so with Jesus Christ. He has still the dew of His youth. The same Christ who led His troops to battle in His early youth leads them now. The arm which smote the sinner with His Word smites now; it is as unpalsied as it was before. The eye which looked upon His friends with gladness, and upon his foemen with a glance most stern and high—that same eye is regarding us now, undimmed, like that of Moses. He has the dew of His youth. So also doctrinally, Christ hath the dew of His youth. Usually, when a religion starts it is very rampant, but it afterwards decays. Look at the religion of Mahommed. For one hundred years or more it threatened to subvert kingdoms, and overturn the whole world, but where are the blades that flashed then? Where are now the willing hands that smote down the foes of Mahommed? Why, his religion has become an old worn-out thing; no one cares about it; and the Turk, sitting on his divan, with his legs crossed, smoking his pipe, is the best image of the Mahomedan religion—old, infirm, effete. But the Christian religion,—ah, it is as fresh as when it started from its cradle at Jerusalem; it is as hale, and hearty, and mighty, as when Paul preached it at Athens, or Peter at Jerusalem. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ's people, a willing people*.—There is here—1. Something supposed. Namely, that Christ hath a people in the world where He erects His standard, that He hath a special relation to, and interest in. "Thy people," even His people (Matt. i. 21). He hath bought them with His blood (John x. 15). It is supposed also, that He finds these unwilling to submit to Him, as well as the rest of the world. The corruption of the will is

common to them with others. 2. Something ensured to the Mediator, respecting this people of His; namely, that these unwilling people shall be willing, Hebrew, "willingnesses"; which imports that they shall submit to Him, and give away themselves to Him; acknowledge the right which Christ hath to them, and be His people by their own consent (Isa. xlix. 18, and lv. 5). 3. The time when, and the way how this shall be done. "In the day of Thy power." That is, in a day of the Gospel's coming with power. "For the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation." I. **THAT CORRUPTION OF THE WILL, WITH WHICH CHRIST FINDS HIS PEOPLE, AS WELL AS OTHERS, POSSESSED.** 1. There is a weakness in their will; they cannot will what is spiritually good and acceptable to God. 2. An aversion to good. 3. A proneness to evil, a woful bent of the will carrying it to sin. 4. A contrariety in the will, to the will of God. 5. Contumacy: the will is wilful or obstinate in evil. II. **THE WILLINGNESS OF THE SOUL SUBMITTING TO CHRIST.** What makes the change? They are made, they do not make themselves willing. The Lord changes their wills, takes away the evil qualities of their will, and gives new qualities. 1. They are willing to part with sin. 2. They are willing to go out of themselves; to cast off all confidence in their attainments and duties; to come to Christ empty, with nothing in them or on them to recommend them to Him but misery. 3. They are willing to take Christ as their Saviour, and to submit to His righteousness. 4. They are willing to take on the yoke of Christ's commandments. 5. Willing to bear Christ's Cross, to cleave to Him and His ways, and to follow Him through fire and water. 6. Willing to go away with Christ, for altogether, home to His Father's house. III. **THE DAY OF POWER.** 1. Though the Gospel may be long preached unto a people, yet there are some special seasons that may be looked on as days of power. Days when the Gospel is new to a people, days of persecution, days when there is a spirit of prayer poured out, and times of sealing ordinances, these are more likely than others to be days of power. 2. There is an appointed time for the inbringing of all the elect of God, and that is the particular day of power to them. 3. A dark night usually goes before this day of power. 4. Whenever this day of power comes, the soul is made willing, the fort of the heart is taken, and the King of glory enters in state, turns out the old inhabitants, and puts in new. (*T. Boston, D.D.*) *The necessity and claims of the missionary enterprise:*—I. **THE NATURE OF THE WORK ITSELF.** The Gospel is just a voice from heaven calling on the Church to evangelize the world. II. **THE NECESSITY OF THIS WORK.** III. **THE PROSPECTS OF THIS WORK.** IV. **THE RELATION IN WHICH CHRISTIANS STAND TO THIS WORK.** (*D. Young.*) *The willingness of God's people:*—I. **GOD HAS A PEOPLE IN THE WORLD, AND THERE NEVER WAS A PERIOD WHEN HE HAD NOT.** II. **THERE IS A DAY OF HIS POWER THAT SHALL PASS ON THEM FOR THEIR REGENERATION AND CONVERSION.** 1. It is a day, not a natural day of twenty-four hours, that is interrupted by night, but I conceive it means three things—(1) A period destined for the conversion of His people, (2) A period perfectly clear to God, (3) A period limited to time. 2. It is the day of His power. To the perishing sinner the Gospel comes, "not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." It is an arresting power; it meets the sinner, and stays his mad career, as in the case of Saul of Tarsus. It is a convincing power; it teaches the sinner that he is ruined in every respect, and leads him to cry out, "What shall I do to be saved?" It is a life-giving power; it quickens dead souls, and will eventually bring the dead bodies from their graves. III. **THE RESULT;** that they shall be brought to Him, made willing to part with all things, and to be His voluntary subjects and followers in the world. The power of God does not do away with the liberty of the will, nor does the liberty of the will render unnecessary the exercise of the power of God. (*J. Jones.*) *The law of least resistance:*—I. **THE DAY OF CHRIST'S POWER.** The day of our Lord's power was the day when, like Samson, He burst the green withes of death, and carried the gates of the grave up the hill of God. The day of His power was proclaimed to all the world when He ascended up on high and sat down at the right hand of God; and the day of Pentecost witnessed, by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the assembled thousands, that the work of Christ was finished and accepted, and had achieved all the mighty results for which it was undertaken. Ever since then, the day of Christ's power has continued. All power on earth and in heaven has been given to Him for the purpose of carrying on His mediatorial work. II. **THE WILLINGNESS OF THE PEOPLE IN THE DAY OF THE LORD'S POWER.** What a world of meaning is there in that word "willing"! It denotes the condition of

one who offers the least resistance to the saving power of Jesus, and in whom, therefore, that power finds it easiest to work and to carry on its gracious purposes. Such a person has no self-will, giving it freely up to be moulded by the Divine will; willing to give up all—to give first the heart and then the life, a living sacrifice. Such a person is not compelled by law, but impelled by love. "Not my will, but Thine be done," is his rule not only in regard to the salvation of his soul, but also in regard to all the duties and relations of life. Christ will bless such an one up to the fulness of His own loving heart, because there is nothing in his heart to prevent it. III. WHAT WILL THE DAY OF POWER DO FOR THEM? It will adorn them with the beauty of holiness, and it will renew their youth. The will of God is our sanctification. The dearest wish of His heart is that the fair image in which He created us; and which we have marred by our sin, should be restored. He wishes us to place ourselves unreservedly in His hands, that He may create us anew in Christ Jesus. The glory of the Godhead shines in Him who assumed our nature; and all power is given to Him in order that He may make us conformable to His image. Who would not accept a king to reign over them who could thus make them what they were meant to be—sons of God and heirs of heaven; who could fulfil here and hereafter, to the fullest extent, their prayer, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us"? But, besides the beauties of holiness, perpetual youthfulness is also what the grace of Christ will produce in those who are willing in the day of His power. In His service the dew of their youth, the brightness of life's morning, will be ever upon them. He who has the power of an endless life, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, will renew their strength from day to day from the fountain-head of His own strength. Eternal life is eternal youth; and He who takes away the old nature of sin and gives the new nature of grace, with it makes all things new. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*) *The increase of the Messiah's kingdom prophetically anticipated.*—I. THE PROSPECT WHICH THE TEXT AFFORDS. 1. Its nature. Light pours in upon his understanding—Divine influence renews his heart. The kingdom of God is within him, and he is swayed by the sceptre of redeeming love. 2. Its effects. True holiness is, in strict propriety of expression, the holiness of truth—it is excellence of character, produced by excellence of principle. Its moral influence is Divinely designed to be, and actually has been in every age, for the healing of the nations. 3. Its extent. The subjects of the Redeemer's kingdom shall be numerous as the drops of morning dew, which sparkle upon the grass in countless profusion when the day breaks, and the glory of the rising sun is poured over the earth. Sinners of every class will perceive so much beauty and evidence in Divine truth, that they will have no more power to resist its illumination, to elude its force, and to remain longer in subjection to their errors, their vices, and their prejudices. II. THE CERTAINTY OF ITS ACCOMPLISHMENT. 1. The immutability of Jehovah's counsel. 2. The perfection of the Redeemer's atonement. 3. The invincibility of Divine grace. (IV. *Hutchings.*) *The Gospel dispensation one of power.*—I. LOOK AT ITS EXTENT. Superstitions the most powerful and beloved,—systems of philosophy the most specious and plausible,—opinions which are congenial to the human heart, and have been entertained for ages,—and habits, strengthened not merely by personal indulgence, but by the influence of the most remote antiquity,—all give way before the Cross. Conversion of the most degraded and ignorant tribes takes place,—the change effected, and the contrast furnished by it, being more visible, and, therefore, more impressive than former dispensations have witnessed. And the most glorious displays are yet future. The close of this day of power is to be most excessive in its brightness,—at eventide there is to be the purest and the fullest light. II. THE PRODUCTION AND INCREASE OF PIETY IN MEN'S SOULS IS MORE NATURAL TO THIS DISPENSATION THAN THE PRECEDING ONES. What was made known under them is not to be compared with what has been made known since, for explicitness and fulness. III. IT IS THE DISPENSATION OF THE SPIRIT. He is the official agent in the conversion and sanctification of men. (*A. J. Morris.*) *When God marshals His forces.*—The word rendered "power" has the same ambiguity which that word has in the English of the date of our translation, and for a century later, as you may find in Shakespeare and Milton, who both used it in the sense of "army." We do not employ "powers" in that meaning, but we do another word which means the same thing, and talk of "forces," meaning thereby "troops." "The day of thy power" is not a mere synonym for "the time of thy might," but means specifically "the day of thine army"; that is, the day when thou dost muster thy

forces, and set them in array for the war. The King is going forth to conquest. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) **In the beauties of holiness.**—*The excellence of Christian morality*:—The words of the text evidently describe the subjects of the Messiah. They illustrate the most distinguishing features of their character and principles. They display the predicted, expected, and now realized superiority of the morality of the Gospel. **I. ITS PRINCIPLES.** Strictly speaking, religion and true morality are in substance the same. In the Scriptures, the application of religion to practice is expressed by the term "holiness," and the maturity or perfection of its principles, appearing in the demeanour and actions of men, is elegantly called "the beauties of holiness." Religion refuses not the aid of reason, when unsophisticated; of the moral sense, when enlightened; or of the eternal distinctions of things, when rightly understood. Nay, religion requires, employs, and retains them all in her service. But above these she exalts, as her peculiar principles of morality. 1. The authority of an all-perfect Being. 2. The operation of faith. True faith is the offspring of light, and the parent of purity. It originates in knowledge and in reason. It is cherished by inquiry and research. It is perfected in the free and full assent of the will, communicated by the Spirit of God, when men are "made willing in the day of His power." 3. Supreme love to God. 4. To live to the glory of God. **II. ITS EXTENT.** Social and relative duties are unquestionably of high importance in morality, and politicians and legislators will ever regard them as the most valuable part of religion, because they are most immediately conducive to the external peace and order of states. But shall philosophers, admirers of wisdom, and students of virtue, pious and aspiring inquirers, extend no farther their conceptions of morality? Let persons of this character prosecute their researches with candour and fidelity, and in the Scriptures of truth they shall soon attain to many new and elevating discoveries. In that sacred volume, does not the great God and our Saviour demand assent, not merely to the common position, that He exists, but require that the conviction of His perfections and presence should affect all our actions? Does He not reveal, not merely His counsels, but challenge an active and universal obedience to His will? Does He not claim, not merely respect for His laws, but zeal for His glory? not merely the homage of the body, but fervour of the spirit in serving Him; not merely submission, but confidence; not merely gratitude, but joy; not merely hope, but assurance; not merely desire, but delight in His communion? **III. ITS EFFICACY.** The Gospel is, in more respects than one, like the principle of light to which it has been so justly compared. It may be distorted by a false medium, or obscured by the intervention of clouds, yet still it assists vision, still it may be beneficial, still it is light, and preferable, in every case, to darkness. Or it is like the element of heat, which, even though unseen, may latently support and invigorate life. Thus even the worst corruptions of the Christian religion have not utterly extinguished its beneficial tendency. To what but the influence of the Gospel is Europe indebted for her boasted superiority of civilization? What has exalted the whole female sex to respectability, to deference, and to love? Without a question it was Christianity. What has mitigated the horrors of war, civilized the manners of nations, attempered the power of the great, and exalted the condition of the poor? It was the same cause. And no system of philosophy, before its appearance, ever produced any similar effects, or ever even attempted such designs. **IV. ITS CONSEQUENCES.** 1. Exemption from the power of sin and the practice of vice (Rom. vi. 14; John viii. 36). 2. A willing mind in the performance of every duty, with its attendant satisfaction and delight, follows this exemption from the dominion of sin. 3. The evidence thus established, that we are in a state of grace and acceptance with God, is a new consequence and fruit of this invaluable morality. Upon no other presumption can the persuasion of this opinion be founded, than the evidence of our conformity to the standards and precepts of the Gospel, the palpable and genuine proof that we are actually redeemed from sin, exempted from its dominion, habituated to holiness, active in virtue, and made willing in a favoured time of power. 4. The true enjoyment of life results from these principles. Without them all is dark, cheerless, and uncertain. With their support, all is light, joyous, and secure. 5. How delightful a task would it be to describe the peculiar resources in affliction, which flow from these principles, and the triumph in the arms of death, to which they lead! 6. The preparation for heaven, which they confer, the anticipation of its joys, and consequently the proof of its assured existence, which they afford, is their last and most important consequence.

(*W. Bennet.*) *The secret of moral beauty*:—If you would make your life truly graceful, truly beautiful, you must go back to conscience, principle, conviction; there must be within you reality, a true godliness and a true consecration to God and to man. You often meet with people whose beauty disappoints you—I mean their moral beauty. They are excellent people, charming people, but somehow or other you are not satisfied with them. What is the matter? There is more amiability than energy. You never like to speak discouragingly about nice people, because there are so few of them; but really some people who are exceedingly amiable are exceedingly unsatisfying. What is the matter with them? It is this—lack of depth, reality, force. They have got more graciousness than they have grit. They make a great many gracious concessions that at last question their conscientiousness. They have a supply of amiability about them that makes you suspect a flabbiness within. No amiability is really satisfactory to men except as it springs from deep, radical, organic conscientiousness, conviction, and devotion. To see lilywork upon a pillar is admirable, but frosted work on a bride-cake is another thing altogether. And I say to you that if you would make your character as you are anxious to make it—graceful, noble, beautiful—there is no way for you but to go back to the roots and foundations of life. If you wish to make yourself right, I say to you: Don't paint your face; see to it that there is health in the central organs. Don't revise your etiquette; see to it that you are transformed in the spirit of your mind. Out of the heart are the issues of life, and out of the love of God and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit spring at last the real majesty and sweetness of human character. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *Thou hast the dew of thy youth.*—*The youth of Godhead*:—Everything young and fresh, everything bright and smiling, everything buoyant and happy, may be traced to the perpetual youth of Godhead, which streams forth for ever and ever, impregnating all receptive souls and substances with its own quality; and it is owing to the unchangeable youth of the Son of God, that every new-born babe, after thousands of years, preserves the freshness and the beauteous innocence of the first-born child of Adam. The fulness of life which rises and dances in every young heart, and the living sunbeams which play upon the face of youth, are from the same one and only eternal source. And after myriads of springtimes in myriads of planets, each succeeding spring is as fresh and full of young vigour and beauty as were the springs before the flood. Every babe, and every spring, and every new morning, are world-types of the everlasting youth of our God. There is no light like the early morning light, there is no air like the early morning air, there is no water like the dew of early morning, and when do the birds sing as they sing in the opening day? Every morning is a new sermon on the youth of Jesus. And the new life that rises with us in the morning, after our nightly death in sleep, is a daily demonstration that life continues young and fresh in its fountain-head. (*John Pulsford.*) *The dew of Christ's youth*:—I. CHRIST HAS THE DEW OF HIS YOUTH. 1. Let me speak first of Christ personally; has He not all the freshness, all the vigour, all the strength of ancient times? 2. It is the same if you think of Him as revealed in His doctrine. The Gospel is always fresh. 3. Our text is also specially true of Christ as revealed in the Bible. There are many other valuable books that have been written; but, as a rule, however valuable they may be, when you have read them half-a-dozen times, you may be quite satisfied that you need not read them any more. You can get to the bottom of all other books; you dive into them, and at first they seem to be very deep; but every time you plunge, they appear to get shallower and shallower, until at last you can see the bottom at a glance. But in God's Word, every time you dive, the depths grow deeper. 4. Everything that has to do with Christ is always young. Everything lives where He is; for He is life, and in Him there is no death at all; and because He is life, He is always full of freshness, and therefore doth He scatter living force wheresoever He goeth. II. WHAT IS THE REASON FOR THIS FRESHNESS? 1. No man, who understands what it is to have Christ in his heart, will ever get tired of Him through want of variety. You may look at Christ a thousand times, and you shall have, if you please, a thousand different aspects of His beauty. 2. Christ has the dew of His youth because of His excellence. Ah, you thought Christ was sweet when first you tasted Him; but you will know Him to be sweeter still when you know more of Him, and taste and see that He is good; but you can never know all His sweetness, for you can eat, and eat, and yet not discover it all; possibly, scarcely in heaven itself will you know all

the sweetness of Christ. 3. Christ will never lose His freshness to us, because He is Divine, and therefore inexhaustible. 4. Another reason why Christ will always have the dew of His youth is, because He meets all the cravings of our nature. When we really have Christ, we feel that we have nothing else that we can wish for. 5. We shall never be tired of Christ, because the need we have of Christ can never cease. "But," says one, "we shall not need Him in heaven." Who told you that? Not need Christ in heaven! Why, if you could take Christ away from heaven, you would take heaven away altogether. If I shall not need Christ to cleanse me in heaven, yet I shall want Christ to commune with Him. If I shall not need to pray to Him, I shall want to praise Him. If I shall not need Him as a Shepherd, I shall need Him as a Priest, as a King, that I may for ever serve Him with joy and gladness. III. WHAT ARE THE LESSONS WE SHOULD LEARN FROM THIS TRUTH? 1. For the pulpit, a lesson of admonition. We who occupy the pulpit must take care that we never entertain the idea that the Gospel has become worn out. It still has the dew of its youth. 2. A lesson of self-examination to each one here present. What you should ask yourself is, "Have I found the right Christ? If the Christ I have found has lost His freshness, is it not very likely that I have found a wrong Christ, one of my own making, one of my own conception? For the real Christ is always fresh, always interesting, always new. Have I not either laid hold of the wrong truth, or held it in the wrong way? 3. A word of aspiration. If Christ has the dew of His youth upon Him, let us, my dear friends who serve the Lord Jesus Christ, aspire to show the world that we do so. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

The dew of youth.—1. Make sure that your life's morning is fresh as the dew. The first thing which strikes us in the dew is its transparency. Is your soul transparently clear? Is your conscience without offence toward God and toward men? How is this purity and beauty of soul to be had? Look at the dew-drop again and ask whence comes its jewelled brightness. It is all the sun's doing. Now, Christ is the Sun of Righteousness. He is wooing you now from all that is low and unworthy, even as the sun woos the vapour from the murky pool. It cannot resist—you can; but will you? 2. Make sure that you keep the freshness of the dew. First by never allowing a stain to remain on your conscience and in your life. That stains will come is inevitable. But let them not remain. But it is not enough to keep clear of stains, or when stains are contracted to have them at once washed away; there must also be a constant renewal of life. You cannot live on the strength of yesterday; you must have the strength of to-day for the work of to-day. Live in time, and for time, and your morning will soon change to sultry noon, to sad afternoon, darkening down to the blackness of night. But accept the eternal life which God gives you in His Son Christ Jesus, and lo! the freshness of the morning is about you all through life. (J. M. Gibson.)

The dew.—I. THE DEW DESCENDS FROM HEAVEN. 1. Every moral production of the earth is impure. Man—systems—institutions—maxims. 2. The productions of the earth may be known by their distinguishing characteristics. The naturalist knows the country of an animal. The botanist, of a plant. The moralist, of a sentiment, or action, or character. 3. The character of the believer proves him not of the world. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." 4. The Bible tells his native country. (1) He is Divine in his parentage. (2) The Spirit comes down to regenerate him. (3) Grace comes down to animate and actuate, etc. 5. Do you feel heaven-born and home affections towards heaven? II. THE DEW DESCENDS DURING THE NIGHT. 1. The present is to the heavenly state as night to day. It is now that the believer is regenerated and sanctified. 2. A season of suffering is to one of personal joy, as night is to day. It is in suffering that the believer is most effectually purified. III. THE DEW-DROPS ARE VERY PLENTIFUL. 1. Believers are a little flock, in any past time—at present—at any one given time. 2. They shall be more numerous during the latter-day glory. 3. They shall be very numerous in heaven. IV. THE DEW-DROPS REFRESH THE VEGETABLE WORLD. 1. Believers, being themselves refreshed, refresh others. (1) By their conversation. (2) By their example. (3) By their prayers. (4) By their deeds of kindness. 2. Are you to your neighbourhood as a dew from the Lord? V. EACH DEW-DROP REFLECTS THE SUN'S IMAGE. 1. Man originally bore God's image. 2. When renewed he again bears it. 3. What is it to have God's image? (1) The same views—Bible views. (2) The same objects—His glory in redemption. (3) The same character—in heart and life. 4. When the believer thinks of God, how high is the attainment of bearing His image!

5. Do you love His law—doings—designs—character—fellowship—people? VI. THE DEW REASCENDS TO HEAVEN WHEN IT HAS REFRESHED THE EARTH. 1. Even now the believer soars aloft—in thought—desire—conversation—hope—confident anticipation. 2. At death, his soul ascends—a constant ascension. 3. At the resurrection, his body ascends. 4. Are your tendencies heavenward? VII. WHEN THE DEW ASCENDS, IT IS IN PERFECT PURITY, FREED FROM ANY MIXTURE OF EARTH. (James Stewart.)

Ver. 4. **Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.**—*Christ, our Priest.*—I. DIVINE AUTHORIZATION TO PRIESTHOOD. 1. The Divine oath has a reference to Christ, for it is the Divine authorization of His priestly office. What spiritual power resides in this mandate of God! It not only creates this office, with all its heavy duties and responsibilities, but it gives it full and free scope for the play of its functions. 2. The oath has also a reference to the sinner, the warrant for his approach to God. What stronger assurance of God's willingness to pardon, nay, rather, heart-yearning anxiety to bring us into a justified state? II. THE OFFICE TO WHICH THE SON WAS CALLED—PRIESTHOOD. Christ, in His struggle with the powers of hell and darkness, was not an overborne subject. He was not a conquered victim, but He was in very truth an active, official, priestly agent, working out and bringing in, amidst sweat and agony and blood, that righteousness which is "unto all and upon all them that believe." III. THE DURATION OF CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD. 1. Christ was Priest on earth. His whole life, from the manger to the cross, was an offering—a sacrificial oblation of sweet-smelling savour to God. 2. He is now a Priest in heaven. (S. McComb.) *The order of Melchizedek.*—I. CHRIST IS A PRIEST AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK. 1. That order was unique. (1) In its loneliness, Melchizedek stood alone. He was the one true priest before the Mosaic dispensation. Christ is the one true priest after it, and He stands alone. (2) In that it was undervived and untransmitted. Melchizedek did not follow, nor was he succeeded by, a priestly line. So Christ's priesthood is "not after the order of a carnal commandment"; nor does it "pass over to another." (3) In its efficacy. 2. That order was righteous. His very name, "King of righteousness," is significant of that. But in a far more real and valuable sense is this so with Christ. (1) He is absolutely righteous in Himself. As such He was predicted (Isa. liii. 11; Jer. xxiii. 5). As such He was by the confession of both friends and foes (Luke xxiii. 4; 1 Pet. ii. 23). (2) As the King of righteousness, He makes His subjects righteous (Isa. liii. 11). By cleansing away their unrighteousness and imparting His Holy Spirit, and encouraging and directing their holy lives. 3. That order was peaceful. He was "King of Salem which is King of peace." Christ is (1) absolutely peaceful in Himself. As such He was predicted and acknowledged. "The Prince of peace." "He shall not cry," etc. (2) As King of peace Christ gives peace, promotes it, and reigns over peaceful subjects. "My peace I leave with you," etc. 4. That order was royal. He was king as well as priest. So is Christ a "priest upon His throne." Christ rules from His Cross: "I, if I be lifted up," etc. And adoring Christendom says, "Thou art the King of glory, O Christ," because "when Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." 5. That order was superior. (1) In its antiquity. It was before the authorized priesthood of Aaron. So Christ is "the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world." (2) In its perpetuity. "For ever." Christ "continueth ever," and "ever liveth to make intercession." (3) In its universality. Christ is "a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." II. CHRIST'S APPOINTMENT TO THIS PRIESTHOOD IS HELD UNDER DIVINE AUTHORITY. "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent." Persons occupying important offices must show their credentials. (J. W. Burn.)

Ver. 7. **He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.**—*Refreshment through suffering.*—The words place before us two pictures. The one is that of want, and the other is that of its supply. He that drinks of the brook is he who needs its refreshment. He lifts up his head, when he has drunk of the running stream: it was drooping before; he had been faintly pursuing his object, but now he goes on his way with head erect, and with elastic tread. I. THE SIMILARITY BETWEEN THE FEATURES OF NATURE AND OF GRACE. II. THE MEANING OF THE TEXT AS SPOKEN BY DAVID. In some of his sharp encounters

with Saul, in some of those hot persecutions which he suffered in such number, there might have been some occasion in which the taste of water was the renovation of his strength; or perhaps he had special reference to the river Jordan, or the brook of Siloa, and coupled them with the holy city, and thought of them as typical streams, and looked at their waters, when tasted, as declaring that the city was nigh at hand, and that he that should drink it would be approaching its shining gates. III. THE APPLICATION OF THE WORDS TO CHRIST. When we first read them, we deem them to speak of the refreshment of exhausted nature; and perhaps, in their primary application they do so. But surely the life of the Son of Man was not one of refreshment or relaxation, at least to Himself. We must remember, then, that water has another meaning, and it is that of distress and the overwhelming of the soul. And was this His refreshment? How could it be so? 1. Because it was the greatest of actions, the crucifixion of self in man. 2. Because it was the performance of the Father's will, and, through this, the way of the redemption of the world. To these waters Jesus stooped down; of these He drank, and after drinking them, He lifted up His head, where now He sits above the clouds in the exaltation of the highest heaven. IV. THE APPLICATION OF THE WORDS TO OURSELVES. 1. We must be partners in the fortune of our Head: what He endured, that—it is a law of our union with Him—we must look to endure also; if His bark went through stormy seas, so surely must ours. 2. We are suffering now, and our reign is not until hereafter. But while we suffer we recruit; we derive immortal vigour from mortal woe; we live through our very death. (*C. E. Kennaway, M.A.*) *The brook by the way*:—We march with a Captain who makes common cause with the humblest. The contrast in this verse between a splendid destiny and the simplest life was never so true of any as of Him (Gal. iv. 4; Heb. iv. 15). 1. See how true this is of the lowest part of human life, the life of the body. For thirty years Jesus lived the frugal and simple life of a carpenter's son in a quiet village among the hills of Galilee. His first recorded temptation was to break His fellowship with us by claiming miraculous supplies, at least of bread; but this help, which He gave to others, He would not Himself employ. 2. Observe, however, that He does drink. You will not find one innocent pleasure, which came "in the way" to Jesus, and which He sourly or wilfully refused. He would leave a feast at once, if called by Jairus to a sick-bed; but He would not refuse the feast of His friends in Bethany, though He knew that He was reproached for eating and drinking. How does His example affect us? We may have to refuse pleasures because we are weak, because temptations must be avoided. Or, like St. Paul, we may deny ourselves for our weak brother's sake, which is an honour, and a Christ-like thing; but the rule, apart from special cases, is that the best and truest life is such as welcomes and is refreshed by all simple pleasures. 3. It is still more wonderful to think of the spiritual life of Jesus nourished by the same means of grace which are available for us all. As if we saw Him rise from the throne of heaven to stoop by our waysides and drink from the rills of earth, so should our heart burn within us, when we observe our Master's constant use of the very means of grace which men neglect. Our prayers are formal, and easily interrupted; but He once rose up a long while before day, and again continued all night in prayer. We easily absolve ourselves from public worship; but He was careful to frequent the synagogues, and attended the festivals in Jerusalem. We neglect the Supper of our Lord, concerning which He said, "Do this in remembrance of Me"; but with desire He desired to eat the Passover with His disciples. We rely on our own judgment and conscience, and but few of us feel it a duty to instruct our conscience and keep it sensitive by a constant study of God's Word, which is as a lamp to the feet. But He was never at a loss for spiritual guidance from the Old Testament, saying, in every emergency, "It is written." It is surely a bitter reproach to us every one, that a stranger who watched our Master and His followers might easily suppose that He it was who needed help most, that we could better afford to dispense with it. The brooks which refreshed Him on His march are not dried up; neither are they, like Solomon's fountain, sealed. (*C. A. Chadwick, D.D.*) *Christ invigorated in the prosecution of His redemptive work*:—I. Christ in the prosecution of His redemptive work is refreshed and invigorated because HE DRINKS FROM THE INEXHAUSTIBLE FOUNTAIN OF HIS OWN LOVE. He still prosecutes His work of mercy, because He drinks of the brook in the way—the brook of His eternal inexhaustible love! II. Christ may be said to drink of the brook in the way, because OF THE PERFECTLY RIGHTEOUS

WORK IN WHICH HE IS ENGAGED. "All His victories are righteous in their end, and in their means." The consciousness of the rectitude of His entire work is a "brook from which He drinks in the way." III. THE JOY IN PROSPECT OF THE FINAL SALVATION OF ALL THE SUBJECTS OF HIS KINGDOM is another "brook from which He drinks in the way." IV. Christ may be said to "drink of the brook in the way," from THE CERTAINTY HE HAS OF A FINAL VICTORY OVER ALL HIS FOES. "He must reign." All enemies shall be vanquished. Christ is "expecting" this. (*John Lewis, B.A.*) *Refreshment supplied by the way*:—The promises are fruits laid up to ripen in time to come, and as most fruits become ripest and sweetest in the winter, so have we found that God's promises have a peculiar mellowness in our times of distress and affliction, such a sweetness as we did not perceive in the summer days of our prosperity. The train which starts from London to go to the North continues to traverse the distance day by day—how is it supplied with water? Why, there are trenches between the rails in several different places, and from these the engine drinks as it rushes along its iron pathway; it is supplied as it runs. That is just what our Heavenly Father has done for you. You are just like an engine on the road to heaven, and between here and heaven there are many stores of grace awaiting you; you will take up fresh water without slackening your speed, and so will be able to keep on to your journey's end. To use another illustration, when the Eastern nations used to trade across the desert in the olden times, in Solomon's days for instance, there were stations built, wells sunk, and provisions stored at convenient halting-places, so that the caravans might pause and take in fresh provisions. The caravans reached their journey's end because the long way was broken up by a series of resting-places. Now, the promises are resting-places for us between here and heaven. There is a long line of them at well-ordered intervals, and as we journey through this desert world we shall be constantly coming, first to one, and then another, and then another, and another, and so we shall find fresh provision stored up, that we may not fail. The manna will fall daily till we come to Canaan. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

PSALM CXI.

VERS. 1-10. Praise ye the Lord. I will praise the Lord with my whole heart.—*The highest work of mankind—praising God*:—I. A NOBLE RESOLUTION FOR THIS HIGHEST WORK. 1. Thoroughness. "With my whole heart." (1) Without this thoroughness it would be unacceptable to God. "He abhors the sacrifice where not the heart is found." (2) Without this thoroughness it will yield no happiness to ourselves. (3) Without this thoroughness it will not be continuous, but broken, desultory, and worthless. 2. Publicity. Man has to do with society, he lives in society, and by it; and if he is thorough, worship will come out in every conversation, in every act, in the sublimity of the look, in the dignity of gait. II. A MIGHTY ARGUMENT FOR THIS HIGHEST WORK. Founded upon—1. The works of God. (1) They are here spoken of generally. His works, whether of creation, government, or redemption, whether in connection with matter or mind, are in every sense great, infinitely great in number, variety, and perfection. It is here implied, however, that their greatness is only seen by those who search for them, "sought out." Their greatness is not in their bulk, their form, their colour, but in their essence, their plan, their uses, their relations, their bearings, etc. That those only search into them who have pleasure in them. A man must be interested in the works of God before he will study them. And to be interested in them he must love their Author. Hence piety is the spring of true philosophy. (2) They are spoken of specifically. His works are grand. Whatever He does in nature is worthy of Himself, who Himself is "clothed with honour and majesty" (Ps. civ. 1). Wonderful. Can the greatest created intellect in the universe comprehend all concerning what appears to be the most insignificant work of God? Memorable. Can anything impress the human soul like the works of God? Beneficent (ver. 5). Truthful (ver. 7). 2. The character of God. (1) His rectitude (ver. 3). (2) His mercifulness (ver. 4). (3) His faithfulness (vers. 5, 7). III. AN ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATION FOR THIS HIGHEST WORK (ver. 10). 1. This "fear of the Lord," or piety, is the commencement of wisdom. He who has

not a reverential love for God has not learnt the first lessons of true wisdom. True philosophy begins in piety. 2. The "fear of the Lord," or piety, secures a sound understanding. (*Homilist*.) *Hallelujah*:—"Praise ye the Lord." Just as though the psalmist would say, "Whether you will or no, I will; I will praise Him, if I am alone in doing so; I will praise Him with my whole heart—with all the fervour, spirituality, and sincerity with which I am endowed; I will praise the Lord with all my heart; and, in order that I may not be alone in praising Him, I will get into 'the assembly of the upright,' and probably some of my rustic notes will induce them to praise Him also; and Jehovah shall have the entire revenue of praise and glory that can be sounded forth from all the ransomed souls on earth, and all the ransomed souls in heaven." I. AN EXHORTATION. "Praise ye the Lord." 1. This exhortation is addressed to those who possess a capacity to praise God—a heaven-born life—a quickened nature. It must be the praise of the soul, called into exercise under the immediate operation of the graces of the Holy Spirit. 2. Those persons who have a spiritual capacity—who have been born from above—have many reasons for praising God. Has this mighty God, to whom we sound our hosannahs, put forth His operations of grace, touched your proud, rebellious heart, nay, created a spiritual capacity in you, implanted all His own graces, opened your eyes to your own ruin and the law's terrors, and then opened them to see the light of the glorious Gospel? If so, can you cease to praise the Lord? II. A vow. "I will praise the Lord." I verily believe that we have not paid attention enough to the act of praise, as going forth from the inmost soul. We may have paid more attention to the act of prayer, we may have paid more attention to the act of believing; we may have paid more attention to the act of humiliation before God in deep repentance; all these are very important; but shall we forget to praise Him? shall we forget to acknowledge the infinite debt of gratitude we owe to Him? What should we think of creatures who did this towards each other? How many thousands of providences, of a most momentous description, has He overruled for us, and not received any return of praise? How many thousands of prayers has He answered, and we not given a single tribute of praise? III. EXPERIMENTAL GODLINESS. "With my whole heart." This includes spirituality, simplicity, and earnestness. There seems something of emulation in this expression—"with my whole heart"; and sure I am, that when the Holy Ghost enables us to move upwards in the spirit of praise, troubles, difficulties, temptations, snares, enemies, afflictions, sorrows, death itself, have no power to harm us; the spirit of praise bears us above all, carries us within celestial regions, where we seem to mingle our praises with the hallelujahs of glorified spirits around the throne. "With my whole heart." IV. THE RELATIVE POSITION. "In the assembly of the upright and in the congregation." Where am I to find "the assembly of the upright"? The man that is upright before God has owned or confessed the worst he knows of his case before the footstool of Divine mercy, he has thrown open his books, he has declared his insolvency to the law and justice of God, he adopts the very language of the psalmist, "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid"; and instead of offering any compromise or making any specious promises, he betakes himself to the Divine Surety, of whom he obtains by faith a perfect obedience, a full satisfaction, a perfect righteousness, and presents them before God as His own. Thus he is accepted before the throne as an upright character. His condemnation is removed—his justification proclaimed—his absolution is enjoyed (without the interference of infidel priests)—his sanctification is given to him, and his glorification waits for him. (*J. Irons*.) *Whole-hearted praise*:—I. WITHOUT WHOLE-HEARTEDNESS OUR PRAISE IS NOT ACCEPTABLE TO GOD. He requires us, not ours. "He abhors the sacrifice where not the heart is found." II. WITHOUT WHOLE-HEARTEDNESS IT WILL YIELD NO HAPPINESS TO OURSELVES. There is no true enjoyment in any service not rendered with the whole soul. No man is ever happy in any enterprise into which he cannot throw his whole being. III. WITHOUT THIS WHOLE-HEARTEDNESS IT WILL NOT BE CONTINUOUS. (*Homiletic Review*.)

Ver. 2. *The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.*—*The greatness of the works of God*:—Greatness, when attributed to the works of man, is a relative term, and it is only correct in one direction. Our works can only be great in comparison with the works of other men; they can have no greatness in relation to God, or to His operations. Our utmost skill

cannot go beyond new combinations, or new discoveries of existing things; we can neither create nor preserve. Our knowledge results from creation; when correct it agrees with its works; but with God, creation results from knowledge—the prototype of it existed in the eternal mind before He began to work (Acts xv. 18).

I. THE GREATNESS OF THE WORKS OF GOD. 1. Their immensity. What a wonderful incomprehensible work was it to produce the matter which forms our globe! Yet our planet is but a small part of the solar system: there are spheres many times larger than our world, revolving at immense distances round the same sun. The sun itself is but one among millions of suns, which in boundless space enlighten other worlds, and are the centres of other systems. We are at once lost in the vastness of creation, in the immensity of being God has called into existence; and are oppressed with an overpowering sense of the magnitude of His works. 2. Their variety. The water affects the land, the land affects the water, an endless diversity of influences of different substances on each other are perpetually producing specific and well-ascertained results. Beings possessed of life were created from inanimate substance: by the infinite power of God the sea and land brought forth abundantly, the vegetable and animal kingdoms were called into existence by the Creator's voice, and the tribes of land and ocean proclaim the magnitude of His work. 3. The preservation and government of the world. Cause and effect is not a necessary but an ordained connection; the energy that works is not that of the instrument but that of God; substances operate upon one another in a natural way, by which we mean an habitual, ordinary manner; but it is God who causes them so to operate; whatever is the instrument its efficacy is from God. 4. His moral government over voluntary and accountable beings. What a vast work must it be to educe order out of the chaotic workings of human minds; to maintain a system of operation and government over myriads of beings, who live as they list, preserving their own schemes of aggrandizement and gratification, without any reference to the will of God: and yet the mightiest of men can accomplish nothing but what God permits, and frequently they are working out, though contrary to their own intentions, the purposes of the Eternal Mind. 5. His greatest work is redemption. It unveils the whole character of God. In the natural world we behold manifestations of His power and wisdom; in His providential government we may learn something of His justice and goodness; but neither of these perfections is so gloriously exhibited as in the Gospel of His Son, where His love and mercy shine with unclouded lustre.

II. SUCCESSFUL INQUIRY IS IN PROPORTION TO THE DEEP INTEREST WE TAKE IN THE WORKS OF GOD. We must love truth, and justice, and mercy, before we can in any degree estimate the expression of Divine love and justice in saving sinners by the gift and death of the Son of God. (*S. Summers.*) *The works of God, in nature, providence, and grace*:—I. IN NATURE. Every clod of earth teems with animation; every drop of water swarms with animalculæ. Surely curiosity might induce us to seek out the works of God even if we had no other motive than mere inquisitiveness and curiosity. But we cannot examine these things as we ought without feelings of lively gratitude, that through the life-giving power of Jehovah everything ministers either to the necessities or to the convenience of man. But there is a still more familiar manifestation of the works of God which we should meditate upon. I wish you to turn your reflections upon yourselves. Contemplate the human body; observe the union of its several parts, and their fitness for the particular purpose for which they are designed; mark the composition and appearance of the whole; what incomparable workmanship is perceptible in the whole frame. II. IN PRESERVATION. III. IN GRACE. We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Since, then, all things are yours if ye are Christ's, whether the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come, let us call to mind that we have them as the subject matter of privilege; as the subject matter of improvement here, and as the subjects of praise throughout eternity. (*H. F. Fell, M.A.*) *The works of the Lord*:—1. Consider—(1) The variety and multiplicity of the objects that constitute the earth and the creatures that dwell on it. How varied is the form of its surface! What an alternation of enormous ridges with summits of different heights, of hills and plains, of spacious, open fields, and of impassable, impenetrable forests, of continents and seas, rivers and lakes! What diversity and what riches in various kinds of precious gems, stones, ores, minerals, lie concealed in its bowels! What a world of wonders is enclosed in its fathomless abysses! (2) Their beauty—no less great and admirable than their variety;

consider the outline, the form, the hues, the infinitely blending shades of colours, the delicate texture, the artificial structure, the arrangement and composition of the several parts of every herb, every flower, every leaf, every tree, every plant, every greater and smaller, visible, and invisible, animal. (3) The accurate and admirable connection that subsists between the several parts and creatures of the earth, causing them all to promote one grand design, the greatest possible welfare of the living. (4) The gradual progress of all things to higher perfection. See how the plant, the tree expands, grows, flourishes, arrives at maturity, bears fruit, propagates and multiplies, from a seed so small as to be indiscernible to thy naked eye; how the crawling maggot rises into a butterfly; how every animal gradually acquires and communicates to others his agility, his powers, his habits; how the infant grows into the stripling, the youth into the man, and the man into the citizen of another world. (5) The magnitude and inexhaustibility of the energies which animate and actuate all nature; those energies which operate so uniformly and silently, and yet so powerfully and irresistibly in all and through all; those energies which are in perpetual exertion through all successive evolutions, renovations, transformations of the whole innumerable host of creatures, and through all their efforts and effects, and in such various methods; those energies which, from what appears to be confusion and strife, produce the fairest harmony—from what we term death and destruction, incessant life and action. 2. Having considered these things, ascend in thought to the original, eternal energy, from whence these powers are derived—to the original, eternal fount of life, from whence these several kinds of life and efficacy flow—to the Supreme Dispenser of all that joy which fills the capacity of thy soul—to that God who predisposed, accomplished, and called them into being, who bears, upholds, connects, enlivens, and rejoices all, who through them all reveals Himself to His intelligent creature—man—speaks to him by a thousand voices, appears to him in a thousand varied forms, and in all and by all as Author, Benefactor, Father. (G. J. Zollikofer, D.D.) *The order and beauty of the visible creation*:—I. THE GRANDEUR AND SIMPLICITY OF THE WORKS OF GOD. How low and contemptible are all the proudest works of men compared to those of God! Could we suppose a person in full maturity of sense and understanding, but who had never seen the light of the sun and the face of nature, presented on a sudden with an ample prospect of the sublime canopy of heaven, the blazing sun, the illumined atmosphere, and the florid earth diversified with its various landscapes; how would the appearance astonish and transport him, stamp at once on his mind the new ideas of grandeur and beauty, and excite his veneration of the wisdom and power of God! II. THE UNIFORMITY AND VARIETY WHICH APPEAR IN THE WORKS OF CREATION. The heavens above, and the earth beneath, continue the same from age to age; yet afford a diversity of successive spectacles: the clouded, the clear, the parti-coloured sky; the nocturnal darkness, the meridian light. If we examine carefully the minuter productions of nature, the smallest insects, or the leaves, flowers, and fruits of plants, we find a wonderful mixture of the various and the uniform, that strikes the mind with a pleasing idea of order and beauty. III. THE PERPETUAL CIRCULATIONS DISCERNIBLE IN THE WORLD. The sun, moon, and stars perform their appointed courses with a stated unerring motion. What is it that upholds and directs them? How come they to know their seasons and courses? What enables them to travel incessantly with the same unremitting force? Why they never fall to the earth? Or wander through the pathless desert of the sky? In a word, why they never err?—These questions will necessarily turn our attention to the unerring wisdom of the Creator. IV. THE REGULAR PROPORTIONS OBSERVABLE IN THE SEVERAL PARTS OF THE WORLD, are a further evidence of creative wisdom in the structure of the whole. For as in the fabric of every plant and animal, the several parts bear a due proportion to each other and to the whole, so it is of the world in general: the parts were all formed by rule and measure, proportionate to each other and to the whole system. V. THE MULTIPLICITY OF EFFECTS IN NATURE FLOWING FROM THE SAME CAUSE; AND THE COMBINATION OF A MULTITUDE OF CAUSES TO THE SAME EFFECT. The single principle of gravitation, pervading the universe, at the same time gives solidity to the land, stability to the mountains, and fluency to the rivers; binds the ocean to its bed, and the whole earth to its orbit; maintains the due distance of the heavenly bodies; and retains everything through universal nature in its proper situation. Similar to this is the single principle of benevolence in the moral world: which in like manner is diffused through human nature, and produces,

according to its different modifications, various beneficial effects: hence parental care; relative union; combination of friends; public spirit; good government of his superiors; fidelity of inferiors; and it is this which retains every individual in his proper sphere, cements human society, and contributes to all virtuous actions, honourable pursuits, and innocent delights. How should it excite the inquisitive understanding, and affect the religious temper, of every considerate person, to find the whole world framed and disposed, and all the elemental parts of it contending and co-operating in a perpetual motion, to please and benefit the human race! (*S. Bourn.*) *On seeking out the works of the Lord and praising Him:*—"The works of the Lord are great;" yet, great as they are, they cannot be understood nor perceived by those who are absorbed in earthly ideas and pursuits. The works of the Lord must be "sought out"; that is, they must be mindfully and diligently observed, in order to their being adequately understood: nay, if we would know anything of their vastness or their excellency. We must be in the constant habit of connecting the ordinary operations and occurrences of life with a higher power, with the counsel and government of heaven; a gracious promise is given, that "all things shall work together for good to them that love God"; and we must be always endeavouring to trace this working, and observe the striking manner in which this effect is produced. Nor can any, but the pious and faithful servant of God, find delight in this holy and profitable exercise; and the longer he lives, the more clearly he perceives the hand of the Almighty in everything; in discomfiting the evil and blessing the good: he sees and admires the wonders of grace, as well as the wonders of providence, vouchsafed to others as well as himself; to the Church in all ages. In all the good he receives or does, and all the evil he escapes or prevents, he traces the power and mercy of his God: "Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but unto Thy name be the glory and the praise." Thus he imitates the conduct of the psalmist, recorded in the text, "I will give thanks unto the Lord with my whole heart": all the power of his understanding and all the affections of his soul are employed in magnifying the majesty and loving-kindness of the "Author and giver of every good gift." And the grateful Christian imitates the psalmist yet farther; he does not hide the sense of God's goodness within his own bosom; but declares it openly as opportunity serves. (*J. Slade, M.A.*) *New interest in God's works:*—An American poet tells us, in one of his letters, how he once met an aged French priest on the Pacific Railway. The priest told him that he was on a journey round the world, and that he had been put up to that by a dream. He dreamed that he had died, and he met the good God, who asked him how he liked the world he had come from. He was obliged to confess that he had not looked at it very much: for the whole time he was there he had been busy getting himself ready to die, and getting other people ready to die—as if getting ready to die were the chief end of man here below. When he awoke he resolved that, old as he was, if the good God would only let him stay on in this world a little while longer, he would take a good look at it before he was summoned to pass another such examination. So he had furnished himself with some little books in physical geography and the like, and was reading, and looking, and thus preparing for the other world by trying to get all the real and Divine good he could out of this earth. (*John Hunter, D.D.*)

Ver. 3. His work is honourable and glorious: and His righteousness endureth for ever.—*God and the godly* (with Ps. cxii. 3):—These two psalms are obviously intended as a pair. They are identical in number of verses, and in structure, both being acrostic, that is to say, the first clause of each commences with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the second clause with the second, and so on. The general idea that runs through them is the likeness of the godly man to God. Worship is, or should be, adoration of and yearning after the highest conceivable good. Such an attitude must necessarily lead to imitation, and be crowned by resemblance. Love makes like, and they who worship God are bound to, and certainly will, in proportion to the ardour and sincerity of their devotion, grow like Him whom they adore. **I. IN ENDURING RIGHTEOUSNESS.** That seems a bold thing to say, especially when we remember how lofty and transcendent were the Old Testament conceptions of the righteousness of God. But, lofty as these were, this psalmist lifts an unpresumptuous eye to the heavens, and having said of Him who dwells there: "His righteousness endureth for ever," is not afraid to turn to the humble worshipper on this low earth, and declare the same

thing of him. Our finite, frail, feeble lives may be really conformed to the image of the heavenly. The dew-drop with its little rainbow is a miniature of the great arch that spans the earth and rises into the high heavens. And so, though there are differences, deep and impassable, between anything that can be called a creaturely righteousness and that which bears the same name in the heavens, the fact that it does bear the same name is a guarantee to us that there is an essential resemblance between the righteousness of God in its lustrous perfection and the righteousness of his child in its imperfect effort. Another psalmist has sung of the man who can stand in the holy place. "He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, even righteousness from the God of his salvation." And our psalms hint, if they do not articulately declare, how that reception is possible for us, when they set forth waiting upon God as the condition of being made like Him. We translate the psalmist's feeling after the higher truth which we know, when we desire "that we may be found in Him, not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is of God by faith." II. IN GRACIOUS COMPASSION. In the former psalm we read "The Lord is gracious and full of compassion"; in the latter we find "he" (the upright man) "is gracious and full of compassion, and righteous." Our hearts need something more than a righteous God if we are ever to worship and draw near. Just as the white snow on the high peak needs to be flushed with the roseate hue of the morning before it can become tender, and create longings, so the righteousness of the great White Throne has to be tinged with the ruddy heart hue of gracious compassion if men are to be moved to adore and to love. And each enhances the other. "What God hath joined together," in Himself, "let not man put asunder;" nor talk about the stern Deity of the Old Testament, and pit Him against the compassionate Father of the New. He is righteous, but the proclaimers of His righteousness in old days never forgot to blend with the righteousness the mercy; and the combination heightens the lustre of both the colours. And the same combination is absolutely needful in the copy, as is emphatically set forth in our text by the addition, in the case of the man, of "and righteous." For whilst with God the two attributes do lie, side by side, in perfect harmony, in us men there is always danger that the one shall trench upon the territory of the other, and that he who has cultivated the habit of looking upon sorrows and sins with compassion and tenderness shall somewhat lose the power of looking at them with righteousness. And so our text, in regard of man, proclaims more emphatically than it needs to do in regard to the perfect God, that ever his highest beauty of compassion must be wedded to righteousness, and ever his truest strength of righteousness must be knit with compassion. But, beyond that, note how, wherever there is the loving and childlike contemplation of God, there will be an analogy to His perfectness in our compassion. We are transformed by beholding. The sun strikes a poor little pane of glass in a cottage miles away, and it flashes with some likeness of the sun and casts a light across the plain. The man whose face is turned Godwards will have beauty pass into his face, and all that look upon him will see "as it had been the countenance of an angel." III. We have still another point, not so much of resemblance as of correspondence, IN THE FIRMNESS OF GOD'S UTTERANCES AND OF THE GODLY HEART. In the first of our two psalms we read, in the seventh verse, "all His commandments are sure." In the second we read, in the corresponding verse, "his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." The former psalm goes on, "His commandments stand fast for ever and ever;" and the next psalm, in the corresponding verse, says "his heart is established," the original employing the same word in both cases, which in our version is rendered, in the one case "stand fast," and in the other "established." So that the psalmist is thinking of a correspondence between the stability of God's utterances and the stability of the heart that clasps them in faith. His commandments are not only precepts which enjoin duty. All which God says is law, whether it be directly in the nature of guiding precept, or whether it be in the nature of revealing truth, or whether it be in the nature of promise. It is sure, reliable, utterly trustworthy. We may be certain that it will direct us aright, that it will reveal to us absolute truth, that it will hold forth no flattering and false promises. And it is "established." The one fixed point amidst the whirl of things is the uttered will of God. Therefore the heart that builds there builds safely. And there should be a correspondence, whether there is or no, between the faithfulness of the Speaker and the faith of the hearer. Lean hard upon God, put all your weight upon Him. You cannot put too much, you

cannot lean too hard. The harder the better, the better He is pleased, and the more He breathes support and strength into us. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. He hath made His wonderful works to be remembered.—*The duty of remembering God's wonderful works:*—1. In reference to any signal benefits, any extraordinary mercy received, it is necessary we should have a true sense and firm persuasion of the work of God in it, that we may learn to depend on His providence, which we find so vigilant over us, so beneficial to us; that we may attribute nothing to ourselves, or sacrifice to our own nets; that we may discern His hand in His own work, and say (Ps. lii. 9; lxxv. 1). 2. This design of God teacheth man to make a true estimate, and set a value upon the benefit received as coming from His hand. 3. This design of God ought to be embraced with all comfort and cheerfulness. For what greater honour can man receive, than that God should desire to be honoured by him? What greater advantage can we have, than that He should therefore bless us, that He may receive praise from us, and purchase His glory by the expense of His goodness? 4. The equity and excellency of the duty enforce the obligation. Here is not anything required, but what may be justly challenged, what cannot be with any pretence denied. There is a moral obligation between men, to render to every man his due, honour to whom honour: and this Divine acknowledgment is required upon no other terms (Ps. xxix. 2). It is required in a due proportion (Ps. cl. 2), according to the manifestation of it. This is the exercise of the blessed saints and angels in the nearest view of His perfections: the language of heaven is Alleluia; and there is nothing more heavenly upon earth. (*Bp. Pearson.*)

Ver. 5. He hath given meat unto them that fear Him.—*The Lord's faithfulness in providing food for His people:*—Consider the text—I. IN ITS LITERAL SENSE. 1. The work, on account of which the psalmist here calls upon us to praise God, is the supply of food; the furnishing us with those provisions which are necessary for the support and comfort of our bodies. (1) They are the Lord's gifts. (2) They are special marks of the Lord's favour to His people. (3) They are proofs of the Lord's faithfulness and truth. 2. Let us beseech Him to give us His grace, that we may receive with thankfulness, and enjoy with moderation, and use to His glory, those gifts of His providence, which He has been pleased to bestow on us; and that we may show forth His praise not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to His service, and by walking before Him in holiness and righteousness all our days. 3. And let us learn to confide in Him for blessings to come. II. IN ITS FIGURATIVE OR SPIRITUAL MEANING. 1. In this sense, the meat mentioned in the text signifies that meat of which our Saviour speaks when He directs us to labour for the meat which "endureth unto everlasting life"; namely, spiritual food, that food by which the soul is supported, strengthened, and refreshed. 2. And what, in this view of the text, is the covenant of which "He will ever be mindful," but the covenant of grace: that spiritual covenant, "well ordered in all things and sure," which God has made with every believer in Christ? The terms of this covenant are, "Repent ye and believe the Gospel." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." And the promises of it are, "Thou shalt be saved." "Thou shalt have everlasting life." (*E. Cooper, M.A.*) **He will ever be mindful of His covenant.**—*The covenant:*—I. WHAT IS THIS COVENANT? If you go to a lawyer, and inquire how a deed runs, he may reply, "I can give you an abstract, but I had better read it to you." He can tell you the sum and substance of it; but if you want to be very accurate, and it is a very important business, you will say, "I should like to hear it read." We will now read certain passages of Scripture which contain the covenant of grace, or an abstract of it (Jer. xxxi. 31–34; Ezek. xi. 19, 20; xxxvi. 25, etc.). Let us just go a little into detail about this. God has made a covenant with certain people that He will do all this for them, and in each case it is of pure grace. He will take away their stony hearts: it is clear from this promise that when He began with them they had stony hearts. He will forgive their iniquities: when He began with them they had many iniquities. He will give them a heart of flesh: when He began with them they had not a heart of flesh. He will turn them to keep His statutes: when He began with them they did not keep His statutes. They were a sinful, wilful, wicked, degenerate people, and He called to them many times to come to Him and repent, but they would not. Here He speaks like a king, and no longer pleads, but decrees. He says, I will do this

and that to you, and you shall be this and that in return. Oh, blessed covenant! Oh, mighty, sovereign grace! II. HAVE I ANY PORTION IN IT? 1. Are you in Christ? If so, you are saved in Him. 2. Have you faith? This is the mark, the seal, the badge of His chosen. 3. Have you been born again? Is the life that is in you a life given by God? The true life is not of the will of man, nor of blood, nor of natural excellence; but it comes by the working of the eternal Spirit, and is of God. If you have this life you are in the covenant, for it is written, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." The children of the promise, these are counted for the seed. III. If indeed we can believe upon the good evidence of God's Word that we are of the seed with whom the covenant was made in Christ Jesus, then EVERY BLESSING OF THE COVENANT WILL COME TO US. I will put it a little more personally—every blessing of the covenant will come to you. 1. God cannot lie, cannot deny Himself. 2. God made the covenant freely. If He had not meant to keep it, He would not have made it. 3. On the covenant document there is a seal—the blood of the Son of God. 4. God delights in the covenant, so we are sure He will not run back from it. 5. God has sealed the covenant with an oath (Heb. vi. 18). (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Covenant blessings*:—I. THE GIFT: "He hath given meat." We are to understand this expression, of course in a twofold sense, of our necessities; the first, temporal, the other, spiritual. II. THE COVENANT. The covenant of grace is a covenant without any conditions on our part whatever, of any sort, in any form, or any fashion. The covenant, in fact, is not made between us and God; it is made between God and Christ, our Representative. All the conditions of that covenant are fulfilled, so that there are none left for us to fulfil. The conditions were that Christ should suffer, and He has suffered; that Christ should obey, and He has obeyed. God will not suffer one single promise of the covenant to be unfulfilled, nor one single blessing of the covenant to be kept back. III. THE CHARACTER OF THE PERSONS HERE REFERRED TO: "them that fear Him." Those who fear the Lord are in the covenant of His grace. If we fear Him, we may believe that He will ever give meat unto us, and that He will always keep His covenant towards us which He has made for us in Christ Jesus our Lord. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 9. **He sent redemption unto His people.**—*Redemption and atonement*:—Theology has frequently confused redemption and the atonement. The atonement for sin offered by Christ on Calvary was universal, but redemption is limited to those that accept the conditions as specified in the Scriptures. Christ died for all, but, as a fact, only they that believe are saved. The atonement is God's provision for the salvation of the world, redemption of the sinner is the object God has in view. There could be no redemption without the atonement, but if redemption is not appropriated the atonement still remains. The work of atonement was the act of one person, but redemption involves several agencies. Christ, by suffering the death of the cross, made the atonement; in effecting redemption, the subject works, the teacher works in presenting God's truth, the Holy Spirit works and applies the Gospel with power to the heart. By this threefold agency redemption is effected. The atonement came without the world's request; but redemption never comes without the earnest seeking of the individual. The atonement was an event that took place "once for all," at one period, on Calvary, two thousand years ago; redemption is constantly taking place in all parts of the world, and in all periods of human history. This is the correct Biblical distinction between the two theological terms as used in the Scriptures. (R. Venting.) **Holy and reverend is His name.**—*Scriptural piety*:—I. WHAT IT IS. We take the term reverence to denote respect; and with this latter term we associate generally a more definite meaning. In the case, indeed, of God, respect must be of the very highest description, to rise to the character of reverence. II. ITS FOUNDATION. Let the mind be informed, not only that God has given a conscience to rebuke, but that God has met the rebuke of conscience, to redeem the party rebuked from despair by holding out His own Son as the vindication of His holiness. The foundation, therefore, you perceive, of Scriptural piety, is the knowledge of the Divine character. III. THE MEANS OF ITS CULTIVATION. Shall we pray that God would enlighten us, while we refuse to come to the means, by which He has Himself told us we are to be enlightened? Shall we seek that He would give us of the Spirit, whilst we neglect the fruits of the inspiration of that Spirit, as those fruits are laid down in the testimony of Divine truth? IV. ITS FRUITS. Piety is not a faculty of the mind; it is an

influence, pervading all the faculties. Piety is not some particular mental power; it is an energy, that tells on the whole man. If such be the fruits of Scriptural piety upon the mind itself, what must be its fruits upon society generally? Even the ungodly and unthinking world, when they discover that piety is thus enlightened by the word of truth, and that in the Church of God there is not a greater degree of warmth than there is of light, will be compelled to confess "that God is in us of a truth." (*John Burnet.*)

Ver. 10. **The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.**—*Piety is true wisdom*:—I. EXPLAIN THE TEXT. 1. By "the fear of the Lord," you are to understand, not merely one affection of our minds towards God; but, piety in general, the service of God, and the devotion of the heart to Him. 2. "Wisdom," in the Scripture sense, is a virtue which makes a man not only skilful and intelligent, but also good and virtuous. It consists, not so much in knowledge, as in practice. 3. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." This may signify, either that it is first in order of time—the rudiment, the foundation of wisdom; or first in point of dignity—the principal, or chief part of wisdom. 4. "A good understanding have all they that do thereafter;" i. e. they are truly wise, and best consult their own interests, both in this and the next world, who do such things as belong to the fear of the Lord. II. ILLUSTRATE AND CONFIRM THE TRUTH OF THE TEXT THUS EXPLAINED: showing, that to practise those duties, in which the fear of God consists, is to be really wise; that it is acting agreeably to our reason, and our interests. 1. Religion alone teaches what is the supreme good of man; concerning the nature of which the philosophers so much erred. It is religion that points out to us an end most excellent, most worthy of our efforts, and of such inestimable value, as to overpay all our labours in the attainment of it: and that end is,—to enjoy eternal, uninterrupted happiness, in the presence of God. 2. Religion not only shows this admirable end to us; but also teaches the means to be used by us for attaining to it; namely, faith and obedience, prayer and thanksgiving; which constitute our religious duty. (*S. Partridge, M.A.*) *The danger and folly of living without religion*:—Philosophically speaking, it has been said that nature abhors a vacuum; and morally speaking, it may also be said that the absence of the fear of God is revolting to the human soul. I. TO LIVE WITHOUT THE FEAR OF GOD, OR, IN OTHER WORDS, WITHOUT RELIGION, MUST BE A DANGEROUS THING. Whether we consider the character of God, or the sinfulness of man—whether we contemplate the sacrifice which God has made, in laying a foundation for our religious homage—whether we fix our views on the riches of God's love, or on the terrors of His wrath,—whether we look to time or to eternity, to death or to doom: Is it not, we would ask, yea, must it not be a dangerous thing to be at war with Heaven? And what, but this, is the position of man without religion? Verily, God is to be feared and held in reverence of all His creatures. His might in creation, and His majesty in providence—our own weakness and our own wants, all combine in enforcing on us this important truth. And yet how strange that we above all His other workmanship should refuse Him a willing homage! Let it not be forgotten that the want of religion is sin, and for sin the Son of God died. Can the irreligious, therefore, the sinful man, be safe? II. TO LIVE WITHOUT RELIGION IS TO EXEMPLIFY THE VERY PERFECTION OF FOLLY. 1. Is he not a fool who overlooks the end of his existence—who forgets and forgets entirely the purpose for which he was sent into the world? 2. Is he not a fool who sacrifices the ethereal, the immortal mind that is in him, to the appetites and desires of the material body in which that mind is enshrined? 3. Is he not a fool who willingly foregoes all that can give a charm to worldly prosperity—a relish to the joys that Providence dispenses in this vale of tears. 4. Is he not a fool who willingly and of his own accord, and recklessly, makes a sacrifice of all that can soothe him in sorrow—support him in trial—comfort him in adversity, or give him hope in death? (*IV. Craig.*) *Religion the highest wisdom, and sin the greatest madness and folly*:—Wisdom consists in two things: choosing a right end, and using right means to obtain it. Now, what end so becoming a creature to live for ever, as everlasting happiness? And what way can it be obtained, but in the way of holiness? I. MEN WILL NOT TAKE THE SAFEST SIDE IN RELIGION, WHICH THEIR REASON AND SELF-LOVE CARRY THEM TO DO IN OTHER CASES. Believe and regard what God has said; be holy in all manner of conversation; strive with all your might to enter in at the strait gate; accept of Christ as your Lord and Saviour. Do this, and you are safe, let the

case be as it will; there are no bad consequences that can possibly follow from this conduct. II. IS IT NOT THE GREATEST FOLLY TO BELIEVE, OR PROFESS TO BELIEVE, THE GREAT TRUTHS OF RELIGION, AND YET ACT QUITE CONTRARY TO SUCH A BELIEF? Do you plead, that "you intend to repent of this inconsistent conduct hereafter"? But if religion is an excellent thing, as you profess to believe it, why do you not choose it now? the sooner the better. Again, is it not the greatest folly to indulge yourselves in a practice that you deliberately intend to repent of? Will you prosecute a scheme which you deliberately intend afterwards to condemn and be sorry for? III. IS IT NOT THE GREATEST FOLLY FOR MEN TO PRETEND TO LOVE GOD, WHEN THEIR TEMPER AND CONDUCT ARE INCONSISTENT WITH IT, AND PLAINLY EVIDENTIAL OF THE CONTRARY? What mean thoughts must they have of God, when they think to put Him off with such an empty compliment and hypocritical profession! IV. IS IT NOT THE GREATEST FOLLY FOR MEN TO HOPE FOR HEAVEN, WHEN THEY HAVE NO EVIDENCES AT ALL OF THEIR TITLE TO IT, OR FITNESS FOR IT? Can an illiterate rustic find pleasure in rigid mathematical demonstrations, and learned speculations, or a man of pleasure and business in the ascetic, mortified life of a hermit? Can a man, whose taste is vitiated by sickness, enjoy happiness in the entertainments of a feast? No, nothing can make a man happy, but what is suited to his relish and disposition. V. IS IT NOT THE GREATEST MADNESS TO BE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THE AFFAIRS OF TIME THAN THOSE OF ETERNITY? If you should throw away an estate to obtain a farthing, if you should run upon a drawn sword to escape a prickle, if you should prefer pebbles to crowns and kingdoms, darkness to light, or one luxurious meal to the support of your whole life, it would not be so shocking a piece of madness. 1. Since there is so much folly in the world in matters of religion, how astonishing is it that it is not universally condemned and ridiculed, or pitied and lamented! 2. With what an ill grace do the irreligious condemn and despise those that make religion their great concern, as weak, silly creatures! 3. How absurd is it for men to pretend they will not turn their thoughts to religion, lest it should make them melancholy or distracted! Alas! sinners, you cannot be more so than you are already; and you will never come to yourselves till, with the prodigal, you determine to return to your Father's house. 4. If the fear of the Lord, religion, is the perfection of wisdom, how unreasonably does the world charge it with making people mad! 5. Since men are such fools in matters of religion, since they censure it with so much severity and contempt, how astonishing is it that God should send down that Divine, heaven-born thing, religion, into our world, where it is so much neglected and abused! (S. Davies, M.A.) **A good understanding have all they that do His commandments.**—*Keeping God's commandments the surest evidence of a good understanding.*—I. ILLUSTRATE AND CONFIRM THE DECLARATION. By "them," or the commandments of God, we are to understand our general duty, as His reasonable creatures; whatever He hath revealed to us as His will, whether by the light of nature or His written Word. Besides living soberly, righteously, and godly, it requireth faith in Christ, love to Him, trust in Him, an humble dependence on the help of the Holy Spirit, and a compliance with the institutions of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which are commandments of God, as being enjoined by Jesus Christ, who was a teacher sent from Him. Doing His commandments implies avoiding everything that is evil (Job xxviii. 28). It includes also learning to do well, and practising every duty which God requireth of us. It is not sufficient to study the commandments of God as a science, to understand their meaning and extent, and to be able to explain them with the most critical exactness. It is not sufficient to talk of them, to admire their suitableness and excellency, but we are to do them, to do them sincerely, cheerfully, and constantly, unmoved by any temptations that would lead us to neglect the observance of them. Now, they who thus do God's commandments are said to have good understandings, that is, to be wise men. 1. They understand the nature of things best, and judge rightly of their essential difference. 2. They understand the nature and will of God best. 3. They understand this world best. They consider it, not as their home and portion, but as a distant land; a school of education; a state of trial for another world. 4. They understand themselves and their own interest best. They know, and consider, that they were formed for God; for His service and honour. Therefore their first inquiry is, "Where is God my Maker?" What doth He require of me, and how is His favour to be obtained? They know, from reflecting upon their own natures, that they were not formed to scrape together the riches of earth, to indulge its pleasures, and

to gratify every craving appetite. Therefore, whilst others are "cumbered about many things," their attention is fixed upon the "one thing needful." They know that "to fear God, and keep His commandments, is the whole duty and interest of man," and therefore they do this. II. APPLY IT IN SOME USEFUL REFLECTIONS AND ADVICES. 1. Let us be thankful for the Divine commandments, which are adapted to exalt us to such dignity and felicity. 2. We may hence learn to judge, who are truly wise, and have good understandings. 3. Here is the true test of orthodoxy. There is no error or heresy so opposite to the Gospel as a wicked life. "There are many," saith Mr. Flavel, "who hate doctrinal errors, yet perish by practical ones; who hate false doctrine, yet perish by a false heart." 4. Let us all make it our great care and business to do the commandments of God. Let us study this as the most important branch of science; mind this as the great concern of human life. Here let your labour and zeal be employed. (*Job Orton, D.D.*)

PSALM CXII.

VERS. 1-10. Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in His commandments.—*Genuine piety*.—I. ITS CHARACTERISTICS. A truly good man—1. Feareth the Lord. 2. Delights greatly in His commandments. 3. Is upright. 4. Is merciful. What a noble character! Heaven multiply such. II. ITS ADVANTAGES. He is blessed—1. In his posterity. 2. In his possessions. 3. In his influence. 4. In his calamities. 5. In his steadfastness. 6. In his memory. 7. With fearlessness of soul. 8. With exaltation. 9. To the confusion of the wicked. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 3. Wealth and riches shall be in his house.—*Prosperity and its qualifications*.—I. WHAT IS PROSPERITY? To be prosperous is to have that which will promote the well-being of man's whole nature and which has that end secured. Material, moral, and intellectual wealth and its results. II. WHAT IS CALCULATED TO PRODUCE IT? The psalmist, our Lord, and St. Paul are at one as to the qualification. "Righteousness"—the harmony of a man's whole nature with the will of God. 1. When that is the case, a man is moderate, temperate, observant of natural laws, and (supposing of course no constitutional ailment) therefore healthy. 2. He holds in check the feverish desire to succeed, and thus godliness with contentment becomes great gain. 3. He holds those passions in check which cloud the understanding and impair the vision. 4. He respects the rights of others. Hence, those whose rights you respect, will respect yours. 5. He will be frugal of his time, his money, etc., in recognition of God's claims upon both, and, as God's steward, will put them out to usury, and strive to be prosperous, that he may advance God's interests in the world. III. WHAT OBJECTIONS CAN BE URGED AGAINST ALL THIS? 1. That the righteous are not better off than others. But (1) Do those who are called righteous answer to the law of righteousness in its entirety? (2) Without controversy it is all true respecting communities. All history proves that they prosper in proportion to their righteousness. (3) It is so by the common consent of the world. How often do we hear the expression that such an one is "worth his weight in gold." 2. That men prosper who violate the laws of righteousness. But (1) Are these men prosperous? (2) Supposing them to have all that heart could wish, "what shall it profit a man?" etc. (3) Supposing it true of an individual, when was it ever true of a nation? (*J. W. Burn.*) *Treasure in the house*.—The treasures in the house of the righteous—i. e. in the Christian home—though very great, are not duly appreciated, even by those who possess them. I heard a good man say once, as we passed the home of a millionaire, "It doesn't seem right that such a man as he is should be rolling in wealth, while I have to work hard for my daily bread." I made no reply. But when we reached the home of the grumbler, and a troop of rosy children ran out to meet us, I caught one in my arms, and, holding him up, said, "John, how much will you take for this boy?" And he answered, while the moisture gathered in his eyes, "That boy, my namesake! I wouldn't sell him for his weight in gold." "Why, John, he weighs forty pounds at least, and forty pounds of gold would make you many times a millionaire. And

you would probably ask as much for each of the others. So, according to your own admission, you are immensely rich. Yes, a great deal richer than that cold, selfish, childless millionaire whom you were envying as we came along. Nothing would tempt you to change places with him. Then you ought to be grateful instead of grumbling. You are the favourite of fortune, or, rather, of Providence, and not he." (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Ver. 4. Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.—*The influence of religion in affliction.*—I. DESCRIBE THE NATURE OF REAL RELIGION. II. TRACE ITS GENERAL INFLUENCE IN AFFLICTION. 1. It informs the sufferer of the source whence affliction springs—from a Father and a Friend—a God who has engaged every attribute of His nature to promote the highest interests and everlasting happiness of the creature He afflicts. Can it fail of its design?—His power controls it. 2. It acquaints him with the design of affliction. If this momentary pain produce everlasting ease; if this night of sorrow be followed by an endless day of joy; who but must welcome the fleeting anguish, the temporary gloom? 3. It apprises him of the limited duration of affliction. 4. It affords him communion with God in his affliction. III. ILLUSTRATE THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION IN AFFLICTION, BY AN APPEAL TO SOME SPECIFIC CASES. 1. Disease. Here is no fretfulness, no complaining, no petulance. Affliction has so refined the sufferer, that he seems already half immortal, and his pinions are plumed for glory, ere he receives the commission to take his flight. 2. Bereavement. Religion gives a partner to that widowed mother, more tender and kind than he could ever prove, over whose grave she weeps in all the agony of woe. It gives a father to those orphan children, full of sympathy and love. 3. Poverty. Religion has dignity with which to invest the poor man, which wealth can never purchase, nor rank confer. 4. Death. "I have," said the dying Romaine, "the peace of God in my conscience, and the love of God in my heart. Jesus is more precious than rubies, and all that can be desired on earth is not to be compared with Him." (*T. Raffles, D.D.*) *Light in darkness.*—1. "Light" and "darkness," figuratively, denote life and death, knowledge and ignorance, virtue and vice, joy and sorrow. 2. There are four things in the text. (1) Certain characters—"the upright." (2) Their seasons of darkness—"the darkness." (3) Light in those seasons—"there ariseth light." (4) The time when the light comes—"in the darkness." 3. Who are "the upright"? (*Ps. xlvii. 11; xlviii. 9.*) 4. The "upright" have their seasons of darkness. Sickness, poverty, debt, family trials, etc. To some, the whole of life is, in a measure, a season of "darkness" (*Prov. xiv. 10.*) 5. To "the upright," "light" comes in such seasons of "darkness." There is the cloud, but there is also "the bright light on the cloud." Innocence can shed "light" in the seasons of slander and mis-judgment. A desire to know the truth, and to follow it, with a quiet consciousness of the necessary limits of our knowledge, is so much "light" in seasons of doubt and mystery. Repentance, faith, confession, and reparation, bring "light," when our own sins bring "darkness." 6. Notice particularly that the "light" is said to arise "in the darkness." It was so with Christ in Gethsemane (*Luke xxii. 43*); and with St. Paul when the "thorn in the flesh" troubled him (*2 Cor. xii. 8-10*). In neither case was the "darkness" entirely removed. There was "darkness," but there was also "light in the darkness." 7. All persons, whether "upright" or otherwise, have their seasons of "darkness," of one kind or another. All, too, have "light" from some source or other, for man as naturally seeks relief from what is painful, as he seeks for food when he is hungry. But from whence come the "darkness," and the "light" too? (*Isa. l. 10, 11.*) 8. "Darkness" there must be: no being can escape it. And when the "darkness" comes, and while the "darkness" continues, there may be "light." Where, from, and to whom? (*Ps. iv. 6.*) (*F. Young.*) *Light in darkness.*—The Christian often has to walk in the night. Clouds and gloom are round about him. Physical weakness, mental infirmity, relative anxiety, and spiritual distress,—these are part of his earthly lot. I. UPRIGHT MEN SHOULD BRAVELY WALK ON IN DARKNESS. That is heroic: but it is difficult. The heart seeks for recognition of its rectitude. Flowers love sunshine, and so do the spirits of men. Job seems to have missed the greetings in the market-place as much as anything. There is a tone of peculiar poignancy in his grief about that. I do not wonder at it. We all like to be loved: we all like to be thought right. It is much easier to walk on against sleet, hail, wind, right in your teeth, than it is to move forward against the prejudice, the peevish-

ness, or the misconception of others. When the sluggish waters of the Ouse rolled at the feet of Bunyan's prison, with the blind child clasping his feet, and a dim light falling on the Bible on his rude table,—he bravely bore on through the persecutor's night. When the dark fortress of Warburg shut its gates on Luther, he bore worse ills than bodily sickness,—he fought in fancy with darkest forms of evil. II. UPRIGHT MEN ARE LIVING FOR ALL THE COMING AGES WHEN THEY ARE WAITING FOR THE LIGHT. The worthies of the old world live now: being dead they speak to us: and, in a special sense, they affect us in two ways. 1. They lead us to recognize the law of right. We are often endangered by the sophisms of expediency. "Wait,"—says Policy, it will be time to-morrow to leave Egypt, and make an enemy of the powerful Pharaoh; do not smite the idols now,—the idolatries left alone will die out! "Trust in God, and do the right,"—says Conscience. Obey and suffer. Never mind the darkness,—the day-star will soon arise. You are not living for yourselves alone,—the beacon-light of your conduct will guide the after-ages of the world. 2. They lead us to recognize the fidelity of God to His promises. They claimed no strength of their own, apart from the inspiration of God. In the calm heights, where God dwells, they had full communion with Him, and there the fevered heart was comforted and cooled. III. UPRIGHT MEN ARE NOT WHOLLY DEPENDENT ON OUTWARD LIGHT. This is refreshing to them as well as to others. I mean, of course, by outward light, that which arises from visible associations. We might as well try to pluck a star from the heavens, or imagine that the storms can wait out the light of the sun, as to suppose that the God-light within us can be dimmed or quenched. No! "The path of the just is as the shining light," etc. IV. UPRIGHT MEN BRING FORTH BEAUTIFUL GRACES IN THE DARKNESS. Naturalists will tell you that there are few night-blowing flowers; they are very rare, for as a rule night opens no petals, but shuts up the bloom. It is otherwise in grace. Many of the sweetest and most fragrant graces of the spiritual nature blossom in the night season of affliction and trial. And why is this? Because God is able to make all grace abound to us in seasons when nature has withdrawn from us her most cheering beams. V. UPRIGHT MEN MAY HAVE THEIR MINDS CLOUDED WITH DOUBT. Probably they will. The more upright they are the more anxious will they be to have the foundation of God which standeth sure. Some of the devoutest minds have had seasons of mental trial merging almost into agony. We can see the outward forms that men's opinions at last have shaped themselves into, but any acquaintance with the thought-struggles of Augustine, of Anselm, of the great thinkers of the Middle Ages,—whether they were Nominalists or Realists in their philosophy,—shows us that in the search for truth there are forests to be traversed that sometimes hide the light. But where there is simplicity of mind, sincerity of heart, spirituality of soul, God leads the mind that trusts in Him out into the perfect day. (IV. M. Statham, M.A.) *Light in the darkness*:—There is, of course, some specific reference and application intended here, such as will harmonize with the general drift of the psalm. But we cannot fail to notice that this is a general proposition—a broad assertion which covers the whole of life for the persons of whom it is said. And I want now to show how true the text is; and how, being true, it practically works, and holds good, in the different spheres of human existence. I. MATTERS OF FAITH—those revealed truths which are to be apprehended by us, and accepted, and turned to perpetual use for guidance, health, salvation. Concerning those truths we may be said to begin in the darkness. And we get into the "light"—not in an easy, natural, irresistible manner, but—by hints and suggestions at first, by help of broken gleams, and through falling shadows; through doubts and uncertainties, and frequent misconception; by gropings, and hesitations, and discoveries: held often in the restriction of our own narrowness, circumscribed always by necessary limits, liable always to mistakes, and at no time holding the complete and perfect truth. The doubts that may arise, in particular minds, and at particular stages of the development of some human souls, are not to be numbered, can hardly indeed be described, they are so delicate and changeful. Yet to a sensitive mind, to a mind full of spiritual anxiety, they are very distressing. How are you to make light arise in the darkness? And how are you to have the assurance that it is light, and not some fatal splendour as transient as it is misleading? Now, here the principle of this text is of direct application, and of priceless force and value: "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." Sincerity: an honest desire to know the truth: readiness to make any sacrifice in order to the knowledge: obedience to the truth so far as it is known already—

those will bring the light when nothing else will bring it. "Light is sown for the righteous;" and the harvest from God's sowing never fails. First conceptions and lower knowledge is the seed of the higher; and that again of higher still. Mistakes and misconceptions fall off and die if only there be the fruitful ground of "an honest and good heart." II. MATTERS OF EXPERIENCE. Say then that the chief intellectual difficulties are now solved; or say that they have never existed, and that "the Gospel," in much of its Divine simplicity, stands clearly before the apprehension, and, as far as the intellect is concerned in the operation, is received in the faith—what will then be the inward condition? Why, a true faith ought to produce a true feeling. And the feeling ought to be a happy one. Faith in "glad tidings" ought to make glad hearts. But at this point be sure you do not mistake. Be sure you seek heart-light "lawfully." It is fruit, and not root. It is consequence, not cause. Seek first the righteousness of the inward kingdom, and the light will come out of that. III. MATTERS OF PRACTICE. Religion in its organized forms in this world, and in its practical operations, is not exempted from the ordinary laws and vicissitudes of human life. Societies and Christian Churches have their times of darkness, their trials, their disappointments. They fall upon the best methods they can think of to extend the cause—the very truth of God—among men. And you would think that God is almost bound by the terms of His own covenant to lift an endeavour like that quite above the ordinary plane of things, and into a realm of visible clearness and certainty. But no. God has time enough, and He takes it. He takes it, and teaches His people to take it; to take—not "their time," which is indolent unfaithfulness, but His time. He educates by trial, by delay, by defeat. "Light is sown for the righteous," but, like all living seed, it takes a while to spring. The days of sowing are sometimes chill and dark. The bright harvest days will make amends for all. (A. Raleigh, D.D.) *Light in the darkness to the upright*:—I. THE CHARACTER OF THE PERSON TO WHOM THIS PROMISE IS MADE. The "upright man" is the honest man, the man of integrity. 1. He hath a serious and hearty sense of God and religion upon his spirit, and is above all things careful to preserve and increase that sense. 2. In his civil conversation—(1) As a private person, the general rule by which he frames his whole conversation, is such a prudent and diligent care of himself, and his own good, as is not only consistent with, but doth effectually tend to promote the good and happiness of all others that he deals with. (2) As a magistrate. The great thing he proposes to himself, in taking any office upon him, is the glory of God and the public good. II. THE ADVANTAGES AND PRIVILEGES THAT SUCH A MAN ENJOYS IN EVIL AND DANGEROUS TIMES. "Light in the darkness." 1. By "light," we may understand light for his guidance and direction; and then the sense is, That in critical and perilous times, the upright man, of all others, will be best enabled to order and manage his affairs. 2. By "light," we may understand safety and defence, as the word is sometimes taken in Scripture; and then the sense is, That in evil times the upright man walks most free from danger; he of all others may expect security and protection in a common calamity. 3. By "light," we may understand peace and joy (as that likewise is another usual sense of the word), and then the meaning is, That in evil times, let things happen as they will, though it should be the fortune of the upright man to be oppressed in the crowd; yet this happiness he will always have, that his mind will be at perfect ease and peace. Nothing shall ever discompose him, but in the midst of his sufferings his heart shall be replenished with perpetual Comfort. (Abp. Sharp.)

Ver. 6. *The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.*—*The reputation of good men after death*:—I. WHENCE IT COMES TO PASS, THAT GOOD MEN ARE VERY OFTEN DEFAUDED OF THEIR JUST PRAISE AND REPUTATION WHILST THEY ARE ALIVE. 1. From what cause it proceeds. (1) Good men themselves are many times the cause of it. For the best men are imperfect; and present and visible imperfections do very much lessen and abate the reputation of a man's goodness. (2) The principal cause is from others. From the hatred and opposition of bad men to holiness and virtue. From the envy of those who perhaps have some degree of goodness themselves. (3) There is something in the very presence and nearness of goodness and virtue, which is apt to lessen it. Perhaps familiarity and conversation does insensibly beget something of contempt; but whatever the reason of it be, we find the thing most certainly true in experience. 2. For what reasons the providence of God permits it thus to be. (1) To keep good men

humble, and, as the expression is in Job, "to hide pride from men." (2) This life is not the proper season of reward, but of work and service. II. WHAT SECURITY GOOD MEN HAVE OF A GOOD NAME AFTER DEATH. 1. From the providence of God. (1) In respect of the equity of it. God, who will not be behindhand with any man, concerns Himself to secure to good men the proper reward of their piety and virtue. (2) In regard of the example of it. It is a great argument to virtue, and encouragement to men to act their part well, to see good men applauded, when they go off the stage. 2. The other part of the account of this truth is to be given from the nature of the thing: because death removes and takes away the chief obstacle of a good man's reputation. For then his defects are out of sight, and men are contented that his imperfections should be buried in his grave with him. III. INFERENCES BY WAY OF APPLICATION. 1. To vindicate the honour which the Christian Church hath for many ages done to the first teachers and martyrs of our religion; I mean more especially to the holy apostles of our Lord and Saviour; to whose honour the Christian Church hath thought fit to set apart solemn times, for the commemoration of their piety and suffering, and to stir up others to the imitation of them. 2. Let this consideration, that "the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance," be an encouragement to us to piety and goodness. This, to a generous nature, that is sensible of honour and reputation, is no small reward and encouragement. 3. Whenever we pretend to do honour to the memory of good men, let us charge ourselves with a strict imitation of their boliness and virtue. (*J. Tillotson.*) *Everlasting remembrance of the good*.—I. IT IS SEEN IN THE FAVOURS WHICH HEAVEN CONFERS UPON REMOTE POSTERITY FOR THEIR SAKE. God blesses children's children, unborn generations, for the sake of a holy ancestor. David may be selected as an example of this (1 Kings xi. 11-13; xv. 4; 2 Kings viii. 19). II. IN THE GOOD WHICH THE ALMIGHTY ACCOMPLISHES BY THEIR INSTRUMENTALITY THROUGH DISTANT TIMES. 1. By their biography. 2. By their literary productions. III. IN THE CONNECTION OF THEIR LABOURS WITH THE INDESTRUCTIBLE CONSCIOUSNESS OF MEN. The saved and the lost will remember their counsel, their reproofs, their exhortations, their sermons, their prayers, for ever and ever. IV. IN THE BLESSINGS WHICH THE ALMIGHTY WILL IMPART TO THEM THROUGH ALL ETERNITY. The subject teaches—(1) The immense value of a righteous man in society. His usefulness is as permanent as the stars. (2) The best method of achieving lasting fame. Usefulness alone can give it. (*Homilist.*) *The religious aspect of history*.—It is now more than six hundred years ago since one of the earliest fathers of English history, an inmate of the venerable Abbey of St. Albans, which nurtured the first school of English historical learning, recounted, at the commencement of his work, how he was vexed by questions, some put by envious detractors, some arising from serious perplexity, whether the record of times that were dead and gone was worthy of the labour and study of Christian men. He replied, with a lofty consciousness of the greatness of his task, first by an appeal to the highest instincts of man, and then added, as a further and complete sanction of these instincts, the words of the psalmist, "The just shall be had in everlasting remembrance." These are simple and familiar words; but the old chronicler of St. Albans was right in saying that they contain the principle which vindicates and sanctifies all historical research. "If thou," he said to his readers, "if thou forgettest and despisest the departed of past generations, who will remember thee?" "It was to keep alive," so he added, "the memory of the good, and teach us to abhor the bad, that all the sacred historians have striven from Moses down to the 'deep-souled' chroniclers of the years in which we ourselves are living." 1. "Everlasting remembrance"—"eternal memory"—"a memorial that shall endure from generation to generation." This is what history aims to accomplish for the ages of the past. As we are reminded both by Scripture and by experience of the noble, the inextinguishable desire implanted within us to understand and to bring near to us the wonders of the firmament, so in like manner we may be assured that there lies deep in the human heart a desire not less noble, not less insatiable, to understand and to bring near to us the wonders of the ages that are dead and buried (Ps. lxxvii. 5, 10, 11; lxxviii. 2-4). As the celestial spheres are mapped out by the natural student to guide the mariner, and "for times, and for seasons, and for days, and for years," so the spheres of earthly events are mapped out by the historical student, and the monuments of glory and the beacons of danger are set along the shores of the past, to direct us through the trackless ocean of the future. Happy, thrice happy he who has the

ears to hear those voices of the dead which others cannot hear—who has the eyes to see those visions of the ancient times which to others are dim and dark. History may be fallible and uncertain, but it is our only guide to the great things that God has wrought for the race of man in former ages; it is the only means through which "we can hear, and" through which "our fathers can declare to us the noble works which He has done in their days, and in the old time before them." 2. And not only the religion of the natural man, but the whole structure of the Bible is a testimony to the sacredness and the value of historical learning. Unlike all other sacred books, the sacred books both of the Old and New Testament are, at least half in each, not poetical, or dogmatical, but historical. Doctrine, precept, warning, exhortation, all are invested with double charms when clothed in the flesh and blood of historical facts. If there has been an "everlasting remembrance" of One supremely Just, in whom the Divine Mind was made known to man in a special and transcendent degree, it is because that Just One, the Holy and the True, "became flesh and dwelt amongst us," and became (so let us speak with all reverence and all truth) the subject of historical description, of historical research, of historical analysis, of historical comparison. The sacred historians of the Jewish Commonwealth—still more the simple, homely, but profound historians of the New Testament whom we call the Evangelists—are the most impressive of all preachers. 3. And this power is not confined to the history of the Jewish people, or of the Christian Church. It extends to the history of "the nations"—of "the Gentiles," as they are called in the Bible. "The just," without reserve, in whatever nation, and of whatever creed, "is to be had in everlasting remembrance." "Whatsoever things are true," etc., in whatsoever race, or under whatsoever form,—these things are the legitimate, the sacred, subjects which the Father of all good gifts has charged the historians of the world to read and to record whosoever they can be discerned. (*Dean Stanley.*) *The reputation of the righteous:*—The desire of reputation is part of the social constitution which God has given us; and, when properly directed, has a powerful tendency to promote our moral perfection. But we desire not the esteem of our contemporaries alone. Extending our prospects through a wider sphere, we seek to be approved by the spirits of the just who adorned the ages that are past; and look forward, with fond expectation, to the reverence that awaits us, after this mortal frame shall have mouldered into dust. But though the desire of reputation be natural to man, and though it operates with peculiar force in the noblest minds; yet it is not to be followed as the guide of our conduct. It is valuable only when it acts in subordination to the principles of virtue, and gives additional force to their impression. Separated from these principles, it becomes a source of corruption and depravity. Instead of animating the soul to generous deeds, it descends to foster the swellings of vain glory, and to beget the meanness of ostentation, or the vileness of hypocrisy. When the love of praise is perverted to such unworthy purposes, it seldom accomplishes its end. For though the artifices of deceit may succeed for a while, and obtain for the undeserving a temporary applause, yet the constitution of things has placed an insuperable bar between the practice of iniquity and a durable reputation. To the virtuous alone belongs the reward of lasting glory; and the Almighty will not suffer a stranger to intermeddle with their joy. For them Providence has prepared the approbation of the age in which they live, and their memorial descends to warm the admiration of succeeding times. Light is sown for the upright; the memory of the just is blessed; and the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. Death removes the chief causes of uncharitable judgment, and enables us to estimate the value of departed worth, free from the influence of prejudice and passion. The little jealousies which darken the reputation of the living seldom pursue them beyond the limits of the grave. Envy ceases when their merit has ceased to be an obstacle to our ambition. Their imperfections are buried with their bodies in the tomb, and soon forgotten; while their better qualities, recalled often to our thoughts, and heightened by the inconveniences which their departure occasions, live in the remembrance of their neighbours, and receive the tribute of just approbation. We are even willing to repay them by an excess of praise for the injury we did them while alive. (*J. Finlayson, D.D.*) *The immortality of influence:*—We think that when a man dies he has done with the world, and that the world has done with him. That view, however, needs revision. There is much about a man that cannot be put into a coffin. Keats left for his epitaph, "Here lies one whose name was writ in

water." The names of men are generally so writ, but the life and character are impressed on society deeply, indelibly. We cannot properly speak of the immortality of bad influence; yet that influence spreads and persists to a distressing extent. But we can speak confidently about the immortality of the influence of the good. Abel being dead yet speaketh; we are not told that Cain does. It is a reassuring thing to know that the good which men do is not buried with their bones. Not only do remarkable saints influence posterity beneficially; all saints do so, although it may be in a less degree. We find it easy to believe that the men influence posterity whose deeds are emblazoned in history, whose books are in the libraries, whose monuments are in the minster, but we are slow to believe in the posthumous life of the obscure and unknown. Yet the immortality of influence is just as true in regard to the humble as to the illustrious. Nature perpetuates the memory of the frailest and most fugitive life, of the simplest and most insignificant action and event. The rolling pebble, the falling leaf, and the rippling water of millions of years ago left their sign in the rocks. The minute creatures of the primeval world built up the strata on which we live, and affecting traces of their being and action are palpable everywhere. All this is going on still; every flash of lightning is photographed, every whisper vibrates for ever, every movement in the physical world leaves an imperishable record. Let us not, then, be anxious lest we should be forgotten. A secret law renders the lowliest life immortal. This gives a new view of the duration of life. We plaintively speak of human life as a dream, a flower, a shade. But the doctrine of the immortality of influence puts the subject in another light. We gain a new view of the seriousness of life. Confined to threescore years life appears insignificant; yet in the light of immortality of influence it appears unspeakably solemn. There is no circle to our influence but the horizon; we are alive to the coming of the Son of Man. We must wait for the last day before we are finally judged. Why? Because men do not close their account with the world at their death; our influence reaches to the last day, and therefore only then can the full and final verdict be given. (*W. L. Watkinson.*)

Ver. 7. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.—Heartsease:—Those who have laid hold on Christ Jesus, and are resting in the Father's love and power, have no reason to be disquieted: should all hell be unmuzzled, and all earth be unhinged, they may rejoice with a joy undampened by carnal fear or earthly sorrow. **I. EVIL TIDINGS MAY COME TO THE BEST OF MEN**—to those whose hearts are fixed and are trusting in the Lord. 1. Let us remember the frail tenure upon which we hold our temporal mercies: how soon may evil tidings come concerning them. We rightly class our families first in our possessions. Our dear relations are but loaned to us, and the hour when we must return them to the lender's hand may be even at the door. The like is certainly true of our worldly goods. Do not riches take to themselves wings and fly away? And though we have heard some almost profanely say that they have clipped the wings of their riches, so that they cannot fly, yet may the bird of prey rend them where they are, and the rotting carcass of the wealth which the owners cannot enjoy, may be a perpetual curse to them. Full often gold and silver canker in the coffer, and fret the soul of their claimant. This world at best is but a sandy foundation, and the wisest builder may well look for an end to the most substantial of its erections. Evil tidings may also come to us in another respect: we may suddenly find our health decay. That strength which now enables us to perform our daily business with delight, may so fail us that the slightest exertion may cause us pain. Certain expositors refer this passage to slander and reproach, and they translate it, "He shall not be afraid of evil hearing." It is one of the sharpest trials of the Christian's life to be misunderstood, misrepresented, and belied. The more prominent you are in Christ's service, the more certain are you to be the butt of calumny. In all these things, however, we ought to expect evil tidings. 2. Evil tidings will also come to us concerning spiritual matters, and babes in grace will be greatly alarmed. Every now and then there cometh a messenger with breathless haste, who tells us that the sages have discovered that the Bible is a fiction. But the religion of Jesus is so full of life, that her deadliest foes cannot make an end of her. We hear also at times that professors have fallen. Moreover, Satan will tell us that we are hypocrites, and conscience will remind us of sundry things which raise the suspicion that we are not soundly regenerated. 3. Moreover,

the evil tidings of death will soon be brought to you by the appointed messenger. The message will be given to us, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee."

II. A CHRISTIAN AT NO TIME OUGHT TO FEAR EITHER IN EXPECTATION OF EVIL TIDINGS, OR WHEN THE TIDINGS ACTUALLY ARRIVE. And why? 1. Because, if you be troubled, and distracted, what do you more than other men? Where is the dignity of that new nature which you claim to possess? 2. Again, if you should be filled with alarm, as others are, you would, doubtless, be led into the sins so common to others under trying circumstances. The ungodly, when they are overtaken by evil tidings, rebel against God; they murmur, and think that God deals hardly with them. Will you fall into that same sin? Will you provoke the Lord, as they do? 3. Further, you must not give way to those doubts and alarms and fears, for, if you do, you will be unfit to meet the trouble. 4. If you give way to fright and fear when you hear of evil tidings, how can you glorify God? **III. FIXEDNESS OF HEART IS THE TRUE CURE FOR BEING ALARMED AT EVIL TIDINGS.** 1. The Christian's heart is fixed as to duty. He says within himself, "It is my business so to walk as Christ also walked: it can never be right for me to do contrary to God's will. I have set the Lord always before me, and in integrity of heart will I walk all my way, wherever that way may lead." Such a man is prepared for anything. 2. But, more comfortable than this, the Christian's heart is fixed as to knowledge and so prepared. He knows, for instance, that God sits in the stern-sheets of the vessel when it rocks most. He knows, too, that God is always wise, and, knowing this, he is prepared for all events. They cannot come amiss, saith he, there can be no accidents, no mistakes, nothing can occur which ought not to occur. 3. Further, there is the fixedness of resignation. When we gave ourselves to Christ, we gave Him our person, our estate, our friends, and everything. It is a good thing every morning to give all up to God, and then to live through the day, and thank Him for renewing the daily lease. 4. Better still, let me remind you of one form of fixedness which will make you outride every storm, namely, fixedness as to eternal things. "I cannot lose"—the Christian may say—"I cannot lose my best things." 5. I believe that holy gratitude is one blessed way of fixing the soul on God and preparing it for trouble. **IV. THE GREAT INSTRUMENT OF FIXEDNESS OF HEART IS FAITH IN GOD.** "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." You see that we have come hither by progressive steps. Evil tidings may come to an heir of heaven; he ought not to be afraid of them; the way to be prepared for them is to have the heart fixed and prepared, and the method of having the heart fixed is confident trustfulness in the Lord. God is never away from any of His children, but He is nearest to those who are the most sad, and sick, and troubled. If there be one sheep in the fold that is more watched over than the rest, it is the weakest sheep. "He carrieth the lambs in His bosom, and gently leadeth those that are with young." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Trust in God the best antidote against fear.*—1. The truster in the Lord shall not be afraid of tidings of wrath and condemnation from the law of God. 2. The truster in God shall not be afraid of sin's recovering its dominion over him. 3. The truster in the Lord of hosts shall not be afraid of tidings of calamity to the Church of God. 4. The truster in God shall not be afraid to hear of public national disasters. 5. The truster in the Lord shall not be afraid of tidings of persecution for the sake of Christ. 6. The truster in the Lord shall not be afraid of the tidings of arduous duties, to which he finds himself altogether unequal. 7. The truster in the Lord shall not be afraid of tidings of personal worldly losses and afflictions. 8. The fixed truster in the Lord shall not be afraid of the evil tidings of his own death. 9. The fixed truster in God shall not be afraid of tidings of judgment. **Learn**—1. That fearful doubts and apprehensions are no part of the character of a Christian. 2. The true principle of a steady and upright practice, namely, trust in God. 3. The reason why God often makes His people to hear evil tidings; and that is, to try their trust in Him. 4. What unhappy persons are believers! If the truster in God is afraid of no evil tidings, they have reason to be afraid of everything; for the wrath of God abideth on them, and His wrath is comprehensive of all evil, both in this world and that which is to come. (*A. Swanston.*) *The unreasonableness of fear in the Christian.*—1. The anxiety of the Christian partakes of the unreasoning terror of childhood. The nervousness of little children is often extreme. What agonies of suspense! what excruciating listening! what cold sweats the little ones suffer when alone in the darkness! But, growing older, we discover how groundless and foolish this childish terror was, and that all the

suffering which arose out of it was absolutely needless. In the dark night, when we were almost paralyzed by fear, how a father's or mother's reassuring voice scattered the ghosts, and once more restored to us sweet sleep! Shall it not be thus again as we listen to the voice of the Heavenly Father? Carlyle considers "that the extent to which we have put fear under our feet is a good measure of manhood"; and it is certainly a sign of the reality and growth of the spiritual life that we walk with increasing confidence. 2. The fear of the Christian partakes of the unreasonableness of the terror of the savage. Ignorant of the laws which govern the system of nature, the savage is the victim of the wildest and most distressing fancies. The storm, the eclipse, the lightning and thunder inspire him with boundless terror, because he interprets them by an arbitrary and gloomy imagination. But it is entirely different with the educated European. He has come to understand the great and beautiful laws which regulate the movements of earth and sky and sea; and with perfect confidence and satisfaction, with entire admiration and delight the astronomer and meteorologist look upon the very phenomena which occasion the savage the ghastliest terror—the vast horror of the untutored mind gives place in the breast of the philosopher to a rational confidence. The anxiety of the Christian has its origin in a defective faith in the Divine government of the world, and is so far kindred with the fear of the superstitious heathen. When we once believe in our very heart that God rules, that He rules well, and that He rules perfectly for the individual as for the universe at large, we regard disturbing events with serene confidence and hopefulness; but how slowly we come to understand and rest in this wise and loving sovereignty! 3. The fear of the Christian partakes of the unreasoning alarm and anxiety that we sometimes perceive in the brute. A bit of vapour from a passing engine will create a panic in a flock of sheep or herd of cattle; they fly panting before the empty whiff of steam as if it were a wolf or leopard. Are not we equally absurd? We are haunted by imaginary fears, we are alarmed beyond expression by baseless imaginations, we see dark omens in things and events which do not and which cannot harm us. Most of us have sniffed ruin in bits of vapour, and suffered martyrdoms in frantic efforts to escape them. How much wiser it would have been to repose and feed in the green pastures into which the faithful Shepherd leads us! And we habitually give way to a causeless and useless anxiety about the things of life which is entirely irrational. The beavers at the London Zoological Gardens are fed every day and have nothing to fear from the weather, but their old instincts are strong, and they make a fussy show of storage against the winter; and the few branches which are given them only in make-believe they engineer with the greatest industry and ingenuity; everything is really done by their keepers for their protection and provision, but they are unconscious of it all, and in a feeble way they store and build as if they were in the wilds and everything depended upon their forethought and toil. How much is this like our gratuitous and abortive anxiety in relation to the government of God! (*Anon.*) *Not afraid of evil tidings*:—An eminent divine, eccentric but honest, said pleasantly and religiously that he was never afraid to open his letter bag. He was in full possession, we may conclude, of the "*mens conscia recti*," the upright consciousness. He lived, as he himself expressed it, with all his windows constantly wide open, that is, the world was ever welcome to fasten the prying inquisitive corner of its evil eye upon him and all his doings. Living thus honestly, as in the day, he had nought to fear from messenger or letter bag. He opened his daily letters fearlessly. That expression of Sydney Smith's was a familiar version of our text. It expresses the enviable calm of an honest and good heart. The first who feared was Adam. Guilt caused his fear. "I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid!" "Why?" "I was naked. My soul in its disobedience was exposed to the all-seeing Eye. I was uncovered of the robe of duty and obedience, and I dreaded punishment. I feared my physician's face." All along the pages of history runs a stream of like fear. Poor old Jacob, waiting his sons' second return from Egypt. The trembling mother, watching and awaiting the fate of her bulrush ark. David, lying upon the earth and listening with strained ear, to every faint whisper of the servants, as they spoke of his guilt-born child. Felix, wondering as he listened to each round period, how near and nearer judgment was coming. All these are examples of human nature afraid of evil tidings. But trusting in the Lord God, we need fear no evil, and no tidings of evil. The black seal will then only mean, "here is another messenger to tell me my own time draws near." The consumption, and the growing

weakness, and all the other heralds of death will find us prepared with the utterance, "O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed, I will even sing and give praise." The little harmless speculation, the haps of the regiment, the delay of the ship, the story about the son or daughter, the witness to our misdeed, the enemy, the slanderer, the possible danger, the probable affliction—all, everything, whatever betide, whatever befall, whatever may threaten—can then only bring out the calm declaration, "My heart is fixed—O God, Thou knowest my heart is fixed, trusting in Thee." There have been men, and women too, who have read with brave solemnity their own warrant of death; over whom the glittering axe has had no terrors, the fire and fagot no unworthy influence. Their heart has been fixed. Of all which this is the point. See that we have our hearts fixed upon God, our feet upon the Rock of Ages, our house built firmly, our sin's penalty transferred surely. Then we need fear no evil tidings. (S. B. James, M.A.) *Established on God*:—Here is a most remarkable type of man—quite out of the line of our every-day experience. One is impelled to look back at the earlier verses of the psalm to see who "he" may be! Not afraid of evil tidings! quite a unique person, then—calm as he scans the startling telegram, serene and composed while he reads the black-edged sheet! There is a moral dignity in a character which is not easily shaken and swayed to and fro by every wind of circumstance; we would all like to be possessed of a character firmly rooted, established; therefore the text ought to have an interest for us all. In writing "evil tidings" the psalmist was thinking of what we commonly call bad news, and to enter into his meaning it is necessary to realize the world's bad news. How much there is! The world seems full of it; so full, indeed, that the glad news of God—the good news of the kingdom of heaven—is often unheeded for this cause alone. The world's bad news reaches us in many ways. We read it on placards and newspaper headlines. A "Stella" goes down, an express train is wrecked, a mine is flooded, or the first shot is fired and a bloody war begins! These are the common "evil tidings" of the world. We can all most fervently join in that petition of the Litany—"From lightning and tempest; from plague, pestilence, and famine; from battle and murder, and from sudden death, good Lord, deliver us!" Now, I want rather to direct your thoughts to the man who is not afraid of the world's bad news even at its worst. "He shall not be afraid of any evil tidings." Who is he? In the Biblical examples and teachings about the righteous man, there is a moral grandeur and dignity unsurpassed in the literatures of the world. Where else in the realm of literature should we go—even if we were not Christians—to find a more exalted and dignified description of man at his best? In the far Eastern literatures of China and India we can easily find sages, dreamers, and adepts of occult philosophy. In Greek literature we meet with heroes, poets, and philosophers in abundance. In Roman literature there is no lack of soldiers, statesmen, and lawgivers; and there are stories among them all of men who knew how to endure the extremity of suffering without making any sign of despair. But the Hebrew literature of the Old Testament flowers in the portraiture of the righteous man. For the moment we may omit any reference to the New Testament as outside the region of mere literary comparison. In reviewing these facts the question naturally arises, Why is the righteous man the flower of Hebrew literature? And the answer is inevitable: Because the Hebrew Bible is the product of men who had a sense of God, the holy and just One, the eternally righteous One! The righteous man is rooted on the rock; that is, the roots of his faith are closely entwined round the central rock of the universe—"the Rock of Ages." "His heart is fixed, standeth fast, trusting in the Lord." The most modern of the world's mystics, Maurice Maeterlinck, seems to have entered deeply into the meaning of our text. In his latest book he asks the question, "Is the sage never to suffer?" And when Maeterlinck writes "sage" he means the good, the truly wise man. "Is the sage never to suffer?" he asks. "Shall no storm ever break on the roof of his dwelling, no traps be laid to ensnare him? Shall wife and friends never fail him? Must his father not die, and his mother, his brothers, his sons—must all these not die like the rest?" And to his own questions Maeterlinck answers, "Needs must the sage (or good man) like his neighbour be startled from sleep by blows at the door that cause the whole house to tremble. He, too, must go down and parley. But yet, as he listens, his eyes are not fixed on the bringer of evil tidings; his glance will at times be lifted over the messenger's shoulder, will scan the dust on the horizon in search of the mighty Idea that perhaps may

be near at hand." Could we find a better commentary on our text? In this spirit—old as Abraham, yet new-born to-day—we can face all the events of the coming time, and

"Greet the Unseen with a cheer!"

No doubt the Messenger of Sorrow will knock at all our doors, for it is not his custom to pass any by; but while we listen to his message we can lift our glance over his shoulder, and seeing Jesus, who has overcome the world, we can "be of good cheer" and say, "Whatever thy news may be, there shall no evil befall us, for our heart standeth fast and trusteth in the Lord." (*A. E. Hooper.*) *The fixed compass*:—The pattern saint of this psalm is happy as well as holy. Evil tidings, when they come, will pierce a good man's heart; but in two things he has an advantage over those who know not God: first, he is not kept in terror before the time by the anticipation of possible calamity; and next, even when calamity overtakes him, he does not look upon it in blank despair. He knows that it is the chastening of a Father, and is sure that love is wielding the rod. "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." This man has a solidity and an independence which others never know. His heart is fixed. It is something to have one's mind made up and settled. No man can be happy as long as he does not know his own mind—does not know what he would be at. On the contrary, "if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." To have an object in view, and to go straight at it, constitutes in a great measure the difference between a useful and a wasted life. We obtain here an interesting glimpse of the true relation in which the children stand to our Father in heaven. It is a matter of the heart, more than even of the intellect. True religion is not a matter into which a man is driven against his will; it is a matter that he seeks with desire, as the hart panteth for the water-brooks. The heart goes to God; the desires of the new nature flow out in that direction: "Nearer to Thee, my God; nearer to Thee." And then, when you come nigh in the covenant, God is not a terror, but a trust. The magnet of the ship's compass is in this aspect very like a godly man in the course of his earthly pilgrimage. The magnet on the sea and the believing soul in this life are firmly fixed on one side, and hang loose on the other. Both alike are fastened mysteriously to the distant and unseen, but are slack and easily moved in all their material settings. Precisely because they are unattached beneath, they are free to keep by their hold on high; and precisely because of their hold on high, they do not turn round with every movement of their material supports. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*)

Vers. 9, 10. He hath given to the poor.—*The excellency and reward of charity*:—Among the various methods of giving glory to God, it is none of the least considerable to celebrate the acts and the reward of His saints. Whilst He is acknowledged for the author of their virtue and their happiness, there will be no danger of declining by this means to superstition and idolatry; the Creator's power and goodness will be observed resplendent in His creatures, but not the creature worshipped instead of the Creator. So thought the holy penman of this psalm, who undertakes to set forth the praises of the Lord, by declaring the blessings of the man that delights in His commandments. **I. THE AMIABLE NATURE OF A BENEFICENT AND BOUNTIFUL DISPOSITION.** 1. The general notion and exercise of this virtue. "He hath given to the poor." It appears to be a principle of nature, that all who have ability, whether of purse, of body, or of mind, are bound to consider the necessities of other people, and spare some decent proportion of their own superfluities, to supply them in such manner as their respective exigencies call for help. The voice of nature, in this as well as other matters, is confirmed by the unerring precepts of revealed religion (1 Tim. vi. 17, 18; Acts xx. 35; Eph. iv. 28). 2. Its great extent and diffusive quality. "He hath dispersed," says the psalmist, or (in the old translation) "He hath dispersed abroad," not confined himself to one or two such acts of charity, but repeated them with frequency, and spread them with discretion. As the husbandman takes care that his ground be first duly prepared for the improvement of his seed, and throws it not away on rocks or uncultivated deserts; so the liberal man should be careful to bestow his bounty where it may turn to use and benefit, and spread abroad with greatest profit and advantage to mankind. 3. Its duration and influence on future times. "His righteousness endureth for ever," i. e. it shall always be had in remembrance before God (as is intimated of the alms of Cor-

nelius), and receive such a reward from Him, as will demonstrate that his substance has not been wasted or thrown away, but discreetly improved to his own greatest advantage. This will be often seen in the increase of temporal blessings to him and his posterity (vers. 2, 3; 2 Cor. ix. 8). And if this temporal increase do not always follow, yet the psalmist adds that "unto the righteous there ariseth light in the darkness," such inward peace and tranquillity of mind as must more than counterbalance all the outward evil of adversity. II. THE HAPPINESS OR REWARD ANNEXED TO SUCH BENEFICENCE. "His horn shall be exalted with honour." It is said of godliness, or the practice of religion in general, that it has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. But more particularly is that part of godliness, namely bounty to the poor, encouraged to trust in the care and goodness of Providence, even for temporal prosperity (Prov. xi. 24). Our Saviour represents it as the test of that reckoning He shall make with us at the last day, whether we have duly ministered to the various wants of His afflicted members, which He will esteem as done unto Himself. And therefore St. Paul has pertinently urged it as the ground why rich men should be ready to distribute, and willing to communicate, that so they may lay up in store for themselves a good foundation (or charter) against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. Then shall their horn truly be exalted with the highest honour. Not that the bare act of giving alms can ever entitle us to such a reward! But when it is given, as it is here considered, from a religious principle, it will then be accompanied with other Christian virtues, all springing from the same root of faith and obedience, which is the very condition of our laying hold on the Gospel promises, and entering into endless felicity. This is to receive honour from God, that durable, substantial honour which should chiefly be regarded. (IV. *Berriman, D.D.*) *The duty and reward of bounty to the poor.*—Our text hath two parts, one affording us good information concerning our duty, the other yielding great encouragement to the performance thereof; for we are obliged to follow the pious man's practice, and so doing we shall assuredly partake of his condition. The main drift is, to represent the liberal exercising of bounty and mercy to be the necessary duty, the ordinary practice, and the proper character of a truly pious man; so that performing such acts is a good sign of true piety; and omitting them is a certain argument of ungodliness. I. I WILL SHOW WITH WHAT ADVANTAGE THE HOLY SCRIPTURE REPRESENTS IT TO US, OR PRESSES IT ON US. 1. We may consider that there is no sort of duties which God hath more expressly commanded, or more earnestly inculcated, than these of bounty and mercy toward our brethren: whence evidently the great moment of them, and their high value in God's esteem may be inferred. 2. It is indeed observable that as in every kind that which is most excellent doth commonly assume to itself the name of the whole kind; so among the parts of righteousness (which word is used to comprehend all virtue and goodness) this of exercising bounty and mercy is peculiarly called righteousness: so that righteousness and mercifulness (or alms-deeds), the righteous and bountiful person, are in Scripture expression ordinarily confounded, as it were, or undistinguishably put one for the other. 3. We may also consequently mark that in those places of Scripture where the Divine law is abridged, and religion summed up into a few particulars of main importance, these duties constantly make a part. 4. It is in like manner considerable that in the general descriptions of piety and goodness, the practice of these duties is specified as a grand ingredient of them. In this psalm, where such a description is intended, it is almost the only particular instance; and it is not only mentioned, but reiterated in divers forms of expression. In the 37th psalm it is affirmed and repeated, that "the righteous showeth mercy; he showeth mercy, and giveth; he showeth mercy, and lendeth." 5. Also in the particular histories of good men this sort of practice is specially taken notice of, and expressed in their characters. In the story of Abraham, his benignity to strangers, and hospitableness, is remarkable among all his deeds of goodness, being propounded to us as a pattern and encouragement to the like practice. In this the conscience of Job did solace itself, as in a solid assurance of his integrity: "I delivered the poor that cried," etc. 6. So near to the heart of piety doth Scripture lay the practice of these duties: and no wonder; for it often expressly declares charity to be the fulfilling of God's law, as the best expression of all our duty toward God, of faith in Him, love and reverence of Him, and as either formally containing, or naturally producing all our duty toward our neighbour. And of charity, works of bounty and mercy are both the chief instances, and the

plainest signs. 7. To enforce which observations, and that we may be farther certified about the weight and worth of these duties, we may consider that to the observance of them most ample and excellent rewards are assigned; that, in return for what we bestow on our poor brethren, God hath promised all sorts of the best mercies and blessings to us. 8. And correspondently grievous punishments are designed and denounced to the transgressors of these duties; they, for being such, do forfeit God's love and favour; they can have no sure possession, nor any comfortable enjoyment of their estate; for "he," saith St. James, "shall have judgment without mercy, who sheweth no mercy." 9. It is indeed most considerable that at the final reckoning, when all men's actions shall be strictly scanned, and justly sentenced according to their true desert, a special regard will be had to the discharge or neglect of these duties. II. IN REGARD TO GOD—1. We may consider that, by exercising of bounty and mercy, we are kind and courteous to God Himself; by neglecting those duties, we are unkind and rude to Him: for that what of good or evil is by us done to the poor, God interprets and accepts as done to Himself. 2. We by practising those duties are just, by omitting them are very unjust toward God. For our goods, our wealth, and our estate are indeed none of them simply or properly our own; God necessarily is the true and absolute proprietary of them. 3. Showing bounty and mercy are the most proper and the principal expressions of our gratitude unto God; so that in omitting them we are not only very unjust, but highly ungrateful. We may seem abundantly to thank Him in words; but a sparing hand gives the lie to the fullest mouth: we may spare our breath, if we keep back our substance. 4. Yea, all our devotion, severed from a disposition of practising these duties, cannot have any true worth in it, shall not yield any good effect from it. Our prayers, if we are uncharitably disposed, what are they other than demonstrations of egregious impudence and folly? 5. The conscionable practice of these duties doth plainly spring from those good dispositions of mind regarding God, which are the original grounds and fountains of all true piety; and the neglect of them issueth from those vicious dispositions which have a peculiar inconsistency with piety, being destructive thereof in the very foundation and root. Faith in God is the fundamental grace on which piety is grounded; love and fear of God are the radical principles from which it grows: all which as the charitable man discovers in his practice, so they are apparently banished from the heart of the illiberal and unmerciful person. 6. Let us consider that nothing is more conformable to God's nature, or renders us more like to Him, than beneficence and mercy; and that consequently nothing can be more grateful to Him: that nothing is more disagreeable and contrary to the essential disposition of God, than illiberality and unmercifulness; and therefore that nothing can be more distasteful to Him. III. IN REGARD TO OUR NEIGHBOUR. 1. He whose need craves our bounty, whose misery demands our mercy, what is he? He within himself containeth a nature very excellent; an immortal soul, and an intelligent mind, by which he nearly resembleth God Himself, and is comparable to angels: he invisibly is owner of endowments, rendering him capable of the greatest and best things. 2. That distinction which thou standest on, and which seemeth so vast between thy poor neighbour and thee, what is it? whence did it come? whither tends it? What the philosopher said of himself, "What I have is so mine, that it is every man's," is according to the practice of each man, who is truly and in due measure charitable; whereby that seemingly enormous discrimination among men is well moderated, and the equity of Divine providence is vindicated. But he that ravenously grasps for more than he can well use, and gripes it fast into his clutches, so that the needy in their distress cannot come by it, doth pervert that equity which God hath established in things, defeats His good intentions (so far as he can), and brings a scandal on His providence: and so doing is highly both injurious and impious. 3. It was also one main end of this difference among us, permitted by God's providence, that as some men's industry and patience might be exercised by their poverty, so other men by their wealth should have ability of practising justice and charity; that so both rich and poor might thence become capable of recompenses, suitable to the worth of such virtuous performances. "Why art thou rich," saith St. Basil, "and he poor? Surely for this; that thou mayest attain the reward of benignity, and faithful dispensation; and that he may be honoured with the great prize of patience." 4. We should also do well to consider that a poor man, even as such, is not to be disregarded, and that poverty is no such contemptible thing as we may be

prone to imagine. Shall we presume, in the person of any poor man, to abhor or condemn the very poor, but most holy and most happy Jesus, our Lord and Redeemer? No; if we will do poverty right, we must rather for His dear sake and memory defer an especial respect and veneration thereto. 5. Thus a due reflection on the poor man himself, his nature and state, will induce us to succour. But let us also consider him as related unto ourselves: every such person is our near kinsman, is our brother, is by indissoluble bands of cognation in blood, and agreement in nature, knit and united to us. 6. Farther, as the poor man is so nearly allied to us by society of common nature, so is he more strictly joined to us by the bands of spiritual consanguinity. IV. IF WE REFLECT ON OURSELVES, AND CONSIDER EITHER OUR NATURE, OR OUR STATE HERE, WE CANNOT BUT OBSERVE MANY STRONG ENGAGEMENTS TO THE SAME PRACTICE. 1. The very constitution, frame, and temper of our nature directeth and inclineth us thereto; whence, by observing those duties, we observe our own nature, we improve it, we advance it to the best perfection it is capable of; by neglecting them, we thwart, we impair, we debase the same. 2. And if the sensitive part within us doth suggest so much, the rational dictates more unto us: that heavenly faculty, having capacities so wide, and so mighty energies, was surely not created to serve mean or narrow designs; it was not given us to scrape eternally in earth, or to amass heaps of clay for private enjoyment. 3. Farther, examining ourselves, we may also observe that we are in reality, what our poor neighbour appears to be, in many respects no less indigent and impotent than he: we no less, yea far more, for our subsistence depend on the arbitrary power of another, than he seemeth to rely on ours. 4. The great uncertainty and instability of our condition doth also require our consideration. We, that now flourish in a fair and full estate, may soon be in the case of that poor creature, who now sues for our relief; we, that this day enjoy the wealth of Job, may the morrow need his patience. 5. And equity doth exact no less: for were any of us in the needy man's plight, we should believe our case deserved commiseration; we should importunately demand relief; we should be grievously displeased at a repulse; we should apprehend ourselves very hardly dealt with, and sadly we should complain of inhumanity and cruelty, if succour were refused to us. 6. We should also remember concerning ourselves, that we are mortal and frail. V. IF WE CONTEMPLATE OUR WEALTH ITSELF, WE MAY THEREIN DESCRIBE GREAT MOTIVES TO BOUNTY. 1. Thus to employ our riches is really the best use they are capable of: not only the most innocent, most worthy, most plausible, but the most safe, most pleasant, most advantageous, and consequently in all respects most prudent way of disposing them. 2. Excluding this use of wealth, or abstracting a capacity of doing good therewith, nothing is more pitiful and despicable than it; it is but like the load or the trappings of an ass: a wise man on that condition would not choose it, or endure to be pestered with it; but would serve it as those philosophers did, who flung it away, that it might not disturb their contemplations: it is the power it affords of benefiting men, which only can season and ingratiate it to the relish of such a person: otherwise it is evidently true, which the wise man affirms (Prov. xv. 16). 3. Again, we may consider that to dispense our wealth liberally is the best way to preserve it, and to continue masters thereof; what we give is not thrown away, but saved from danger: while we detain it at home (as it seems to us) it really is abroad and at adventures; it is out at sea, sailing perilously in storms, near rocks and shelves, amongst pirates; nor can it ever be safe, till it is brought into this port, or insured this way: when we have bestowed it on the poor, then we have lodged it in unquestionable safety; in a place where no rapine, no deceit, no mishap, no corruption can ever by any means come at it. 4. Nay, farther, we may consider that exercising bounty is the most advantageous method of improving and increasing an estate; but that being tenacious and illiberal, doth tend to the diminution and decay thereof. 5. Farther, the contributing part of our goods to the poor will qualify us to enjoy the rest with satisfaction and comfort. The oblation of these first-fruits, as it will sanctify the whole lump of our estate, so it will sweeten it. 6. The peculiar nature of our religion specially requires it, and the honour thereof exacts it from us; nothing better suits Christianity, nothing more graces it, than liberality; nothing is more inconsistent therewith, or more disparageth it, than being miserable and sordid. VI. SOME REWARDS PECULIAR TO THE EXERCISING THE DUTIES OF BOUNTY AND MERCY. 1. "His righteousness endureth for ever." These words may import that the fame and remembrance of his bounty is very durable, or that the effects

thereof do lastingly continue, or that eternal rewards are designed thereto; they may respect the bountiful man himself, or his posterity here; they may simply relate to an endurance in God's regard and care; or they may with that also comprehend a continuance in the good memory and honourable mention of men. Now, in truth, according to all these interpretations, the bountiful man's righteousness doth endure for ever. 2. "His horn shall be exalted with honour." This may be supposed to import that an abundance of high and holy, of firm and solid honour shall attend on the bountiful person. And that so it truly shall, may from many considerations appear. (1) Honour is inseparably annexed thereto, as its natural companion and shadow. God hath impressed on all virtue a majesty and a beauty which do command respect, and with a kindly violence extort veneration from men. (2) An accession of honour, according to gracious promise (grounded on somewhat of special reason, of equity and decency in the thing itself), is due from God unto the bountiful person, and is by special providence surely conferred on him. (3) God will thus exalt the bountiful man's horn even here in this world, and to an infinitely higher pitch He will advance it in the future state: he shall there be set at the right hand, in a most honourable place and rank, among the chief friends and favourites of the Heavenly King, in happy consortship with the holy angels and blessed saints; where, in recompense of his pious bounty, he shall, from the bountiful hands of his most gracious Lord, receive "an incorruptible crown of righteousness," and an "unfading crown of glory." (*Isaac Barrow, D.D.*) *The commendation and reward of the benevolent man*:—I. HIS CONDUCT IS COMMENDED. 1. Its disinterestedness. 2. Its judicious distinction of their recipients and their circumstances. 3. Its modesty, and the benignity of manner in which it is performed. 4. Its evangelical motive and single aim. He looks to Calvary, and sees there the grand incentive to all virtue. The influence under which he acts is not the temporary excitement of sympathetic feeling, nor the sentimental emotion of a poetic generosity, nor the feverish thirst for distinction and applause, nor the mere mechanical habit of doing as others have done; but it is a Divine influence—a motive which comes fresh into his bosom from the fount of all purity and grace, and which instigates not to a fitful, but to a persevering—not to an indolent, but to an indefatigable—not to a self-complacent, but to a self-denying exercise of that "pure religion which is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." He who from such a principle engages in offices of brotherly kindness and charity never arrogates to himself the glory, but ascribes it all to God. II. HIS REWARD. 1. The exercise of benevolence naturally conciliates esteem. All virtuous conduct is deemed honourable; but men ever reserve their best eulogiums for the disinterested benefactors of their kind. 2. The inspired writers in repeated instances speak of it as part at least of a good man's singular felicity that his name shall be followed with blessings, and the remembrance of his piety be cherished when he has entered upon his everlasting rest. 3. The chief part of that reward which it pleases God to bestow upon Christian beneficence is reserved for another world. Little as we know of that future state of being upon which we enter at death, we are left in no doubt of the fact, that it will be to every man a state of misery or of happiness, according to the manner in which he shall have spent this present probationary season on earth. They, consequently, who, "by patient continuance in well-doing, are seeking for glory, honour, and immortality," shall not find themselves disappointed at last. (*E. Steane.*)

PSALM CXIII.

VERS. 1-9. *Praise the name of the Lord.—The highest service and the highest Being*:—I. THE HIGHEST SERVICE IN WHICH INTELLIGENT CREATURES CAN ENGAGE. What is praise? Not verbal laudation, however enthusiastic in feeling, appropriate in language, or transporting in music. What, then, is it to praise God? It is to have our whole souls, and being, attuned to His holy character, and to His benevolent purpose. A holy life is the only true anthem. 1. Because its inspiration can alone give worth to all other services. 2. Because it alone can harmoniously develop and satisfy all the faculties and aspirations of our nature. It is—

(1) A service for all men (ver. 1). (2) A service for all time (ver. 2). (3) A service for all space (ver. 3). II. THE HIGHEST BEING THAT INTELLIGENT CREATURES CAN CONTEMPLATE. 1. His character. All-wise, all-holy, all-merciful, etc. 2. His incomparableness (ver. 4). 3. His condescension (ver. 6). 4. His operation—(1) Abroad in society (ver. 7). (2) At home in families (ver. 9). He operates in families as well as abroad and in society. To Him the birth of every child must be ascribed. (*Homilist*.)

Vers. 5-8. **Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high!**—*The greatness and goodness of God*.—I. HIS INCONCEIVABLE GREATNESS (ver. 5). 1. The place of His habitation. With great propriety, heaven, and the heaven of heavens, though they cannot contain God's essence, are represented to us as the place of His immediate abode; there His glory dwells. This heaven is called the high and the holy place. "He dwelleth on high," far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named. 2. His infinite superiority to the greatest of beings and the greatest of things. The purest and loftiest angel that stands in the presence of God is far removed beneath Him. How much more must He stoop, then, to behold the things that are done on the earth, things of the greatest interest—things that in our view swell into the mightiest importance. II. HIS MATCHLESS GOODNESS (vers. 6-8). 1. The ministrations of His providence. 2. The manifestations of His grace. Consider not only the general scheme of our recovery by grace Divine, through the humiliation, and suffering, and death, and burial of the Divine Redeemer, but consider the manner in which this salvation is applied by the sovereign and gracious operations of the Holy Spirit. 3. The revelations of eternity. "Eye hath not seen," etc. III. WHAT PRACTICAL LESSONS MAY WE LEARN FROM THE COMBINED OR ASSOCIATED DISPLAY OF THE GREATNESS AND GOODNESS OF GOD. 1. Let it fix on our minds a deep sense of our own insignificance, meanness, and vileness. 2. Let it promote reverence in worship. 3. Let it nourish in our bosoms confidence towards God. 4. Let it scatter—(1) Those doubts of scepticism, and those hesitations of infidelity which are too industriously spread amongst us at the present day. The minute observation which God's providence takes of the affairs of men. (2) The efficacy of believing prayer. (*G. Clayton*.) *God's condescension in beholding the things in heaven and in earth*.—I. THE UNEQUALLED MAJESTY AND GLORY OF GOD. 1. He dwelleth on high. He is described as "seated on a throne high and lifted up" (Isa. vi. 1). The residence of His glory is in the heavenly world. From thence He beholds the whole universe, reigneth over it; and all creatures, and all worlds are under His government and control. 2. There is none like Him. It is impossible, in the nature of things, that there should be any more than one eternal, self-existent Being. II. HIS GREAT AND AMAZING CONDESCENSION. 1. It is great condescension in God to behold the things that are in heaven—the saints and angels; for they are creatures, and fall infinitely short of Him in perfection. They cannot by searching find out God, nor have they minds capacious enough to receive Him. Besides, their best services, though not sinful and polluted, are yet imperfect. They are not equal to His glory; for "He is exalted above all blessing and praise." 2. It is greater and more wonderful condescension to behold the things on earth. They derive their being from the dust; dwell in houses of clay; at their best estate they are altogether vanity; will soon be laid in the grave and turned to corruption. They have lost their innocence and are become unclean; have lost their order and are become irregular. They often desire, judge, and act wrong; and there is not one that perfectly doeth good, no, not one. By the generality of men God is affronted, neglected, or forgotten. Even the worship and obedience of His saints, of the best of His saints, are imperfect and polluted. Who, then, is like to the Lord our God, that stoops to regard such creatures, and be so good to a world so full of vanity, sin, and pollution? III. APPLICATION. 1. Learn to reverence this great and glorious Being, since He dwelleth on high, and there is none like Him. 2. Learn the odious nature of pride. 3. The condescension of God affords much comfort to His people. 4. How strongly should the condescension of God attract our hearts to Him, and make our gratitude and love to Him warm and constant. 5. Learn to imitate the condescension of God. To be friendly and affable to all, and stoop with a grace, is to be polite, to be a gentleman; yea, what is better, it is to be a Christian; to be so far like God. Condescension is not meanness. The very word implies dignity. As you owe more to God than others, for His

bounty to you, show your gratitude this way. By kindness and condescension you will be esteemed and beloved; for "before honour is humility; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (*Job Orton, D.D.*) *The majesty and condescension of God*:—There are two propositions in the text which human reason could never unite. "Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high?"—but yet He "humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and that are in the earth." And the reason why the mere unassisted faculties of man could never unite these two ideas is, that they could not, in the nature of things, be united, but by the third discovery, which must come from God Himself, and show the other two in perfect harmony,—the discovery that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son," etc. There God and man met. And when we know this, and enter into the spirit of this great truth, then we know that there is a philanthropy, a love of man, in God; an intense, a boundless love even of creatures low and degraded as they are; then we wonder no longer how it is that He who exalteth Himself to dwell on high should humble Himself to behold, not only the things which are in heaven, but those also upon the earth. **I. GOD DWELLETH ON HIGH.** 1. This is a declaration of the Divine majesty, designed to rebuke that thoughtlessness which we are so apt to indulge, and to impress us with that reverence which is at once so becoming and so necessary. 2. This is a revelation of His power. Everything being subject to Him who is high above all, whose almighty power has hitherto controlled all things, and continues to control and regulate them, this revelation of the Divine power is made, that man—the man that trusts in God, and rests upon His almighty power—may be afraid of nothing; and that, when he has to believe any express promise which is made to him in the Word of God, whose accomplishment, to the man of the world, seems altogether impossible, he may say, "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" 3. This is a revelation of His wisdom, of His infinite and arranging wisdom. It is connected with our comfort, as to individual life; connected with our confidence, as to God's Church; and connected with all our views of Providence, as to the management and issues of the affairs of this world. **II. AS IS THE MAJESTY, SO ALSO IS THE MERCY OF OUR GOD** (ver. 7). 1. This condescension of God to things on earth respects the regard which He has had for our race, for the race fallen indeed as it is, poor, and seated in the dust, and lying on the dunghill. 2. There is, no doubt, also, a reference in this to the respect which God pays even to the lower ranks of the race, seeing that He raiseth up the poor, and lifteth up the needy. 3. The text includes a reference, also, to the condescension of God in His relation to man in circumstances of trouble. His eye penetrates through the ranks of angels, and fixes upon a trembling, humble, contrite sinner. 4. The expressions of the text refer to our nature. Christ, who is the head, cannot be exalted without the members; and therefore Christ's exaltation is the pattern of ours; His body, now incorruptible, the pattern of our body to be glorified; His stainless glorified spirit the pattern of ours, which is to be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, pure as the light in which God dwells in the kingdom of heaven, the very place into which He has entered; this glory is to be the residence of His people for ever. (*R. Watson.*) *The extent of the Divine condescension*:—God, in addition to the bare faculty of dwelling on a multiplicity of objects at one and the same time, has this faculty in such wonderful perfection, that He can attend as fully, and provide as richly, and manifest all His attributes as illustriously, on every one of these objects, as if the rest had no existence, and no place whatever in His government or in His thoughts. 1. For the evidence of this position, we appeal, in the first place, to the personal history of each individual. His eye is upon every hour of my existence. His Spirit is intimately present with every thought of my heart. His inspiration gives birth to every purpose within me. His hand impresses a direction on every footstep of my goings. Every breath I inhale is drawn by an energy which God deals out to me. And what God is doing with me, He is doing with every individual. 2. But, secondly, were the mind of God so fatigued, and so occupied with the care of other worlds, as the objection presumes Him to be, should we not see some traces of neglect or of carelessness in His management of ours? Should we not behold, in many a field of observation, the evidence of its Master being overcrowded with the variety of His other engagements? 3. But, thirdly, it was the telescope, that, by piercing the obscurity which lies between us and distant worlds, put infidelity in possession of the argument against which we are now contending. But, about the time of its

invention, another instrument was formed which laid open a scene no less wonderful, and rewarded the inquisitive spirit of man with a discovery which serves to neutralize the whole of this argument. This was the microscope. The one led me to see a system in every star. The other leads me to see a world in every atom. The one taught me that this mighty globe, with the whole burden of its people and of its countries, is but a grain of sand on the high field of immensity. The other teaches me that every grain of sand may harbour within it the tribes and the families of a busy population. They, therefore, who think that God will not put forth such a power, and such a goodness, and such a condescension in behalf of this world, as are ascribed to Him in the New Testament, because He has so many other worlds to attend to, think of Him as a man. They confine their view to the informations of the telescope, and forget altogether the informations of the other instruments. They only find room in their minds for His one attribute of a large and general superintendence; and keep out of their remembrance the equally impressive proofs we have for His other attribute, of a minute and multiplied attention to all that diversity of operations, where it is He that worketh all in all. And when I think that as one of the instruments of philosophy has heightened our every impression of the first of these attributes, so another instrument has no less heightened our impression of the second of them—then I can no longer resist the conclusion, that it would be a transgression of sound argument, as well as a daring of impiety, to draw a limit around the doings of this unsearchable God—and should a professed revelation from heaven tell me of an act of condescension in behalf of some separate world, so wonderful that angels desired to look into it, and the Eternal Son had to move from His seat of glory to carry it into accomplishment, all I ask is the evidence of such a revelation; for, let it tell me as much as it may of God letting Himself down for the benefit of one single province of His dominions, this is no more than what I see lying scattered, in numberless examples before me—and running through the whole line of my recollections—and meeting me in every walk of observation to which I can betake myself; and, now that the microscope has unveiled the wonders of another region, I see strewed around me, with a profusion which baffles my every attempt to comprehend it, the evidence that there is no one portion of the universe of God too minute for His notice, nor too humble for the visitations of His care. What a grandeur does it throw over every step in the redemption of a fallen world, to think of its being done by Him who unrobed Him of the glories of so wide a monarchy, and came to this humblest of its provinces, in the disguise of a servant, and took upon Him the form of our degraded species, and let Himself down to sorrows and to sufferings and to death for us! (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*) *The nature, possibility and truth of a particular providence*.—I. STATE THE DOCTRINE OF A PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE. 1. We must not expect that God's particular providence would interpose, where our own endeavours are sufficient. For that would be to encourage sloth and idleness, instead of countenancing and supporting virtue. Nor ought we to expect to be relieved from difficulties and distresses, into which our own mismanagement and criminal conduct have plunged us. 2. We must not expect that Providence would so far consult our private interest, as to counterwork that of the whole. 3. We are not to expect that Providence upon our repeated requests would grant what we imagine a blessing; there being several things which we think to be blessings, that are not so upon the whole, or not so to us. And Providence is not like an over-indulgent parent, who destroys the future happiness of His children, by complying with their importunate petitions, and removing their present uneasiness. 4. Nor must we hope that Providence will prevent every calamity that may befall good men. All that the assertors of a particular providence contend for is that, if He does not think fit to prevent it, He will either support them under it, or rescue them from it; or make all things, at the last winding up of the drama, work together for good to them who love Him. II. Having stated the doctrine of a particular providence, PROVE THE POSSIBILITY OF IT. We must distinguish between the grand and fundamental laws of nature, and those of an inferior and subordinate nature. The economy of Nature may be in a great measure unalterable, as to the grand and fundamental laws, by which the universe is steered: such are those respecting the revolution of the heavenly bodies, the succession of day and night, and the round of the seasons. But there are subordinate and inferior laws, which God may alter without any seeming or visible alteration. And to recede from them, under proper limitations,

occasionally at the instance of particular persons, may be no detriment to the universe, and yet of great importance to them. Such are the laws relating to the course of infectious and pestilential vapours, the state of the atmosphere, etc.

III. PROVE THE TRUTH AND CERTAINTY OF A PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE. 1. That the Deity should not grant every particular good man what is really for his good upon the whole, and no ways inconsistent with that of the public, must either argue that He is unwilling or that He is unable to grant it. Infinite goodness cannot but be willing to communicate happiness to every individual, who is not wanting to himself, and infinite power cannot but be able to bring about whatever His goodness wills. 2. God will respect and treat every man agreeably to what he is, and therefore there can be no irrespective course of things. 3. Instinct is a proof that providence extends itself to every particular brute; instinct being the immediate energy of the Deity acting upon each of the brute creation. Now, if Providence condescends to regard every individual in the brute creation so far as to act constantly in it and upon it, shall He not much more extend His care to every particular person in the rational world, and adapt His dispensations to the necessities of each single person in it? 4. Those who admit a general providence, but deny a particular one, seem to forget that generals are nothing but a collection of particulars; they are nothing but the sum total of individuals. And consequently as generals include particulars, a general providence must imply a particular one. 5. The surprising discoveries of murder, the fall of the wicked into the pit which they made for others; the strange and judicial infatuation of men, wise at all other times, when some great event was to be brought about, which can only be resolved into His power, who maketh the knowledge of the wise foolish, and turneth their counsels backwards; the indiscretion of others succeeding, when well-concerted plots have failed; the disproportion of the visible means to the effect; these are so many arguments to prove a particular providence at the helm, who has a perfect view of all things, whether great or small, at all times, and in all places, with infinitely more ease, than we can attend to one thing at once.

IV. REFLECTIONS. 1. Let us learn from hence to form the most august ideas of the Divine nature of which ours is capable. 2. Instead of scaring yourself with melancholy views, let it be a matter of joy and comfort to you, that, amidst all the confusion and madness of the world, men cannot faster perplex and entangle things than God can unravel them; or embroil the world, than He can bring order out of confusion. 3. Let us never do anything to throw ourselves out of His protection. While we enjoy the light of the Divine countenance, we need not be dejected at the frowns of the whole world. For if God be for us, it will in a short time signify little or nothing who was against us: but if He be against us, what will it signify who was for us? (*J. Seed.*)

Vers. 7, 8. **He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill.**—*From the dunghill to the throne*.—I. WHERE GOD'S CHOSEN ONES ARE WHEN HE MEETS WITH THEM. 1. Many of them are in the lowest place socially. The Lord excludes no man from His election on account of his rank or condition. Come as a beggar, if you be a beggar. Come in rags, if you have no other covering. 2. The expression in the text does not refer merely to social gradations; I have no doubt it has a more spiritual meaning. (1) The dunghill is a place where men throw their worthless things. How often have God's own chosen people felt themselves to be mere offscourings and sweepings, good for nothing but to be cast away! You are in a like case, for you have discovered your own utter worthlessness. When we think little of ourselves, God thinks much of us. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." He will not break thee, O thou bruised reed! (2) The dunghill is a place of contempt. Contempt sometimes sneeringly says of its victim, "He is such a person, that I would not pick him up if I saw him on a dunghill." Well, despised one, let me remind you that the Lord has often looked upon those whom man has despised. (3) The dunghill may be spiritually considered as the place of condemnation. You look at a certain article of food for instance, and the economical housewife does not wish to waste anything. Well, if it may not serve for food, may it not be useful for something else? At last, when she sees that it is of no service, the sentence of condemnation is, "Let it be cast on the dunghill." Well, poor sinner, if thou be in thyself condemned, and a hoarse voice has said, "To the dunghill with him!" yet I come to thee in Jehovah's name, and bid thee hear this word, "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust," etc. (4) A thing

which lies upon the dunghill is in contact with disgusting associates; and, therefore, the text may represent those who have hitherto lived in the midst of evil associations. II. **HOW THE LORD RAISES THEM FROM IT.** He lifteth the needy out of the dunghill. It is a dead lift, and none but an eternal arm could do it. It is all done by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Word, filled with the energy of God. When the Lord begins to deal with the needy sinner, the first lift He gives him raises his desires. The man is not satisfied to be where he was, and what he was. That dunghill he had not perceived to be so foul as it really is; and the first sign of spiritual life is horror at his lost condition, and an anxious desire to escape from it. The next sign generally is that to such a man sin loses all sweetness. When the Lord begins to work with you, even before you find Christ to the joy of your soul, you will find the joy of sin to have departed. A quickened soul that feels the weight of sin cannot find pleasure in it. It is another blessed sign that the man is being lifted from the dunghill when he begins to feel that his own self-righteousness is no assistance to him; when, having prayed, he looks upon his prayers with repentance, and having gone to God's house, rests not in the outward form. It is well when a man is cut off entirely from all confidence in himself. Now comes the true lift from off the dunghill. That poor, guilty, lost, worthless one hears of Jesus Christ that He came into the world to save sinners: that poor soul looks to Him with a look which means, "Lord, Thou art my last resort! If Thou dost not save me, I must perish; and Thou must save me altogether, for I cannot help Thee." III. **HOW HE RAISES THEM UP.** 1. They are lifted up by complete justification. This furnishes the believer with a throne as safe as it is lofty; as happy as it is glorious. 2. The children of God who have been taken from the dunghill, many of them enjoy full assurance of faith. They are certain that they are saved; they can say with Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." As to whether they are children of God or not, they have no question; the infallible witness of the Holy Spirit bears witness with their spirit that they are born of God. To know that my Beloved is mine, and that I am His, and that He loved me and gave Himself for me, this is far better than to be heir-apparent to a score of empires. 3. The children of God, favoured by Divine grace, are permitted to have interviews with Jesus Christ. Like Enoch, we walk with God. Union with the Lord is a coronet of beauty outshining all the crowns of earth. 4. Nor is this all: the elect of God, in addition to receiving complete justification, full assurance, and communion with Christ, are favoured with the Holy Spirit's sanctification. God the Holy Spirit dwells in every Christian; however humble he may be, he is a walking temple in which resides deity. 5. God lifts His people up in another sense: while He gives them sanctification and usefulness, He also anoints them with joy. Oh! the joy of being a Christian! IV. **WHERE IT IS THAT OUR LORD SETS HIS PEOPLE.** "Among princes," we are told. "Among princes" is the place of select society. We are a chosen generation, a peculiar people, a royal priesthood. Our courtly privileges are of the highest order. Listen! "For through Him we both have access by one spirit unto the Father." "Let us come boldly," says the apostle, "to the throne of the heavenly grace," etc. We have courtly audience and peculiarly select society. Next to this it is supposed that among princes there is abundant wealth, but what is the wealth of princes compared with the riches of believers? for "all things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." "He that spared not His own Son," etc. Among princes, again, there dwells peculiar power. A prince has influence; he wields a sceptre in his own domain: and "He hath made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign for ever and ever." We are not kings of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and yet we have a triple dominion; we reign over spirit, soul, and body. We reign over the united kingdom of time and eternity; we reign in this world, and we shall reign in the world that is yet to come: for we shall reign for ever and ever. Princes, again, have special honour. Every one in the crowd desires to gaze upon a prince, and would be delighted to do him service. Let him have the first position in the empire; he is a prince of the blood, and is to be had in esteem and respect. Beloved, hear ye His word: "He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," so that we share the honour of Christ as we share His cross. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 9. **He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children.**—*Influence:*—The psalmist must have been thinking surely

of the many modes in which the powers are called out and the affections exercised. The guidance of the household, the care of children,—these are certainly the commonest ways in which the affections and the powers of one half the human race are brought into free and full play. But there may be no house to guide, and no children to love and tend and educate; and yet the words may be made true, "He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children." I take the words, then, as telling us, first of all, this: That no powers and no affections were intended by the Giver of all to lie fallow and waste. He, from whom these, as well as all other good and perfect gifts, come, has, we may be sure, in His view also a field for their exercise—a field, into which He is prepared, by His providence and His Spirit, to guide the owner. There is room and need, depend upon it, for every power and every affection that the Creator has implanted in us. Now, I may be speaking to some who have not yet found their place in the world, and who suffer from the heartache and the restlessness which come of unused faculties and dormant affections. It is to such cases as these that the words of the psalmist should come home with a special message to rouse and comfort and invigorate. The matter is really in their own hands. They have but to look around them, and they will soon perceive that the literal meaning of the psalmist's words is not the only, nor in many ways the most satisfying, meaning. It will be strange if they cannot find, within the circle of their own acquaintance, more than one life which looks at the first glance very lonely, very dull, very uninviting; in which the nearest and dearest ties of husband, wife, and children have no place; and yet which on closer inspection turns out to be full of interests, full of affections, full of duties, full of good works and heavenly charities. It may be the life of some poor widow living amidst a crowd of neighbours as poor as herself, of whom she is the loved and trusted friend, counsellor, and comforter. Or it may be the life of some daughter and sister at home, who is the link between all the widely-scattered members of the old household. Or it may be the life of some poor helpless and hopeless sufferer on a sick-bed, whose couch of pain is the meeting-point of many hearts, which are cheered and elevated by the sight of Christian endurance, and soothed and softened by the warm tide of Christian affection. (*D. J. Vaughan, M.A.*)

PSALM CXIV.

VERS. 1-8. When Israel went out of Egypt.—*The workings of the Eternal will:*—God has a will. He doeth all things after the "counsel of His own will." The universe is but His will in form and action. It is the primordial, the propelling and presiding force of all forces and motions. The psalm leads us to look at this Eternal will in two aspects—I. As acting on **MORAL MIND**. In the deliverance of the Jews from Egyptian bondage, it acted both on the Egyptian mind and on the Hebrew mind. 1. This will acted on the Egyptian mind disastrously. Whose fault was this? Not God's. (1) Man can resist the Divine will. Herein is his distinguishing power. This binds him to moral government, and renders him accountable for his conduct. (2) His resistance is his ruin. To go against the Eternal will is to go against the laws of nature, the current of the universe, the eternal conditions of well-being. Acquiescence to the Divine will is heaven. resistance to the Divine will is hell. 2. This will acted on the Hebrew mind remedially. (1) It brought Israel out of Egypt. (2) Into blessed relationship with God. II. As acting on **MATERIAL NATURE**. 1. Its action on matter is always effective. God has only to will a material phenomenon, and it occurs. "He spake, and it was done." Nothing in material nature comes between His will and the result purposed. Not so in moral mind. 2. Its action on matter is philosophically exciting (vers. 5, 6). The motions of matter are constantly exciting the philosophic inquiry. Would that philosophy would not pause in its inquiries until it traced all the forms and motions of matter to the Eternal will! It was that will that was now working in the mountains, in the hills, and the rocks. 3. Its action on matter is sometimes terrific (ver. 7). (*Homilist.*)

Vers. 3, 4. The sea saw it, and fled.—*The removal of obstacles:*—I. **ANTAGO-**

NISMS ARE QUELLED. Wherever the Church has advanced—1. Sin and Satan have receded. Where it has not been so the Church is to blame. The promise depends on the proper spirit and the use of proper means. 2. Idolatry has receded. Christianity simply annihilated the classical, Druidical, Saxon, Tartar, and Scandinavian mythologies, the bloody rites of the South Seas, and is now doing the same for the debasing superstitions of Africa and the foul abominations of Hindostan. 3. Infidelity has receded. For all the ancient philosophies she proved an overmatch. II. BOUNDARIES ARE REMOVED. "Jordan was driven back." 1. Christianity levels all class distinctions. To all castes, Jewish, Roman, Indian, etc., it is a formidable foe. It reduces all mankind to one common level of crying need, for which but one provision has been made. 2. Christianity obliterates all physical barriers. It goes into all the world and preaches the Gospel to every creature. It was not made for home consumption, but is the property of all nations. 3. Christianity fills up all intellectual chasms. No greater remove could possibly be than that between the old philosopher and the common people. Christianity appeals to both. Its truths are the food of the scholar and the refreshment of the slave. III. DIFFICULTIES ARE OVERCOME. "The mountains skipped," etc. 1. All difficulties of nature. Wherever Christianity has appeared "the valleys have been exalted," etc. Crooked ways have been made straight. No mountain has been too high, no sea too broad, no continent too wide, for the pioneers and missionaries of the faith. 2. All difficulties of human prejudice. Armies have been levied to extirpate it. Fires have been kindled to burn it. Learning has been accumulated to refute it, but in vain. IN CONCLUSION. This history is prophecy. Fulfilled prophecy in some instances. It holds good through the ages. Let the Church in the strength of it redouble her efforts, brighten her hope, perfect her faith, and go on conquering and to conquer. (*J. W. Burn.*)

PSALM CXV.

VERS. 1-18. **Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory.**
 —*Genuine religious consciousness*:—I. A consciousness of GOD'S GREATNESS LEADING TO A CONTEMPT FOR ALL IDOLS. 1. The majesty of God. (1) God is great in His moral excellence (ver. 1). "Mercy" and "truth" lie at the foundation of all moral greatness. The grand mission of Christ was to bring these into the world in the most impressive forms. "The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ." All sound beliefs or convictions are based on truth or reality. Without love all is selfishness, and selfishness is the essence of sin. Without truth all is sham, and sham is the curse of the world. In God these two exist in essential unity and in infinite perfection. (2) God is great in His sovereignty (ver. 3). He is over all. There is no being above Him, the highest are infinitely below Him, and in all His operations He is absolutely free. He hath no counsellor to teach Him new methods of action, no power to restrain Him in any course. He acts according to His own good pleasure, the only being who is absolutely free, independent, and irresponsible. 2. The worthlessness of idols (vers. 4-8). (1) Material productions. (2) Human productions. (3) Worthless productions. (4) Lying productions. (5) Symbolic productions. They are but the visible forms of the brutish ignorance, stupidity, and depravity of those who made and worshipped them, mere embodiments of their ideas and wishes. II. A consciousness of GOD'S GOODNESS INSPIRING THE HIGHEST PHILANTHROPY. What is the highest philanthropy? That whose main object is to draw men to the One True and Living God; and the man who is conscious of God's goodness, who has "tasted and seen that the Lord is good," will surely address himself to this work—the work of drawing men to God (Rom. x. 1). This is what the psalmist felt (vers. 9-15). III. A consciousness of GOD'S PROPERTY LEADING TO A SENSE OF OUR STEWARDSHIP (ver. 16). He who created the universe owns it, it is His absolute property, and how vast, how immeasurable it is! (1 Chron. xxix. 11). But this sense of God's unbounded wealth leads to the impression of our stewardship of the earth which He hath given us. To the "children of men," not to a class, but given to them as air and light, and fire and water are given for their common use. IV. A consciousness of LIFE'S TERMINATION URGING THE

DISCHARGE OF RELIGIOUS DUTY (vers. 17, 18). (*Homilist.*) "*Non nobis, Domine!*"—Every careful reader can see the connection between this 115th psalm and the one which precedes it. In the 114th psalm we see the gracious and grateful Jews sitting around the passover table, having eaten of the lamb, and singing of the miracles of Jehovah at the Red Sea and the Jordan. It must have been a very jubilant song that they sang, "What ailed thee, O thou sea," etc. When that joyful hymn was finished, and the cup of wine was passed round the table, they struck another note. They remembered their sad condition, as they heard the heathen say, "Where is now their God?" They recollected that, perhaps, for many a year there had been no miracle, no prophet, no open vision, and then they began to chant a prayer that God would appear—not for their sakes, but for His own name's sake, that the ancient glory, which He won for Himself at the Red Sea and the Jordan, might not be lost, and that the heathen might no longer be able tauntingly to say, "Where is now their God?" I. A POWERFUL PLEA IN PRAYER: "Not unto us," etc. There are times when this is the only plea that God's people can use. There are other occasions when we can plead with God to bless us, for this reason or for that; but, sometimes, there come dark experiences, when there seems to be no reason that can suggest itself to us why God should give us deliverance, or vouchsafe us a blessing, except this one,—that He would be pleased to do it in order to glorify His own name. You may be emboldened to urge that plea, notwithstanding the vileness of the person for whom you plead. In fact, the sinfulness of the sinner may even be your plea that God's mercy and lovingkindness may be seen the more resplendently by all who know of the sinful soul's guilt. II. THE TRUE SPIRIT OF PIETY. "Not unto us, O Lord," etc. That is to say, true religion does not seek its own honour. For instance, suppose, in preaching the Gospel, a man has, even as a small part of his motive, that he may be esteemed an eloquent person, or that he may have influence over other men's minds;—for it is lamentably true that this mixture of motives may steal over the preacher's soul. Ah! but we must fight against this evil with all our might. Somebody once told Master John Bunyan that he had preached a delightful sermon. "You are too late," said John, "the devil told me that before I left the pulpit." Satan is a great adept in teaching us how to steal our Master's glory. "Glory be to God," should always be the preacher's motto. And as it should be so with our preaching, do you not think that the same thing is true concerning our praying? III. A SAFE GUIDE IN THEOLOGY. When I am going to read the Scriptures, to know what I am to believe, to learn what is to be my creed, even before I open my Bible, it is a good thing to say, "Not unto us, O Lord," etc. This is, to my mind, a test of what is true and what is false. If you meet with a system of theology which magnifies man, flee from it as far as you can. This is why I believe in the doctrines of grace. I believe in Divine election, because somebody must have the supreme will in this matter, and man's will must not occupy the throne, but the will of God. The words of Jehovah stand fast like the great mountains. IV. A PRACTICAL DIRECTION IN LIFE. 1. This text will help you in the selection of your sphere of service. You will always be safe in doing that which is not for your own glory, but which is distinctly for the glory of God. 2. Sometimes my text will guide you as to which you should choose out of two courses of action that lie before you. What flesh revolts against, your spirit should choose. Say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory. I will do that which will most honour my Lord and Master, and not that which would best please myself." V. THE ACCEPTABLE SPIRIT IN WHICH TO REVIEW THE PAST. 1. This is the spirit in which to live. Has God blessed us? Do we look back upon honourable and useful lives? Have we been privileged to preach the Gospel, and has the Lord given us converts? Then, let us be sure to stick to the text: "Not unto us, O Lord," etc. 2. Aye, and when the time comes for us to die, this is the spirit in which to die, for it is the beginning of heaven. What are they doing in heaven? If we could look in there, what should we see? There are crowns there, laid up for those that fight the good fight, and finish their course; but do you see what the victors are doing with their crowns? They will not wear them; no, not they; but they cast them down at Christ's feet, crying, "Not unto us," etc. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Glory to God for public blessings:*—The inspired author seems to have had his thoughts employed in the contemplation of some public blessing vouchsafed to the house of Israel, and to the house of Aaron; some late and remarkable instance of God's having been their help and

their shield; a devout sense of which made him break out into these words, full of great humility and pious gratitude: "Not unto us, O Lord," etc. 1. When the psalmist denies that the glory of those mighty and wonderful successes, wherewith God's people are at any time blessed, doth belong to them, he intimates that men are apt to ascribe the praise thereof to their own merits, counsels or achievements. 2. When he with earnestness and vehemence repeats that denial, he doth by such reiterated negation imply the great folly and impiety of men's thus ascribing the glory of such successes to themselves, or to any of the children of men. 3. When he expresses his desire that the glory thereof may be given to God's name, he directs us to pay the tribute of praise and thanksgiving to that sovereign Being, to whom only of right it is due. 4. When he requires that this glory should be given to God for His mercy and for His truth's sake, he instructs us that when we receive such blessings from the hands of God, we derive them, not from His justice, but from His clemency; they are not such as we can of right claim, but such as He, out of His unbounded goodness, and regard to those gracious promises, which He hath made to His Church, vouchsafes to grant. (*Bishop Smalridge.*) *Giving God the glory:*—I was reading of the battle of Agincourt, in which Henry V. figured; and, it is said, after the battle was won—gloriously won—the king wanted to acknowledge the Divine interposition, and he ordered the chaplain to read the psalm of David, and when he came to the words, "Not unto us, O Lord, but unto Thy name be the praise," the king dismounted, and all the cavalry dismounted, and all the great host of officers and men threw themselves on their faces. Oh, at the story of the Saviour's love and the Saviour's deliverance, shall we not prostrate ourselves before Him to-night, hosts of earth and hosts of heaven, falling upon our faces, and crying, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy name be the glory." (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

Ver. 3. But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased.—*The sovereignty of God:*—Sovereignty signifies, in general, supremacy, the possession of supreme power, a right to govern without the control of another; or, as in our text, a power to act as one pleases. 1. This right is here ascribed to God, and can belong to no other in the same sense or degree. He made all things; He supports all things; and is it not fit that He should govern all things? For His pleasure they are and were created (Rev. iv. 11); may He, then, not do with them as He pleases? especially when we consider—(1) He is infinitely wise. He perfectly knows all His creatures, all their actions, and all their tendencies. (2) He is infinitely good. 2. Observe His sovereignty in—(1) The creation of the world. (2) The awful event of man's apostasy. (3) The method He has been pleased to appoint for the recovery of fallen man. (4) The application of this great salvation. (5) His disposal of the temporal affairs of men, whether as individuals or as nations. As individuals.—Our parentage, the circumstances of our birth, the place, the time, are all arranged by the great Ruler. That sovereign hand is, perhaps, more visible in the affairs of nations; they rise and fall, flourish and decay, and the connection between natural causes and effects may sometimes be plainly discerned; yet that the Ruler of the world directs and controls them is sufficiently evident, for in His hand are both the causes and the effects. (*G. Burder.*)

Vers. 4-8. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.—*Babylonian idolatry:*—Babylon was a land in which life was overshadowed by a vast idolatry. What this idolatry was, we may see, in part, by a visit to the British Museum. There are to be seen at this hour figures and inscriptions which might well have been gazed on by the writers of this very psalm, and which show how the Baal worship which, in its different forms, prevailed from the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean, was the most striking feature of the life of the Imperial race that had conquered Palestine. To this hour, the ruins of what was the great Temple of Belus within the city, and of the Temple of Nimrod without the city, show how powerfully this idolatry must have addressed itself to the senses of the people. And the same conclusion is warranted by the anxious warnings of Isaiah in anticipation of the captivity, and by the language of the later psalmists who wrote in Babylon. Isaiah describes with a fine and indignant irony how in Babylon, too, the smith with the tongs, and the carpenter with his rule, would combine to make an idol according to the beauty of a man, and how worship would be paid to what was, in reality, only the stock of a tree. And the

psalmist of the later epoch was, we can hardly doubt, inspired to write at the sight of the splendid images in the Babylonian temples, and notably, perhaps, by that of the golden image of Belus. "Their idols are silver and gold," etc. (Ps. cxv. 4-8). It was this idolatry which Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego resisted at the risk of their lives, and at which Daniel struck a deadly blow when, according to the Alexandrian account—till lately read in our churches, and undoubtedly embodying a germ of substantial history—he exposed on a great scale the fraud of the priest of Baal and destroyed his image. (Canon Liddon.) **Eyes have they, but they see not.**—*The eye of the spirit:*—The rich and varied gifts, the pure exalted pleasures, which the eyes of the body are intended to minister to man, are marred by want of sympathetic observation even more than by want of knowledge. Two boys went out one summer's day, each alone, to spend a holiday in the fields. I have forgotten every detail of the story, but whatever the story was, it is easy to imagine what it might have been. The one boy came back in discontent. He had seen nothing, done nothing. He was tired; he had wasted the holiday. The other came back full of delight. He had watched the cattle and the fishes and the birds. He had noted the flowers and the hedgerows and the corn. They had spoken to him with voices which—though he knew it not—his spirit heard. They had told him—though he felt it only, understood it not—they had told him of the marvels of their nature, of their fitness for their appointed place, of the ever fresh beauties which man could see in them, if he would but enable the eyes of his body with the spirit of thankfulness and love. You have this contrast, thus drawn, set before you every day in many ways. I suppose that no one here would wish to live a merely material—animal—life, a life of the body only; to spend his time in securing the largest amount of pleasure—harmless pleasure if you will—for the delight or solace of his bodily senses; to feel more and more sad, as the years run on past middle life, that one sense and another is become less keen, is capable of less pleasure; to watch the sands of life running out apace, with no sense of compensation, no quiet conviction that as one transient pleasure after another becomes less bright or passes away, the place of each is taken—is taken and more than filled—by consolations of no transient kind, by blessings that make their abiding home with him. We must, if we would avoid a growing discontent, we must live the inner—the spiritual—life too. The eye of the spirit must be an eye that sees. The life of the spirit must be a real life. Not a life apart from that of the body, but a life spiritualizing and etherealizing the bodily life. To teach the eye of the body to see in the higher sense, to observe, to interpret, to enjoy, to minister to the intellectual capacity of man, and be in turn quickened and brightened by man's intellect, we educate the man; working in faith and hope; not discouraged by the many discouragements; sure that it cannot but be right that man should learn to know. How shall we treat the eye of the spirit? how shall we help it to see? how give it insight? I speak not now of what our holy religion may do; for the moment I am not referring to the realms of grace. That which the spirit of man most needs, for its full play and development, is just that which in this hurrying age is ever more and more difficult to obtain,—rest and quiet, time and place for contemplation. This is no idea specially of the Christian revelation; it is common to all ages and all peoples; it is the natural demand of the spirit of man. We have all of us probably seen and noted the highest oriental ideal of spiritual isolation from things and thoughts of the world,—a seated figure with inscrutable face, the eyes for ever cast down, gazing endlessly into the palm of the hand. This was one of the ideas connected with the prophet of old times. He sat apart in rapt contemplation; the things of the world and of the flesh shut out from his sight; his eyes fixed steadily on some unmoving thing; the spiritual element ever growing in relative importance, and at last overpowering the material and dominating the whole man. And then there welled up within him, from some spiritual source, some inspiration, the thoughts and the words that were to frame and to form his prophetic utterance; and he poured forth dark sayings, or declared, as one inspired, the will of God. But need I really go further than the experience of each one of you, to find evidence of the power of contemplation on the spirit, the need of it, if we would have a spiritual sense, a spiritual insight? You know of what extreme importance it is, if you have any serious matter in hand, to put yourself in the right frame of mind to consider it duly and make a wise resolve. How often it happens that you cannot shut out the disturbing presence of other things. You know that for this special purpose you ought to

isolate yourself, to be clear of confusing voices, confusing thoughts. And what you have to make your resolve about is coming on so rapidly; a resolve will be forced upon you so soon; there is such a sense of rush and hurry; you cannot properly decide the matter without previous quiet thought and communing, and quiet thought you cannot get. You feel this in matters of business; you feel it in difficult moral questions; you feel it in many a decision, which circumstances force upon you, in your relations with those who are of your bone and of your flesh. You feel it whenever you think of yourself in your higher relations, as a spiritual existence, as having duties beyond the realms of sense, as being under some conscious obligation to be guided in your walk through life by aims which shall of themselves ennoble your endeavours, by principles which are of eternal truth and justice. (*Bishop Browne.*)

Ver. 8. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.—*False religions.*—A false religion has all the outward signs of importance. A false religion could not live if it showed only its lying side. Even a lie could not live but for the one grain of truth that may be in it: it may be a grain of probability only, or even of possibility, but the lie owes its life, however brief, to the element of at least seeming truth, or possible truth, that may be in it. So with false religions: enumerate them, set them all out in a line, and one looks very much like another as to outward appearance. How long would a piece of lead be in the market-place if offered as a coin? Not one moment. But if treated, if smelted, minted, stamped, drilled, and made to look like a coin, it might deceive somebody, it might live a little while. To what would it owe its life? Not to its intrinsic quality, but to its appearance. So when you cite the religions of the world, and set them all in a line, you are perfectly right in saying, Behold them, and see how very strikingly they resemble one another. The counterfeit coin lives in its resemblance: take away this resemblance, and you take away its whole value; its similitude is its life. What wonder, then, that we find men deceived by religions that are superficial, and merely human inventions, that have nothing to live upon that is of an eternal and Divine nature? It is quite possible that the counterfeit coin may be more brilliant than the real coin. How did the five-pound note pass? Because it was like a five-pound note: the paper was the same, the mill mark was the same, the writing was the same; the resemblance was the reason of the successful deception. Much is mistaken for faith that is not faith, that is mere intellectual assent, or mere intellectual indifference. A man does not believe things which he simply names with his mouth. He only believes those things for which he would die. What havoc this makes in the professed beliefs of the Church! Yet everything must be judged by the degree in which it realizes its own pretensions. To pretend to have hands means power of handling, or it is a lie: to profess to have feet and yet to be unable to walk is to contradict your own statement: to have ears carved by an Angelo which yet cannot hear a thunderburst is to have ears that are visible falsehoods. Where we find hands we have a right to expect handling: where we find faith we have a right to expect morality, or service, or action: and if we with all Christian profession of an intellectual kind are not balancing that profession by actual, living, useful service, then let all the mockers of the universe taunt us, saying, They have hands, but they handle not. The taunt is not a mere taunt; it is a snare justified by reason. If there were no hands we should pity the sufferer. Who expects to refresh himself from the branches of an oak tree? Yet if the hungry soul should come to a fig tree in the time of figs, and should find upon the tree nothing but leaves, hunger has priestly rights of cursing, hunger may excommunicate that tree from the trees of the garden, because it pretended to be a fruit tree and yet it grew nothing but leaves. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 12. The Lord hath been mindful of us.—*The mindfulness of God.*—**I. GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT FOR GRACE BESTOWED.** Have we not abundant reason, individually and collectively, to say one to another in exhortation, and together in thankful acknowledgment to God, "The Lord hath been mindful of us"? Let us look back and reflect upon the way in which He has led us these many years. Shall we not, like Samuel of old, raise our Ebenezer? And as we travel through the past, until we step from the past into the future, shall not we take encouragement and joyfully exclaim, "Jehovah-jireh"? In creation, in redemption, in providence and in grace, in the fulness of spiritual blessings pro-

vided, and in the measure of grace imparted, we have abundant cause for the grateful acknowledgment, "The Lord hath been mindful of us." II. A GRATEFUL SENSE OF PAST MINDFULNESS BEGETS A SURE CONFIDENCE OF FUTURE BLESSING. "He will bless us." To what extent does this promise go? He will bless us in our walk and all our work, and in whatever He calls us to do! His blessing will ever rest upon us for good. His everlasting hand will be beneath us and will keep us from falling. He will guide us with His counsel and afterward receive us to glory. You deserve to perish, you deserve to reap what you have sowed, but God is merciful and kind. You may look to Him in confidence, for He will bless you. He will blot out the past, and He will break the power of sin. I have also a word for the true believer in God, who is sorely tempted and doubtful of the future, who is conscious of weakness, knowing painfully the power of temptation, knowing sadly in recollection the influence of this evil world. Do not think you will prove unfaithful at the last. The Lord hath been mindful of you, and it will be in the future as it has been in the past. Look at the promises which He has given for your comfort in His Word. He hath been mindful of you and He will bless you. (*Bishop Pelham.*) *Past mercies inspire confidence of continued good:*—Many minds know a good deal of the Roman Emperor's forebodings, that if things have long gone well with you, then something amiss is very likely to come. If we could but all rise to the happier argument from the past to the future of a certain ancient and inspired poet, and really believe that "The Lord hath been mindful of us: He will bless us." The common way of judging constantly is, that since all has been so pleasant for many days or years, now a smash is due. But though this way of judging be common, and though, to a superficial glance, it seems to be confirmed by facts, it would be very easy to show that it is entirely wrong. (*A. K. H. Boyd.*)

Ver. 13. **He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great.**—*The equality of small and great:*—There are thousands of young men and women who retain belief in God, but do not fear Him; cherishing the easy notion that since He is so very good, everything will come right by and by. This is not love. It is something near akin to contempt, and God is not good enough to consent to be despised. Rather let me say that He is too good, too righteous, too mindful of the interests of His children, who can only find salvation in faith and love that are touched with holy fear. God is Love. He so loved the world that He gave His son: His lovingkindness is over all His works; and He includes in His Divine regard both the small and the great. I. **WE HAVE HERE A RECOGNITION OF THE NATURAL INEQUALITY OF MEN, "GREAT AND SMALL."** Men differ outwardly, and the difference counts for something. But there are deeper differences that count for more: the differences of the mind. Sometimes a massive and majestic frame co-exists with a weak will. Or it may be that a man of feeble appearance, like St. Paul, has a will of tempered steel. And what a force that is. The crowd makes way for one of inflexible determination, and he moves on to the fulfilment of his purpose with something like the inevitableness of fate. As John Foster exclaims, "It is wonderful how the casualties of life bow to a will that will not bow to them, and in the end subserve a purpose which at first they seemed to frustrate." II. **THE IMPARTIALITY OF GOD.** "He will bless . . . both small and great." We are always being tempted to respect of persons; often we scarcely make pretence of resistance. But the Bible reiterates the statement that God is no respecter of persons. He is sublimely impartial. He is a faithful Creator, a loving Father. He is not dazzled by His own gifts. He considers not the beauty, the stature, the cleverness, which come to men without their seeking; but that inner man, which is expressed in character, and which accepts or rejects eternal love. "He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great." III. **THE BLESSING OF GOD, THAT TENDS TO MAKE MEN EQUAL IN SPITE OF DIFFERENCES.** Lately I was standing near an elm tree that towered scores of feet above me. No other tree was by to draw attention from its solitary glory. The splendour of its early foliage flashed and darkled in the sunshine, and its giant shadow fell across the field. It was a mighty work of God and dwarfed its surroundings, making the bushes of a neighbouring hedge seem little things indeed. A little later my attention was arrested by tiny blossoms shining in the long lush grass beneath this giant tree. "Bright-eyes" the flowers are called, and the name is descriptive, though I never saw eyes so blue as the petals of these flowers. I plucked one or two, looked up again at the tree, and thought of the contrast.

They represented the great and the small. The one had braved the storms of generations, the other lived for a fleeting summer and might be plucked and torn by baby fingers, and yet were they brought into equality by the blessing of Almighty God. Each was perfect in its own order, and it were impossible to say with which Divine power had taken more pains, the elm tree or the bright-eyes. It is a parable: God made the elm tree and the bright-eyes. He made each to fill its place. Each is faithful to its own order. Each equally declares the glory of the Lord. And God has made men "both small and great." And when in holy fear and reverent love they open their hearts to Him, as the trees and flowers open their hearts to the sunshine, He blesses them by coming in to dwell with them, and His blessing means that they fulfil their destiny and manifest His glory; and herein are they equal. (*G. Hawker.*)

Ver. 15. Ye are blessed of the Lord which made heaven and earth.—*The Lord blessing His saints*:—I. A BLESSING BELONGING TO A PECULIAR PEOPLE. 1. A people whom God has blessed because He willed to do so. 2. A people to whom this first will of God to bless them has been certified by countless acts of indisputable love. Gethsemane and Calvary speak volumes concerning the reality of the blessings which God has given to His chosen, for there they were loved to the death and redeemed by blood. An incarnate God, a Mediator covered with bloody sweat, a Redeemer wounded and slain,—What say you to this? 3. The people to whom this blessing comes are, after their conversion, known by their character. They "fear the Lord." 4. It is very sweet to notice that this benediction is common to all Godfearing persons,—"both small and great;" and the small are put first, lest they should think they are forgotten. II. A BLESSING FROM A PECULIAR QUARTER. "Ye are blessed of the Lord which made heaven and earth." 1. This is a blessing from one peculiarly related to us, and therefore it is the more to be prized. All other blessings are only blessings in proportion as they contain the essence of this blessing; God's blessing is the sea, and others are but drops; that is the sun, and others are but sparks. 2. This blessing comes not from an idol-god. The psalm leads us to make that observation. The gods of the heathen had mouths, but they spake not; ears, but they heard not: any benediction from them would be a mockery: but the children of God are not blessed of Baal or Ashtaroth, but of Jehovah, the self-existent Lord of all! 3. This benediction comes from the omnipotent Creator, "who made heaven and earth." This intimates that the blessing is almighty in power. Have I the blessing of Him who said, "Let there be light," and there was light? Then He can speak into my darkness, and cheer the gloom of my despair. Does the blessing of Him who brought order out of chaos rest upon me? then He can speak to the confusion of my circumstances, and the turmoil of my desponding mind, and charm all things into harmony. The blessing of Him who clothed the earth with beauty, piled the hills, and digged the channels of the sea, must have in it a fulness unrivalled. 4. It is a blessing from the All-wise One "who made heaven and earth." His infallible counsels shall conduct thine affairs to a blessed issue. III. A BENEDICTION WITH A PECULIAR DATE. "Ye are the blessed," etc. This verb is in the present tense, and, indeed, it may be said to be in all the tenses put together, in a tense that is not a tense, a time that hath no time, but lasteth on evermore, till time shall be no more. 1. This blessing embraces all circumstances. You are laid low and pining away with consumption, but "You are blessed of the Lord which made heaven and earth." You are smitten down in the very heyday of your usefulness, and laid aside, but "You are blessed of the Lord which made heaven and earth." Oh, that your faith may lay hold of this when you are very sorely exercised, for happy is the man whom God correcteth, and blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord! 2. Our text reaches to all time and beyond all time, because it runs thus: "Ye are blessed of the Lord that made heaven and earth." While I am on earth, this shall console me: "I am blessed of the Lord that made the earth;" and He Himself has said of His servants, "Blessed shalt thou be in the city," etc. When I have to go out of this earth into another world, this shall console me: "I am blessed of the Lord that made heaven." I shall still dwell in a place which my Father made. I am not going into a foreign country when I leave the warm precincts of this house of clay. I shall emigrate to the country where flowers never fade, and winter never chills. IV. A BLESSING WITH A PECULIAR CERTAINTY. Scripture does not lie, or utter "perhappes" and "ifs" and "buts." "Ye are blessed of the Lord which made heaven and earth."

Oh, ye that fear God, this is a matter of fact, ye daily and continually abide under a true and real blessing. Some blessings are vain words: the utterer is a hypocrite. Other blessings are sincere, but the person pronouncing them has no power to fulfil them. Such blessings are wells without water, or barren fig trees bearing leaves but no fruit. The Lord blesses not in word only, but in deed; not in futile wishes, but in omnipotent acts. We may fail to obtain the benedictions which our friends invoke upon us, but God's blessings are sure to all the seed. V. **THIS BLESSING INVOLVES A PECULIAR DUTY**, for, if God has blessed us, the succeeding duty is that we should bless Him (ver. 18). "Praise Him from this time forth." If the past has been marred by any other talk, now "from this time" bless the Lord. Wash thy mouth of all complaining, take the cup of gratitude to sweeten thy soul, and bless His name from this time forth. What, dumb till now? An heir of heaven speechless? May a sight of God's blessing open thy mouth. From this time forth begin to bless Him. Then the psalmist resolves to praise the Lord "for evermore." Our adoration of God is never to cease. As long as there is breath in our body let us praise Him who gives it to us. "Dum spiro spero," said the heathen, "While I breathe, I hope." But the Christian says, "Dum expiro spero," "When I die, I will still hope in God." While we exist we will adore. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 16. **The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth hath He given to the children of men.**—*The mysteries of the universe*:—Our contemplation of the mysteries of the universe is to be associated—I. **WITH FAITH**. "The heavens are the heavens of the Lord." All the wonders of unseen worlds are in charge of Him whom we serve. Whatever marvellous forces range the universe we may sing, "All things serve Thee," and dismiss all fear. How foolish to fear the discoveries of science! "All facts," as Kingsley used to say, "are God's facts." How foolish to fear for our safety here or hereafter if we be the Lord's, for all is His! The mysteries of the universe are those of Him who died for us, and in the heart of those mysteries there is love. II. **WITH DILIGENCE**. "The earth hath He given to the children of men." Earth's fields are to be tilled, her provisions stored and distributed. Homes are to be superintended and cities and states to be governed. These are the first claims upon our thoughts as servants of God. "The heavens are the Lord's," let us claim the kingdom of the earth for Him and humbly help to establish His dominion here. (IV. *Hawkins*.) *The earth for men*:—I. **A STRONG REBUKE TO ALL SOCIAL MONOPOLY**. The earth is for "the children of men." II. **A STRONG REBUKE TO RELIGIOUS INDIFFERENCE**. The earth is given to man in trust for certain uses. 1. As a scene for man's physical development. 2. As a school for man's intellectual culture. 3. As a temple for man's religious worship. The children of men to use this world rightly should worship God in all they suffer, enjoy, think, or do. In everything there should be—(1) A reigning gratitude. The earth is a gift to every man, and every man should use every portion of it thankfully. (2) A reigning reverence. The earth is a gift where the greatness of God is everywhere seen, and, therefore, "take off thy shoes from off thy feet," etc. 4. As a sphere for evangelical labour Christ has been on this earth. Here He has left doctrines for every child of man to believe, propagate and work out. (*Homilist*.) *The earth of the redemption*:—The heavens and the earth are set in contrast with each other. The heavens with their sun and moon and stars, their wandering winds, their majestic domes and pinnacles and fields of cloud, their mysteries of rain and dew, of frost and snow; and then the earth, with its familiar cities and forests and corn-fields, its homes of men and women, its seas and rivers, its sports and toils, its friendships and kinships, these stand over against each other. And their contrast is in this,—that while the heavens are out of the reach of man, the expression and result of forces which he cannot control, the earth is what man makes it. He is the changing power here. It is the familiar contrast which is always present, and always having its effect upon our life. The earth, and life upon the earth, are never the same things they would be if the great heaven did not stretch, mysterious and unattainable, above them. Man, great as his power grows upon the earth, is always kept aware of how limited his power is. There is always the heaven above him, which is not his, but God's. And this becomes a figure of the limit of man's power everywhere. When David says that God has "given the earth to the children of men," he cannot mean that it was given away from those eternal plans and purposes of goodness which God must always keep with reference

to all His creation. It is God's world still. It has been given to man not absolutely, but in trust, that man may work out in it the will of God. Here is the fundamental difference in the lives of men. Man finds the world in his hands. He can do with it what he will. Everywhere the difference of man lies here, in whether this mastery seems to be absolute, or whether it seems to be a trust. Absolute mastery means self-indulgence. The mastery of trust means humility, conscientiousness, elevation, charity, the fear of God and love of man. It is in this higher and true view of the giving of the world by God to man that the coming of Christ into the world gains its true meaning. Here was God's world, given to man to keep, to use, to work for God. Here was man, always falling into the temptation to think the gift of trust an absolute gift. And here the Giver came, with clear assurance of Himself; making the men who saw Him know that it was He; not taking the earth back out of man's keeping, but making Himself man, so that all men might see what it might really mean for man to keep and use and work the earth for God; so God came to the world. It is within this great general purpose that all the special personal works which Christ does for men are included. (*Bishop Phillips Brooks.*)

Vers. 17, 18. **The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence. But we will bless the Lord.**—*Living praise*:—The living God should be adored by a living people. A blessing God should be blessed by a blessing people. When we bless Him we should not rest till others do the same: we should cry to them, "Praise the Lord." Our example and our persuasion should rouse them to praise. I. **A MOURNFUL MEMORY.** "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence." This reminds us—1. Of silenced voices in the choirs of Zion. Good men and true who neither sing nor speak among us any longer. 2. Of our own speedy silence: so far as this world is concerned we shall soon be among the dead and silent ones. 3. Of the ungodly around us, who are already spiritually dead, and can no more praise the Lord than if they were dumb. 4. Of lost souls in hell. Never will these bless the Lord. II. **A HAPPY RESOLUTION.** "But we will bless the Lord." In heart, song, testimony, action, we are resolved to give the Lord our loving praise; because—1. We live. Shall we not bless Him who keeps us in being? 2. We live spiritually, and this demands perpetual thanksgiving. 3. We are blessed of the Lord: shall we not bless Him? 4. He will bless us. More and more will He reveal His love to us: let us praise Him more and more. Be this our steadfast vow, that we will bless the Lord, come what may. III. **AN APPROPRIATE COMMENCEMENT.** "We will bless the Lord from this time forth." 1. When the heathen ask, "Where is now their God?" (ver. 2), let us reply courageously to all atheistic questions, and meet infidelity with joyous adoration. 2. When under a sense of mercy, we are led to sing—"The Lord hath been mindful of us" (ver. 12), let us then bless Him. 3. When spiritually renewed and comforted. When the four times repeated words, "He will bless," have come true in our experience, and the Lord has increased us with every personal and family blessing (vers. 12-14), then let all that is within us bless the holy name of the Lord. 4. When led to confess Christ. Then should we begin the never-ending life-psalm. Service and song should go together. 5. When years end and begin—new-years' days, birthdays, etc., let us bless God for—(1) Sin of the year forgiven. (2) Need of the year supplied. (3) Mercy of the year enjoyed. (4) Fears of the year removed. (5) Hopes of the year fulfilled. IV. **AN EVERLASTING CONTINUANCE:** "from this time forth and for evermore." 1. Weariness shall not suspend it. We will renew our strength as we bless the Lord. 2. Final falling shall not end it: the Lord will keep our soul in His way, and make us praise Him all our days. 3. Nor shall death so much as interrupt our songs, but raise them to a purer and fuller strain. 4. Nor shall any supposable calamity deprive the Lord of our gratitude (Job i. 21). (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **United and continuous praise**:—On Thursday evening, March 29, 1883, for above an hour all who had occasion to use the telephone in Chicago found it vibrating to musical tones. Private and public telephones, and even the police and fire-alarm instruments, were alike affected. The source of the music was a mystery until the following day, when it was learned that a telegraph wire, which passes near most of the telephone wires, was connected with the harmonic system, that tunes were being played over it, and that the telephone wires took up the sounds by induction. If one wire carrying sweet sounds from place to place could so affect another wire by simply being near to

It, how ought Christians, in communication with their Father in heaven, to affect all with whom they come in contact in the world! The Divine music of love and praise in their lives should be a blessing to society. (*Pulpit Treasury.*)

PSALM CXVI.

VERS. 1-19. I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications.—*Christian experience and its results.*—I. The psalm opens with a general declaration of GRATITUDE to God, AS THE HEARER OF PRAYER (ver. 1). 1. The true believer is a man of prayer. 2. Another feature of the child of God is conviction of sin (ver. 3). 3. He is one who can testify that the Lord has answered his prayers: one who has tasted the sweetness of Divine mercy (vers. 5, 6, 8). 4. He seeks his happiness from God, and looks to the bosom of God as the only resting-place for his soul (ver. 7). II. THE RESULTS OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. 1. A deep sense of gratitude, and a desire of manifesting the same (ver. 12). 2. A special resolve to manifest his gratitude, by a devout attendance on ordinances, appointed of God as the public and solemn expression of thanksgiving and self-dedication (vers. 13, 14). (*W. Hancock, B.D.*) *The religion of gratitude.*—We trace this religious gratitude—I. IN A PROFOUND IMPRESSION of God's relative kindness. His relative kindness is shown in two ways. 1. In delivering from distress. The distress seemed to have consisted (1) In bodily suffering. (2) In mental sorrow. 2. In delivering from great distress in answer to prayer. II. In an EARNEST CONFESSION of God's relative kindness. 1. His general kindness (ver. 5). 2. His personal kindness (ver. 6). III. In a DETERMINATION TO LIVE A BETTER LIFE IN CONSEQUENCE of God's relative kindness. Here is a determination—1. To rest in God (ver. 7). (1) The soul wants rest. Like Noah's dove it has forsaken its home, and is fluttering in the storms of external circumstances. (2) Its only rest is God. It is so constituted that it can only rest where it can find unbounded faith for its intellect, and supreme love for its heart. And who but God, the supremely good and supremely true, can supply these conditions? (3) To this rest it must return by its own effort. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul." The soul cannot be carried to this rest. As you steer the sea-tossed bark into harbour, so it must go itself into the spheres of serenity and peace. (4) A sense of God's relative kindness tends to stimulate this effort. "The Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." "The goodness of God shall lead to repentance." 2. To walk before God. "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living." "I will set the Lord always before me." Whoever else I may lose sight of, ignore, or forget, His presence shall always be before my eye. IV. In a PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGMENT of God's relative kindness. (*Homilist.*) *Prayer answered, love nourished.*—The particular objects which you are now to look back upon are the manifold and manifest answers to prayer, which God has given you. I. The first thing I would have you recollect is, YOUR OWN PRAYERS. If you look at them with an honest eye, you will be struck with wonder that ever God should have heard them. Look back now, Christian, upon thy prayers, and remember what cold things they have been. Thy desires have been but faint, and they have been expressed in such sorry language, that the desire itself seemed to freeze upon the lips that uttered it. And yet, strange to say, God has heard those cold prayers, and has answered them too, though they have been such that we have come out of our closets and have wept over them. Then, again, believer, how unfrequent and few are your prayers, and yet how numerous and how great have God's blessings been. Ye have prayed in times of difficulty very earnestly, but when God has delivered you, where was your former fervency? Look at your prayers, again, in another aspect. How unbelieving have they often been! You and I have gone to the mercy-seat, and we have asked God to bless us, but we have not believed that He would do so. How small, too, the faith of our most faithful prayers! When we believe the most, how little do we trust; how full of doubting is our heart, even when our faith has grown to its greatest extent! I am sure we shall find much reason to love God, if we only think of those pitiful abortions of prayer, those unripe figs, those stringless bows, those headless arrows, which we call prayers, and which He has borne with in His long-suffering. The fact is,

that sincere prayer may often be very feeble to us, but it is always acceptable to God. It is like some of those one-pound notes, which they use in Scotland—dirty, ragged bits of paper; one would hardly look at them, one seems always glad to get rid of them for something that looks a little more like money. But still, when they are taken to the bank, they are always acknowledged and accepted as being genuine, however rotten and old they may be. So with our prayers: they are foul with unbelief, decayed with imbecility, and worm-eaten with wandering thoughts; but, nevertheless, God accepts them at heaven's own bank, and gives us rich and ready blessings, in return for our supplications. II. Again: I hope we shall be led to love God for having heard our prayers, if we consider **THE GREAT VARIETY OF MERCIES WHICH WE HAVE ASKED IN PRAYER, AND THE LONG LIST OF ANSWERS WHICH WE HAVE RECEIVED.** It is impossible for me to depict thine experience as well as thou canst read it thyself. What multitudes of prayers have you and I put up from the first moment when we learnt to pray! You have asked for blessings in your going out and your coming in; blessings of the day and of the night, and of the sun and of the moon; and all these have been vouchsafed to you. Your prayers were innumerable; you asked for countless mercies, and they have all been given. Only look at yourself: are not you adorned and bejewelled with mercies as thickly as the sky with stars? III. Let us note again **THE FREQUENCY OF HIS ANSWERS TO OUR FREQUENT PRAYERS.** If a beggar comes to your house, and you give him alms, you will be greatly annoyed if within a month he shall come again; and if you then discover that he has made it a rule to wait upon you monthly for a contribution, you will say to him, "I gave you something once, but I did not mean to establish it as a rule." Suppose, however, that the beggar should be so impudent and impertinent that he should say, "But I intend, sir, to wait upon you every morning and every evening:" then you would say, "I intend to keep my gate locked that you shall not trouble me." And suppose he should then look you in the face and add still more, "Sir, I intend waiting upon you every hour, nor can I promise that I won't come to you sixty times in an hour; but I just vow and declare that as often as I want anything so often will I come to you: if I only have a wish I will come and tell it to you; the least thing and the greatest thing shall drive me to you; I will always be at the post of your door." You would soon be tired of such importunity as that, and wish the beggar anywhere, rather than that he should come and tease you so. Yet recollect, this is just what you have done to God, and He has never complained of you for doing it; but rather He has complained of you the other way. He has said, "Thou hast not called upon Me, O Jacob." He has never murmured at the frequency of your prayers, but has complained that you have not come to Him enough. IV. Think of **THE GREATNESS OF THE MERCY FOR WHICH YOU HAVE OFTEN ASKED HIM.** We never know the greatness of our mercies till we get into trouble and want them. God's mercies are so great that they cannot be magnified; they are so numerous they cannot be multiplied, so precious they cannot be over-estimated. I say, look back to-day upon these great mercies with which the Lord has favoured thee in answer to thy great desires, and wilt thou not say, "I love the Lord because He has heard my voice and my supplications"? V. **HOW TRIVIAL HAVE BEEN THE THINGS WHICH WE HAVE OFTEN TAKEN BEFORE GOD, AND YET HOW KINDLY HAS HE CONDESCENDED TO HEAR OUR PRAYERS.** In looking back, my unbelief compels me to wonder at myself, that I should have prayed for such little things. My gratitude compels me to say, "I love the Lord, because He has heard those little prayers, and answered my little supplications, and made me blessed, even in little things which, after all, make up the life of man." VI. Let me remind you of **THE TIMELY ANSWERS WHICH GOD HAS GIVEN YOU TO YOUR PRAYERS,** and this should compel you to love Him. God's answers have never come too soon nor yet too late. If the Lord had given you His blessing one day before it did come, it might have been a curse, and there have been times when if He had withheld it an hour longer it would have been quite useless, because it would have come too late. VII. **WILL YOU NOT LOVE THE LORD, WHEN YOU RECOLLECT THE SPECIAL AND GREAT INSTANCES OF HIS MERCY TO YOU?** You have had seasons of special prayer and of special answer. What shall I say then? God has heard my voice in my prayer. The first lesson, then, is this—He shall hear my voice in my praise. If He heard me pray, He shall hear me sing; if He listened to me when the tear was in mine eye, He shall listen to me when my eye is sparkling with delight. My piety shall not be that of the dungeon and sick-bed; it shall be that also of deliverance and of health. Another lesson. Has

God heard my voice? Then I will hear His voice. If He heard me, I will hear Him. Tell me, Lord, what wouldst Thou have Thy servant do, and I will do it. The last lesson is, Lord, hast Thou heard my voice? then I will tell others that Thou wilt hear their voice too. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Reality of answer to prayer:*—A prayer is an appeal from helplessness to power. No wonder that prayer in its prompting and incontinence is always attributed to the Holy Spirit. David says, "He has heard my cry and my supplications." All the language is not on one side. I sent a letter to a certain city across the Atlantic, believing that the mail would carry my missive, that the British flag under which the mail ship sailed would protect her in safety across the Atlantic, and that thus my epistle would reach its destination. In due course a reply comes, showing that my expectations were fulfilled. You could not reason me out of my belief; you might go into discussion about the mighty leagues of ocean that separate Glasgow from Chicago, but you could not reason me out of my belief when I had that reply in my hand. There are men who as literally and as definitely have had a reply from God to their cry. They can say with David, "God has heard my voice and my supplication;" they have got the proof; they have received the reply. (*J. Robertson.*) *Love of God in the heart:*—"I love the Lord." Can you say that? There is a bell in Moscow that never was hung and never was rung. It is one of the largest bells in the world, but its clapper has never swung against its great echoing sides. There is many a human heart that was placed where it is to beat with love to God; but, like the bell, it has never been hung and never been rung. Dead, lost soul, your heart was made to love God. Will you let it lie there, as they let the Moscow bell lie in the courtyard amid the dust and rubbish and daily defilement of the palace? Would you not rather pray, and strive, and agonize that your heart should be hung, and that it should be rung in a melody of love to God? (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 2. Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.—*Answers to prayer confirm habits of prayer:*—Philip Henry, after he had been engaged in prayer for two of his children that were dangerously ill, remarked, "If the Lord will be pleased to grant me this my request concerning my children, I will not say, as the beggars at our door used to do, 'I'll never ask anything of Him again;' but, on the contrary, 'He shall hear oftener from me than ever;' and I will love God the better, and love prayer the better, as long as I live."

Vers. 3, 4. The sorrows of death compassed me.—*To souls in agony:*—I. First, here is THE WRETCHED CONDITION into which many a poor awakened soul has been brought. 1. Many a troubled conscience feels the sorrows of death; that is to say, he is the subject of griefs similar to those which beset sinners on their dying beds. They are all around him—these sorrows of the past, and the present, and the future. 2. Awakened sinners sometimes feel what they describe as the pains of hell: not that any living man does endure the pains of hell to the extent which they are suffered in hell, but still a dreadful foretaste of those pains may be experienced by an awakened conscience. What are these pains of hell? Remorse; a sense of condemnation; a terrible despair; a crushing sense of misery. 3. But the case was worse than this, for the poor soul felt no alleviation and knew of no escape. These things were by themselves, unsoftened, left in all their terror, the gall was unmixed, the vinegar undiluted. Notice the language. "The sorrows of death compassed me." It is a very strong word. When the hunters seek their prey they form a cordon around the poor animal that is to be destroyed. The poor panting creature looks to the right, but a man with a spear is there, he looks to the left and there are the dogs. Before and behind him are more spearmen, more hounds, more hunters; there is no way of escape. So does an awakened soul discern no respite, no loophole by which it may be delivered. The text says, "The pangs of hell gat hold upon me." "Gat hold," as if the jaws of the lion had roally gripped the lamb, or the paws of the bear were hugging the poor defenceless sheep. "Gat hold upon me," as though God's terrible sergeant from the court of justice had laid his hand upon his shoulder, and said, "I arrest thee in the name of God to lie in hell's prison, and perish for ever." Many a soul has felt that, and felt also that it could not get away from the terrible grip. 4. Once more, the psalmist felt no comfort from any exertion that he made. That takes in the last sentence of the text's description. "I found trouble and sorrow;" so

that he looked for something, but the only result of his search was that he found trouble and sorrow. Do you remember, in the days when you were under bondage on account of sin, how you bound yourself apprentice to Moses to work out your own salvation by your own goodness? What did you get? Surely you found trouble in the work, and sorrow as its wages. You found trouble and sorrow. Perhaps you went to Mr. Legality, and he and his son, Mr. Morality, did what they could for you; but if you were really awakened all that you got from them was trouble and sorrow. That was the whole result of it. II. **THE AWAKENED SINNER'S COURSE OF ACTION.** What did he do? First, he called—called upon God's name, lifted up his heart, and lifted up his voice, and called as a man might do who is lost in a fog and calls to a neighbour, hoping to hear a voice that will guide him; or as one who is far away in the bush of Australia and gives a call in the hope that some human voice may respond to it. This call is often described as a cry—a natural, simple, inartificial, unpleasant, but most effectual style of expressing our distress. Oh, sinner, if God has really been at work with you, and put you where I have been describing, you will call to God now. Now, notice, he says, "Then called I upon the name of the Lord." The sinner had forgotten the Lord till then, and now the Lord came to his remembrance. When did he call? That is the important point in this text. "Then called I upon the name of the Lord." Then. Was that the first time in his life? Perhaps it was. Begin at once, O sinner. When his condition was at its very worst, then he called upon God. Why did he not stop till he became better? He knew that delays are dangerous. And now for his prayer. Here it is—"O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul." A very natural prayer, was it not? He just said what he meant, and meant what he said, and that is the way to pray. It is a very short prayer. Many a prayer is too long by twenty times. It is smothered under a bed-full of words. It was a humble prayer: "O Lord, I beseech Thee." It is the language of one who is bowed into the dust. It was an intense prayer: "O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul." But I want you most of all to notice that it was a scriptural prayer. There are three great little prayers in Scripture,— "O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul;" "God, be merciful to me a sinner;" and, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." These are all contained in the Lord's Prayer. "O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul," is "Deliver us from evil." "God be merciful to me a sinner,"—what is that but "Forgive us our trespasses"? And what is the prayer, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom," but that grand petition, "Thy kingdom come"? How wonderfully comprehensive is that prayer which our Lord Jesus has given us for a model. All prayers may be condensed into it, or distilled from it. III. **DELIVERANCE** (ver. 8). He gained a great deal more than he asked for. He prayed, "O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul," and God delivered his soul from death, his eyes from tears, and his feet from falling. He asked for one thing, and he obtained it, and two other things besides; for it is our Heavenly Father's way to do exceedingly abundantly above what we ask or even think. He gained deliverance from death; for souls can die though they cannot cease to exist. They die when separated from God; all souls are dead until by union to God they are quickened into spiritual life. His eyes were also cleared from tears. Who is not free from sorrow when he is free from the fear of the death-penalty? Forgiveness brings joy at its heel wherever it comes. And then, having gained salvation and joy, the Lord gave him stability. Those feet that were so apt to slide were set fast, and the fear of future apostasy was removed by the gracious securities which God gave to him that He would never leave him. Thus he had a blessing for his soul, his eyes, and his feet—salvation, joy, and stability. The last word to be said is this—these same blessings can be had by others. "Gracious is the Lord and righteous; yes, our God is merciful." That is why the Lord heard David's prayer—because He is gracious, and He loves to show grace to sinners. It was also because He is righteous, and therefore keeps His promise. Remember, too, that if your distresses are like David's you may use the same prayer, because you have the same promises. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 6. **I was brought low and He helped me.**—*God's method of helping:*—Thousands of times has this experience of the psalmist been repeated. It is the Divine method. Bring low and then help. Cast down and then lift up. There are some diseases of the human system which the skilful physician thus treats. He begins at once to deplete and bring down the patient, reducing him little by

little till the unskilled observer trembles lest life itself will depart. But at the right moment when the disease has been expelled the restoratives are applied, and a new life enters into the system, and there is a rapid and healthy building up. Brought low he has been helped. So in all God's gracious dealings with human souls, this is His method. Take the process in conversion. First comes the terrible conviction. The soul discovers depth after depth of the evil within it, till it seems as though its condition were absolutely hopeless. And when this process is complete, and the soul is thoroughly cast down, brought low, then the Infinite Helper stretches forth His hand. Then power from on high comes. And thus through all the stages of the Christian life. The soul is brought low, pride is humbled, lofty looks are brought down, and then the help comes. Was is not thus with poor sinning Peter? He had grown self-reliant. He could even boast of his resolution and firmness. But when the trial came he was weaker than weakness itself, and fell; terribly, disgracefully fell. He wept bitterly. But just when the humiliation was complete he was reinstated in his office, and commissioned to feed Christ's sheep. He was brought low and he was helped. Ask the aged and experienced disciple of to-day how it had been with him in the long years of his pilgrimage. He will tell you that he has many times been laid low, even in the dust, and just then he has been helped. Divine help is neither welcomed nor appreciated till the soul is taught its need of it in the stern school of experience. The process may not be pleasant at the time, but an infallible Physician superintends it. (*Anon.*)

Ver. 7. Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.—*The gate to rest:*—The psalmist exhorts his soul to return unto its rest; not because it has heard of God, or has seen His power in nature; not because He recognizes Divine order in the universe, not because his poetical feeling is kindled by the thought of Divine majesty and glory, but because he has had personal dealings with God. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." I supplicated Him, He "heard" my supplication. I was brought low, He "helped" me: He "delivered my soul from death." He wiped the tears from my eyes and gave His angels charge to keep my feet from falling. Therefore, on my side, I too, will deal with Him. I will "call" upon Him: I will "rest" in Him: I will "walk before" Him: I will "believe" in Him: I will "pay my vows" to Him. We really need to get back to the old Hebrew conception of God's relation to man. But we never can do so through any conception of God which makes Him less than a personal Father in heaven. Now, let us look at three questions in the light of this thought of the soul's rest, all of them practical questions which every thoughtful man asks. "Whence do I come?" "How shall my life be ordered?" "Whither am I going?" No soul is at rest until it can answer these three questions; and no soul will ever find rest until it shall have found its answer in God. 1. As to the first of these questions—"Whence did I come?" Modern thought is seeking rest for itself, not in God, but in scientific theories of the origin of man. We have no fault to find with such researches. All I say now is that the scientist does not give you anything restful, even if he succeeds in proving that God had no hand in your creation. You go on craving a Father in heaven just the same. You are restless as ever, no less restless than the child who knows his mother is in her grave, but who, nevertheless, cries for her unceasingly. You want the truth, but may not your filial instinct be truthful? May not your sense of sonship be a sense of a stupendous truth? 2. How shall I live? How make the most and best of life? What guides shall I follow? Here again we find a point of rest only in a personal God, a God of providence, who interferes (I am not afraid of the term) in our affairs. You may prove, if you can, that your life moves on under the guidance of mere, settled, mechanical order. That conclusion will not give you rest. If this world of men which we see and of which we are a part, with all its clashing and contradiction, its triumph of evil and its struggle of good, is uncontrolled by a Supreme Will, if men like grains of sand, merely fly before the wind that drives them against the rocks and against each other, if change, and sickness, and ruin, and death come just as the water shoots the precipice, just as two and two make four,—it is but mockery to point our souls to such a conception of life and say, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul." We can obtain a calm, restful outlook upon life, a tranquil, cheerful participation in life only as we get back to God. We find these only when Christ leads us as He led the

disciples of old to the market, and points to the little dead sparrow, and says—"Your Father marked its fall; fear not, ye are of more value than many sparrows." We shall not be frightened at a mystery, provided we know God is behind it. 3. And, once more, the soul finds no rest as regards the question of destiny, until it finds it in God. Whatever restful thought of heaven we have, whatever knowledge of its conditions we have, comes entirely from the moral quality of heaven, and therefore from the thought of God; for, take out God from the universe, and no determinate moral quality is left anywhere, in heaven or in earth. Heaven is heaven to us because God is there; because God's law rules there absolutely; because its happiness is the happiness of perfect moral order. (M. R. Vincent, D.D.) *The soul's rest*:—"There would seem," says James Martineau, "to be an incurable variance between the life which men covet for themselves and that which they admire in others; nay, between the lot which they would choose beforehand and that in which they glory afterwards. In prospect, nothing appears so attractive as ease and licensed comfort; in retrospect, nothing so delightful as toil and strenuous service." The truth of this remark is being repeatedly impressed upon us both by public and private circumstance. It does seem as if Providence had conditioned us to a lot of labour and struggle,—nay, forced it upon us,—while our first aim is to smooth our path and prepare the way for an after happiness which consists in rest and passive pleasure. Born for contest, we ask for repose. We would skip, if possible, the drill and the discipline, and clutch at once the prizes of victory. How many of us go through life like complaining school-children,—doing our tasks, it may be, but longing for the time when books shall be put aside and all lessons come to an end! But, notwithstanding the prevailing extent of this desire for repose and the fallacious arguments with which we attempt to cover our own delinquencies in the matter, human nature, in its inmost heart, is sound, and honours no repose which is not honourably achieved by contest and victory. Human nature is to be judged, not by the standard which individual men live by, or even set for themselves, but by that which they most admire in others; and that must be regarded as the aim of humanity at large, which, though exhibited in the attainment of but a single individual, gathers about it the greatest number who applaud and revere it. Who but the brave, who but those who against all obstacles have contended manfully and unflinchingly and kept their integrity to the bitter end, have ever been adopted as the models or worshipped as the heroes of mankind? How immeasurably more has the world admired the character of Socrates for refusing to avail himself of the plan of his jailer, who had been bribed to aid his escape! These two points, then, seem to be clearly established: first, in the midst of the toil, trials, and struggles of our lot there is an instinctive craving within us for rest; and yet, secondly, the standard of life which we also instinctively place the highest, and which, at the bottom of our hearts, we do most really admire, is that in which there is the least of rest. Solve this seeming paradox, and we shall answer the question of what the soul's rest is. We crave for rest, it is true; and the desire is so universal that it must be regarded as instinctive. But, like all our instincts, the desire is blind. Instinct does not see and consciously choose its end, but gives only direction toward a certain satisfaction which human nature requires in order to fulfil its destiny. What is the extent and character of that satisfaction, not any one instinct or desire, but the whole nature, must determine. What, then, is the kind of rest which the human soul demands, and which alone can satisfy its desires? The rest that our natures crave is not the repose of passivity, of listlessness, of sleep, but the rest of healthy spiritual life,—of life in accordance with the laws of our being, which are laws of progressive activity, and, if obeyed, put us into harmony with the spirit and peace of God. The rest that we want is like the rest of the heavenly bodies, which, though all may be in rapid and varied movement, are yet at peace with regard to each other, because moving according to the harmony of a Divine law. And such rest as this we can have, though in the midst of labour and trial and conflict. It is the rest to which Jesus invited the "weary and heavy-laden"; the rest, not of those who have thrown their burdens off or would impose them upon others, but of those who would have taken upon them the yoke of God's law, and find the "yoke easy" and the "burden light," because, through obedience to this law, a mighty strength and a mighty peace have come into their being. (W. J. Potter.) *The Christian's disposition under a sense of mercies received*.—I. THE STATE OF THOSE WITH WHOM THE LORD HATH DEALT BOUNTIFULLY. 1. The Lord hath dealt

bountifully with those from whom He hath removed any affliction under which they groaned, and for deliverance from which they prayed. 2. The Lord hath dealt bountifully with you, if you can observe a particular mark and signature of His providence in your mercies. (1) When the means by which any mercy is brought about are extraordinary, and far beyond the reach of human wisdom, it serves to show that God Himself hath been their help. (2) Sometimes the providence of God is seen in the season of the mercy. It is bestowed when it is most needed, or when it may be of greatest use. (3) The signature of providence is sometimes seen in the nature of the mercy, when it is exactly suited to the state and character of the person concerned. 3. The Lord deals bountifully with His people, when He gives them a clear and satisfying view of the salutary end, and enables them to make a sanctified use both of their trials and mercies. 4. The Lord hath dealt bountifully with those whom He hath admitted to the most intimate and spiritual communion with Himself; those whom He hath carried above the sphere of temptation, filled them with sensible joy in the Holy Ghost here, and earnest desires after the complete and perpetual enjoyment of His presence in heaven. II. THE IMPORT OF THE PSALMIST'S RESOLUTION. 1. Return and give the praise where it is due; and humbly acknowledge God as the author of thy mercies. 2. This expression may imply returning to God, and delighting in Him as our reconciled God, and supreme portion and happiness. 3. This expression implies a confidence and reliance on God for protection and security against future dangers. III. PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT. 1. Observe one great branch of the sinfulness of the world in general—forgetfulness of God, and unthankfulness for His mercies. 2. Let me beseech every serious person to consider how far he hath sinned against God and his own comfort by forgetting the goodness of God, both in common and special mercies. 3. Directions to those who are truly sensible of the goodness of God. (1) Be circumspect and watchful; though a thankful frame of spirit is of great advantage, both for your sanctification and peace, yet it is not out of the reach of temptation; let it not produce pride, security, or self-sufficiency. (2) Be public-spirited and useful; if the Lord hath dealt bountifully with you, commend His service, and speak to His praise. (3) Be frequent and diligent in secret prayer. This is the way to preserve your watchfulness, and to increase your usefulness. (*J. Witherspoon, D.D.*) *Soul rest*:—I. AS AN ORIGINAL INHERITANCE. "Return unto thy rest." There is no rest for souls in places, however fair, beautiful, or grand; not in any externalisms, however calm and sunny. It is nowhere but in their own moral states. But what are the moral states that constitute soul rest? 1. Unquestioning trust. 2. Satisfying love. 3. Conscious rightness. 4. Congenial pursuits. II. AS A LOST INHERITANCE. The whole world is in disquiet. Men are trusting, but their trust is not unquestioning. The foundations of their hopes prove to be sand. The staff they grasp for support proves to be a reed that breaks beneath their weight. Everything they rest on fails them. Men are loving, but their love is unsatisfying. They are loving the imperfect, and the discovery of their imperfections distress them. They are loving the unreciprocating, and their indifference fills them with painful solicitude. They are loving the inconstant, and their inconstancy tosses them as timbers on the billows. They love the unhappy, and the sorrows they discern bring a shivering shadow over themselves. Men want righteousness; their deep cry is, "Oh! wretched man that I am." They see the right, they reach after it, but it eludes their grasp. Men are active, but the pursuits they follow are uncongenial with their nature, and felt to be unworthy of their lofty powers and destiny. III. AS A RECOVERABLE INHERITANCE. The text implies the possibility of regaining the rest. How can this soul-rest be recovered? The Gospel and the Gospel alone returns the satisfactory answer. "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." How does He give rest? By supplying man with the necessary conditions. He presents the only object for unquestioning trust. One that is all-wise, all-kind, all-powerful, the unchangeable and eternal God. And He bids man to trust in Him that liveth for ever. He presents to man the only object for a satisfying love. One who is all perfect, who is light, in whom is no darkness at all. One who returns in an infinite degree all the love that is given. One who is constant, who will never leave and never forsake. One who is happy—the "ever blessed God." He supplies man with the means of becoming consciously right. He presents congenial pursuits—pursuits connected with the advancement of holiness, the promotion of human happiness, and the glory of God. (*Homilist.*) *The soul's rest*:—1. From vain endeavours to

relieve a burdened conscience, return unto thy rest, O my soul, in the perfected redemption and pardoning grace of Jesus. 2. From the distress and disquiet of inconsistent conduct, return unto thy rest, O my soul, in unreserved obedience to Christ. Cease that opposition; forsake that evil path: cast from thee the accursed thing; cease to do evil; and thus return unto thy rest. 3. From the fretting anxieties and disappointments of pride, return unto thy rest, O my soul, in the humility of Christ. 4. Disappointed in thy search for happiness elsewhere, return unto thy rest, O my soul, in the love of Jesus, and the peace the world cannot give. As the dove flew to and fro, finding no rest for the sole of her foot till she returned to the ark, so the believer cannot repose away from Christ, our true and only refuge. 5. From vain speculations and sceptical doubts, return unto thy rest, O my soul, by childlike faith in Christ. 6. From the sorrow caused by afflictions, return unto thy rest, O my soul, in the sure mercies of a God of Love. Rest in His wisdom; He knows what is most needful for thee. Rest in His love; He will not withhold what is good. Rest in His power; He is able to do what His love prompts and His wisdom plans. Rest in His tenderness; for as a father pitieth his children, so He pitieth thee. Rest in His faithfulness; He cannot deny Himself. Gratefully remember past deliverances, and thus "Return unto thy rest," etc. 7. From all the trials of the present life, return unto thy rest, O my soul, in the home which is preparing for thee above. Every step of the journey brings us nearer. Every care, every conflict, every grief helps us onward. There is rest yonder. Let us even now enjoy it by anticipation. (*Newman Hall, LL.B.*)

*The rest of the soul:—*I. GOD IS THE REST OF THE SOUL. 1. As the light of the intellect. 2. As the refuge from the charges of our consciences. 3. As our chief good. 4. As our almighty protector. 5. As our great and ultimate end. II. THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH WE ARE MORE ESPECIALLY CALLED TO RETURN TO GOD OUR REST. 1. When we are too much affected by the cares of ordinary life. 2. When we are pressed with uneasy fears as to our spiritual safety. 3. When we have vainly perplexed ourselves with difficulties. 4. When we have experienced special deliverance. Having obtained from God pardon, a revival of piety, restoration from affliction, deliverance from temptation and sorrow; then we ought to summon the spirit to "cleave with purpose of heart to the Lord," and to rest more fully in Him, who is the strength of our heart, our portion, our exceeding great reward. (*R. Watson.*) "Return unto thy rest":—I. THE BELIEVER HAS HIS REST. While trying to think how I should describe it, nothing seemed to strike me as a more full and accurate description of the believer's rest than the apostolic benediction with which we are accustomed to dismiss our assemblies. If you have these three things,—the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost,—I am sure I need not stay to prove to you that, in your experience, you have realized what it is to enjoy rest for your soul. II. SOMETIMES THE BELIEVER LEAVES THAT REST. 1. Through affliction. 2. Through a want of submission to the Divine will. 3. Through want of contentment. 4. Through the world's joys. 5. Through allowing some conscious sin. III. THE BELIEVER, WHEN HE HAS GONE AWAY FROM HIS REST, SHOULD RETURN TO IT; and the sooner he does so, the better. As Noah's dove came back to him, so fly back to Christ, who is your Noah, your rest, for that is the meaning of the name. 1. It is quite certain that you can never rest anywhere else. 2. This unrest puts you out of order for everything. 3. Your want of rest is putting you into a state in which you are very liable to be tempted and overcome. 4. This unrest can do no possible good. IV. THE BELIEVER HAS ONE EXCELLENT ENCOURAGEMENT TO RETURN: "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." The psalmist tells us in detail what the Lord had done for him; or, rather, he tells the Lord. "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling." Now, believer, you ought to come back, and rest in God, because you have received from Him these three marks of His Divine favour. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Spiritual rest:*—In reconciliation to God through Christ Jesus the soul regains its lost equilibrium, finds again the centre of repose for which it had been sighing in vain. What sensual pleasure, wealth, ease, honour, power, the applause of men—what even intellectual pursuits, and the domestic and social charities of life, fail to bestow, or bestow for the moment only to stimulate the thirst they seem to quench, in the ineffable sense of union with God the soul finds at last—rest, satisfaction, perfect peace. 1. This "rest" not bodily or physical, but mental or spiritual rest. When doubt and disbelief are gone, when the object of life is found in Christ, when God

becomes the sure portion and sweetest joy of the heart, and the spirit within us, hitherto, it may be, groping bewildered amidst earthly hopes and pleasures, like one in the dark for the friendly hand, feels itself at last embraced in the sure grasp of strong and changeless love—then is the true rest of man, the stillness of the weary spirit in the everlasting arms. This is the only repose which is independent of outward circumstances. Even amidst the outer toil and distraction of the world, it is “the peace of God which keepeth the heart and mind.” Nor does death, which disunites and disturbs all else, for a moment interrupt its continuity: for the rest of the soul in Christ is identical with the rest of heaven—“the rest which remaineth for the people of God.” 2. It is the rest, not of immobility, but of equipoise. The rise of religion in the heart may be indicated by the bitter pangs of an awakened conscience, and by the painful struggle of spirit with sense, of the reviving element of moral freedom with the old and inveterate tyranny of sin in the soul. And it may only be by a long-protracted process of holy discipline that the soul attains at last to the complete mastery over self, the perfect inward harmony of a spirit in which every thought and feeling and desire are “brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” But when that glorious end is gained, then the “weary strife of frail humanity” is at an end, and a repose—oh how deep, how tranquil, how sublime!—diffuses itself throughout the spirit—a repose in which there is at once calmness and power, the sweet serenity of an infant’s slumbers, yet the strength of an angel of God. 3. The true “rest” of the soul is that, not of inactivity, but of congenial exertion. As love to Christ deepens in the soul that is truly given to Him, the work which it prompts us to do for Him loses the feeling of effort, and passes into pleasure. Less and less of set purpose do we need to constrain the mind to think of Him, or to approach Him in the formal attitude of devotion. The idea of Christ in the holy mind becomes gradually blended with all the actions of its daily life; thought goes out to Him as by a divine instinct; an ever-acting attraction draws the heart upwards to its great and first object, and life becomes an unconscious yet continuous prayer. The transition from motive to act, from holy intention and design to holy doing, becomes less and less marked, until at last the will acquires an almost mechanical certainty, an almost unconscious smoothness and rapidity of action. And so, with the unfettered ease of one “who playeth well upon an instrument,” from the many-stringed harp of life the soul renders up to God the sweet melody of holy deeds. Then indeed has it “returned into its rest.” (*J. Caird, D.D.*) *The soul’s resting-place*:—It seemed scarcely a stone’s throw from the busy streets, almost in the centre of the city’s crowding and rushing, that we found the quaint little park with its grass and trees, its flowers, its quiet resting-places and playing children. “How strange it seems to find such a garden spot in the heart of all the city’s din and traffic, its restless comings and goings!” we said, dropping down upon one of the rustic seats. “Yet how hard it would be to endure all the strain and turmoil if there were no such places!” “It is like life,” said a friend thoughtfully. “Our days are full of care and toil, of eager pursuit and feverish ambition. The demands of business, of civic duty, and of social life crowd and press upon each other; but deep in the heart of each of us, if life is what it should be, lies some quiet little garden spot, fenced about and protected. Our religious life has its roots there; it holds our holiest ties and friendships, and something from out our childhood which never grows old or dies. The world may fill our outward lives with the city’s roar and tumult, but the soul holds ever amid it all its garden of flowers and rest.” (*IV. L. Watkinson.*)

Vers. 8, 9. For Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.—*On recovery from sickness*:—I. THE BLESSING CONFERRED. Why was the psalmist so transported with joy, on being delivered from death? As if a mariner were to give thanks that he is not arrived in port; a traveller that he has not reached the end of his tedious journey; a banished man that he is not restored to his country; or a man groaning under a heavy burden that he is not relieved from it. Let us not hastily blame this emotion of the psalmist. For although death, through God’s favour, be a benefit to pious and holy persons; yet in itself, abstracted from those considerations, it is fearful and terrible. It is the sentence of our condemnation; the punishment of our rebellion; the bitter fruit of our corruption. But the text suggests to us, on this subject, two particular reflections. 1. David was not a mere private person; for he held

two very important public stations. He was a king, and a prophet. As a king, his life was highly important to the state; as a prophet, it was a singular utility to the Church of God. And in each of these distinguished relations David was an extraordinary personage. He was a signally brave, wise and pious king, and he was a prophet of unequalled vigour and comprehension of mind. David, therefore, might wish for life, and be thankful on his deliverance from death, not only for his own sake, or chiefly, but for that of his people; for the good of his subjects, and the service of God's Church, to which he was so useful and necessary. 2. There are actually occasions on which even good persons may fear death, and feel a most lively joy in being delivered from it. And those are when their sickness and sufferings are the immediate effect of their sins. For although their peace may be made with God, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, yet God may send upon them very sharp corrections, when they have offended Him by criminal acts and provocations. And they may wish and pray not to die in this state; death, presenting itself in such junctures, being more than commonly formidable. II. THE GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT (ver. 9). When we read in Scripture of "walking before the Lord," we often find other expressions joined with this, such as prove that it means piety in general, the whole duty of a religious and godly person. One of the Grecian sages having said, "All things are full of God, and He seeth all our actions," another great man judged this maxim to be so beautiful and important that he pronounced it to comprehend the whole philosophy of virtue." And with great reason: for, in truth, the conviction and feeling of having God ever present with us is the grand security of all good morals. The promise and vow, therefore, of David in the text is—a pure and holy life: "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living." (S. Partridge, M.A.) *Experience, resolve and hope*:—This is a quotation from an earlier psalm, with variations which are interesting, whether we suppose that the psalmist was quoting from memory and made them unconsciously, or whether, as is more probable, he did so deliberately and for a purpose. 1. The words in the original psalm (lvi.) read, "Thou hast delivered my soul from death; hast Thou not delivered my feet from falling?" The writer of this psalm felt that that did not say all, so he put in another clause—"mine eyes from tears." It is not enough to keep a man alive and upright. God will wipe away his tears; and will often keep him from shedding them. 2. The original psalm goes on: "Thou hast delivered . . . my feet from falling, that I may walk before God." But the later psalmist goes a step further than his original. The first singer had seen what it is always a blessing to see—what God meant by all the varieties of His providences, viz. that the recipient might walk as in His presence. But the later poet not only discerns, but accords with, God's purpose, yields himself to the Divine intention, and instead of simply saying, "That was what God meant," he says, "That is what I am going to do—I will walk before the Lord." 3. The original psalm says, "in the light of the living"; the other uses another word, a little more intelligible, perhaps, to an ordinary reader, and says, "in the land of the living." Now, noting these significant variations, I would draw attention to this expression of the psalmist's acceptance of the Divine purpose, and the vision that it gave him of his future. It is hard to say whether he means "I will walk," or "I shall walk"; whether he is expressing a hope or giving utterance to a fixed resolve. I think there is an element of both in the words. I. A SURE ANTICIPATION. "Thou hast"—"I will." The past is for this psalmist a mirror in which he sees reflected the approaching form of the veiled future. God's past is the guarantee of God's future. What God has done, He will keep on doing. Our experience yields fuel for our faith. We have been near death many a time; we have never fallen into it. Our eyes have been wet many a time; God has dried them. Our feet have been ready to fall many a time, and if at the moment when we were tottering on the edge of the precipice, we have cried to Him and said, "My feet have well-nigh slipped," a strong hand has been held out to us. "The Lord upholdeth them that are in the act of falling." And if we have pushed aside His hand, and gone down, then the next clause of the same verse applies, for He "raiseth up those that have fallen," and are lying prostrate. As it has been, so it will be. "Thou hast been with me in six troubles," therefore "in the seventh Thou wilt not forsake me." We can wear out men; and we cannot argue that because a man has had long patience with some unworthy recipient of his goodness, his patience will never give out. But it is safe to argue thus about God. II. A FIRM RESOLVE. "I will walk before the Lord,"

What does "walking before the Lord" mean? It means the habitual—I do not say unbroken, but habitual—effort to feel in our conscious hearts that we are in His sight; not only that we are with Him, but that we are "naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." And that is to be the result, says our psalm, as it is the intention, of all that God has been doing with us in His merciful providence, in His quickening, sustaining, and comforting influences in the past. He sent all these varying conditions, kept the man alive, kept him from weeping, or dried his tears, kept him from falling, with the intention that he should be continually blessed in the continuous sunshine of God's presence, and should open out his heart in it and for it, like a flower when the sunbeams strike it. Oh, how different life would look if we habitually took hold of all its incidents by that handle, and thought about them, not as we are accustomed to do, according to whether they tended to make us glad or sorry, to disappoint or fulfil our hopes and purposes, but looked upon them all as stages in our education, and as intended, if I might so say, to force us, when the tempests blow, close up against God; and, when the sunshine came, to woo us to His side. Would not all life change its aspect if we carried that thought right into it, and did not only keep it for Sundays, or for the crises of our lives, but looked at all the trifles as so many magnets brought into action by Him to attract us to Himself? But there has to be something more. There have to be a firm resolve, and effort without which the firmest resolve will all come to water, and be one more paving stone for the road that is "paved with good intentions." That firm resolve finds utterance in the not vain vow, "I will"—in spite of all opposition and difficulties—"I will walk before the Lord," and keep ever bright in my mind the thought, "Thou God seest me." Aye! and just in the measure in which we do that shall we have joy. If we are right with God, then the gladdest of thoughts is, "Thou knowest me altogether, and Thou hast beset me behind and before." If we are right with God, "Thou hast laid Thine hand upon me" will mean for us support and blessing. If we are wrong, it will mean a weight that crushes to the earth. And if we are right with Him, that same thought brings with it security and companionship. Ah! we do not need ever to say, "I am alone," if we are walking before God. It brings with it, of course, an armour against temptation. That thought, of the present God, draws the teeth of all the raging lions, and takes the sting out of all the serpents, and paralyses and reduces to absolute nothingness every temptation. Clasp God's hand, and we shall not fall. III. A FAR-REACHING HOPE. When we read, "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living," we cannot but think of the true and perfect deliverance, when it shall be said, with a depth and a fulness of meaning with which it is never said here, "Thou hast delivered my soul from death," and the black dread that towered so high, and closed the vista of all human expectation of the future, is now away back in the past, hull-down on the horizon, as they say about ships scarcely visible, and no more to be feared. We cannot but think of the perfect deliverance of "mine eyes from tears," when "God shall wipe away the tears from off all faces, and the rebuke of His people from off all the earth." We cannot but think of the perfect deliverance of "my feet from falling" when the redeemed of the Lord shall stand firm, and walk at liberty on the golden pavements, and no more dread the stumbling-blocks of earth. We cannot but think of the perfect presence of God, the perfect consciousness that we are near Him, when He shall "present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." We cannot but think of the perfect activity of that future state when we "shall walk with Him in white," and "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." And one guarantee for all that far-reaching hope is the tiny experiences of the present; for He who hath delivered our souls from death, our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling, is not going to expose Himself to the scoff, "This 'God' began to build, and was not able to finish." But He will complete that which He has begun, and will not stay His hand until all His children are perfectly redeemed and perfectly conscious of His perfect presence. (A. Maclaren, D.D.) A series of great deliverances:—Lo, here a deliverance, not from one, but many dangers—"death," "tears," "falling." Single deliverances are as threads; but, when multiplied, they become as a cord twisted of many threads, more potent to draw us to God. Any one mercy is as a link, but many favours are as a chain consisting of several links, to bind us the closer to our duty. Frequent droppings of the rain cannot but make an impression even on the stone, and renewed mercies may well prevail with the stony heart. Parisiensis

related a story of a man whom (notwithstanding his vicious courses) God was pleased to accumulate favours upon, so that at last he cried out, "Most gracious God, Thy unwearied goodness hath overcome my obstinate wickedness," and from that time devoted himself to God's service. No wonder, then, if David, upon deliverance from such numerous and grievous afflictions, maketh this his resolve, "to walk before the Lord in the land of the living." (N. Hardy.)

Ver. 9. **I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.**—*The nature and necessity of good works:*—1. The matter of the duty in which the psalmist promiseth to engage—"I will walk." It signifies the practice of what is good and lovely, as the words following intimate. 2. The manner in which he purposed to walk before the Lord, that is, in such a manner, that God, the searcher of hearts, would be pleased with it, and approve of it. 3. The place and time: while he continued on earth, and remained among the living. **I. CONFIRM THE PROPOSITION, THAT INWARD AFFECTION TO GOD MUST BE DECLARED BY OUR OUTWARD CONVERSATION.** 1. The one cannot be without the other. 2. This duty is frequently pressed in Scripture. Abraham; Noah; Zacharias; and Elizabeth. 3. Walking before the Lord has been abundantly rewarded. Enoch. **II. SHOW WHY OUR INWARD AFFECTION TO GOD MUST BE DECLARED BY OUR OUTWARD CONVERSATION.** 1. In this way God is glorified. 2. Others are benefited. 3. Our own good is promoted. It is by a good conversation, that the security of our hearts, the integrity of our consciences, the soundness of our faith, and, in a word, the truth of all graces are clearly manifested, cherished, and increased. **III. CONSIDER THE NECESSITY OF GOOD WORKS.** 1. They are commanded and expressly required by God Himself. 2. They are the way to the Kingdom of God. 3. They are an evidence or demonstration of our faith. 4. The not doing of them merits eternal death. 5. They are necessary as expressions of our gratitude. **IV. CONCLUSION.** 1. This subject teacheth us that those who walk not in God's ways cannot be esteemed His affectionate people. 2. The knowledge, affection and profession of persons who walk not before the Lord are all in vain. 3. Walking with God, in the external duties of religion, will best stop the mouths of the adversaries of the truth. 4. Those who walk not before the Lord in the land of the living are exposed to the most dreadful ruin. (G. Faitoute, M.A.) *The Christian's walk before God:*—**I. TO WALK BEFORE THE LORD IN THE LAND OF THE LIVING INCLUDES RECONCILIATION WITH GOD AS A PARDONED SINNER.** **II. TO WALK BEFORE GOD IN THE LAND OF THE LIVING REQUIRES A REALIZING SENSE OF HIS PRESENCE AND PERFECTIONS.** **III. TO WALK BEFORE GOD IN THE LAND OF THE LIVING COMPREHENDS A SUPREME REGARD TO THE AUTHORITY AND THE REQUIREMENTS OF HIS WORD.** **IV. THAT WE MAY WALK BEFORE THE LORD IN THE LAND OF THE LIVING, WE MUST HAVE RESPECT UNTO THE RECOMPENSE OF REWARD.** (J. Smyth, D.D.) *Walking before the Lord:*—**I. TO WALK BEFORE THE LORD IS A STYLE OF SPEAKING MADE USE OF TO REPRESENT THAT MANNER OF LIFE PECULIAR TO GOOD MEN.** It may be considered as including in it—1. That men live under a lively impression of the presence of God. 2. The exercise of a sincere love to Him, and such friendly intercourse with Him as this imperfect state admits. 3. To live in dutiful and constant subjection to His will. **II. THE EXCELLENCE OF SUCH A COURSE OF LIFE.** 1. There is joy in it. If you are really desirous to know whether it be so, go and consult the words of Him who cannot lie. They say that "gladness is sown for the upright in heart"; that "the voice of rejoicing is in the tabernacles of the righteous"; that "great peace have they who love God's law"; that "everlasting joy shall be upon them." If you ask, again, how these things are so, they will reply, that the righteous rejoice before God; that their hearts rejoice in Him, because they have trusted in His holy name; that their rejoicing is this, the testimony of their conscience, that, "in simplicity and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God," they have their conversation in the world. 2. There is honour in it. There is a dignity connected with walking before the Lord superior to everything celebrated by that name among men. "I will," says the Almighty, "guide them with Mine eye. I will never leave them nor forsake them. I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people." 3. There is a preparation for heaven in it. Every step they take in walking "before the Lord in the land of the living" is just so much progress in the path of life—every temptation overcome is a new advance to glory—every good disposition acquired will increase their happiness in the paradise of God. (W. F. Ireland, D.D.)

Ver. 10. **I believed, therefore have I spoken : I was greatly afflicted.**—*Opinions and convictions*:—There is sincerity, intensity, reality, in every line of this song. Nobody doubts the psalmist when he says, "I believed, and therefore do I sing my song of trust in God, and thankfulness to Him for a great salvation." I know few portions of the Bible more fitted than this psalm to bind our hearts with the bands of faith and gratitude to truth, and duty, and God, and to make us turn away from mere opinions and empty speculations on the high affairs of religion. While it is very desirable, for many reasons, that we should take broad views of the bearings of the Divine government, and especially of the plan of redemption, on the whole world of men, and while it may be very profitable that we even study the religions of the race, and see the points of contrast and comparison between these religions and the truth as it is in Christ, it is imperative that we, first of all, fix our attention on the personal necessities of our own nature, and character, and circumstances, and on the Divine methods of meeting these necessities. We must begin at home, not in the spirit of selfishness, but because that is the natural order of things, and because if we do not see how our own necessities can be compassed, we can only find in the regions outside of us matter for barren talk about religion, and for opinions changeable as the weather. If we cannot get to facts in our own capacities and circumstances, and in the Divine dealings with ourselves, we can never come within sight of facts in the spiritual condition of the world, and in God's methods of working for the weal of mankind. Mark the prominence of the "I," and the "me," and "my," in this psalm, and yet there is not the semblance of egotism. God's Spirit deals with your spirit. Yourself cleave to Christ with full purpose of heart, and then you will speak because you believe, really believe. Although, if we are to have convictions and not mere opinions on the high affairs of religion, we must begin with ourselves, and a God and Saviour for ourselves, the spirit of faith in us must travel out over our neighbour, and the world, and out over a gospel adequate to meet the wants of the race. The gospel for ourselves is the gospel for the race, and if we are taught aright the truth to be believed, we get a glimpse of its adaptations for man everywhere, when we get a glimpse of its adaptations for our own selves. We can believe only for ourselves. We cannot by proxy believe for others. But our creed can compass a Christ, a complete Christ for every man. That confession of faith we can make, because we believe it. And it is a great confession of faith,—a real Saviour for the real wants of every man. When believed as a vast and blessed spiritual reality, it makes a man speak. (*W. Bathgate, D.D.*) *Conviction is the spring of all action*:—Tozer says, "Conviction lies at the root of all consistent action. A mechanical genius conceives an idea. It is as clear as noon-day in his mind, but ere that idea is embodied in a wheel, a spring or lever, he must believe in the possibility of its embodiment: and just in proportion to the strength of his conviction as to the practicability and probable success of his idea, will he be consistent and earnest in working it out. The mind must conceive and believe before the hand or foot will move. Columbus conceived the existence of a continent; the conception grew into a conviction; the conviction was followed by consistent action, and that action was crowned with success, by the discovery of America. A man believes that an observance of certain physical laws is conducive to health, and he acts accordingly. Another believes that obedience to certain moral laws is necessary to a good moral character, self-respect, and peace of conscience, and he obeys these laws. Christianity, then, by making man's pardon and happiness to hinge upon faith, acts in accordance with the laws of his mental and moral being. It is no arbitrary requirement; it is as necessary to holy obedience as any cause is to an effect. A man, for instance, must believe in God, or he will never serve Him; in law, or he will never obey it; in sin, or he will never see the necessity of a Mediator." (*The Weekly Pulpit.*)

Ver. 11. **I said in my haste, All men are liars.**—*The dangers of pessimism*:—Pessimism is a sin, and those who yield to it cripple themselves for the war, on one side of which are all the forces of darkness, led on by Apollyon, and on the other side of which are all the forces of light led on by the Omnipotent. I risk the statement that the vast majority of the people are doing the best they can. Nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand of the officials of the municipal and the United States Governments are honest. Out of a thousand bank presidents and cashiers, nine hundred and ninety-nine are worthy the position they occupy.

Out of a thousand merchants, mechanics and professional men, nine hundred and ninety-nine are doing their duty as they understand it. Out of one thousand engineers, and conductors, and switchmen, nine hundred and ninety-nine are true to their responsible positions. It is seldom that people arrive at positions of responsibility until they have been tested over and over again. It is a mean thing in human nature that men and women are not praised for doing well, but only excoriated when they do wrong. By Divine arrangement the most of the families of the earth are at peace, and the most of those united in marriage have for each other affinity and affection. You hear nothing of the quietude and happiness of such homes, though nothing but death will them part. But one sound of marital discord makes the ears of a continent, and perhaps of a hemisphere, alert. The one letter that ought never to have been written, printed in a newspaper, makes more talk than the millions of letters that crowd the post-offices, and weigh down the mail-carriers, with expressions of honest love. We need a more cheerful front in all our religious work. People have enough trouble already, and do not want to ship another cargo of trouble in the shape of religiosity. If religion has been to you a peace, a defence, an inspiration and a joy, say so. Say it by word of mouth; by pen in your right hand; by face illumined with a divine satisfaction. If this world is ever to be taken for God, it will not be by groans, but by hallelujahs. If we could present the Christian religion as it really is, in its true attractiveness, all the people would accept it, and accept it right away. Exemplify it in the life of a good man or a good woman, and no one can help but like it. A city missionary visited a house in London and found a sick and dying boy. There was an orange lying on his bed, and the missionary said, "Where did you get that orange?" He said, "A man brought it to me. He comes here often, and reads the Bible to me, and prays with me, and brings me nice things to eat." "What is his name?" said the city missionary. "I forget his name," said the sick boy, "but he makes great speeches over in that great building," pointing to the Parliament House of London. The missionary asked, "Was his name Mr. Gladstone?" "Oh yes," said the boy, "that is his name; Mr. Gladstone." Do you tell me a man can see religion like that and not like it? Why do you not get this bright, and beautiful, and radiant, and blissful, and triumphant thing for yourselves; then go home telling all your neighbours that they may have it, too; have it for the asking; have it now? Mind you, I do not start from the pessimistic standpoint that David did, when he got mad and said in his haste, "All men are liars!" or from the creed of others that every man is as bad as he can be. I rather think from your looks that you are doing about as well as you can in the circumstances in which you are placed, but I want to invite you up into the heights of safety, and satisfaction, and holiness, as much higher than those which the world affords as Everest, the highest mountain in all the earth, is higher than your front doorstep. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The spirit of cynicism*.—The Cynics were a sect of philosophers among the Greeks, founded by Antisthenes, who, on account of his snappish, snarling propensities, was frequently called "The Dog"; and probably enough it may have been on account of this that his school of philosophy was called the "Cynic" or "Dog" school. He was stern, proud, and unsympathetic. He taught that all human pleasure was to be despised. He was ostentatiously careless as to the opinions, the feelings, and the esteem of others. He used to appear in a threadbare dress, so that Socrates once exclaimed, "I see your pride, Antisthenes, peeping through the holes in your cloak!" His temper was morose, and his language was coarse and indecent. His disciple, Diogenes, even "bettered the instruction," living, it is said, in a tub, and peering about the streets with a lantern in the daytime, in search, as he alleged, of a man! It was part of his system to outrage common decency, and he snarled and growled even more bitterly and insolently than his predecessor. It is from this old school of philosophy that we derive the term cynicism; and we commonly apply it, now-a-days, to that mood or habit of mind which looks out upon mankind with cold and bitter feeling, which finds little or nothing to admire in human character and action, which systematically depreciates human motives, which rejoices to catch men tripping, which sneers where others reverence, and dissects where others admire, and is hard where others pity, and suspects where others praise. It would appear, then, to have been some such mood as this through which the psalmist had been passing. With him, however, the mood seems to have been but transient. For a time his soul was darkened by its baleful shadow—all human goodness eclipsed for him, and his own human syn-

pathos and affections frozen. But only for a time. He does not seem to have cherished this cynical mood. On the contrary, he seems to have been conscious of its wretchedness, and to have retained the power to pray against it. When you are tempted to "say in your haste, All men are liars," then cry with the psalmist, "O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul!" And now let me mention further one or two practical safeguards against the attitude or habit of cynicism.

I. LET US CHERISH A MODEST ESTIMATE OF OUR OWN ABILITIES AND OUR OWN IMPORTANCE. A vain man is naturally exacting. He expects from others recognition, admiration, and deference; and if he does not secure the appreciation which he fancies is due to his abilities or merits, he may begin to rail at the blindness and stupidity of the world. An exacting nature, also, is apt to suspect the genuineness of an affection or friendship which is not always showing the amount of attention demanded and expected. The "milk of human kindness"—curdled somewhat at the outset by a selfish vanity—is still further soured when that vanity is wounded. A selfish ambition, too, when disappointed, is apt to leave the spirit embittered. Some of the most snarling and carping critics are men who have failed to reach the fame they coveted. And then, again, even the ordinary calamities of life, coming upon an intense egotism, will sometimes plunge a man into the cynical mood. That mankind in general should be subject to disease or to misfortune is not so strange to him; but that he himself should be thus visited surprises and chafes him. Nay, but let us cherish a modest estimate of ourselves—this is a grand safeguard against cynicism, and helps to preserve the sweetness of the spirit in times of disappointment and affliction. A humble recognition, too, of our own defects and faults will tend to keep us from harsh and censorious judgments of our brethren, and from all scornful and bitter railing at the weaknesses of humanity.

II. LET US CULTIVATE THE HABIT OF LOOKING OUT FOR HUMAN EXCELLENCES, AND OF PUTTING THE MOST GENEROUS CONSTRUCTION ON HUMAN ACTIONS. The man who finds nothing to admire in others thereby reveals the shallowness of his own nature. A soul—and especially a young soul—that has no "hero-worship" in it, of some sort or other, thereby writes itself down as ignoble. The cynic who is constantly depreciating the actions and suspecting the motives of others is certainly paying no compliment to himself. A man does some deed that has a noble and worthy look about it. You know nothing whatever of the man; but you must, forsooth, begin with bitterness to insinuate that his action may not be so disinterested as it looks—that it springs, probably, from some selfish or sinister motive! What does all this mean but that you find it hard to believe in nobleness? And what does this, again, mean but that you yourself are incapable of such disinterested conduct? Nobleness believes in the possibility of nobleness, and delights to recognize it. Get into the habit, then, of looking out for excellences of character instead of picking out flaws and magnifying faults. "Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." Cultivate also the habit of putting the most generous construction on human actions. If an action can be ascribed to two possible motives, why should you ascribe it to the lower? "Charity believeth all things, and hopeth all things." III. LET US SEEK TO LOOK AT ALL MEN AS THROUGH THE EYES OF CHRIST. This is the grand antidote to the cynical spirit. Christ is our Lord; Christ is our Saviour; it is our safety and blessedness to cling to Him, and to receive His Spirit into our hearts. And the grand secret of loving and caring for and bearing with others lies in looking at them through the eyes of Him who is their Redeemer and ours. Christ "tasted death for every man." He so loved even the unworthy that He was willing to shed His blood for them. They tell us that "Love is blind"; but be sure that hatred, or even indifference, is far blinder. Love may sometimes be blind to faults, but it has a quick eye for excellences. (*T. C. Finlayson.*) *Faith in God and man*:—It has been left to a pitiful cynicism and to a threadbare wit to remind us, especially of late, that if David had lived in our days the words which he once uttered in haste he might now have spoken with utmost deliberation. Is it true? Is falsehood the invariable characteristic of the dealings and the speech of men? I will not trifle with your intelligence by seriously discussing the question. We may not blink or belittle the crimes that are done in high places or in low ones—least of all may we deny the essential evils from which those crimes have sprung; but to own the power of evil in the world, to be afraid of it, to hate it, to frown upon its exhibitions when they flower into personal transgression—that is one thing. It is quite another to be precipitated by these things into that blunder of hasty generalization which David no sooner detected in himself than he

so simply and manfully disowned and repented of it. Have we ever realized that, if we seriously believed as some of us are willing to affirm, that all men are liars, life would be simply unendurable? After all, the foundations of human society are laid in the cement of mutual trust, not of mutual suspicion. It paralyzes effort, it deadens aspiration, it destroys hope when we find that our own confidence in others evokes no answering trust in them. We do not realize, I think, how readily distrust begets its echo in those who are distrusted. To be doubted and suspected,—this with the young is often a short road to ultimate recklessness. "What is the good of it," cries the young and sensitive nature, which has not yet learned to appeal from the judgment of its fellows, to the verdict of its unseen Master—"what is the good of any effort after right, if one is met at the threshold with a sneer and a suspicion? Is there no such thing as truth, after all? Is all life hollow and false and unreal? Well, then, why should I try to be true and to hate what is false? Why should I revere what is good, and despise what is base and mean? No one believes in goodness any more. It must all be a game—this life that I am living, and cleverness, not righteousness, the aim of it." And thus is born the cynic and the sceptic—the unbeliever in truth and the scoffer at faith. And if there is any life more wretched and any character more unlovable, the world has yet to reveal it. In the phraseology of science, there is what is known as a good working hypothesis. It is a probability assumed for the time to be true, as a means of reaching conclusions which lie beyond. Now, in our dealings with our fellow-men, which is the better working hypothesis: to assume with David in his haste, that all men are liars, or to prefer to believe that on the whole all men are not liars? Which will best serve to redeem the fallen, and steady the tempted, and inspire the timid? Give your brother man your confidence. Provoke him to love and to good works by the good which you look to see in him. And you that are fathers and mothers, ennoble the child whom you are training by appealing to that which is noble in him. Amid all his faults and waywardness, strive to love him with an unextinguishable hope and trust. Believe me, what your suspicions, your scorn, your lurking distrust of him can never do, your loving confidence will far oftener and far more surely accomplish. (*Bishop H. C. Potter.*)

Vers. 12-14. What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me!—*Giving thanks by taking more:*—There is a wonderful ministry of contrast in this varied psalm. A diamond resting upon black plush or velvet shines with a more dazzling lustre. And so it is with the bright patches in this psalm, they are lifted into a still whiter radiance by their surroundings. Take this bit of black environment: "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow." And now take this gracious bit of light lying just upon the very fringe of the dark country: "Gracious is the Lord and righteous; yea, our God is merciful! The Lord preserveth the simple." And here, again, is a similar contrast: "I was greatly afflicted; I said in my haste, All men are liars." How sweet is the music that follows! "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" My text is therefore born of the brighter season, when the storm is dying and rumbling away in the distance, and the sun is out again. We find him overwhelmed in the contemplation of Divine benefits. "All His benefits toward me." He is amazed at the richness and the multitude of the favours which surround him. He is engirt by the vast crowd of Divine guests! Into whatever room of his house he enters, the guests are there. In highway and byway they throng his steps! Now, here is a very matured attainment of the spiritual man. To perceive and appreciate our benefits necessitates a very refined soul. That is so upon the merely human plane. There are some men who cannot appreciate kindnesses. They either never see them or they misconstrue them. They are the victims either of dulness or pride, and both these foul spirits make this kind of appreciation impossible. But this spiritual numbness is even more apparent in our relationship to the Divine. We receive multitudes of benefits, but we do not see the Divine mark upon their foreheads. We take them in, but they are not revealed to us as the King's bounty. It is amazing how fine is the perception of other souls! They never open their eyes without seeing the presence of the hosts of God. "The mountains are full of horses and chariots." "Having nothing," they yet possess all things. Now, this is a fine perception which can be cultivated by continual exercise. We can have our "senses exercised to discern." It is amazing how we can

cultivate even a bodily perception. We can train it so as to discover even more minute distinctions. And it is the same with the senses by which we realize the presence of the Divine. But the exercise must be deliberate. We must set about in dead-set purpose to discern the mercies of the Lord. We must just be on the look-out for them as a botanist is on the look-out for wild flowers as he walks the country lanes. You must sit down to-night, for instance, and range over your life to-day, and seek out with eager eyes the mercies which have been about your path. Get hold of Frances Ridley Havergal's "Journal of Mercies," and she will help you in the cultivation of the finer sight. And then the happy issue is this, that what begins in deliberate exercise becomes an instinctive habit. Our souls can become habituated to the perception. Day after day your life would appear more and more filled with the bountiful guests of the Lord. What is the issue of such contemplation? The fountains of desire are unsealed. Love awakes, and yearns to make some return unto the Lord who has poured His benefits upon us. "What shall I render unto the Lord?" Have I ever used that word? If such phrase has never leapt to my lips it is because I have never gazed upon the mercies of the King. What return can I make? Now, mark this; the first answer which comes from a soul that has attained to fine spiritual perception is this—"I will take the cup of salvation." How exceedingly strange it all is! He asks what he can render, and he answers that he will further take! And this is the very essence of true gratitude. The best return we can make for a gift of God is to take a higher gift. Have you thanked Him for your daily bread? Then the best return you can make is to take the bread of life. Have you thanked Him for your sleep? Then the best return you can make is to take His gift of rest and peace. Have you thanked Him for your health? Then the best return you can make is to seek His gift of holiness. "I will take the cup of salvation." I will take the finest thing upon the Lord's table! He has given me this gift, now I will take a bigger gift! But that is not the only return the psalmist makes. "I will pay my vows unto the Lord now." When the cords of death compassed him he had made a strong and secret vow. He said to himself, "If I get over this I will live a more pronounced life unto the Lord!" "If I get my strength back, I will use it for the King." "If I get out of this darkness, I will take a lamp and light the feet of other men!" And now he is better again, and he sets about to redeem his vow. The midnight vow was redeemed in the morning! As soon as he was out of the peril he remembered his covenant. "Now!" There must be no delay. In this sphere delays are attended with infinite peril. Aye, and he will surround the redemption of his vow with publicity. "In the presence of all His people." He will do something publicly which will strongly proclaim him on God's side, and tell to all men that he has given his devotion to Him. And that must be our way. The vow we made in secret must be performed openly. We must do something to indicate that we have passed through a great experience, and that we are remembering the benefits of the Lord. We can speak His name to another. We can write some gracious letter to a friend. We can attach ourselves publicly to the Master's Church. We can commit ourselves openly and outwardly as professed followers of the King. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*)

Awake, sweet gratitude:—I. A VERY SUITABLE INQUIRY. It contains—1. A remembrance of all His benefits. 2. A recognition of the Lord's consequent claim. 3. A desire appropriately to acknowledge these benefits. 4. An overwhelming sense of inability to acknowledge God's mercy. II. A TRULY REMARKABLE REPLY. 1. Thank God for the cup of communion, and the cup of consolation. The best way to praise Him for mercies past is to accept mercies present, and to anticipate the mercies that are still in store. 2. True prayer is worship, homage. As a sickly flower pent within the cottage window turns itself towards the sun, and by drinking in its beams worships it, so you who have nothing to give to the collection, so you who have no talents for Sunday school teaching, so you whose lives seem to be one dull round, one common task, do worship God in most spiritual fashion by just breathing His air, imbibing His beams, meditating on His mercy, and asking still for more. 3. Praise and prayer are acceptable to God, and better sacrifices could hardly be, but with praising and praying the psalmist links paying. Do not divorce one from the other. Do not rob God. Have you never read of one who, being brought to the place of martyrdom, knoeled down in the mire at Smithfield, and, lifting up his eyes to heaven, said, "I will pay my vows now in the midst of thee, O Smithfield"? The place was red with the blood of saints, and brown with the burning of the fires! Ah me! the lines are fallen to us in

pleasant places; we have a goodly heritage. Will you pay your vows unto the Lord in the basement of the tabernacle? Smithfield's fires are out, thank God. It should be easier for us to be consecrated, and devoted, and whole-hearted here and now. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Harvest Thanksgiving*:—The importance of gratitude in the heart of man cannot be over-estimated. This is true, even viewing it as an item in the economy of human things. But the sin and the shame of not possessing it are surely greatest when men are found unthankful to their God. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits?" It is a practical question, for God does not expect any reward from us which we cannot give. 1. And, first, might we not have a full appreciation of God's goodness? This would please Him. There are times certainly when we should practise abstinence, but to say this is very far from teaching that it is sinful to appreciate and use to the full the means of sustenance and enjoyment which God has given. A full appreciation of the beauty of the world in which we live,—of the warmth of its sunshine and the fragrance of its flowers, of the strength and healing in its kindly fruits,—is one of the least rewards God merits and expects. A lack of due appreciation is one of the seeds of ingratitude. 2. And then, too, let us be patient in all the circumstances of our life. This also will please God. There may be some who are in want. What shall we say to such as these? Shall we be content to tell them of a better land? Let us tell them of that country, and lead them thither, but let us also tell them to be patient here. Tell them that Jesus, who laid their burden upon them, will help them to bear its weight. "Sweet are the uses of adversity" if it leads us to trust more in Him. I once heard of a man who was rich, and happy in his wealth. Suddenly a reverse in fortune came, and he lost all. Yet, even in misfortune, he was still happy. On being asked the reason why he was happy in all circumstances of life, he answered, "When I was rich, I saw God in all things. Now that I am poor, I have all things in God." Brethren, "in your patience possess ye your souls." 3. And God expects us to be kind. That will surely please Him, for He has said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me." The very existence of the poor (and we have them with us always) is an opportunity for good works. May all of us in time "learn the luxury of doing good." We have kept the grandest lesson of harvest till the last. 4. It leads our thoughts on from carnal food to Jesus, who is the Bread of Life. As food is necessary for the sustenance of the body, so is Jesus necessary for the life of the soul. Therefore, like David, let us "take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord." (*F. St. John Corbett.*) *How may each Christian best glorify God?*—I. THE BENEFITS WHICH WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM GOD. The catalogue is endless. It stretches into eternity. Converting mercy—pardoning mercy—renewing mercy—justifying mercy—restoring mercy—supporting mercy;—where shall I close the enumeration? II. THE RETURN OF GRATITUDE AND LOVE WHICH GOD REQUIRES AT YOUR HAND. 1. There are methods of glorifying God common to every Christian. Every Christian must dedicate his body to God as His temple. Surrender to Him the key of every apartment. Lay open to Him every chamber of your heart. Let your spirit bow before Him as He enters in, and hail Him Lord of all that it contains. 2. By employing your talents in His service. If you are the property of God, then all the powers of the mind, as well as the members of the body, are individually his right. (*T. Raffles, D.D.*) *What shall I give to Him?*—I. THE DESIRE THAT PROMPTS THE QUESTION. 1. It seems to be a law of nature that some return should be made for benefits received. 2. Gratitude can only be shown by making some return. 3. Thanksgiving is the peculiar privilege of the saint. 4. How may we know when we are truly thankful? (1) When we are quick to see and slow to forget our mercies. (2) When our heart is in our praises. (3) When there is an absence of all thought of human merit. II. SOME THOUGHTS SUGGESTED BY THE QUESTION. 1. The possessions of God. 2. Our own poverty. III. THE ONLY ANSWER THAT CAN BE GIVEN. The heart's gratitude is all the saint can give in return for mercies that are fresh with every hour, and as numerous as the seconds in the day. Do not niggardly withhold the only thing you can render. Praise Him, it costs nothing, it is all that you can do, and it is just what He is willing to accept. Not to do so is disloyalty to heaven's throne. But if thanksgiving be good, remember thanksgiving is better, therefore let thy whole life join in the harmony. (*A. G. Brown.*) *What will you do?*—The text is the language of a man who sees religion in its true light. I. THE BENEFITS RECEIVED. 1. The benefit of answered prayer. The

ancient Romans had many gods, some of which they regarded as their especial deities; but they were so much afraid of some other nation stealing or enticing their gods away that they never mentioned their names; and in one instance the marble image of a god was actually chained in the temple, to prevent his leaving them or being spirited away to some other place. Being fickle themselves, they believed their gods were also fickle. The blessedness of true religion, based upon Divine revelation, is that it clearly shows that our God will never leave us. He has promised, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." God careth for us because He is our Creator and our Redeemer. He is a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God. 2. The Lord had redeemed his soul from death. Then, because He has redeemed your soul from death on the cross, what will you render unto the Lord? Will you not take the cup of salvation? Will you not be the Lord's servant and pay your vows in the presence of His people? II. **THE RETURN MADE FOR THESE BENEFITS.** "I will take the cup of salvation." Jesus spoke of His body as bread and of His blood as wine; and when He told His disciples that they must eat His flesh and drink His blood, it is evident He meant that we must get our spiritual nourishment from believing in the truth and love of His Gospel, and our strength from practising that truth and love in our lives. It is considered doubly treacherous to injure or betray a man of whose bread and wine you have partaken. The Arabs say that if you eat bread with them or taste their salt, they can never injure you; everlastingly they are your friends. Now, when you take the cup at what is called the Lord's Supper, it means, likewise, that you publicly testify that you are a friend of Jesus who died for you; and when you eat the bread, you mean that you earnestly desire to receive the truth, which the bread represents. Partaking of this cup also means that we trust our Lord. Alexander of Greece was warned by a friend that his physician was seeking an opportunity of poisoning him; but when the physician next time presented the cup, Alexander looked in his face steadfastly, and then, taking it in his hand, said, "I drink to show my trust in thee!" (W. Birch.) **I will take the cup of salvation.**—*Taking from God the best giving to God:*—It is a most natural thing, as all languages show, to talk of a man's lot, either of sorrow or of joy, as the cup which he has to drink; and there are plenty of instances of the metaphor in the psalms, such as "Thou art the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup, Thou maintainest my lot." "My cup runneth over." That familiar emblem is all that is wanted here. "The cup of salvation" expresses, by its plural form, the fulness and variety of the manifold and multi-form deliverances which God had wrought and was working for the psalmist. His whole lot in life appears to him as a cup-full of tender goodness, loving faithfulness, delivering grace. It runs over with Divine acts of help and sustenance. As his grateful heart thinks of all God's benefits to him, he feels at once the impulse to requite and the impossibility of doing it. The great thought, then, which lies here is that we best requite God by thankfully taking what He gives. I. Now, I note **HOW DEEP THAT THOUGHT GOES INTO THE HEART OF GOD.** Why is it that we honour God most by taking, not by giving? The first answer that occurs to you, no doubt, is—because of His all-sufficiency and our emptiness. No doubt that is quite true; and, rightly understood, that is a strengthening and a glad truth. But is that all which can be said in explanation of this principle? The principle of our text reposes at last on "God is love and wishes our hearts," and not merely on "God has all and does not need our gifts." He delights in no recompense, but only in the payment of a heart won to His love and melted by His mercies. II. But now let us look at **THE ELEMENTS WHICH MAKE UP THIS REQUIT OF GOD IN WHICH HE DELIGHTS.** And, first, let us be sure that we recognize the real contents of our cup. It is a cup of salvation, however hard it is sometimes to believe it. How much blessing and happiness we all rob ourselves of by our slowness to feel that! Then, again, another of the elements of this requital of God is—be sure that you take what God gives. There can be no greater slight and dishonour to a giver than to have his gifts neglected. Do not complain of your thirsty lips till you are sure that you have emptied the cup of salvation which God gives. One more element of this requital of God has still to be named—the thankful recognition of Him in all our feasting,—*"call on the name of the Lord."* Without this, the preceding precept would be a piece of pure selfish epicureanism—and without this it would be impossible. Only he who enjoys life in God enjoys it worthily. Only he who enjoys life in God enjoys it at all. This is the true infusion which gives sweetness to whatever of bitter, and more

of sweetness to whatever of sweet, the cup may contain, when the name of the Lord is pronounced above it. If we carried that spirit with us into all our small duties, sorrows, and gladnesses, how different they would all seem! We should not then find that God's gifts hid Him from us. Nothing would be too great for us to attempt, nothing too small for us to put our strength into. There is an old legend of an enchanted cup filled with poison, and put treacherously into a king's hand. He signed the sign of the cross and named the name of God over it—and it shivered in his grasp. Do you take this name of the Lord as a test. Name Him over many a cup which you are eager to drink of, and the glittering fragments will lie at your feet, and the poison be spilled on the ground. What you cannot lift before His pure eyes and think of Him while you enjoy, is not for you. Friendships, schemes, plans, ambitions, amusements, speculations, studies, loves, businesses—can you call on the name of the Lord while you put these cups to your lips? If not, fling them behind you—for they are full of poison which, for all its sugared sweetness, at the last will bite like a serpent and sting like an adder. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Taking in giving*:—"What shall I render? . . . Take!" Why, the whole essence of Christianity is in that antithesis, if you think about it. For what does the doctrine that a man is saved by faith mean, if it does not mean that the one thing that we all have to do is to accept what God bestows? And the same attitude of reception which we have to assume at the beginning of our Christian life must be maintained all through it. Depend upon it, we shall make far more progress in the Divine life if we learn that each step of it must begin with the acceptance of a gift from God, than if we toil, and moil, and wear ourselves with vain efforts in our own strength. I do not mean that a Christian man is not to put forth such efforts, but I do mean that the basis of all profitable discipline, and self-control, and reaching out towards higher attainments, either in knowledge or in practical conformity to Jesus Christ, which he puts forth, must be laid in fuller acceptance of God's gift, on which must follow building on the foundation, by resolute efforts to work God's gift into our characters, and to work it out in our lives. All around you, Christian men, there lie infinite possibilities. God does not wait to be asked to give; He has given once for all; and continuously as the result of that once-for-all giving, just as preservation is but the prolongation of the act of creation. He has given, once for all, and continuously, all that every man, and all men, need, for their being made perfectly like Himself. We hear people praying for "larger bestowments of grace." Let them take the bestowments that they have, and they will find them enough for their need. God communicated His whole fulness to the Church for ever when He sent His Son, and when His Son sent His Spirit. "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." Take what you have and you will find that you have all that you need. (*Ibid.*) *Receiving and rendering*:—The two component parts of true religion are receiving and rendering. As to the first disciples, so to each one of us, according to the several providential gifts and spiritual graces bestowed upon each, the Master still says, "Freely ye have received, freely give." And I doubt not many a financial loss that has overtaken wealthy or well-to-do members of the Church has been visited upon them because while they "received" they failed to "render." The true record of the bankruptcy of many a Christian merchant might be written thus:—First, he failed to render to his God; then, and therefore, he failed to receive from God (for God could no longer give where no adequate return was made), and then, lastly and consequently, he failed to pay his fellows. But whether or not such retribution overtakes the unjust steward in this life, there can be no doubt that when the Lord returns He will require the balance-sheet to be presented—a balance-sheet in which the receiving and the rendering alike will be faithfully chronicled; and then the Lord "will render unto every man according to his work." I. The psalmist refers to the great benefit of PERSONAL SALVATION (ver. 16). It is true that as you "were not redeemed with" such "corruptible things as silver and gold," so such things as silver and gold can never make adequate repayment to your Redeemer. He claims your love, your life; not yours, but you. And yet shall we refuse these "corruptible things" when by them we may bring honour to our Saviour and help to extend His kingdom? II. The psalmist refers, again, to the great benefit of PIOUS PARENTAGE. "The son of Thine handmaid"—how great a blessing is acknowledged in those simple words! Through this small loophole we can see the inestimable advantages of a religious home. The psalmist makes no reference to his father, but his mother's pre-eminent piety stands before him still, and he

recognizes it as one of his choicest blessings when he says, "I am Thy servant and the son of Thine handmaid." How many of us have to thank God for this priceless benefit—the benefit of a pious parentage and religious training! III. The psalmist also refers—and, as it is the occasion of the psalm, refers at length—to the benefit of **RESTORED HEALTH AND PROLONGED LIFE**. Through pain and weakness he had been "brought low." Disease held him fast in its fierce grip, so that he "found trouble and sorrow." "The sorrows of death compassed him"—came crowding round him on every side, till there seemed to be no escape; and the "pains of hell"—the mysteries of the unseen world and the darkness of the grave—"got hold upon him." Then in his pain and misery he cried unto the Lord, and God heard his voice and his supplication. "Precious in the sight of the Lord was the death of His saint;" i. e. it was not lightly regarded by God that His servant should perish. He rebuked the destroyer, made "Death ungrasp his fainting prey." He "delivered his soul from death," his "eyes from tears," his "feet from falling." And now, with health restored and life prolonged, the psalmist cries, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me?" And he answers, "I will walk before God in the land of the living"; "I will pay my vows unto the Lord"; "I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving." (*J. H. Greeves.*) *The cup of salvation*:—In the Bible "the cup" is used to represent the condition of a man, his circumstances, and his portion (Ps. xi. 6; xvi. 5; xxiii. 5; lx. 3; lxxv. 8). The cup of salvation is the condition of deliverance, which this psalm celebrates, not the drink-offering appointed by the law, not the cup of blessing. Noah's deliverance was a cup of salvation. "To call upon the name of the Lord" is a phrase of greater power than to call upon the Lord. There is a reference, in the use of the word "name," to the manifestations of God, to historical Divine manifestations (Ex. iii. 13-15). I. **GOD GIVING**. 1. A personal God. 2. Something which the personal God has provided and arranged, held out to His creatures. 3. A recognition of a relation with us upon God's part, and of dependence upon our part. 4. Kindness shown. The cup of blessing is a revelation of love. II. **MAN TAKING**. Here it may be said, Will he not invariably take? Must he not take? The taking here is not a simple laying hold of that which God gives, but the use and enjoyment of what God bestows. To "take the cup of salvation" is to receive a blessing in all its fullness, to the utmost limit of our receptive capacity, and of our power to accept and to enjoy. III. **GOD'S SERVANT SEEING GOD IN WHAT HE TAKES**. There is a name of God on every cup and in each act of offering a cup. The words, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, represent the God who is to be seen in the lives of these men. But God is as really in the lives of Robinson, and Smith, and Jones, as in the lives of the patriarchs. God is in health and in healing, in wealth and in extrication from poverty, in prosperity and in lifting up out of adversity. In His giving and working and ministering and protecting, God is ever writing His name. One point of difference between the godly and ungodly is that the former see God in connection with their cup, and that the latter see Him not. As far as a landscape without sunshine is inferior to a landscape upon which the sun sheds his rays, is the appearance of blessings when separated from God, to the same blessings when regarded as the gift of His hand. IV. **WORSHIP, THE FRUIT OF WHAT WE RECEIVE AND SEE**. "And will call upon the name of the Lord." Past and present gifts on the part of God should encourage us in three things—prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. (*S. Martin.*) *Taking all God offers*:—How much more happy we should all be, if we only received all that God offers and accepted more cordially that which we do take! A writer in "The Reader," in an admirable article on Thermo-electrical Science, observes, "Like windmills, thermo-electric batteries might be erected over the country, and entrap, finally converting into mechanical motion, and thus into money, gleams of sunshine, which would be as wind to the sails of the mill. What stores of fabulous wealth are, as far as our earth is concerned, constantly wasted by the non-retention of solar rays poured on the desert of Sahara. Nature here refuses to use her wonderful radiation net, for we cannot cover the desert sands with trees, and man is left alone to try his skill in retaining solar energy. Hitherto helpless, we need not be so much longer, and the force of a Sahara sun may be carried through wires to Cairo, and thence irrigate the desert, or possibly, if need be, it could pulsate under our streets, and be made to burn in Greenland." Take up your neglected mercies, my brethren. Take the cup which you have overlooked and despised. Take the cup entirely, which you have taken but partially, and with the taking of every cup

call upon the name of the Lord. (*Ibid.*) *The cup of life*:—The whole lot in life of the psalmist appears to him like a cup full of tender, good, loving faithfulness and delivering grace. And why is it that the best return for God's goodness is by further taking, not by giving? The principle upon which this text rests ultimately is that God is love, and wants our hearts, and not merely that God has everything and does not need our gifts. Take the illustration of our own case. Do we not feel that all the bloom and beauty are gone from a gift if the giver hopes to receive anything in return? Love gives because it delights to give. It gives to express itself, and to bless the giver. If there be any thought of return, it is only the return of love. And that is how God gives. As St. James expresses it, He is the giving God. "I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord." The Jewish father at the head of his family on the old Passover day, at a certain period in the family feast, solemnly lifted the wine cup and breathed a thanksgiving to God, and then drank of it with all around him. This word here "I will take" we may fairly translate as "I will raise." Perhaps it is intended that there should be preserved for us within the sacred word that old picture as emblematic of the consecration that should rest upon all our happiness and upon all our life—the remembrance of God, the calling upon the name of the Lord. Christ gave us not merely the ritual of an ordinance, but the pattern of all our life, when He took the cup and gave thanks. And so common joys become sacraments, and enjoyments in our homes and in our innocent pleasures become worship, and the cup of mingled bitter and sweet that is provided for each of us by our loving Father becomes a cup of blessing and of salvation over which and by reason of which we can come more fully to recognize and praise the goodness of God. (*M. Hartley.*) *The cup of salvation*:—This cup of salvation is standing on the table of infinite love, filled to the brim with the wine of the Kingdom; all heaven is there in solution, all joy, peace, comfort, security, for the word salvation covers all. How came it there? Ages back man was tempted and drank of a forbidden cup; it wrought madness in the brain, enmity in the heart, and the poison spread into all parts of his being, and as the result of the first draught he had to drink of another, the cup of sorrow. But over and beyond there is a third cup of God's holy anger against sin, deep and filled with wormwood and gall. The Man Christ Jesus comes in a body like our own, He looks on the cup of Divine anger, He takes and begins to drink, and finds it a cup of trembling and amazement, but never a moment's pause or hesitation till He came to the dregs, and His anguished soul cried, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and He puts it down and says, "It is finished." He rises again; and now the cup which He had drained is as full of blessing as it was of woe. It is the cup of God's salvation. "Take" the cup of salvation, not make. So many are wanting to tread out grapes of their own good works and put them into the cup, but that is filled with the wine which comes from Jesus Himself, having been trodden in the winepress. "Take," not admire and wonder. "Take," not only hold it in a trembling hand, but drink, put it to thy lips and say, "I will take the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord." All believers may take a fresh and a deeper draught, and the more you drink of this wine the more sober you become, and the deeper and sweeter, for there is more in Christ than was ever dreamed of, and a delight in God's salvation that could never be thought possible. (*A. G. Brown.*)

Ver. 14. **I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people.**—*Whether well-composed religious vows do not exceedingly promote religion*:—Whoso doth engage himself by a well-ordered vow, doth set his religion in the whole, or in some particular part of it, in very good forwardness. Religion is a gainer by this bargain well made; the bond is to God, but religion receives the interest at least: well-composed vows are religion's engines, able to move the weightier burdens and loads, and fit to be only employed in them. I. WHAT A VOW IS. 1. A promise. 2. Voluntary. 3. Made to God alone. II. WHETHER IT BE LAWFUL, IN ANY CASE, FOR US NOW TO MAKE A VOW. 1. What is not evil in itself, nor evil by accident, unless made evil by the undue ordering of it through our fault, may lawfully be done by us. 2. Vows may be lawfully made now by us Christians, because what was lawful to the Jew on moral considerations, and not on any ceremonial considerations, that is also lawful now unto us Christians. 3. Vows may lawfully be made by us Christians; for it is a kind of thankfulness and acknowledgment made to God, with the universal approbation

and consent of men. 4. Unless such vows may be accounted lawful to us, I cannot see how we have any way of making free, voluntary, and extraordinary acknowledgments unto God. 5. But that is lawful to us Christians which doth most certainly ensure our duty to God, yet doth not ensnare us in the ensuring of it. III. WHEN VOWS ARE WELL-COMPOSED, AND SO CONSEQUENTLY FOR THE ADVANTAGE OF RELIGION. 1. If you would duly and well compose your vows, you must wait a fit season; not vow on every occasion. 2. When the extraordinary case warrants thee to this extraordinary obliging of thyself, then be sure to proceed deliberately, and with advice. Consider what thou doest: every one condemns rash vows; and, I am sure, inconsiderate vows are rash ones. Here Jephthah failed. Consider—(1) Whether that thou vowest to do be lawful. (2) Whether acceptable to God. (3) Whether that thing which thou vowest bear a proportion to that thou didst expect and pray for when thou vowedst, or to that thou hadst received, for which thou dost now make thy vow. 3. Thou must vow cheerfully, and with a ready mind. 4. Vow sincerely and uprightly. IV. HOW WELL-COMPOSED VOWS PROMOTE RELIGION. 1. Religion hath its concernment in the credit and reputation which it hath in the world. Religion hath a name to look after, so well as you or I; and it loseth or gaineth, as it is either honoured or reproached by the professors of it. Now, when times of extraordinary danger drive us to our prayers and vows to the true God, and we resolve to have mercy from Him, or to choose to fall into His hand, this sets the credit and honour of religion, that it can have recourse to God, who, we know, can deliver us. This is somewhat; but the making a vow doth not so much honour religion as the performing of it doth, when it is hereby declared to the world,—that religion is the thing that makes men the same in their mercies which they were in their distresses; that the God whom they worship is the true God, able to require their vows, if they should neglect to pay them. 2. By setting forward the growth of religions in the midst of those who profess it. 3. Vows well made, and kept well, very much improve and promote religion in the heart and life of him who so voweth and keepeth his vow. V. WHENCE THESE WELL-COMPOSED VOWS HAVE SUCH INFLUENCE ON RELIGION, WHAT HAVE THEY IN THEM MORE THAN ORDINARY THUS TO PROMOTE IT? To this I will answer as briefly as I may: There is in such vows a most notable awakening and quickening power, which sets all a man's care, wisdom, truth, and strength on work, to do the things whereby religion is so much promoted. VI. APPLICATION. 1. If well-composed vows do indeed much promote religion, it will teach us how careful we should be in making our vows to the greatest advantage of religion. 2. Do well advised and composed vows so much promote religion when well and faithfully kept? Are they also such sacred and inviolable bonds? Then look what vows you are under, look how you have performed them. (*H. Hurst, M.A.*) *Religious decision*.—I. THE ELEMENTS OF WHICH RELIGIOUS DECISION CONSISTS. 1. A settled faith in the principles of Christian truth. 2. A self-denying conformity to the precepts of Christian holiness. 3. A public dedication to the interests of the Christian cause. II. THE ARGUMENTS BY WHICH RELIGIOUS DECISION IS COMMENDED. 1. It is a due and proper return for the mercies you have received. 2. It must greatly elevate your own character. 3. It is the source of the purest and highest happiness. III. THE PRACTICAL RESULT WHICH OUR CONTEMPLATION OF RELIGIOUS DECISION AND THE ARGUMENTS COMMENDING IT OUGHT INVARIABLY AND UNIVERSALLY TO ANSWER. 1. It is that you should thus be decided and devoted for yourselves. 2. Resolve upon it without delay. (1) By hesitation you lose time. (2) By hesitation you diminish the probabilities of devotedness at a future time. (3) By hesitation you presume guiltily upon the probabilities of future life. (*J. Parsons.*) *The sanctity of vows*:—I. A VOW IS A DISTINCT AND CONSCIOUS ASSERTION OF OUR RELIGIOUS NATURE. It is made with the most perfect consciousness of personal responsibility, in the presence and under the authority of that august Being to whom all obedience and worship are due. And it is void of all significance and solemnity if the whole religiousness of man's nature does not find expression in it. II. A VOW IS THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF MORAL RESPONSIBILITY, AND A CONFESSION OF GUILT BEFORE GOD. In this vow it is confessed that God holds man responsible for what he does. There is no significance in the vow if it is not based upon the recognition of his individual responsibility before the law. And as this springs from a conscience under the pressure of guilt, it is a confession of judgment identical in character with that which will be made by the sinner at the bar of God in the last day. III. THE VOW IS A VOLUNTARY ACT OF THE WILL, AND IS, THEREFORE, OF THE

NATURE OF A COVENANT WITH ALMIGHTY GOD. It cannot be broken, therefore, without the guilt of perjury. IV. EVERY PROPER VOW IS IN THE DIRECTION OF ORIGINAL DUTY, AS WELL AS IN THE DIRECTION OF OFFERED GRACE. A vow is, therefore, doubly binding. It has absorbed into itself an obligation that existed before. It has embodied a duty which was in itself binding, and by its form ratifies, endorses and strengthens that obligation under the sanction of an oath. A voluntary pledge to perform that which is in itself a duty, rivets the obligation upon the conscience, and leaves no loophole for escape. But the vow is also in the direction of offered grace. Being made to Almighty God, with entire reliance upon Divine aid in its fulfilment, it is clearly in the line of the grace which is offered to man. V. THE VOW IS MADE UNDER THE SANCTION OF THE ETERNAL WORLD. For a moment the spiritual eye has been opened to catch a partial glimpse of all that is blessed in heaven, of all that is dreadful in hell, of all that is awful in the judgment-day, of all that is sublime in the vastness of the silent eternity to which we are hastening. How solemn the obligation becomes under the pressure of such a sanction as this! (B. M. Palmer, D.D.)

Ver. 15. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.—*Precious death:*—As we see death, it means decay, removal, absence—things which we do not prize. But as God sees death, He beholds something really precious to Him and, we may justly infer, precious to us, for whatever is against us cannot be precious to our Father. We are looking at the wrong side of the tapestry, where all is tangle and confusion. God sees the right side, where the design is intelligent and the colours harmonious. We are without the veil, and see but the dim light through the curtain; within is the Shechinah glory. We stand in the dark, believing and hoping; God is in the light, seeing and knowing. I. TO GOD DEATH MEANS THE OPPORTUNITY TO SUPPLY EVERY NEED OF HIS CHILD. Health means conscious strength. While we are well, we may feel that we are equal to taking care of ourselves. Dying means absolute helplessness. Such is God's opportunity. When physicians give up the case, He takes it up. After human help has failed, the Lord delights to be to us all that we need. II. TO GOD DEATH MEANS THE MOST INTIMATE COMMUNION. He rejoices to have all to Himself those whom He loves. He said of Israel, "I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her." No one else can help us die. Through the valley we must go alone—yet not alone, for Jesus accompanies. III. TO GOD DEATH MEANS REST. Jesus said, "Come unto Me," etc. It was His delight to quiet the heart and give rest to the weary mind. The voice from heaven said, "Blessed are the dead," etc. "There remaineth a rest," etc. To us death looks like a rest of the body—the lifeless form no longer suffers; it sleeps until the waking on the resurrection morning. God sees the rest of soul, and the event which introduces His children into this restful state is precious to Him. IV. TO GOD DEATH MEANS LARGER LIFE. Christ came to give life, and to give it more abundantly. Whatever imparts and increases the life of God's people is of great value. While to us death seems to be the cessation of life, to God it is an increase of life. The last words of Drummond Burns were, "I have been dying for years, now I shall begin to live." It is passing from the land of the dying into the land of the living. V. TO GOD DEATH MEANS JOY. All through the Bible we are exhorted to "Rejoice, rejoice evermore!" The joy of His children is precious to God. Dying, Rutherford exclaimed, "I feed on manna; oh, for arms to embrace Him!" President Wingate, of Wake Forest College, whispered to his wife with his last breath, "I thought it would be sweet, but I did not think it would be so sweet as this." It is passing from shadow into sunshine; from the discords of earth into the music of the celestial harps; from contraction into everlasting expansion. VI. TO GOD DEATH MEANS MINISTRY TO THE LIVING. Through death Jesus entered the family of the Jewish ruler, and the death of our friends often leads us to invite the Man of Sorrows to our homes. The departure of loved ones opens a window of heaven, and gives us a glimpse into the beyond; and in leaving us, they, in a very true sense, come to us. We appreciate them as we never did before; we see their virtues and forget their faults; they are to us transfigured, while everything about them shines with a peculiar glory. (A. C. Dixon, D.D.) *Precious deaths:* I. THE STATEMENT HERE MADE IMPLIES A VIEW OF DEATH OF A PECULIAR KIND. Death in itself is terrible. But to the saint death is by no means such a thing as happens unto the unregenerate. The change lies mainly in the fact that it is

no more the infliction of a penalty for sin upon the believer. To him it is a privilege to die. The Head has traversed the valley of death-shade, and let the members rejoice to follow. We know that to die is not to renounce existence; we understand that death is but a passage into a higher and a nobler existence. The soul emancipated from all sinfulness passes the Jordan, and is presented without fault before the throne of God. II. THE STATEMENT HERE MADE IS OF A MOST UNLIMITED KIND. 1. There is no limit here as to whom. Provided that the dying one be a saint, his death is precious. He may be the greatest in the Church, he may be the least: he may be the boldest confessor, he may be the most timid trembler; but if a saint, his death is precious in God's sight. 2. There is no limit as to when. What, shall the hero fall when the battle wants him most? Shall the reaper be sent home and made to lay down his sickle just when the harvest is heaviest, and the day requires every worker? To us it seemeth strange, but to God it is precious. Oh, could we lift the veil, could we understand what now we see not, we should perceive that it was better for the saints to die when they died, than it would have been for them to have lived longer lives. 3. There is no limitation as to where. Up in the lonely garret where there are none of the appliances of comfort, but all the marks of the deepest penury, up there where the dying work-girl or the crossing-sweeper dies—there is a sight most precious unto God; or yonder, in the long corridor of the hospital, where many are too engrossed in their own griefs to be able to shed a tear of sympathy, there passes away a triumphant spirit, and precious is that death in God's sight. Alone, utterly alone in the dead of night, surprised, unable to call in a helper, saintly life often has passed away; but in that form also precious is the death in God's sight. 4. There is no limit as to how. Their deaths may happen suddenly; they may be alive, and active, and in a moment fall down dead, but their death is precious. III. THE STATEMENT OF THE TEXT MAY BE FULLY SUSTAINED AND ACCOUNTED FOR. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints," is a most sober and truthful declaration. 1. Because their persons were, and always will be, precious unto God. His saints! These are they whose names are borne on Jesus' breast, and engraven upon the palms of His hands; these are His bride, His spouse; therefore everything that concerns them must be precious. 2. Because precious graces are in death very frequently tested, and as frequently revealed and perfected. You cannot tell what is in a man to the fulness of him till he is tried to the full, and therefore the last trial, inasmuch as it strippeth off earth-born imperfections and develops in us that which is of God, and brings to the front the real and the true, and throws to the back the superficial and the pretentious, is precious in God's sight. 3. Because precious attributes are in dying moments gloriously illustrated. I refer now to the Divine attributes. In life and in death we prove the attribute of God's righteousness, we find that He does not lie, but is faithful to His word. We learn the attribute of mercy, He is gentle and pitiful to us in the time of our weakness. We prove the attribute of His immutability, we find Him "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." 4. Because it is a precious sheep folded, a precious sheaf harvested, a precious vessel which had been long at sea brought into harbour, a precious child which had been long at school to finish his training brought home to dwell in the Father's house for ever. God the Father sees the fruit of His eternal love at last ingathered: Jesus sees the purchase of His passion at last secured: the Holy Spirit sees the object of His continual workmanship at last perfected. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The preciousness in God's sight of the death of saints:*—I. AS THE SUPREME CRISIS OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE. This life is a life of changes, of pains, of destructions. But all are dwarfed by that change, that pain, that destruction. 1. Physically. 2. Socially. 3. Spiritually. II. AS AFFIXING THE SEAL TO HUMAN CHARACTER. III. AS THE ENTRANCE INTO NEW FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD (Eccl. xii. 7; 2 Cor. v. 8; Phil. i. 2, 3). To the wicked, such nearness of the soul to God, with all disguises stripped away, must be an embrace of fire; but to those that are the saved of the Lord, an ineffable blessedness. The children are at school now, and the time is often a time of weary waiting; but there shall be the homecoming then! IV. AS THE BEGINNING OF A BOUNDLESS LIFE. The intermediate waiting, be it what it may, shall be but "as a watch in the night." And then? Then a perfect manhood, a perfect world, a perfect progress for ever! The long waiting is all for this crowning joy; the many hindrances and oppositions are but a discipline to prepare for this consummate blessedness; the great salvation finds its full completion in the all-perfect life whose beauty

dawns immortal at last. (T. F. Lockyer, B.A.) *The preciousness of the saints in life and in death*.—I. THE LORD HAS HIS SAINTS—HIS HOLY ONES. This imports—1. Appropriation. They are "His" saints—saints through Him and in Him, saints of His making and modelling and establishing. 2. Devotedness. They are holy unto the Lord, sanctified or set apart to His service, self-surrendered to the adorable Redeemer. 3. Resemblance. Such characters are emphatically Godlike, holy and pure; children of their Father which is in heaven; certifying to all around their filial relationship to Him, by their manifest participation of His nature, by their reflection of His image and likeness. 4. Endearment. II. THEY ENJOY NO IMMUNITY FROM BODILY DEATH. Waiving whatever is occasional, arising out of circumstances peculiar to individuals, it is easy to see that, though this is so painful for the time being to God's dear children, it is well adapted to promote such important ends as these;—the trial and improvement of their present grace,—the consequent heightening of their happiness in the future state,—the arresting of the sinner's attention,—the encouragement of many feeble and wavering believers through their dying testimony,—the illustration, in a stronger light, of the awful evil of sin,—the demonstration, too, of the spiritual and superior nature of Christian joy, and its absolute independency on artificial circumstances, and its true character, the joy of the Holy Ghost,—and the complete, eventual display, in the sight of heaven, and earth, and hell, of the conquest of Christ, and of His religion, over suffering, and death, and hell. III. YET, EVEN IN DEATH THEY ARE THE CONTINUED OBJECTS OF GOD'S COMPLACENT REGARD. 1. He watches over, and sets a high value upon the holy and useful lives of His people, and will not lightly allow those lives to be abbreviated or destroyed. 2. He exercises control over the circumstances of their death. 3. When they are dying, He looks upon them and is merciful unto them. 4. He attaches great importance to their deathbed itself. The close of a Christian's career on earth, his defiance, in the strength of his Saviour, of his direst enemy, the good confession which he acknowledges when he is enabled to witness before those around his dying bed, all these are precious and important in the sight of the Lord, and ought to be so in our view, and redound, not only to his own advantage, but to the benefit of survivors, "to the praise and glory of His grace." 5. He evinces his estimation of their character, and of their circumstances, by providing for their recovery from the grave, and their enjoyment of a glorious immortality. (W. M. Bunting.) *The preciousness of the death of believers*.—I. THE DEATH OF THE SAINTS IS A GREAT AND MOMENTOUS EVENT IN THE SIGHT OF GOD. II. IT AFFORDS SUPREME GRATIFICATION TO HIS PATERNAL LOVE. O believers, it is precious to the Father to see your trials close, to see you entering on the glories of the spotless bride of Christ, to see all tears wiped from your eyes and your voices tuned to the song of Moses and the Lamb, to see you lay aside the cross and take up the crown. III. IT EXERTS A POWERFUL INFLUENCE ON THE SALVATION OF OTHERS. Can you forget the prayers breathed out for you amid uttered longings to depart and be with Christ? IV. THE PLACE IT OCCUPIES IN THE SALVATION OF THE SAINT HIMSELF. The time of death is a most precious time for God to work. It is the time when all pride is laid in the dust, and the soul, emptied of itself, is ready to be filled with the fulness of Christ. It is a time when lusts and passions have lost their power, and the poor sinner is ready to acquiesce in salvation by free grace. It is the time of man's extremity which is God's opportunity; a time when all human help fails, and Jehovah comes in mercy to aid. V. The saint's death is so precious to the Lord that HE TAKES CARE TO ORDER ALL THINGS RESPECTING IT FOR THE SAINT'S GOOD AND FOR HIS OWN GLORY. (J. Walken, D.D.) *The death of good men dear to God*.—I. WHENCE IT IS THAT THE DEATH OF THE SAINTS IS DEAR TO GOD. 1. Because then they are delivered from all their sufferings. 2. Because an end is then put to all their labours. 3. That He may approve their conduct, and confer upon them a glorious recompense. 4. Because they are then made capable of serving Him better than in this present world. II. THE PRACTICAL INFLUENCE WHICH THE CONSIDERATION OF THE DEATH OF THE SAINTS BEING DEAR TO GOD SHOULD HAVE UPON US. 1. It should make us ambitious to attain their character. 2. It teaches us that none are exempted from mortality. All the ingenuity of the sons of men hath not been able to discover an antidote against mortality, and the saints must submit to it as well as others. What, then, remains for us to do? Surely to live the life of the righteous, that we may have our last end like his. 3. The death of the saints should fill us with the deepest regret. I may call them the pillars of the earth, which preserve it from destruction. When these are removed, there is reason to

apprehend approaching desolation. (*D. Johnston, D.D.*) *Death of saints*:—**I. CONSIDER WHY GOD CLAIMS SAINTS AS HIS OWN.** 1. He has set them apart for Himself, in His original purpose of redemption. 2. He has enstamped His moral image upon them. 3. They have freely and sincerely given themselves away to Him. **II. SHOW THAT GOD TAKES PECULIAR CARE OF THE DEATH OF HIS SAINTS.** 1. He always takes care when His saints shall die. 2. He takes care that they shall die, not only at the best time, but under the best circumstances. 3. God takes care of His saints, when their pure and immortal spirits leave their clayey tabernacle, and take their course to the world of light. He knows that death is a great and solemn change, and He will not forsake them while passing through it. **III. IMPROVEMENT.** 1. If God treats His saints in such a manner as has been said, then we may learn the extent of His sovereignty towards all mankind. 2. In the view of this subject, we may see that real saints have a permanent source of comfort, to which all who disbelieve and reject the Gospel are entire strangers. 3. Since God claims all real Christians as His own, and always takes a gracious care of them, they ought to make their calling and election sure to themselves. They are absolutely secure in His view, and they ought to be absolutely secure in their own view. 4. If the death of saints be precious in the sight of the Lord, then it ought to be precious and desirable in their own sight. They ought to live in hope, and not in fear of death. 5. Since God claims saints as His own, and takes peculiar care of them both living and dying, it infinitely concerns sinners to become saints, and live a holy and devout life. 6. If God takes peculiar care of saints in life, and often gives them a peaceful death, then their death ought to be peculiarly regarded as very precious and instructive. 7. If God claims all real saints as His own, and takes peculiar care of their death, which is precious in His sight, then pious mourners have ground of support and consolation under the bereavement of their pious relatives and friends. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *The importance which God attaches to the death of His saints*:—**I. HE WILL NOT PERMIT IT TO TAKE PLACE AT THE WILL OF HIS ENEMIES, OR WHENEVER THEY IN THEIR MALICE MAY SEEK TO COMPASS IT.** He who turned the hearts of Joseph's brethren rather to sell him into slavery than to slay him and conceal his blood; He who preserved the three Hebrew children in the midst of the fiery furnace, and brought Daniel unhurt out of the lions' den; He who sent His angel and delivered Peter out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews; He who, when His servant Paul was pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that he despaired even of life, but had the sentence of death in himself, delivered him from so great a death as that which he feared, has still the hearts of all men in His hands, and all events at His disposal. He knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust to the day of judgment to be punished. **II. HE WILL NOT PERMIT THE DEATH OF HIS SAINTS TO TAKE PLACE BUT FOR PURPOSES WORTHY OF BEING GAINED EVEN BY SUCH A PRICE.** 1. The impression it may make on others who remain for a time behind those who are taken away. 2. The acceptable homage which God may purpose to derive to Himself from the death of His saints. 3. The purpose of their death to the saints themselves, which is to usher them into a blessed immortality. (*J. Henderson, D.D.*) *The death of His saints precious to God*:—**I. Precious, therefore, in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints, BECAUSE IT BRINGS THEM NEARER TO GOD.** How strange, indeed how absurd, this life would be if death ended all! Think of a man like Gladstone, who lived under a high sense of duty, whose life was one of prayer, who sang "Praise to the Holiest in the height" amid the sufferings of his last days;—just imagine all this ending in nothingness! Why, it reminds one of the famous Amblongus pie of the nonsense book. It was a pie of most elaborate construction. Particular directions were given as to the making of it, what was to be put in, and in what quantities. It was to be very carefully compounded, and most scientifically baked, and then the final instructions were to "open the window and pitch it out as fast as possible." Just as laughable, so to speak, is the idea of a man, trained to high thought and holy feeling and submissive will, being, at the last, simply "cast as rubbish to the void." But Christ hath brought life and immortality to light. **II. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints, BECAUSE IT ENDS THEIR STRUGGLE.** There is no surer thing about life here than that it is a struggle. The road is uphill all the way, and you must wrestle on towards heaven. But it is just this struggling that makes us, and gives us a character worth taking into the next world. It is told of the mother of Mr. Balfour that, on one occasion, when her

sous were going to play in a football match, some friend advised her to keep them from going because of the danger. "Would you have me spoil a character?" was the mother's reply. She herself was anxious about them, and didn't like their playing; but to keep them back from joining their comrades merely because of any risk, she felt, would do more harm than good. All the same, you may be sure, it would be a relief to her to see them safe home again after it was all over. And so God does not separate us from the need for struggle here, and the risks attending it. We have to face them all. He wants us to gain and acquire character through a well-fought fight. But will not He too be pleased,—relieved, might we say?—when all the struggle is safely over, and death brings His children home? III. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints, BECAUSE IT ENDS THEIR IGNORANCE. It is said, and with a good deal of truth, that most people who do any good in the world die without knowing it. That is very hard. Surely such, above all, deserve to know at least the good they have done. But often not till they are gone is the value of their work realized. They may have thought they were failures, they may have longed to be taken away as useless; and yet, when they are gone, others rise up and call them blessed. "Ah!" we say, "if they had only known, if they had only had the satisfaction of knowing that while they were with us!" But do you not think they know now? We may be sure that death ends their ignorance as to that, and as to many of the things that men here have for ages desired to look into. (*J. S. Mayer, M.A.*) *The death of the righteous precious in the sight of God:*—You might have thought that it would have been their life which was declared "precious"; for what are they but the army of the Lord? Are they not those who maintain His cause against a wicked and rebellious generation? And when withdrawn from earth, are they not comparatively withdrawn from all opportunity of witnessing for the truth, and upholding Christ's kingdom against the powers of darkness? Oh, it does but show more clearly how much of danger surrounds the saints during their sojourning below, that their death should be counted so valuable, notwithstanding that it interrupts their usefulness, removes them from the scene where alone they can wage the war with the enemies of God. Was the death of Paul precious, though his death was as when a standard-bearer fell, and there have arisen none since to take up his mantle as a champion of Christ? Then does not the very preciousness of his death give additional meaning and emphasis to his own words—"I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway"? The death is precious because the life is perilous; and God rejoices over His saints when He has gathered them into the separate state, because then they can be no more tempted to the forsaking His law, no more exposed to the assaults of the evil one, no more challenged to a battle in which if victory be glorious there is all the risk of a shameful defeat. And though it may seem to you that the usefulness of life must after all detract from the preciousness of death, so that you can hardly see how that is to be thought of great worth which transplants the believer from activity to quietude, from the maintenance of God's cause to the deep recesses of the separate state, yet reflect for a moment on the power of a saint's death, and you may believe that, even as a weapon against the unrighteous, death must be precious. It was in dying that Christ conquered. What was so precious as His death, forasmuch as through death He destroyed "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil"? It is in dying that saints often achieve their greatest victory, or do most for the cause of God or the truth. There is a power in their memory which makes them survive dissolution. The death of the righteous is often effectual in convincing those who were not moved by their life. The piety which can smile at the grim tyrant, more persuades men of its truth, and more urges to imitation, than piety under lesser trial and demonstration, as it was not in the pulpit, nor in the study, but at the stake, that martyrs lighted the candle which yet sheds over nations so rich an illumination. Let us not, then, speak of death as necessarily the termination of usefulness. It may often be only that which carries usefulness to its height, and gives it perpetuity. Having put off their armour, they may still be in the fight, their example remaining to incite others to constancy, their memory descending to lead on successors in the championship of truth. Housed, then, by death, so that everlasting blessedness is made theirs beyond every possible contingency; removed from a scene where every hour in danger of dishonouring and denying God, to one where they are certain to love Him and adore Him without the slightest interrup-

tion, the dissolution moreover of this framework of flesh being often but a process through which righteousness takes a higher stand in the witnessing for the Gospel, and in the advancement of the kingdom of Christ—oh, tell me not that death can be other than valuable in the eyes of the Almighty; valuable as securing those whom He loves and promoting that which He designs. (*H. Melville, B.D.*) *The death of God's saints*:—The word here rendered "saints" means those that are saved by grace, to use the New Testament language, and are now endeavouring to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world, because they are taught or trained so to do by the grace of God which has brought them salvation. Now, all through their lives God watches over these, His saints. Precious are their lives in His sight. He hears their supplications, and when they are brought low He helps them; He makes all things work together for their good; precious to Him are their prayers and their praises. Their very tears and cries and the sobs of their hearts are known to Him. Precious is their daily service, whether rendered in silence and obscurity or under the stimulus of publicity and the responsibility of a high position. Precious to the Lord is their walk before Him. In their going out and their coming in, their rising up and lying down, the Lord knoweth them that are His, and the Lord careth for them. He will not let them die at any such time or in any such way as may do them hurt. They may die early or late (God appoints the time)—early with much promise unfulfilled or just in the midst of a very useful life; or in old age, after years of helplessness. No one can tell you why. But God knows, and the death of His saints, at what time and in what manner soever it occurs, is always watched over by His unsleeping eye, engaging the tender pity and lovingkindness of Him who is Lord both of the dead and of the living, for these have fought a fight of faith, and their Master calls them to peace. Peace, at last: no enemies any more; no enemies within; no enemies without; no more wounds from false tongues or blows from hands unjust; no more conflict in the heart; no more temptation of the world, or of the flesh, or of the devil. They have finished their work, and their Master calls them to rest. Their bodies rest in the tomb, but their spirits rest in the light of God. Oh, happy release to those that have laboured and not fainted! Absent from the body, they are present with the Lord, and it is far better. (*D. Fraser, D.D.*) *Death culminates God's designs for saints*:—The death of His saints is the climax and culmination of all God's works on their behalf; therefore does He rejoice in it. As fathers welcome home their boys and girls when holiday-time arrives—as the shepherd looks with joy upon the sheep gathered in the fold, and welcomes the late-comer with special gladness—as they who stand upon the pier look on with pleasure when the sails are furled and the anchor dropped and the voyage over—as the husbandman gazes with delight upon the sheaves ingathered, and hears with delight the cries of harvest home,—so does our Father stand with rapture at His gate to welcome home the children for their eternal holiday; so does our Shepherd gather to His side in heaven the sheep for whom He bled; so do the heavenly watchers on the quays in glory look with glistening eyes upon those who have an abundant entrance into the kingdom of His dear Son, like ships that have sailed from far, and weathered many a storm, arriving safely in the harbour with their precious freight; so does the Lord God, the Husbandman of our souls, look on with great delight when shocks of corn that are fully ripe fall beneath the sickle and are gathered into His garner. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints," for it is the fulfilment of all God's designs of life; and, when the topstones are brought on with shouting, they shall pass from sonnets of His grace to singing of His glory, which He has made to be theirs as well. (*T. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 16. **O Lord, truly I am Thy servant.**—*God's service*:—This, with the following verses, may be thus paraphrased: Blessed Lord, from the sense of what Thou hast done for me, I cannot but declare myself infinitely obliged to Thee; no servant bought with a price, or born in a house, can be more engaged to his Master than I am to Thee, who by Thy providence hast rescued me from the utmost dangers; what remains but that I should return the humblest offerings of praise and prayer, that I should spend my whole life as a vowed oblation to Thy service, and render Thee all possible praise in the public assembly, in the most solemn manner? I will own and endeavour to approve myself Thy servant. **I. REASONS WHY SUCH A SERVICE SHOULD BE CHOSEN BY US.** 1. It is a just service. (1) He has a right of creation, for He hath made us, and not we our-

selves (Isa. xlv. 1). (2) He has a right of redemption. We are His by purchase (Exod. xii. 44; 1 Pet. i. 18; 1 Cor. vi. 20). (3) He has a right to us by conquest (Luke vii. 54). 2. It is a most necessary service. (1) Because we are born to serve. (2) If we withdraw our service from Him, we perish in our rebellion (Isa. lx. 12). (3) It is necessary by our own voluntary act. For we bound ourselves by a solemn promise and vow, in the face of the congregation at our baptism, to continue Christ's faithful servants and soldiers to our lives' end. 3. God's service is easy. What He commands us to do, He helps us to perform, so that "His commandments are not grievous." 4. God's service is the most honourable. No man ever truly served God that did not gain incredibly by it. These things the servants of God may depend upon as the certain perquisites and benefits of His service, protection, maintenance and reward. II. How we should demean ourselves in God's service. 1. With reverence. This is accompanied with—(1) Humility. (2) Fear of offending (Mal. i. 6; Ps. ii. 11; Heb. xii. 28). (3) A care of desire and pleasure (Col. i. 10). 2. With obedience. (1) Active obedience to God consisteth in keeping His commandments and doing His will. (2) Passive obedience consists in contenting ourselves with the allowances of our supreme Master, and submitting ourselves to His corrections. 3. Fidelity. This is shown in—(1) The sincerity and heartiness of our service. (2) Zeal in His behalf. (3) Diligence. (*E. Lake, D.D.*) *The delight of God's service* (to young men):—I. I commend the service of God to you. 1. I have never regretted that I entered it. All sorts of enticement have assailed me, and siren voices have often tried to lure me; but never since the day in which I enlisted in Christ's service have I said to myself, "I am sorry that I am a Christian; I am vexed that I serve the Lord." I think that I may, therefore, honestly, heartily, and experimentally recommend to you the service which I have found so good. I have been a bad enough servant, but never had a servant so lovable a Master or so blessed a service. 2. I have great delight in seeing my children in the same service. When a man finds that a business is a bad one, you will not find him bringing up his boys to it. Now, the greatest desire of my heart for my sons was that they might become the servants of God. I never wished for them that they might be great or rich, but, oh, if they would but give their young hearts to Jesus! 3. So blessed is the service of God, that I would like to die in it. David Brainerd, when he was very old and could not preach to the Indians, was found sitting up in bed, teaching a little Indian boy his letters, that he might read the Bible, and he said, "If I cannot serve God one way, I will another; I will never leave off this blessed service." (1) To serve God is the most reasonable thing in the world. It was He that made you. Should not our Creator have our service? (2) This is the most honourable service that ever can be. (3) This service is full of beneficence. It is good for yourself, and it is good for your fellow-men; for what does God ask in His service but that we should love Him with all our heart, and that we love our neighbour as ourselves? He who does this is truly serving God by the help of His Spirit, and he is also greatly blessing men. (4) It is the most remunerative work under heaven. A quiet conscience is better than gold. To wear in your button-hole that little flower called "heart's-ease," and to have the jewel of contentment in your bosom—this is heaven begun below: godliness is great gain to him that hath it. II. A word of caution. David said, "O Lord, truly I am Thy servant." "Truly." 1. If you become the servant of God, become the servant of God truly. God is not mocked. It is the curse of our Churches that we have so many merely nominal Christians in them. It is the plague of this age that so many put on Christ's livery, and yet never do Him a hand's turn. Oh, if you serve God, mean it! 2. If you would be God's servant, then count the cost. You must leave all others. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Ye cannot serve Christ and Belial. He is not God's who is not God's only. 3. You must enter upon God's service also for life; not to be sometimes God's servant and sometimes not—off and on. III. I want now to offer counsel in the matter of distinct confession if you become the servant of Christ. "I am Thy servant," says David, and I want every young man here who is a Christian to say so, that there may not be one among us who follows the Lord Jesus in a kind of mean, sneaking way. It has become a custom with some to try to be Christians and never say anything about it; but I urge the true servants of Christ to out with it, and never to be ashamed, because, if ever the declaration was required, it is required now. IV. I close by congratulating some of you who are God's servants upon your freedom, for that is

the last part of the text. "Thou hast loosed my bonds." (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Devotedness to God.—I. THE IMPORT OF THE PSALMIST'S DECLARATION AND PURPOSE. 1. A very humble sense of his distance from, and dependence upon, God as His creature. 2. A confession of his being bound by particular covenant and consent unto God, and a repetition of the same by a new adherence. 3. An expression of his peculiar and special relation to God. 4. A sense of gratitude for signal mercies. 5. A solemn dedication and surrender of himself to God and His service for the time to come. II. PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT. 1. Plead with every one the right of his Maker to his service. 2. Warn such as are living in open and avowed profanity. They are so far from being the servants of God that they are His enemies, his confederated enemies, and the enemies of everything that stands in a visible relation to Him. (J. Witherspoon, D.D.)

The divine servant.—I. THE DIVINE SERVANT. He should be—1. A voluntary one, willing in every sense of the word to do the bidding of his Master, even when it is opposed to the wishes of men. 2. Earnest. 3. Unselfish. 4. Humble. 5. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, who dwells within him. II. DIVINE SERVICE. Cathedrals and chapels may be likened to spiritual stables, where divine servants are born and fed and rested; but our workshops, our families, our school-rooms, our editorial chairs are the places where we should do our divine service. (W. Birch.)

The Lord's servant.—A servant is one who obeys the will of another. The will of a person may be obeyed consciously or unconsciously. Hence servants are of two kinds,—those that obey consciously, and those that obey unconsciously. The latter—such as obey unconsciously—may be called instruments of the master's will; and the former—such as obey consciously—may be called agents of it. All believers are God's servants in the best and noblest sense of the word. They do His will because they know it, and because it is their delight; they obey His law, because they know it, and because they have it within their heart. They are not the blind instruments of His power; they are the conscious and willing agents of a service in which they glory. I. HOW THE BELIEVER BECOMES A SERVANT OF THE LORD. 1. By birth. It must not be confounded with that birth which the believer has experienced in common with all the race, and which brought him into a world of sin, and sorrow, and death. This is his second birth. This is his new birth. It is a birth which is peculiar to the believer. He is born of water, figuratively, symbolically; of the Word, instrumentally; of the Spirit, efficiently. 2. By purchase. Christ gave Himself for you, that He might redeem you from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. 3. By conquest. 4. By voluntary engagement. He will have nothing more to do with his old master. He desires that his ears may be bored, and that he may be the servant of Christ for ever. II. THE STATE OF MIND WHICH THE BELIEVER, AS A SERVANT OF GOD, SHOULD CULTIVATE. 1. He ought to remember that he is a servant of God. It will be easy to do this in heaven. The difficulty would be to forget it for an instant amid the fellowships of that glorious place. But there are strong temptations to forget it here. The service of God is unpopular. It is unfashionable. And it is inconsistent with many practices which are pleasant to the flesh. 2. He should remember how he became the Lord's servant. 3. He should keep his duty as a servant of God always in view. We conjoin these two—the obeying of God's commandments with the doing of God's work—because it is not enough, and does not come up to the full idea of what a servant should be, that he be zealous in his master's cause, and devote himself to his master's interests; for it is necessary also that he be guided implicitly by the master's will, and that he do God's work in God's way. (A. Gray.)

Self-dedication to God.—I. THE OLD BONDS LOOSED. No sooner is a man united to the Crucified One by living faith, than the sentence, borne by the Surety, falls from off him (as it is written, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us"), and, with that sentence, all the other bonds together—sin, Satan, the world. II. THE NEW BONDS WHICH HAVE COME IN PLACE OF THE OLD FOR EVER. 1. The nature of the new bonds. As they consist in the service of God, so that service is, as to the character of it, first, true; second, entire; and third, hearty and free. 2. The spring and source of the new bonds. It is taught here as to this, that it is the loosing of the old bonds which is the source and spring of the new. (1) The loosing of the old bonds is the source and spring of the new, in that it is indispensable to the whole formation of them. So long as the old are not loosed, the new cannot exist. (2) The loosing of the old bonds is the source and spring of the new,

inasmuch as it fixes the new, many ways, sweetly and strongly on the soul,—enhances many ways the obligation of God's service on the soul. (3) The loosing of the old bonds is the source and spring of the new, in that God's express purpose and design in the loosing of the old was to fix the new for ever upon the soul,—to set the soul free in order to its serving and glorifying Him for ever. (4) The loosing of the old bonds is the source and spring of the new, in that it brings into the soul a Divine power and strength,—the power of the Holy Ghost, effectually to persuade, enable, constrain, the soul to the service of God. (5) The loosing of the old bonds is the source and spring of the new, in that, besides the power, it brings into the soul all manner of inducements, persuasives, motives, to the service of God; and specially among these, the motive of an overpowering gratitude and love, under whose blessed influence it comes to pass that, whereas we could not serve God before, now we cannot but serve Him, as David sings in this psalm, "What shall I render unto the Lord," etc. (C. J. Brown, D.D.)

Personal service.—The religion of Jesus is the religion of liberty. The true believer can say, when his soul is in a healthy state, "Thou hast loosed my bonds. The penal fetters with which my soul was once bound are all dashed to shivers; I am free!" "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," etc. The burdensome bonds of ceremonials are all cast to the winds. Henceforth the beggarly elements are trodden under foot; shadows have yielded to substance, and the type and the symbol cease to oppress; the true light now shineth, and the torches are quenched. "Thou hast loosed my bonds"—that is to say, Thou hast not only saved me from the penal consequences of my sin and from the heavy burden of the old Mosaic ceremonial law, but Thou hast moreover delivered me from the spirit of bondage which once led me to serve Thee with the fear of an unwilling slave. Thou hast made me Thy freedman. No more do I crouch at Thy feet or go to Thy footstool cowering like a slave; but I come to Thee with privilege of access, up to Thy very throne. By the Spirit of adoption I cry, Abba, Father. Thou dost own the kindred. For by the selfsame Spirit I am sealed to the day of redemption. Thus, O Lord, "Thou hast loosed my bonds." Nor, if religion has had its full sway in us, is this all. Thou hast loosed me from the bonds of worldly maxims; Thou hast delivered me from the fear of man; Thou hast rescued me from the stooping and fawning which made me once the slave of every tyrant who laid claim to my allegiance, and Thou hast made me now the servant of but one Master, whose service is perfect liberty.

I. THE NATURE OF PERSONAL SERVICE. Let me explain it by a contrast. The service of God among us has grown more and more a service by proxy. Do we not observe, even in the outward worship of God, at times a great attempt towards worship by proxy? Do we not often hear singing the praises of God confined to some five or six or more trained men and women who are to praise God for us? Do we not sometimes have the dreary thought, when we are in our churches and chapels that even the prayer is said and prayed by the minister for us? We shall never see great things in the world till we have all roused ourselves to our personal responsibilities. God will not give the honour of saving the world to His ministers. He meant it for His Church; and until His Church is prepared to grasp it, God will withhold the crown which He has prepared for her brow, and for hers alone, and which none but she can ever win.

II. ITS REASONABLENESS. Heir of heaven, blood-bought and blood-washed, Jesus did not save thee by another. But, again, have you not a personal religion? You live, if you be a true Christian—you live upon the personal realization of your interest in the covenant of grace. What more reasonable than that you should give personal service? Further, this personal service is reasonable from the fact that personal service is the only kind of service at all available. I scarcely know whether you can serve God except by individual consecration.

III. ITS EXCELLENCE. This excellence is manifold. Among the first of its charms, personal service is the main argument of the Christian religion against the sceptic. Let every private man have his mission; let every man and woman begin to build nearest to their own house, and from that day scepticism begins to lose, at least, one of its arguments; and, with it, it loses one of its most formidable elements—one of its deadliest weapons with which it has attacked the Church. But, further, I am persuaded that while it would be a grand argument against sceptics, it would be one of the greatest means of deciding that class of waverers who, although they are not sceptical, are negligent of the things of the Kingdom. There is no way to make another man earnest like being earnest oneself. But, further, the

excellency of personal service, it strikes me, is not confined to the good we do, but should be argued from the good we get. We have in our Churches men and women who are always looking for an opportunity for finding fault. They are never consistent in anything but in their inconsistent grumbling. The mightiest cure for the Church is to set them to work. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *God's servants*:—It would oftentimes help us to bear our trials were we to reflect we are all God's servants rather than His guests. This does not degrade us, for the work of all the world is carried forward by underlings. No monarch saves a state, no commander wins a battle, no captain sails a ship, no trader amasses a fortune, but by the fidelity of his servants. To be God's servants, if faithful, is to be the world's co-redeemers. (*Christian Weekly.*) *Joyful Servitude*:—It is told of Socrates and his servant, that the servant gave himself to his master on his birthday, and that the master loaded his faithful servant with presents, and said, "Now I give thee thyself back richer than before." Then the servant replied, "But now, my master, I am more than ever thy servant still." (*Quiver.*)

Vers. 18, 19. *In the courts of the Lord's house.*—*The duty and blessing of public worship*:—I. AN URGENT DUTY. That God should receive the adoration of His creatures is the first dictate of all theology. We are told, in the earliest periods of sacred history, of altars erected and sacrifices offered. It was not until natural religion degenerated into idolatry that the manner of their service was specially revealed. The light of nature had led them together into God's presence. The throne of grace, the song of praise, the Word of God—by means like these His people find Him, and they can come even to His seat. They are to us the patriarch's ladder, connecting earth and heaven; and if ours is the true spirit of devotion, we too shall be encompassed with messages of Divine approval, and shall leave its scenes of gracious manifestation, exclaiming, "It was none other than the house of God; it was the gate of heaven." II. AN INVALUABLE PRIVILEGE. The truth, that all duty is privilege, applies here with special force. The holy city drew forth the desires of the pious Hebrew, because it was the place of the visible presence of the Most High, where His favour was to be obtained. Within the gates of Jerusalem He was to be found; and the psalmist therefore "longed, yea, even fainted for the courts of the Lord." Surely the Christian cannot lag behind the Jew, when he reckons up the benefits that flow from united approach to the place where prayer is wont to be made. What are all the ordinances of Christian faith, its simple sacraments, the Sabbath institution, the house of God, our perpetual access to the Throne—what are all these but our Jerusalem? III. A SCENE OF HALLOWED ENJOYMENT. It is impossible to read this psalm without being struck with its cheerful, happy tone. It expresses feelings very unlike the repulsive gloom with which some have invested the sanctuary and its services. God's worship inspired those who of old engaged in it with most enviable dispositions, if one may judge of them by their record here. How comprehensive its sympathies! How tender its affections! Love to God and man, to His Word, and to His people, breathes through every verse; and whenever God is worshipped in truth, the same experience is realized. Our feet stand on holy ground. Far hence he banished all profane thoughts and ungenial tempers, with the dark crowd of lusts that war against the soul. Here contrition mourns over sin; humility owns unworthiness; trustfulness casts herself on sovereign mercy; and love awakens love, as devotion enkindles her sacred fires. Let such feelings be in our hearts on one day of the week, and every other will own their influence; while the communion of saints is deepened in the place where the rich and poor meet together, and the Lord is the Maker of them all. Let it be something to us to belong to the company of those who worship God. Let our brethren be to us co-heirs of the grace of life, with whose joys and sorrows we seek to sympathize; and let our fellow-worshippers have a place in our kind regards and unfailing prayers. Let the very church we worship in be dear to us as the scene of sacred fellowship. (*A. MacEwen, D.D.*)

PSALM CXVII.

VERS. 1, 2. O praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise Him, all ye people.—*An exhortation to praise God for His goodness.*—1. In God's worship it is not always necessary to be long; few words sometimes say what is sufficient, as this short psalm giveth us to understand. 2. The conversion of the Gentiles was foreseen and foretold long before the Jews were rejected, as this exhortation directed unto them, and prophesying of their praising God doth give evidence. 3. Invitation of any to the fellowship of God's worship, and in special unto praise and thanksgiving, is an invitation to them to renounce their sinful course, and to subject themselves unto God in Christ, and to embrace the offer of His grace, that so they may join with the Church in the song of praises. 4. Yea, this invitation to all the nations to praise God, set down in Scripture, is a prophecy which was to take effect in all the elect Gentiles in all nations, for so reasoneth the apostle (Rom. xv. 11) from this place. 5. Albeit there be matter of praise unto God in Himself, though we should not be partakers of any benefit from Him, yet the Lord doth give His people cause to praise Him for favours to them in their own particular. 6. There is no less reason to praise God for what He hath promised, than for what He hath given already. 7. As God's kindness and truth are the pillars of our salvation, so also are they the matter of our praise, which always go together, and run in the same channel toward the same persons, and do run abundantly and for ever together. 8. All they who hear of God are bound to praise God. (*D. Dickson.*) *Worship the duty of all peoples.*—I. **ALL PEOPLES ARE TO WORSHIP THE SAME GOD.** 1. All are identical in spiritual condition. They all have a capacity to form a conception of the same God, and the same tendency to reverence and adore. 2. All have identical moral relationships. "In Him all live and move and have their being." 3. All should have identical controlling sympathies. Thus true worship becomes the unifying force of the race. II. **ALL PEOPLES ARE TO WORSHIP THE SAME GOD FOR THE SAME REASON.** 1. His kindness to all. 2. His faithfulness to all. God is truth, hence He never alters. Error is like the clouds, never shifting; truth, like the sun, continues the same from age to age. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Universal adaptability of Christianity.*—Christianity alone, of all so-called faiths, overleaps all geographical limits and lives in all centuries. It alone wins its trophies and bestows its gifts on all sorts and conditions of men. Other plants which the "Heavenly Father hath not planted," have their zones of vegetation and die outside certain degrees of latitude; but the seed of the kingdom is like corn, an exotic nowhere, for wherever man lives it will grow, and yet an exotic everywhere, for it came down from Heaven. Other food requires an educated palate for its appreciation, but any hungry man in any land will relish bread. For every soul on earth this living, dying love of the Lord Jesus Christ addresses itself to and satisfies his deepest wants. It is the bread which gives life to the world. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

PSALM CXVIII.

VERS. 1-4. O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: because His mercy endureth for ever.—*The perpetuity of Divine mercy.*—This is a subject for—**I. JOYOUS GRATITUDE.** "O give thanks," etc. Why should the perpetuity of Divine mercy inspire such fervent gratitude? 1. Because all men that now live require mercy. All men are so guilty and depraved as to render them more or less unhappy here, and miserable hereafter. Mercy creates men anew in Christ Jesus in good works. 2. Because all men that will hereafter live require mercy. Thank God, then, that mercy is to run on to the crash of doom. II. **THE CELEBRATION OF ALL MEN.** The perpetuity of mercy is a subject in which men of all characters, of all lands, of all times may triumphantly rejoice. Here we can all meet, both the rich and the poor. (*Homilist.*) *Boundless mercy.*—O this mercy of God! I am told it is an ocean. Then I place on it four swift-sailing craft,

with compass, and charts, and choice rigging, and skilful navigators, and I tell them to launch away, and discover for me the extent of this ocean. That craft puts out in one direction, and sails to the north; this to the south; this to the east; this to the west. They crowd on all their canvas, and sail ten thousand years, and one day come up the harbour of heaven; and I shout to them from the beach, "Have you found the shore?" and they answer: "No shore to God's mercy." Swift angels, despatched from the throne, attempt to go across it. For a million years they fly and fly; but then come back and fold their wings at the foot of the throne, and cry: "No shore; no shore to God's mercy!" (*T, De Witt Talmage.*)

Vers. 5-7. The Lord . . . set me in a large place.—*God the Deliverer and Defender of His people*:—I. **THE DELIVERER** (ver. 5). 1. The deliverance seems to have consisted in raising him from a circumscribed to an expansive position. 2. The Almighty is constantly delivering men in this way, lifting them from the narrow to the broad. (1) *Secularly*. Often by His providence He takes men from the narrowness of poverty out into the broad places of worldly prosperity. (2) *Intellectually*. He takes men from the narrowness of ignorance and prejudice, and habit, out into the broad places of knowledge and freedom. (3) *Spiritually*. From the narrowness of guilt and corruption He takes men by the Gospel of His Son, into the broad realms of forgiveness and virtue. II. **THE DEFENDER** (ver. 6). "The Lord is for me." 1. Because of this we need not fear. If He is for us, who can be against us? "God is our refuge and strength." If He is for us, we have not only the whole universe for us, but even our very enemies shall be made to subserve our interest. 2. Because of this we shall conquer (ver. 7). The word "desire" is not in the Hebrew. The words should be, "and I shall look upon my haters," look with calm defiance, look with expectant triumph. (*Homilist.*) *An untrammelled life*:—The Christian is absolutely the freest and most untrammelled man in the world. I am a freer man, a richer man, a blither man, a stronger man, a hopefuller man, because I am a Christian. He has "set me in a large place." I. **I HAVE A GRAND, BROAD CREED**. 1. First, a God whose love is universal; who is pledged to every soul to whom He has given being; to whom every soul is as dear as every other, and who works to realize the most perfect blessedness of all. 2. A creed which makes its best possible for everybody. You can be a hero anywhere; you can be a saint anywhere; you may win your place in God's "legion of honour" anywhere. "Cribb'd, cabined, confined?" Nay! God has "set me in a large place." 3. A creed which invites me to examine and explore it, which courts criticism, which positively invites men to do what many imagine it forbids. One of its proudest mottoes is, "I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say." The Gospel invites you to explore all its territories, to dig for its hidden treasures; indeed, will only give itself to him who will question, think, search. II. **A BROAD, ROUNDED, HEALTHFUL LIFE**. A life that includes every sweet and noble thing. 1. Every bright and healthful pleasure. All natural pleasures are mine. Mirth which is medicine and food is mine. All intellectual feasts are mine. Oh magic books which I love, in which I delight to dig! 2. A life that is to attain its blessedness, the ideal aimed at, not by prohibitions, but by growth. The way to kill the bad life in you—"the old man," as Paul calls it—is by filling yourself with the rich graces of life as seen in Christ Jesus. Courage and sweet help for those who need it, the brave love that can bear any cross—the life of Jesus,—there is room in that; it is "a large place." Live it, and you will grow in God's own bliss. III. **THE NOBLEST ENTERPRISES, THE MOST ROYAL WORK, THE GRANDEST AIMS, FOR THE BETTERMENT OF THE WORLD**. Broaden the soul! Nothing broadens the soul like work for the wants and woes of men, and nothing inspires men to work like the dreams, the hopes, and promises of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We have caught a vision of the world as He saw it, yearned for it, died for it. We also carry this world in our heart; the African, the Hindoo, the South Sea Islander, are also children of God, and we will toil for their redemption. IV. **I HAVE NOBLE AND INSPIRING HOPES**. Rich indeed are the hopes which the Gospel gives me; immortality is a grand word. I find "a large place" for myself under the broad skies of "eternal life." Man, according to the Gospel, has room to grow and time to grow. Over-hurry spoils the best work. Few of us have the courage of Browning's grammarian, who refused to hurry; who never dreamt that he could finish his studies here, but was sure that he should be allowed to finish them yonder. Let us also be a little wiser; we will

not get scared and spoil our work by over-hurry. Eternity is ours. Give me room; plant me with the noble sky of immortality over me; I will grow into my full stature then. Set me where God set me—in "a large place." (J. Moriaia Jones.)

Vers. 8-13. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.—Confidence in God:—I. AS JUSTIFIED BY EXPERIENCE. "It is better," says Matthew Henry, "more wise, more comfortable, and more safe, there is more reason for it, and it will speed better, to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man, yea, though it be in princes. He that devotes himself to God's guidance and government, with an entire dependence upon God's wisdom, power, and goodness, has a better security to make him safe, than if all the kings and potentates of the earth should undertake to protect him." II. AS THE INSPIRATION OF COURAGE. What courage breathes in these words, "All nations compass me about," etc. True confidence in God will always make a man invincible and fearless. The courage of Moses, Daniel, and the three Hebrew youths, and Paul, who said, "None of these things move me," all grew out of confidence in God. (*Homilist.*) *The duty of trust in God:—*It is readily acknowledged that God governs the world, and interposes in all the affairs of it; yet this principle has not those pious and generous effects that might be expected; how often do we promise ourselves success from human means and visible preparations, without taking a Divine Providence into the account, or without attributing so much to it, as to our own prudence, address, or experience! I. WHEREIN THE RELIGIOUS TRUST HERE RECOMMENDED DOES CONSIST. 1. This duty implies a humble belief that all things, by God's blessing, will succeed well with us. I do not mean that everything should exactly correspond to our desires, or the probability of second causes; but that upon the whole matter God will appear for us, and interest Himself in our favour. 2. In order to a well-grounded trust in God, human means and endeavours must not be wanting. 3. In the use of human means, we must take care not to have recourse to such as are unlawful. How can we reconcile it, either with a common sense of piety or prudence, to acknowledge that all things come to pass by the will of Heaven, and at the same time knowingly and deliberately to act in opposition to it? 4. The main foundation of our religious trust, upon which all the forementioned qualifications of it are supported, is a due regard to the laws of God and religion in general. II. MOTIVES AND ARGUMENTS TO ENFORCE IT. 1. Because there is nothing but God wherein we can place an entire trust and confidence. The good state of our fleets, the conduct of our generals, the integrity and abilities of our ministers, the number and importance of our alliances, are usually the first things that come into consideration; but yet if we leave God out of the account, they all signify nothing. 2. A motive to this duty shall be taken from the nature of it; as it is the highest and noblest act of religious honour, the most sensible acknowledgment of the Eternal power and Godhead. And for this reason so many particular promises are everywhere in Scripture annexed to it; and God has as remarkably on all occasions made them good. (*R. Fiddes.*) *Trust in princes perilous:—*Voltaire for a time was the friend and familiar of Frederick the Great. He was honoured with a seat at the King's table, and appeared almost essential to the King's happiness. But the attachment was soon over. Royal smiles turned to frowns, and Voltaire was put under arrest at Frankfort, and there the comedy ended. Many efforts have been made to exempt Frederick from all blame in this matter and throw it upon his servants, but there the ugly fact remains, and the man who was receiving the royal flatteries was shortly afterwards detained as a prisoner. The late Prince Bismarck of Germany experienced a reverse about as great when his royal master, the young Kaiser William II., dismissed him from his office. Shortly after that event, he had an interview with the Tsar, Alexander III., and with great freedom and certainty propounded his political convictions and intentions, as if futurity belonged to him. When the Tsar suddenly interrupted him and said, "Yes, I agree with you, and I place the utmost confidence in you, but are you quite sure that you will remain in office?" Prince Bismarck replied, "Certainly, Majesty; I am absolutely sure that while I live I shall remain Minister." However, only five months after, he was unceremoniously dismissed from office. (*H. Livesey.*)

Ver. 12. They compassed me about like bees.—Like bees:—I know the bees can compass one about right well; but, as a rule, they compass about those who

threaten to attack their home and to take away their little treasure. Let us think about a few things connected with the bee's life. 1. Bees build their own house, and a beautiful house it is. The skill of the bees in building is wonderful. Every little room built by them has six sides; but all the rooms are not of the same size. They are made according to their requirements; but they are all so beautifully planned and partitioned that every room is just big enough for its purpose. There are no end of little nurseries, store-rooms, and ordinary living-rooms in a beehive. The bees' house is a wonderful house; we could not build anything like it. Then, having built the house—2. They are very busy in filling their larders. I know there are some drones. You never found a community anywhere without drones, and the poor bees are not perfect; but the bulk of them are very busy workers. There are, for instance, many wax-makers—those who produce wax and thus make up cells and construct walls. They also store the honey. Then there are the nurse-bees: such tender little creatures! They seem to tread softer and move about more quietly than the other bees. They see to all the sick, and to all the little children that are in the house, and feed, nurse, and watch over them. 3. They also reserve food for the winter. They fill a cell with honey and then seal it up, very much as your mother does with the preserve, when having filled a galley pot she puts a sheet of white paper on the top and seals it. Some of you boys wish it were not so well sealed. I have no doubt some little bees occasionally wish some of the cells were open; but they must not open them. They are not opened until the winter comes, and there is urgent need of food. Then older bees open those little cells just as your mother does the preserve pot, then they take just what is needed. Thus, there is such careful preparation for winter, that the bees can live right through until the spring comes back again, when they are able to begin to work and provide once more. Well now, could not we imitate the bees, could not we be active, and be ever doing our part? And even if we are put on the defence, can we not show strong characters, and let people learn that because we deal in honey we are not necessarily helpless? (*D. Davies.*) *Lessons from the bees*:—I. **LOYALTY**. They all love their queen. She is their ruler and their mother, and they are her subjects and her children. Without her, home would be nothing. She is queen, and must be obeyed. II. **LOVING THE HOME**. Bees are very much attached to their hive. No mother of a family loves her home more than a queen bee; and all the true worker bees take after their mother in this respect. Some people have a genius for helping; there are others who seem to have a genius for hindering. III. **CLEANLINESS**. The care with which they remove dirt of all kinds is something remarkable. Every boy and girl may well follow the example of these wise little philosophers, the bees, and keep everything clean in their homes. IV. **SYMPATHY**. I have seen a wounded bee carried at length, and laid on the bee-board in the warm sunshine. One bee would lick the sufferer from head to foot with his tongue, another would roll him over and over in the sunshine. After they had succeeded in doing this, they would carry him to his sick-bed. This shows us the sympathy of the bee, and sympathy is the most divine thing in the world. V. **BEING HAPPY IN ONE'S WORK**. "Place yourselves," says one who has written on this subject, "before a hive, and see the indefatigable industry of its busy toilers. Let the bee's hum inspire you with the honourable resolution to do all things cheerfully in the active duties of life. We ought to be happy and cheerful in our work." (*R. Newton, D.D.*)

Vers. 13, 14. **Thou hast thrust sore at me, that I might fall: but the Lord helped me.**—*Christian experience*:—Christian experience is the richest product of grace, and it ought to be laid at the feet of the Well-beloved from whom it comes, and to whom it belongs. What God hath done for one of His people is an indication of what He will do for others of His chosen. The Lord's providences are promises, and His benedictions are predictions. To be silent concerning the loving-kindness of the Lord is a robbery of the worst kind; it is taking from our God the glory due unto His holy name. I. **TRIBULATION AND PATIENCE**. "Thou hast thrust sore at me," etc. Truth must always strive against error, and holiness must battle against sin. It is an uphill journey to glory, and that man had need be a hardy mountaineer who resolves to ascend into the hill of the Lord, and to dwell in His holy place. He who is born for the crown is bound for the cross. A thousand snares are laid in your path; and only he who made you a Christian can cover your head, and carry you safely through the bombardment which awaits you. II. **PATIENCE AND EXPERIENCE**. "The Lord helped me"—1. To believe.

2. To pray. 3. To stand. 4. To fight. III. EXPERIENCE AND A HOPE THAT MAKETH NOT ASHAMED. 1. Our God has become our strength. He is the Lord all-sufficient when we are most insufficient. With Him for our strength, we cannot faint, or fail; but, on the contrary, we shall renew our force, and rise continually to something higher and better than before. 2. Our God has also become our song. It may mean, "The Lord is my strength while I am waging the war, and my song when I have won the victory." This is an excellent sense, but another seems to me more clearly in the words, "The Lord is my strength and song"; both are in the present, we sing while we fight. Your great Lord and mine, when He went to His last tremendous conflict, where the powers of darkness marshalled all their strength against Him, and He strove until He sweat as it were great drops of blood,—how did He go? Here is the answer, "After supper, they sang a hymn." Let us claim the victory, anticipate it, and shout it, while yet we are contending. On our beds let us sing God's high praises, and magnify Him in the midst of the fires. Set your whole lives to music. Make your entire career a psalm. But what shall we sing about? Well, "The Lord is my song." Sing the Father and His love eternal. Sing the Son of God, whose delights were with the sons of men before He came here to dwell. Tell how He took our flesh to take away our guilt. Tell how He died, and rose again, and led captivity captive, and ascended up on high. Make that your song, but do not forget to sing the Holy Spirit's love. Magnify the Holy Ghost, the Illuminator, Comforter, Guide, abiding Advocate, and Paraclete. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Vers. 14-18. **The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation.**—**God and man.**—I. HOW GOD SHOULD BE REALIZED BY EVERY MAN. What should He be to every man? 1. He should be his strength. All the strength we have, physical, intellectual, and moral is from God; nay, more, is God's. Conscious dependence upon His strength is the foundation of piety. "Hold thou me up, and I shall be saved." 2. He should be his "song"; that is, his joy. The source of all his joy and spring of his delights. We should rejoice in God as our Father. 3. He should be his salvation. He saves from misery by saving from sin. II. HOW GOD IS ENJOYED BY THE RIGHTEOUS. Who is the righteous man? The man who is right in himself and right in relation to God and the universe. 1. Such a man has rejoicing. "Being justified," or made right by faith; he has "peace that passeth all understanding." Religion is happiness wherever it exists. 2. Such a man has salvation. A righteous man is saved—saved from sin, and to be saved from sin, is to be saved from all evils of all kinds. III. HOW GOD APPEARS IN HIS PROCEDURE. 1. Courageous (ver. 16). He moves on in the execution of His eternal purposes with absolute fearlessness. Of what can He be afraid, whose will can at any moment create or destroy universes? 2. Glorious. "The right hand of the Lord is exalted." That is, praised, honoured, adored. Who that studies His works, whether the minute or the vast can fail to exalt and adore the right hand of the Lord? 3. Restorative (vers. 17, 18). (*Homilist*.) **Christ is our song.**—I. IN WHAT SENSE CHRIST IS A BELIEVER'S SONG. 1. He is the main object of hope and trust (Isa. xii. 2). 2. He is the main subject of praise and thanksgiving (2 Cor. ix. 15). 3. He is the main matter of joy and rejoicing (Ps. cxxxvii. 6; xliii. 4). Three things are necessary. (1) An interest in Him as our Saviour. (2) The knowledge of that interest. (3) Suitable walking. II. WHAT OF CHRIST ESPECIALLY IS A BELIEVER'S SONG? True believers sing, and ought to sing—1. Of what Jesus Christ is in Himself as to His personal excellences and perfections. 2. Of what He is to us. He is our foundation, our food, our root, our raiment; and should we not sing of these? 3. Of what He hath done, and is doing, and will yet do, for us. (1) He hath taken our nature upon Him, and in our nature suffered and died; He hath washed us from our sins in His own blood; called us with a holy calling; begun a good work. (2) Is He not ever living to make intercession for us? Is He not guiding and guarding us, enlightening and comforting us, every day? (3) He will perform the good work that He hath begun; He will come again and fetch us to Himself, that where He is there we may be also. Can ye name any other to sing of, that hath done the like for you? III. WHAT ARE THE PROPERTIES OF THIS SONG? 1. He is the angels' song (Job xxxviii. 7; Luke ii. 13, 14). 2. He is the most ancient song; the song of the ancients. They sung of Him as one to come, for they saw Him, though it was but as through the lattices, or as through a glass darkly. 3. He is the new song. Wherever ye read of a new song in Scripture, it points at Him (Ps. xxxiii. 3;

xl.; xvi. 1; cxviii. 1; cxlix. 1). He is the New Testament song. Ever since His coming in the flesh all His saints have been singing of Him, as of one already come; rejoicing in Him, and showing forth His praises. As fast as they have been made new creatures they have learned this new song. 4. He is their night song (Ps. xlii. 8; Job xxxv. 10). (1) In the night season, when others are sleeping, true believers are rejoicing in God their Redeemer, and solacing themselves in Him (Ps. cxlix. 5; Cant. i. 13; Acta xvi.) Paul and Silas sang at midnight. (2) In the night of sorrow and affliction. To be able to sing then, when everything looks sad and sorrowful round about us, is a great matter; as David (1 Sam. xxx. 6) 5. He is their song all the week, and their song on the Sabbath. We are bid to rejoice in the Lord always, every day, and they that have an interest in Christ, and know it, do so; but especially on Sabbath days (Ps. cxviii. 24). Sabbath days are set apart on purpose. 6. He is their song while they live, and their song when they die. While they live, in all the turns of their lives (Ps. cxlvi. 2). And in a special manner when they come to die; upon sick-beds, and death-beds. As it is said of the swan, that she sings sweetest when dying, so it is with many of God's people. At the death of Mr. John Janeway, one present said he never was in a room where God in Christ had more praises than there at that time. 7. He is their song in the world, and will be their song to eternity. What is the great employment of heaven, and what will it be for ever and ever, but to lift up God-redeemer (Rev. v. 9-13). Jesus Christ is to be our everlasting song (Isa. xxxv. 10). It is good to be found doing that now that we would be glad to be found doing hereafter—world without end. IV. APPLICATION. 1. This may serve for an examining sign, or mark of trial, whereby to know what we are as to our spiritual state and condition. We are bid to try ourselves (2 Cor. xiii. 5). What is Jesus Christ to us? What think we of Him? Hath He ever been our song? Do we rejoice in Him? 2. Here is a word of reproof to the true believers among us, that do not make Christ their song, that are in Him, but do not rejoice in Him; however, not with evenness and constancy, not in that measure and degree, that they should and ought. Thou shouldst chide thyself for it (Ps. xlii. and xliii. 5). (1) It grieves the Spirit of God. (2) It blemishes the ways of God; makes thee a stumbling-block to them that are without, like the evil spies. (3) It is weakening to thyself. The more Christ is our song the more is our strength (Neh. viii. 10). Then search out the cause. 3. Exhortation, to all that call themselves believers. Make Christ your song, week days and Sabbath days. (1) He is worthy that you should. (2) The gain of it will be thy own, in present comfort, in eternal recompense. (*Philip Henry.*) *Making God our song:*—Instead of waiting until you get sick and worn out before you speak the praise of Christ, while your heart is happiest, and your step is lightest, and your fortune smiles, and your pathway blossoms, and the overarching heavens drop upon you their benediction, speak the praises of Jesus. The old Greek orators, when they saw their audiences inattentive and slumbering, had one word with which they would rouse them up to the greatest enthusiasm. In the midst of their orations they would stop and cry out: "Marathon!" and the people's enthusiasm would be unbounded. My hearers, though you may have been borne down with sin, and though trouble, and trial, and temptation may have come upon you, and you feel to-night hardly like looking up, methinks there is one grand, royal, imperial word that ought to rouse your soul to infinite rejoicing, and that word is Jesus. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

Vers. 15, 16. **The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous.**—*The joy of holy households:*—A believer in Christ is not long without finding joy. He is in the land which floweth with milk and honey, and he will get a sip of sweetness very soon. Like Nicodemus, he comes to Jesus in the dark, but the sun is rising. This joy is in him and abounds, so that he belongs to a happy people. I. THERE IS JOY IN THE FAMILIES OF THE RIGHTEOUS. 1. To some extent, this is in proportion to the salvation that is found in the family. Many among us can say, "All my children are children of God: they go with me from my table to the Lord's table: I have a church in my house, and all my household are in the church." Here is a picture, a pattern, a paragon, a paradise. Seek, then, the salvation of the whole of your household. 2. The joy which is here alluded to is mainly spiritual: a joy of the father, because he is saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; a joy of the mother, because she, too, has had her heart opened, like Lydia, to hear and to receive the Word; a joy of the dear

children, as they offer their little prayers, and as they talk of Jesus, whom their soul loves. 3. This kind of joy, while it is spiritual, is not dependant upon external circumstances; it hangs not on wealth or honour. They said of old that philosophers could be merry without music, and I am sure that it is truer still of Christians that they can be happy in the Lord when temporal circumstances are against them. Our bells need no silken ropes to set them ringing, neither must they be hung in lofty towers. 4. Christian joy, whether in the individual or the family, can be abundantly justified. If God is pleased with us, we may well be pleased with Him. II. **THIS JOY SHOULD BE EXPRESSED.** "The voice," etc. We should put a tongue in our joys, and let them speak. The voice should be heard daily, from morn till eve, and till the silence of sleep steals over all; but it should never fail to sound forth in the daily gatherings for family prayer. It should be a happy occasion when we meet to read the Word of God, and to pray together. It is well if we can also sing at such times. Matthew Henry says, concerning family prayer, "They that pray do well; they that pray and read the Scriptures do better; they that pray, and read the Scriptures, and sing a hymn, do best of all." There will be frequent occasions for holy joy in all Christian families, and these ought always to be used right heartily. Holy joy breeds no ill, however much we have of it. You can easily eat too much honey, but you can never enjoy too much delight in God. Birthdays and anniversaries of all sorts, with family meetings of various kinds, should find us setting life to music right heartily. Moreover, it would be well if our houses more generally resounded with song. It drives dull care away, it wards off evil thoughts, it tends to a general exultation, for the members of a household to be accustomed individually and collectively to sing. If you really cannot sing at all, yet the voice of rejoicing and salvation may be in your tabernacles by a constant cheerfulness, bearing up under pain and poverty, losses and crosses. God give you more and more of this spirit in all your households! The whole Church shall be blessed when every family is thus made happy in the Lord and in His great salvation. III. **THIS JOY OF HOLY HOUSEHOLDS IS A JOY CONCERNING WHAT THE LORD HATH DONE.**

1. How we should joy in God, in our families, when we think of all that He has done in conquering sin and Satan, death and hell! Christ hath led captivity captive; therefore, let us sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously. 2. Then let us think of what the Lord has done for each one of us individually. 3. Since then, the Lord has helped us in providence, and delivered us from fierce temptations, and made us to stand steadfastly when the adversary has thrust sore at us that we might fall. 4. And when you see great sinners converted, when the drunkard leaves his cups, when the swearer washes out his filthy mouth, and sings the praises of God, when a hardened, irreligious, sceptical man bows like a child at Jesus' feet, should not our families as well as ourselves be made acquainted with it, and should it not be a subject for joy at the family altar?

(C. H. Spurgeon.) *Domestic happiness*.—I. **ITS IMPORTANCE.** 1. In reference to our avocations and cares. These are numerous and diversified, and demand relaxation and relief. Who could endure perpetual drudgery and fatigue?—and what so refreshing, so soothing, so satisfying, as the placid joys of home! 2. In reference to the afflictions of life. It looks like a general remedy, furnished by the kindness of Providence, to alleviate the troubles which from various quarters we unavoidably feel while passing through this world of vanity and vexation of spirit. How many little sighing vacancies does it fill up! How many cloudy nervous vapours does it chase from the mind! 3. In reference to the good things of this life. Without this, all will be insipid, all will be useless. Imagine yourselves prosperous in your affairs; trade pouring in wealth, your grounds bringing forth plentifully, your cup running over—misery under your own roof would be sufficient to canker your gold and silver; to corrupt your abundance; to embitter every pleasure. 4. In reference to the seductions and snares of the world. From the danger of these there is no better preservative than the attractions of a family. The more a man feels his welfare lodged in his own house, the more will he prize and love it. The more he is attached to his wife and children, the less will he risk their peace and comfort by hazardous speculations, and mad enterprises in trade. II. **TO OPEN ITS SOURCES, AND EXAMINE ON WHAT IT DEPENDS.** 1. Without order you can never rule well your own house. "God is not the God of confusion." He loves order: order pervades all His works. 2. Many things will arise to try your temper: and he is unqualified for social life who has no rule over his own spirit; "who cannot bear the frailties of his

fellow-creatures with common charity, and the vexations of life with common patience." 3. The influence and advantage of good sense are incalculable. This will preserve us from consorioness; will lead us to distinguish circumstances; to draw things from the dark situation of prejudice which rendered them frightful, that we may candidly survey them in open day. 4. We must go beyond all this, and remind you of those religious principles by which you are to be governed. These are to be found in the Word of God; and as many as walk according to this rule, mercy and peace shall be upon them. God has engaged that if you will walk in His way, you shall find rest unto your souls. If it be said, There are happy families without religion, I would answer—(1) There is a difference between appearances and reality. (2) If we believe the Scripture, this is impossible—"the way of transgressors is hard: there is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked." (3) Religion secures those duties, upon the performance of which the happiness of households depends. (4) Religion attracts the Divine blessing—and all we possess depends upon its smiles. (*W. Jay.*) *The happiness of the righteous*.—I. EXPLAIN. The joy of the righteous is—1. Intense. 2. Satisfying. 3. Abiding. You "rejoice" in that which rust cannot destroy, and which the tongues of men cannot injure. II. APPLY. 1. How miserable is the state of the wicked. 2. How important is vital piety. (*C. Clayton, M.A.*) *The cultivation of piety*.—I. TRUE PIETY HAS A VOICE RINGING WITH THE NOTE OF JOY AND HEALTH. Could we set forth the beauty of its offices, the beauty of prayer, the joyousness of worship, the peace of Divine fellowship; could we restore the bloom of health to its wan countenance; could we put the mountain air and breezes into our religion and make it a strong, healthy, living thing; could we make it a voice of rejoicing and salvation in the dwellings of our land, how grand, how triumphant, how sovereign a power it would become! II. THE PLACE OF TRUE PIETY IS THE HOME. We need better homes; homes ruled in the fear of the Lord, where father and mother are prophet, priest and king; homes sweetened by the incense of prayer and worship and well-ordered discipline; homes where the Sabbath is honoured and all needless toil and travelling on the day of the Lord are avoided, and worship and edification as becometh immortal beings are the order of the day; homes where reverence has her abode, and holy beauty and the gladness of Christian faith and charity; homes that are none other than the house of God, none other than the gate of heaven. (*H. F. Henderson, M.A.*) *Union of gladness and goodness*.—It demoralizes life and religion to believe that God does not desire the happiness of His creatures, just as surely as it demoralizes life and religion to imagine that He has no higher aim for them than that they should be happy. It was a wise, as well as a Scriptural, answer which was given to the first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism as to man's chief end. "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever." It is not without reason that spiritual life and blessedness are always in some form joined together; for goodness and happiness were not meant to be divided. Culture and restraint. (*Hugh Black.*)

Ver. 16. *The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly.*—*Mighty to save*.—I. THE TRIUMPHS OF THE LORD JESUS. He did not come as a man of war, for He is the prince of peace; He came not here with shield and buckler, but He came with a body fitted to suffer, and with a heart strong to endure. The Christ of God came in lowliness and in shame; but for all that He fought great battles in the midst of His weakness, and won for Himself wondrous spiritual victories. II. THE TRIUMPHS OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. The Church began with feeble numbers, with small wealth, and with comparatively little talent, but she was clothed with the Holy Ghost, and was therefore mighty. III. THE TRIUMPHS OF GRACE IN INDIVIDUALS. Do you remember when you sought to escape from the multitude of your sins? Do you recollect when they compassed you about like bees? You could not count your sins—you had forgotten them; they seemed dead and buried, but they all came to life again, and they swarmed about you. They buzzed about you at your table; they stung you in your sleep; in your dreams they harassed you; at your work you had no peace because of them. And dost thou mind the place, the spot of ground, where thou didst meet with Jesus? Oh let your soul go back to your spiritual birthday; ring the bells of your heart again; hang out the streamers of your soul for that happy day when Jesus washed your sins away. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The power of God displayed in the redemption of man*.—I. A SUBLIME ATTRIBUTE OF GOD. "The right hand

of the Lord " represents His power in its loftiest manifestation, its sovereignty, its resistlessness, its omnipotence. II. SIGNAL ACHIEVEMENTS WHICH, BY THE OPERATION OF THAT DIVINE ATTRIBUTE, ARE PERFORMED. 1. The personal history and work of the Messiah. 2. The application of the work of the Messiah to individual men. 3. The progress of the economy founded upon the work of the Messiah, and its wide diffusion throughout the earth. III. THE EMOTIONS WHICH THE CONTEMPLATION OF THESE ACHIEVEMENTS PRODUCES IN PIOUS MINDS. Our rejoicing is to be connected with, and ensured by, practical manifestations. They are these: implicit trust on the Saviour's mediation; abounding gratitude for the Saviour's goodness; devoted obedience to the Saviour's commandments; zealous activity for the Saviour's glory. And as those, who are set apart by Him to be the instruments in the advancement of His empire, by our self-denial, our activity, and our prayers, we are to attempt the ingathering of His people, and the advancement of those grand and wonderful designs we have presented, which are to be fulfilled in the recovery of the world. (*J. Parsons.*)

Ver. 17. **I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.**—*The power of recovery*:—This buoyant and hopeful language is obviously in place on Easter Day. The psalm which contains it was sung for the first time either at laying the foundation-stone of the new temple, or at its dedication: and it breathes, in every line, the spirit of thankfulness, of triumph, of hope. It is the hymn of the deliverance from the captivity, just as Miriam's song is the hymn of deliverance from Egypt: it is such a *Te Deum* as was possible when as yet the Gospel had not been revealed. I. THE MEANING OF THE WORDS AS USED BY CHRIST. Before His Crucifixion the words were a prophecy of the Resurrection. Unlike ourselves, our Lord throughout His earthly life knew what was before Him. From us the future is hidden in mercy: we could not bear the sight, it may be, if the veil were lifted. But our Lord surveyed everything. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" And yet the foreknowledge which surveyed His coming agony surveyed also the peace and triumph beyond. He was to die, yet He was to rise; it was the prospect of death modified by the prospect of triumph over death; it was Calvary, but already irradiated by the Resurrection morning. "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." But after the Resurrection the words must have a fuller meaning; they became to Him more literally true. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more." II. We listen here to AN UTTERANCE OF THE HEART OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, again and again heard during the centuries of her eventful history. In many ways the Passion and Resurrection of Christ have been reflected in the later fortunes of Christianity; and especially the Church's power of recovery from weakness and disaster is a note and proof of her union with Christ. 1. There has been the distress and suffering produced by outward persecution. At times it seemed as if the faith must be killed out from among men. But all through these dark and dreary years, the secret leaven of the Resurrection power of Jesus was working in the heart of Christendom. Never was the darkness so thick that no ray of light reached the soul of the suffering Church. Never was her cause so desperate but that she could, not boastfully or in scorn, but in the clear, albeit broken accents of faith and hope, utter her unfailing conviction: "The empire will pass, but Jesus Christ remains; 'I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.'" 2. The Church has been exposed more than once to a more formidable danger,—the decay of vital convictions within her fold. This happened in the early part of the thirteenth century, when the Arabian philosophers of Moorish Spain were so widely read in the Universities of Europe, and caused for some years a secret but profound unsettlement of faith in the leading truths of Christianity. So again, at the revival of letters in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, especially in Italy. So also, and conspicuously in the eighteenth century, we may almost say, throughout Europe. The great anti-Christian campaign was opened in England by Bolingbroke, Tindal, and the English Deists. It was carried on in France by their pupil—for such virtually he was—Voltaire, and the Encyclopædist writers. It found a powerful patron in Frederick the Great of Prussia. It closed, in Germany, with Lessing, who mistook criticism for faith, and to whom the search for truth seemed better than its possession; and with Nicolai, and other writers of the "enlightenment" period; while on the western bank of the Rhine, the worship of the goddess of Reason was keeping time with the horrors of the Revolutionary Tribunal and of the Reign of Terror. 3. Worst

of all, the Church has been exposed to moral corruption. Here surely is an evil more perilous far than any persecutor's sword, or even than any form of intellectual rebellion. Good men always feel strongly the evils of their own day; it is their business to recognize and to combat them. But in doing so they are sometimes led to think that no previous age has been so weighted with energetic mischief as their own. Here there is a risk of losing a true sense of proportion; of not merely exaggerating the evils of present as compared with those of past times, but of forgetting the Divine resources upon which the Church of Christ may always fall back, and which are more than equal to her needs. Let us be sure that to believe that Christ has risen is to know that, come what may, His Church will not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. III. In these words we have **THE TRUE LANGUAGE OF THE INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN SOUL, WHETHER IN RECOVERY FROM ILLNESS, OR FACE TO FACE WITH DEATH.** 1. This is the language of the convalescent. The legend that the risen Lazarus was never seen to smile expresses the sense of mankind as to what befits him who has passed the threshold of the other world; and surely a new and peculiar seriousness is due from those who have all but passed it, and have returned to life by little less than a resurrection. Of what remains of life the motto should surely be, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." Surely such a life must be consecrated; like the Risen Jesus, and in virtue of His Resurrection power, it must declare the works of the Lord. 2. These words should express the feeling of every Christian soul, in the prospect of death and eternity. (*Canon Liddon*;) *Gratitude for deliverance from the grave*:—You know, perhaps, that this text was inscribed by Martin Luther upon his study wall, where he could always see it when at home. Many Reformers had been done to death—Huss, and others who preceded him, had been burnt at the stake; Luther was cheered by the firm conviction that he was perfectly safe until his work was done. May you and I, when we are tried, be able, through faith in God, to meet trouble with the like brave thoughts and speeches! I. At the outset, here is **THE BELIEVER'S VIEW OF HIS AFFLICTIONS.** "The Lord hath chastened me sore." On the surface of the words we see the good man's clear observation that his afflictions came from God. It is true he perceived the secondary hand, for he says, "Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall." There was one at work who aimed to make him fall. His afflictions were the work of a cruel enemy. Yes; but that enemy's assaults were being overruled by the Lord, and were made to work for his good; so David, in the present verse, corrects himself by saying, "The Lord hath chastened me sore. The enemy was moved by malice, but God was working by him in love to my soul. The second agent sought my ruin, but the Great First Cause wrought my education and establishment." Next, the believer perceives that his trials come as a chastening. "The Lord hath chastened me sore." When a child is chastised, two things are clear: first, that there is something wrong in him, or that there is something deficient in him, so that he needs to be corrected or instructed; and, secondly, it shows that his father has a tender care for his benefit, and acts in loving wisdom towards him. "What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." There is not a more profitable instrument in all God's house than the rod. Consider the psalmist's view of his affliction a little more carefully. He noted that his trials were sore: he says, "The Lord hath chastened me sore." Perhaps we are willing to own in general that our trouble is of the Lord; but there is a soreness in it which we do not ascribe to Him, but to the malice of the enemy, or some other second cause. The false tongue is so ingenious in slander that it has touched the tenderest part of our character, and has cut us to the quick. Are we to believe that this also is, in some sense, of the Lord? Assuredly we are. If it be not of the Lord, then it is a matter for despair. If this evil comes apart from Divine permission, where are we? Even while the wound is raw, and the smart is fresh, be conscious that the Lord is near. Yet there is in the verse a "but," for the psalmist perceives that his trial is limited; "but He hath not given me over unto death." Certain of the "buts" in Scripture are among the choicest jewels we have. Before us is a "but" which shows that, however deep affliction may be, there is a bottom to its abyss. There is a limit to the force, the sharpness, the duration, and the number of our trials. II. **THE BELIEVER'S COMFORT UNDER HIS AFFLICTIONS.** "I shall not die, but live." Occasionally this comes in the form of a presentiment. How do you understand the story of John Wycliffe, at Lutterworth, in any other way than this? He had been speaking against the monks, and various abuses of

the Church. He was the Morning Star of the Reformation. Wycliffe was ill—very ill, and the friars came round him, like crows round a dying sheep. They professed to be full of tender pity; but they were right glad that their oncomer was going to die. So they said to him, "Do you not repent? Before we can give you the viaticum—the last oiling before you die—would it not be well to retract the hard things which you have said against the zealous friars, and his Holiness of Rome? We are eager to forget the past, and give you the last sacrament in peace." Wycliffe begged an attendant to help him to sit up; and then he cried with all his strength, "I shall not die, but live, to declare the works of the Lord, and to expose the wickedness of the friars." He did not die, either: death himself could not have killed him then; for he had more work to do, and the Lord made him immortal till it was done. How could Wycliffe know that he spoke truly? Certainly he was free from all foolhardy brag; but there was upon his mind a foreshadowing of future work that he had to do, and he felt that he could not die till it was accomplished. Forecasts of good from the Lord may come to those who are sore sick; and when they do, they help them to recover. We are of good courage when an inward confidence enables us to say, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." This, however, I only mention by the way. When a believer is in trouble, he derives great comfort from his reliance upon the compassion of God. The Lord scourges his sons, but he does not slay them. He may often put His hand into the bitter box, but He has sweet cordials ready to take the taste away. For a small moment has He forsaken us, but with great mercies will He return to us. You have an effectual comfort if your faith can keep its hold upon the blessed fact of the Lord's fatherly compassion. Next, faith comforts the tried child of God by assuring him of the forgiveness of his sin, and his security from punishment. Please to notice the very distinct difference between chastisement and punishment. "The Lord hath chastened me sore," and in that He has acted a fatherly part; "but He hath not given me over unto death," which would have been my lot if He had dealt with me as a judge.

III. THE BELIEVER'S CONDUCT AFTER TROUBLE AND DELIVERANCE. "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." Here is declaration. If we had no troubles, we should have all the less to declare. A person who has had no experience of tribulation, what great deliverance has he to speak of? Tried Christians see how God sustains in trouble, and how He delivers out of it, and they declare His works openly: they cannot help doing so. They are so interested themselves in what God has done that they grow enthusiastic over it; and if they held their peace, the stones would cry out. If you read further down, you will find that they not only give forth a declaration, but they offer adoration. They are so charmed with what God has done for them, that they laud and magnify the name of the Lord, saying, "I will praise Thee: for Thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation." This done, they make a further dedication of themselves to their delivering God. "God is the Lord, which hath showed us light." It was very dark! We could not see our hand, much less the hand of God! We thought that we were as dead men, laid out for burial; when suddenly the Lord's face shone in upon us, and all darkness was gone, and we leaped into joyful security, crying, "God is the Lord, which hath showed us light." We were convinced that it was none other than the true God who had removed the midnight gloom. Doubts, infidelities, agnosticisms—they were impossible. We said, "God is the Lord, which hath showed us light." (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Life in face of death:*—These words were inscribed upon the walls of Martin Luther's study. They were the incarnation of his courage and his faith. Luther lived his strenuous life in the midst of dangers. Hour by hour as the years sped on he looked death in the face. Such a life of conflict and hazard irresistibly drives a godly man nearer to God. It is not under the impulse of some coward terror that he crawls to the feet of the Strong One. It is not the pitiful appeal of fear for deliverance from the ever-during dark. It is a sixth sense which has been developed in the soul of man. It is the sense of the Infinite, which demands its satisfaction in tones so imperious that the cries of all other senses are stilled. In the common experiences of life we need God, oh, need Him so deeply! But in these uncommon experiences we have God. No normal mind deliberately chooses the life of daily and nightly nearness to death; yet all men would choose it if the normal mind could see realities in their true proportion. For in the life which is lived in the presence of death, the man of God knows that he lives and moves and has his being in God. Any man who is called upon to lead a life in which day by day

there is but a step between him and death becomes either a better man or a worse under the pressure of it. He becomes a worse man—reckless, dissipated, abandoned—as we see often in the life of miners, sailors, soldiers, and a hundred others whose disdain of moral restraint appals us. You know how true this is of times of war, epidemic, or plague. Yes; he becomes a worse man, or he becomes a better. For life is never the same again. He has looked upon the heights and depths of things. He has endured as seeing Him who is invisible. That which he thought realst in the universe has crumbled at the breath of a new emotion, and the Unseen has become the one Reality. Henceforth, there is a deeper note in his thinking; in his feeling a fuller tenderness. Psalm cxviii., from which I take this text, was written for some great national festival, and was chanted in the Temple thanksgiving service. Its praises and its prayers are alike the expression of national aspiration and gratitude. It is of Israel protected, ransomed, restored, Israel Divinely reinforced, Divinely saved, that the poet sings. It is united Israel which declares that His mercy endureth for ever. Each worshipper may say for himself what he sings for the nation, "I shall not die, but live." Each devout soul may promise for himself what he desires for his Church and for his country, that in this restored life the first purpose shall be to "declare the works of the Lord." If I were to read our poet's feelings by the light of my own, I should be ready to say that all other considerations are lost in the overwhelming solemnity of the experience through which he has passed. He has emerged upon a new and different world. In that world he finds himself at first a stranger. Sky and sea, meadow and mountain, the grass on the hillside, and the flowers beneath his feet, have a new meaning for him. While that strange, unspeakable thing which we call life—life one and indivisible in its myriad manifestations—is so wonderful, so wonderful that he feels that he has never lived before. You never feel the awfulness of life till death has held you. It is through the darkness of death that we walk in the light of life. A baffled wonder is one of the elements of this deep solemnity. The foundations of life have been shaken. Earth's base is built on stubble. The realization that one is mortal like his neighbours is the strangest revelation which comes to the heart of man. Almost too painful for analysis is the sense of humiliation which such an experience brings, the shrinking from the physical accompaniments of sickness and death. The pride of life has vanished in the twinkling of an eye. And of one other aspect of such an experience I do not trust myself to speak—the parting from those whose love has given us the purest joy which we have known on earth. Then, after all this, comes to our poet, has come, thank God, to millions of the sons of men who have passed through his experience and been the better for it, the exquisite realization of life again, the knowledge that all is yet possessed, the life of the flesh and the life of the soul, the desire of the eyes and the pride of life, the joy of thought, the power of aspiration, the delight of action and of service, the passion of labour, the potency of love! Surely this is the most solemn experience of human life, this in which the new-born man in a new-made world says to himself in amazement, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord!" You do not marvel that this vague wonder passes into fervour, into exultation, rapture, into consecration? "I shall . . . declare the works of the Lord!" Learn the lesson! There comes a time when all else fails you. The good that you have done alone abides. Learn that lesson well, for immortality is there. On the day when John Wycliffe died, while yet breath remained in the old man's body, the friars crowded round his bed, and demanded of him that he should make confession of the evil deeds that he had done to them and to their craft. He raised himself upon his pillows, and gathering together the last remnants of his expiring strength, exclaimed, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the evil deeds of the friars." That day the great reformer died. But the great reformer never dies! Wycliffe lives, like many another son of the Highest, mightier dead than when he lived indeed. (*C. F. Aked, D.D.*) **And declare the works of the Lord.**—*Declaring the works of the Lord*.—I. MANY ARE THE WORKS OF THE LORD. 1. Creation. 2. Providence. 3. Redemption. 4. Regeneration. Do not be ashamed to declare that work of the Lord; and do it mainly by exhibiting the fruit of it in your life, but also by clearly narrating your own experience whenever you have a fitting opportunity. II. **THESE WORKS OF THE LORD OUGHT TO BE DECLARED.** 1. For God's glory. 2. For the comfort of His people. 3. To guide the anxious. 4. As a warning to the self-righteous. 5. To gladden the Church of God. III. **WHO OUGHT TO DECLARE THE**

WORKS OF THE LORD? We who have experienced the working of God's grace, should bear our own personal testimony concerning what He hath done for our soul. Personal witness-bearing is always effective. And if God does not get witnesses among those who have had their sins forgiven, whence are His witnesses to come? IV. Now I want, with all my heart, to stir up your hearts and my own also to THE DUTY OF DECLARING GOD'S WORKS. 1. I pray you to declare His works, and to be encouraged to do so because, first, it is a very simple duty. This work of glorifying the grace of God is a mosaic; I can put in my little pieces of stone or marble to form the pattern so far, but there is another part of that mosaic which nobody but yourselves can manufacture. It can be made out of the odds and ends of your spiritual experience, as you think them to be; but, insignificant and unimportant as they seem to be, they help to complete the whole design. 2. Then notice what a very manifest duty it is that you should tell out what God has done for you. Does this need any proof? Do you think that the Lord saved you that you might just be happy, keeping your joy within your own heart, ever feeding and fattening it? 3. Notice also that this is a very profitable duty. I hardly know of anything that is more useful to a Christian than to tell out what the Lord has done for him. You will never know the truth in all its fulness till with all your heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, you have attempted to inculcate it in the hearts of others. 4. Moreover, it is a very pleasant duty to those who practise it. 5. This ought also to be a constant duty with all who love the Lord. When we have once told the story, we ought to feel bound to tell it again and again. "But I cannot," says one. What can you not do? If you were to be cured of a dreadful disease, I am sure you would be able to tell somebody who the doctor was. And if, to-night, a thief were to break into your house, and a policeman came and seized him, I am sure you would tell somebody to-morrow about what had occurred. Do you ask, "Whom shall I tell?" Well, good man, tell your wife, if you have never yet spoken to her about these things. Christian woman, do you inquire, "Whom shall I tell?" Why, tell your husband, and your children! You cannot have a better congregation than your own family. Are you in a factory? Tell your work-mates about Jesus Christ. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 18. **The Lord hath chastened me sore: but He hath not given me over unto death.**—*The afflictions of God's people*.—I. THE CONDITION. 1. The Author of it. Affliction comes not out of the dust; God is the Inflicter of all evils and crosses upon us. (1) Look up to the Lord in every affliction and labour to see Him in it. (2) Here is matter of comfort to the servants of God: that whosoever, or whatsoever may be the instrument, God Himself is the principal cause of every trouble to them. It is the cup which their Father gives them to drink, and therefore they may be sure that it is well mingled and tempered for them. 2. The nature of it—a chastening, for the better rule and government of His family. (1) To wean us from the world, and an inordinate love of things below. (2) To embitter sin to us, and subdue corruption. (3) For examples to others—(a) of warning, that they may avoid and take heed of the like provocations; (b) of patience, that they may be strengthened to endure the like afflictions. 3. The aggravation. (1) The frequency of these chastenings, not once only, but often, even again and again. (2) The multitude of these chastenings, not one single one only, but many, one in the neck of another. (3) The grievousness and tediousness of them, not some light ones only, but such as were very irksome and hard to be borne. II. THE QUALIFICATION. "But He hath not given me over unto death." Consider these words—1. In their connection, and so they are a qualification of those that went before, and they serve to show unto us the manner of God's dealings with His people, which is to mitigate His afflictions of them, and to correct them still in measure; He chastens them but does not undo them. Thus (2 Cor. vi. 9; iv. 8, 9; 1 Cor. x. 13; Lam. iii. 32). (1) God's aim and intent is not destruction but reformation, which death doth hinder and prevent the opportunities of, unto us. (2) As God does thus mitigate His corrections in wisdom, so also in mercy, because He is a gracious God, and He continues still so to be without alteration (Lam. iii. 22; Mal. iii. 6). 2. Absolutely. "He hath not given me over unto death." (1) Out of His goodness, and mercy, and love to His people. (2) Because He has work and service for them to do. (3) For the good and comfort of their friends. (T. Horton, D.D.)

Vers. 10, 20. Open to me the gates of righteousness.—*The realm of righteousness*.—I. A FELT OBSTRUCTION to it. "Open to me the gates of righteousness." The gates of righteousness are closed to us—closed not by God, but closed by ourselves—closed by ignorance, prejudice, sensuality, worldliness, unbelief, pride. Who does not feel the obstruction? II. A DETERMINATION TO ENTER THE realms of righteousness. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence," etc. We must agonize to enter in. We have to wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against powers, principalities and darkness, and crush them on our way to the gates. III. A WELCOME INTO the realms of righteousness (ver. 20). If this response is from within the sacred enclosure it may be taken as a welcome. Spiritually all within the realm of righteousness are ready to welcome us. Saints, angels, Christ—all are ready to welcome us. (*Homilist*.) *The gates of righteousness*.—Though by "the gates of righteousness" the psalmist mainly refers to the gates of the sanctuary, the words may be taken in a sense that will suggest truths of the most vital moment, and of universal application. I. They suggest that a state of "righteousness" is a MOST DESIRABLE STATE FOR MAN. 1. The want of it is the cause of all the evils that afflict humanity. All physical, social, political, intellectual, and moral evils arise from unrighteousness. 2. The possession of it will secure all good. Let all men be righteous in the principles of action towards God, and man and Eden will bloom again. II. They suggest that into this most desirable state THERE IS A CERTAIN WAY OF ENTRANCE. "The gates of righteousness." One Scriptural expression will describe the gates:—"Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." Those gates are difficult to enter. "Strive to enter in," etc. (Matt. vii. 13). Those gates are exclusive. There are no other ways of entrance. III. They suggest that MEN REQUIRE ASSISTANCE TO ENTER THESE GATES. "Open to me the gates." Whomsoever the psalmist in the words might appeal to, in order to open the gates of the sanctuary, we know that spiritually no one can open the gates of righteousness but God Himself. He leads the soul unto repentance and faith—(1) Through the revelation of His Son. (2) Through the events of His providence. (3) Through the work of His Spirit. IV. They suggest that when the entrance is fully obtained THE MAN WILL BE TAKEN UP WITH WORSHIP. "I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord." Worship is at once the great want and grand end of man's existence. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 21-24. I will praise Thee: for Thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.—*A blessed consciousness, a marvellous providence, a joyous day*.—I. A BLESSED CONSCIOUSNESS (ver. 21). 1. A grateful assurance of answered prayer. "Thou hast heard me." To know that God has heard me is, of all knowledge, the most transporting. 2. A grateful assurance of personal salvation. "Art become my salvation." Not shall become, or will become, but "art" become. Salvation is a present blessing. "This is life eternal," etc. The consciousness that I am saved is indeed a blessed consciousness. II. A MARVELLOUS PROVIDENCE (ver. 22, 23). What man rejects, God accepts. 1. Man rejects insignificant means with which to accomplish his chief ends. When man has a great plan to carry out, he looks out for the most gifted, the most mighty and skilful agents. Not so with the Almighty. By whom did He deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage? By Moses, a poor Hebrew exile. 2. Man despises the very agents whom God employs. This was pre-eminently the case with Christ. "He was despised and rejected of men." Yet He was employed in a work of transcendent greatness. III. A JOYOUS DAY (ver. 24). Man has to create his own Sabbaths, and when they come to him, he feels the Lord hath made them, and he "will rejoice and be glad in it." (*Homilist*.)

Ver. 22. The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.—*Christ the head stone of the corner*.—The ode seems to have been sung in a solemn procession to the temple; and by the Levitical band in responsive chorus. The stone, styled the "head of the corner," was not placed on the top of the wall, but in some important and conspicuous position. Now, when the temple was built, a stone, intended by the original designers for this purpose, seems to have been rejected by the builders, and cast away as useless among the rubbish: but as no other stone could be found to supply its place, either from necessity, or from Divine warning, the despised stone was sought for, and built into that honourable station to which by the heavenly Architect it had been destined. And when the gates of the temple were opened, and the procession was

arranged in its courts, its massive buildings and golden ornaments are left out of view,—though the most prominent beauties of the wonderful fabric,—and by the Spirit of God this truly wonderful event is commemorated, as being the most notable in the history of the erection of the sanctuary, as proving the minute and surprising care which God exercised over His house, and as being typical of future erections no less strange and worthy of celebration. The verse may now be illustrated by a reference to Christ as Prophet, as Priest, as King. I. AS PROPHET. The important office of teacher or interpreter of the will of God has been exercised by the Son of God ever since revelations have been made to the world. As Logos, or Oracle, the Son bears such a relation to the Father as speech does to thought. This mysterious personage was the Jehovah of the Hebrew nation, who gave the law from Sinai, and was worshipped on Zion, and came at length to “His temple,” which He had consecrated and inhabited. But when Messiah appeared in human form, and began his prophetic career, proclaiming the spirituality and extent of the law of God,—affording evidence of His divine mission by miracles so decisive, so public, so frequent, so peculiar,—then was the indignation of the builders excited. And as the stone despised by the builders might be cast away among the rubbish, and be at length buried and out of sight, so was Jesus slain, and committed to the sepulchre, and hid from view in its depth and darkness; yet, though rejected, has He become the head of the corner. To prove Himself the faithful and true Witness He rose from the dead; if by His own power, then He was God, and as God could neither deceive nor betray His creatures; if by His Father’s power, then Jehovah would not accredit an impostor. Now Jesus is exalted as the great Prophet of the Church, though He was once despised; and now, what with the descent of His Spirit to guide into all truth; what with the commission, “Go ye into all the world,” and the varied qualifications for that lofty enterprise; and what with the living ministry which He has founded, and perpetuated, and blessed to preach the Word; may we not perceive the truth of the psalmist’s declaration, and may we not add in adoring wonder and gratitude, “This is the doing of the Lord!” II. AS PRIEST. The priesthood of Jesus is of eternal ordination. In virtue of His priesthood did He act with men as a prophet. It was necessary that He should assume our nature, that He might have somewhat to offer; yet, alas! how few recognized His sacerdotal dignity. Nor were they without warning from the typical language of their priesthood and sacrifices; yet, through prejudice, they would not recognize a priest in Jesus, for He wore not the sacred vestments, and was not sprung from Aaron,—nor an atonement in the death of Him who died on Calvary amidst the scorn and execrations of the multitude. This His noblest office was unseen, unvalued; and, in His decease, men saw nothing but the merited end of treason and blasphemy. Hoping to effect the extinction of His pretensions by His death, they assisted only in unfolding His designs. Immortal life to a dying world has flown from His blood,—yet, though the manner of His death combined the stigma of slavery with the degradation of crime, that death was a true and proper sacrifice, vicarious, perfect, accepted, successful. And now in heaven the great High Priest in the heavenly temple has become the head of the corner. Now does He pursue the great work of intercession in the realms of repose and glory; by His “own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” III. AS KING. The incarnate Jesus had been often depicted by the prophets as a monarch, “on the throne of His father David,”—yet “when He came to His own, His own received Him not.” Was not He who died on Calvary condemned for His reasonable aspirations to the throne of Judea? And who could fancy Him a king who wore no diadem and waved no banner, lived in obscurity and privation, and died in desertion and ignominy? But the stone, though disallowed of men, is chosen of God and precious. God hath raised Him from the dead, and placed Him at His own right hand, and endowed Him with universal government. The sceptre of all worlds is swayed by a human arm. So that if you consider what contempt was poured upon Jesus as a King,—how they crowned Him with thorns, and put a reed in His hand, and arrayed Him in garments of mock royalty, and bowed the knees before Him in contemptuous obeisance, and placed a tablet over His cross, and inscribed on it as His accusation, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews”; and then again consider His present exaltation to the throne of the universe, angels obeying His word, and the countless armies of heaven rejoicing to execute His mandates, and the work of the last judgment committed to His hand; you cannot fail to perceive how truly the symbol has been verified: “The stone which the builders despised

is become the head of the corner." (*John Eadie, D.D.*) *The stone rejected by the builders exalted as the head stone of the corner*.—I. VIEW THE CHURCH AS A HOUSE OR BUILDING (Isa. ii. 2, 3; 1 Cor. iii. 9). II. THE CHARACTER GIVEN TO CHRIST WITH RELATION TO THIS BUILDING. He is "the Stone" in a way of eminence and excellency. He is the matchless and incomparable Stone, for He is the chief Stone of the corner; the brightness of His Father's glory is in Him, and the express image of His Person. III. THE WORKMEN EMPLOYED IN REARING THIS SPIRITUAL BUILDING OR FABRIC OF THE CHURCH HERE CALLED BUILDERS. IV. THE FATAL ERRORS OF THESE BUILDERS SPOKEN OF IN MY TEXT. They reject the Stone, without which their whole building was nothing but a medley of confusion, however glorious it might appear in their own eyes. 1. This fatal error of theirs proceeded from their ignorance of Christ, in the excellency of His person, and of the glorious mystery of redemption and salvation through Him (Acts iii. 17; 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8). 2. Mistaken notions of the nature of the Messiah's kingdom was another cause of their rejecting this precious stone. What a dangerous thing it is not to have right conceptions of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom. V. INQUIRE WHAT MAY BE IMPLIED IN CHRIST'S BEING MADE THE HEAD STONE OF THE CORNER, NOTWITHSTANDING THE ATTEMPTS OF THE BUILDERS TO JOSTLE HIM OUT OF HIS PLACE. 1. It implies Christ's exaltation and victory over all His enemies and opposers. 2. It implies that God has a great regard for the glory of His Son, as the Head and King of His Church. 3. It implies that the whole spiritual fabric or building of the Church hangs upon Him, as the superstructure leans upon the foundation and chief corner stone. 4. It implies that He alone is the centre of unity in the Church. 5. It implies that Christ is the beauty and ornament of His Church, for much of the beauty and ornament of the building lies in the corner stone. 6. It implies that they who would build the Church of Christ must still have Him in their eye, and that the whole of their conduct and administration in the house of God must be regulated with a view to His glory and honour. 7. It implies that God and corrupt builders are driving quite different measures and designs. VI. APPLICATION. 1. Let us beware of the fatal errors before mentioned, whereby the Jewish builders ruined their once glorious fabric, and buried themselves in the ruins thereof. 2. Let us seek the builders' word from the great Master-builder; for there is a word which Christ gives to His faithful ministers, whereby the art of building is much conveyed (*John xvii. 14*). 3. Let us take care that every stone of the building corresponds with the foundation and corner stone. In order to which, let us examine our own and others' doctrines and conversation by the plumb-line and infallible rule of the word (Isa. viii. 20). (*E. Erskine.*) *The stone refused by the builders*.—I. NOTICE THE VIEWS HERE GIVEN TO THE REJECTION OF THE MESSIAH. 1. The ignominy with which they treated His Person. 2. The opposition with which they met His doctrine. II. NOTICE THE SUBSEQUENT EXALTATION OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. 1. His Person has become highly exalted. 2. The victory gained by His doctrine, in rapidly subduing the hearts of men, and nations of men, to the faith. III. CONSIDER THIS CHANGE IN THE FORTUNES OF THE STONE AS THE DOING OF THE LORD, AND NOT THE DOING OF MAN; NOT THE WORK OF ANGELS, NOT THE ACHIEVEMENT OF ANGELS, BUT THE DOING OF THE LORD. 1. It is the doing of all the persons in the Trinity. 2. It is the doing of all the attributes of the Godhead. 3. It is the doing of all the dispensations of Providence. IV. THE CLAIM WHICH THIS MAGNIFICENT EVENT—THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST—HAS UPON THE ATTENTION AND ADMIRATION OF MEN. 1. The exaltation of the Saviour's mediatorial person is marvellous in our eyes. 2. The victory gained by the doctrines of Christ. "It is marvellous in our eyes." There is a sevenfold marvel; whether you consider the doctrine which won the victory, the instruments employed, the weapons that were wielded by those instruments while they were propagating the doctrine, the opposition over which it triumphed, the number of those on whom it took hold, and over whom it prevailed, or the supernatural effects on all those of whom it took hold—whether you consider the one or the other, "it is marvellous in our eyes." (*J. Beaumont.*) *The rejected stone*.—I. THE FACT. We have Christ's authority for applying this spiritually to Him. The rejection of Christ foreknown. Rejection by man no proof of worthlessness: the rejected may be of God. Men reject the greater for the lesser; the moral for the sensual, all self-indulgent men risk their moral in gratifying their sensual; the spiritual for the natural, God has ordained us to life by faith, because that life is higher and nobler than the life of sense or appearance; the enduring for the sake of the temporal: all this in rejecting Christ. Hostility to Him worse than

useless—ruinous. II. THE CAUSE. "This is the Lord's doing." God works by man: through man as an agent: over man as the sovereign Lord. God works by the wrath of man. The child's rebellion and anger will not frustrate the father's purpose. That may be the Lord's doing which looks very unlike it. Evil a mystery, but God's doing through it, clear in the Gospel, though nowhere else.

III. THE RESULT. "It is marvellous in our eyes." The scheme of salvation, marvellous in conception, unlike and beyond all human thought. All that God does should be marvellous to us, would be if we were His little children. Wonder plays an important part in our history and religion. (*Homilist.*) *The head stone of the corner*.—I. CHRIST REJECTED. 1. He was clearly placed before the Jewish people as the stone which God would lay in Zion as the foundation of their hopes, but they persistently refused Him. Alas, for the blindness of men's hearts. 2. His rejection was rendered the more remarkable and the more sorrowful because He was rejected by the builders or leaders of the nation. 3. It was a violent and indignant rejection. They were not content to say, "He is not the Messiah," but they turned their hottest malice against Him; they were furious at the sight of Him. 4. This rejection was most unreasonable; they did violence to truth and justice by their evil deed. II. CHRIST EXALTED. 1. At this moment Christ has the chief place of honour in the building of God. 2. Nor is He alone eminent for His position of honour, but for His surpassing usefulness. He is the head stone of the corner, that stone which joins two walls together, and is the bond of the building. Jew and Gentile are now one in Christ Jesus. Wondrous corner stone! Thou dost bind all of us together who are in Thee, so that by love of Thee we are builded together for a temple of the Holy Ghost. Thou art the perfect bond, the eternal holdfast, the Divine cement which holds the universe in one. Is it not written, "By Him all things consist"? 3. Our Lord Jesus Christ then is brought up from all rejection and shame to which His enemies put Him to be by usefulness and by honour the grandest personage upon the face of the earth; and all this none the less, but all the more, because He was rejected. He lost nothing by His enemies. They scourged His back, but they did not rob Him of that imperial purple which now adorns Him; they crowned Him with thorns, but those thorns have increased the brilliance of His diadem of light; they pierced His hands, and thereby prepared them to sway an irresistible sceptre of love over men's hearts; they crucified Him, but His crucifixion led Him to His greater honour. III. THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST IS DUE TO GOD ALONE (ver. 23). Jesus Christ's name and work were at length had in honour in the world, but this was due to no man's wisdom, eloquence, or power, but entirely to the Lord, who is wonderful in counsel and great in might. When I consider how hostile is human nature to the Gospel, the very existence of a true Church in the world is to me a miracle. Just think of it. Why, at this very day, we have all the wisdom, and power, and eloquence, and skill of the superstition of the world arrayed against the simple Gospel of Jesus. Though they are agreed in nothing else, they all unite against Christ. IV. THE EXALTATION OF THE REJECTED CHRIST COMMENCES A NEW ERA (ver. 24). We date from our Lord's resurrection even as the Jews of old counted from the night wherein they went out of Egypt. What is this day which the Lord hath made? I reply first, it is the day of the Gospel. Through our Lord's exaltation pardon for the guilty is freely preached among all nations, and whosoever believeth in Him hath everlasting life. What day is this which the Lord hath made? Why, in the next place, it is a Sabbath day, the beginning of a long line of Sabbaths. The day in which our Lord Jesus rose from the dead is now sacred to rest and holy joy. Let us keep it with reverent love, and bless God for making it. Again, "This is the day which the Lord hath made." The resurrection of Christ commences an era of triumph. We have spoken of the Gospel day, and the Sabbatic day, but it is also a day of victories. As Jesus Christ rose from the dead, so will His truth continually rise from the sepulchre into which men may cast it. As he triumphed over the powers of death and darkness, so will His Gospel triumph over all opposition. V. THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST SUGGESTS A PRAYER (ver. 25). 1. A prayer for salvation. Put it in the present tense. Ask for a display of the present saving power of our exalted Head. 2. The other half of the prayer is for prosperity. "O Lord, send now prosperity." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ the head stone of the corner*.—The corner is the place where two walls meet, and the corner stone is that by which they are connected or combined. Hence the idea suggested by a corner stone is mainly that of union; and it is as uniting what was separated or detached that Christ is specially presented

to us under such an emblem. And verily He was the Corner Stone. In His Person were combined the Divine nature and the human; and it was this combination, His being the Corner Stone between God and man, which alone fitted Him for the vast office He had undertaken to discharge. Did He not, moreover, unite Jew and Gentile, making both one, by removing all ceremonial distinctions, and founding a Church which threw open its gates to every nation under heaven? Nay, did He not unite God and man in another sense by becoming, in His own person, a Corner Stone? He reconciled the world to its Maker—He restored harmony where sin had wrought a fearful separation. Yes, He was, and He is, the Corner Stone between earth and heaven. But it is evident from the manner in which St. Peter has quoted the prophecy in our text, that it had especial reference to the resurrection of Christ. It was by and through the Resurrection that the rejected Stone was exalted to the head of the corner; and forasmuch as the alleged marvel lies evidently in the transition from the rejection to the exaltation, we are bound to conclude that the process through which the transition took place had much to do with the wonder expressed by the psalmist. And never ought the Resurrection of the Redeemer to appear to us other than a fact as amazing as it is consolatory; for there is a respect in which the resurrection of Christ differs immeasurably from every other recorded case of the quickening of the dead. Others were raised by Christ, or by men acting in the name and with the authority of Christ; but Christ raised Himself. He rose from the grave—rose by His own act. "Destroy this temple," said He, "and in three days I will raise it up;" the evangelist adding, as a comment, "He spake of the temple of His body." Marvel of marvels! that which we believe will not cease to be marvellous when eternity has been given to its contemplation—is that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us"; but the marvel seems immeasurably heightened when the dead Christ, as well as the living, may be defined as actually a person of the Godhead. Divinity in the grave!—this is a stupendous thing. But Divinity was in the grave—Divinity was proved to have been in the grave, when the rejected Stone, by the exercise of its own power, came forth from the grave. Verily, we must exclaim with the psalmist—"This is the Lord's doing." The resurrection of Christ, effected through His own power, supersedes all necessity for any other miracle in evidence of the Divine origin of Christianity. How could that being be less than Deity itself, who, even when dead in human nature, was mighty enough to quicken that nature—who, by the strangest of all combinations, must have been dead and alive at once, and who was able, in that respect in which He was alive, to reanimate Himself in that respect in which He was dead? Need we ask whether this excites your amazement? Oh! which of you, when he thinks how, in rising from the dead, the Redeemer destroyed the curse and provided that "the creature itself also should be delivered from the bondage of corruption"—which of you can refuse to join in the exclamation—"This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes"? But amazement or admiration is not only the feeling which the fact before us should excite. The battle, the narrative of which is so surprising, was fought in our behalf, and the landscape, which awakens such lofty emotions, includes within its sweep whatever is most precious to ourselves. A Redeemer detained in the grave, would have necessarily been a Redeemer unable to redeem; a stone not exalted to "the head of the corner," would have been one which failed to combine earth and heaven. We, then, who can rejoice, because there has arisen a Mediator between us and God, must therefore rejoice in the exaltation of the rejected Stone. It was in the rising to "the head of the corner" that this Stone swept down the obstacles to the forgiveness of man, and opened to him the pathway to heaven and immortality. And there is more to be said than this. The resurrection of our own bodies is intimately connected with the resurrection of Christ—connected, as an effect with a cause; "for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead: for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Therefore, if it be any cause for joy that our bodies are to rise, it is cause for joy that the Stone rejected by the builders was exalted of God to "the head of the corner." And the resurrection of the body is a cause for joy. The body, indeed, is to be a spiritual body, and therefore will renovated materialism assume a more spiritual character, congenial to that of the celestial inhabitants; but a material system there surely shall be—a material world, with material loveliness, and an over-arching sky, in which, when the present constellations shall be quenched, their places shall be filled with others,

more beautifully, more eloquently bright. If such, then, be the resurrection, and such our personal interest in the rising of the rejected Stone to be "the head of the corner," it is not amazement only with which you will hear the record or look upon the landscape. The record is that of a stupendous victory, but a victory which secured you the means of grace and the hope of glory. Oh! then, delight must be added to amazement. If you have already exclaimed with a tongue of wonder, "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes," will you not now add with a tongue of exultation, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it"? (H. Melville, B.D.)

Ver. 23. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.—*The Lord's doing*.—The following appear to me to be evident marks, or strong indications of an immediate work of Divine Providence. 1. When great and notable events are brought about by causes apparently inadequate to produce them,—by means that, to all human reason and appearance, are unable to attain their end. 2. When nature herself seems to arm in defence of, or in opposition to, any cause, by operating for, or against the same, in an extraordinary and unusual manner (Josh. x. 13; Judges v. 20; 1 Sam. vii. 10). 3. When the hidden works of darkness are brought to light in some sudden, surprising, and unexpected manner, as if by accident (2 Kings v. 20–27; Acts v. 1–12; Matt. ii. 1–17; Esther vi. 7; Acts ix. 23–25; xxiii. 12–25). 4. When some great and notable mischief is not only discovered and prevented, but likewise when it is returned upon the heads of its first contrivers. Pharaoh, Haman. 5. When great, good, and noble ends are brought about by wicked men quite contrary to their malevolent intentions (Ex. i. 15; ii. 1–10). 6. When events are well timed and highly seasonable. Learn—1. That with God nothing is impossible. 2. Wherein the spirit and power of thankfulness doth chiefly consist: it consists in the life of those who are truly thankful. (D. McIndoe.)

Ver. 24. This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.—*The day of days*.—The day of days in the life of Christ was the day of His resurrection; and to the early Christians Easter Day was the queen of festivals. Easter should provoke a joy in Christian hearts, greater than any event in our private lives; greater than any in the world's public history; greater than any other even in the life of our Lord Himself. This is the immemorial feeling and sense of Christendom; but why should it be so? why has Easter, why has the resurrection, this extraordinary claim on the buoyancy of the Christian heart? I. **THE JOY OF A GREAT REACTION**; a reaction from anxiety and sorrow. So it was at the time of Christ's resurrection. The apostles had been crushed by the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. When He was in His grave, all seemed over; and when He appeared, first to one, and then to another, on the day of His resurrection, they could not keep their feelings of welcome and delight,—traversed though these were by a sense of wondering awe,—within anything like bounds. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." And this joy of theirs is repeated every year in the greatest feast of the Christian Church. Those who have felt the sorrow feel the joy. Year by year we stand by, in spirit, while Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus lay Him in His grave; and the tension of sincere feeling, of sympathetic sorrow, of penitence and contrition which this implies, is followed by a corresponding reaction on Easter morning. II. **THE JOY OF A GREAT CERTAINTY**. The resurrection of our Saviour is the fact which makes an intelligent Christian certain of the truth of his creed. And in this way it satisfies a real mental want, and it occasions keen enjoyment by giving this satisfaction. All else in our creed depends on the resurrection of Christ; and to-day when we remind ourselves of its historical certainty, which is scarcely less illustrated by the apparent contradictions than by the collective and direct force of the accounts which have come down to us, we experience a mental delight at the freshening touch of truth, and cry, "This is the day which the Lord hath made: we will rejoice and be glad in it." III. **THE JOY OF EASTER IS INSPIRED BY THE HOPE WHICH EASTER WARRANTS AND QUICKENS**. Hope and Joy are twin sisters. Joy best enters the human soul when leaning on the arm of Hope. As the apostle says, "We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." What is this hope which Easter most distinctly puts before us? and how does it spring from our Saviour's resurrection? The great hope which Easter sets before us is the completeness of our life after death. The difficulty of believing in a future life is due, not to the

reason, but to the imagination as controlled by the senses. Who of us has not made this discovery in some one of those dark hours, which sooner or later visit every human life? Who of us has not stood by the open coffin, and felt himself, or marked how others feel, the terrific empire of sense in the presence of death? At such a moment the most modest anticipations of reason are deemed an unsubstantial guess: the clear teaching of revelation a solemn fancy; the mind's sceptre has passed to the imagination and the senses, and they decide that all ends with death, and that the grim secrets of the grave are the measure of man's impotent aspirations after a future existence. Now it was to deal with this specific difficulty that our Lord willed to die, and then, by a literal bodily resurrection, to rise from the grave. Truly we may exclaim with the apostle, that God "hath begotten us again unto a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," and with the psalmist, that "this is the day which the Lord hath made: let us rejoice and be glad in it." (*Canon Liadon.*) *Easter Day*:—I. **THIS IS THE DAY WHICH THE LORD HATH MADE GREAT**, by giving the most glorious proof of His own greatness; by rising on it from the dead, by being born again of the womb of the earth, to prove Himself God, as His first birth had proved Him to be man. II. **THIS IS THE DAY WHICH THE LORD HATH MADE GLORIOUS**, by displaying the glory of His everlasting kingdom, by taking possession of eternal life in His own person, and thereby assuring the same precious blessing to them who by faith lay hold on His promises. III. **THIS IS THE DAY WHICH THE LORD HATH MADE A DAY OF TRIUMPH AND REJOICING**, by subduing all the most formidable enemies of human nature, robbing death of its sting, the grave of its victory, spoiling principalities and powers, triumphing over them, and making a show of them openly: by flinging open the gates of death and hell, proclaiming liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. IV. **THIS IS THE DAY WHICH THE LORD HATH MADE WONDERFUL**, by turning dishonour into honour, by converting the ignominy of His death into the glory of a resurrection, the cross on which He suffered into the trophy of His victory, the crown of thorns into a ray of glory. V. **THIS IS THE DAY WHICH THE LORD HATH MADE COMFORTABLE TO ALL THAT MOURN IN ZION**, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. (*A. Grant, D.D.*) *The memorial of Christ's resurrection ought perpetually to be celebrated*:—I. **THE IMPORT OF THE WORDS**—"This is the day," etc. The everlasting mercies of God which are celebrated in the four first verses by way of repetition; Christ's being set in a large place (ver. 5), which the prophet elsewhere explains by God's delivering him (Ps. xviii. 19); his exultation, because he shall see his desire upon them that hate him (ver. 7); his declaring that it is better to trust in the Lord than to put any confidence in man (ver. 8); the power given him to destroy all nations in the name of the Lord (ver. 10). All these expressions, I say, import some effects of his royal dignity, more permanent and extensive, and more evident tokens of the Divine interposition, than can be attributed to the former event; though that was not effected without the direction of a particular providence. But all these effects, as all other effects of Christ's mediatorial office, being fully accounted for from the truth of His resurrection, and such facts as were consequential to it; it is most reasonable to consider the text as respecting His resurrection. II. **UPON WHAT REASONS SO EMINENT AND PECULIAR A DISTINCTION OF THIS DAY IS MADE**. 1. The resurrection of Christ did evidence the Divine authority of our Saviour, as it could not, upon the principles of the Jews themselves, have been effected, but only by a Divine power. 2. But the proof, indeed, of the Divine mission of Christ from His resurrection does not only affect the Jews, but all other persons indifferently; for granting a power to man of doing very strange and surprising things by means of the union of his soul and body, according to the laws of which they here act upon one another, or upon other bodies; yet, when this union is dissolved, when the soul is incapable of acting either upon its own former body, or any body whatever, how is it possible to conceive that it should be able to restore the bodily organs, which it before informed, either to their proper offices or order again? This can only be the act of God, who made us and fashioned us; by whom, as the psalmist celebrates His wisdom and power, we are so fearfully and wonderfully made; in whose hand is the soul of every living thing; of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things. III. **WHAT ARE THOSE PROPER ACTS OF JOY AND GLADNESS WHEREWITH IT OUGHT TO BE CELEBRATED**. 1. The first and highest expression of our joy on occasion of so extraordinary an act of the Divine power and goodness, ought to

consist in those inward and spiritual sentiments which the soul of a good man naturally feels when he reflects on any special mercy of God, or any spiritual good which it is the means of conveying to him; especially in so ample a manner that it is fruitful and diffusive of many other spiritual goods. Such is the Divine mercy which we now commemorate; and therefore, if we commemorate it as we ought, we shall inwardly rejoice in the Lord, according to the joy in harvest, or as men rejoice when they divide the spoil on occasion of so great a flow of Divine blessings upon us all at once. 2. This internal joy ought also to be expressed by some outward and proper significations of it. Acts of religious praise and thanksgiving to God; and acts of innocent festivity in other external respects. (*R. Fiddes.*)

The Lord's day:—I. THIS DAY IS DISTINGUISHED BY HIS TRIUMPHS—let us hail Him Conqueror. II. THIS DAY HE CLAIMS AS AN OFFERING—let us present it with joyful obedience. III. ON THIS DAY HE ADVANCES WITH REGULAR PRIVILEGES—let us get forth to meet Him with all the ardour of hope. IV. ON THIS DAY WE DISCERN OUR INTEREST IN THE TRIUMPH OF THE REDEEMER. (*J. Hughes.*)

The blessings of a day:—A day, what is it? A space of light between two mountain-walls of darkness; a time of redemption from the kingdom of Chaos and Old Night; the half or the two-thirds of life really given us to live; the season of consciousness, duty, trial; the end and aim for which sleep is given, and the veil of temporary oblivion and rest spread over our faculties so many hours. Wonderful and rich, far beyond the line of our usual appreciation, is the gift of a day. It stands like a monument between the eternity of the past and the eternity of the future. One day! It is little; a fugitive twenty-four hours, a hurried routine, a mill-horse round of cares and toils, a succession of meals,—breakfast, dinner, supper,—a miniature life, "rounded with a sleep," a daybreak of childhood, a morning of youth and hope, a noonday of manhood and activity, a twilight of age and pensiveness, a night of death. How quickly it is here, how soon it is gone! But in this very shortness of a day we discern a benevolent intention. Constituted as we are, we could not bear the burden of a double day. Literally, our "strength is according to our day, and our day according to our strength." They have been weighed and balanced by a sure Hand, one to the other. The mechanical arrangements by which the day is made, the position of the earth and the sun and their respective revolutions, and those of the other planetary and celestial bodies, the nature of the influence exerted on us by the sun through light, heat, and electricity and other elements, too subtle and delicate for our coarse senses to take cognizance of them, all are indications of the Fatherly care over us, and fitted to assure us that "this is the day which the Lord hath made," and to inspire us to "rejoice and be glad in it." We discern a most beneficent intention in the separation and subdivision of our life into daily fragments. Each night is a gentle semi-oblivion, that our past lives may not tyrannize over us, that the door of progress may still be kept open, that we may have in some sense a new and untrammelled being every day. Every night is a faint death, every morning a fresh birth. The blessing of the day depends in no slight degree on the manner in which we begin it, on the key-note of the morning hour. It is well begun by the Almighty Disposer. He gives us a new world, bathed in dew, blushing with the dawn, vocal with the song of birds, while clouds of vapour and smoke rise like columns of incense from hill and vale and human homes to heaven. Fair and gracious world of ours, we feel like saying, how sad and strange it is that we should ever forget that this is a Divine handiwork, or that we should ever abuse such royal gifts by our ingratitude and disobedience! Devotion is the spontaneous service of the morning. To invoke the guardian care of Heaven, and to bless its new mercies, is but a fitting counterpart to all the other beauty, and solemnity, and hope, and renewed life of the world. Shall the birds arise and sing at the gate of heaven, and man feel no uplifting sentiment at the birth of a new day? "Man," says the psalmist, "goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening." That work and labour, the heat and burden of the day, called, in the external and figurative language of the elementary dispensation, "a curse," have proved on long trial, and in the wide experience of a world, to be some of the best blessings of the day. Who has the pleasant consciousness of being useful? The worker. Who stores up the rich memories of many things done? The worker. Who sleeps sweetly? The worker. Who relishes his food more than the epicure? The hard worker. Who enjoys leisure? He who has used his time so industriously that he has earned a right to be idle. Who can understand the full measure of blessing in a day, but he who has so earnestly

pursued its opportunities that its minutes are to him as gems, and its hours as diamonds? There is great work yet to be done on this planet,—continents to be reclaimed, oceans to be navigated, wild elements to be yoked to the car of human progress, acres of brains to be tilled, Augean stables of moral filth to be purified, swarming multitudes of souls to be touched to finer spiritual issues, vast social Saharas to be clothed with verdure, new and grander organizations in Church and State, and family, and art, and labour, and literature, to be formed, that shall make our modern homes, and sanctuaries and schools, galleries and Crystal Palaces, seem to be but the bungling work of apprentices compared with the productions of the perfect Master-workman. The past history of our race has its representative in the night,—dreamy, sleepy, irresponsible, fearful, often riotous, artificially lighted, addicted to passion, meteor-led night. The ages have been dark ages, and history has been profane, and the earth has not been holy land. But the dayspring from on high hath visited us, and the future is to be a day of action, usefulness, progress, as the past has been a night of preparation, dreams, and darkness. (*A. A. Livermore.*) *Evangelical gladness*:—First, it brings with it a spiritual delight. Secondly, an external gladness which opens itself in signs and tokens. The spiritual delight which we treasure up within the soul looking steadfastly upon Jesus that died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, is heavenly and unutterable, it is a superlative joy that cries down all other petty delights. The external utterances of a pious joy are these—1. Days of rest from bodily labour; for the meaner labour must give way when a better and a worthier is to be undertaken. And while the mind hath just occasion to make its abode in the house of gladness, the weed of ordinary toil and travel doth not become us; therefore it is fit that ordinary labour should sometimes surrender itself up to the service of God. 2. To laud the name of the Lord, and to give thanks unto Him are the only language of our thankfulness (Ps. xlii. 5). 3. God doth not deny it, but he that offereth Him praise doth honour Him; but will you know how that honour is best exalted? Make a cheerful noise to the God of Jacob, singing and making melody to the Lord with psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. If the Jews might justly say, how can we sing the Lord's song, while we are in a strange land, while we are in captivity? then we must acknowledge, on the contrary, how can we choose but sing the Lord's song, being delivered out of captivity? Singing of psalms is a most proper exercise of our reasonable service. 4. Another effect of Christian joy is to give, because it abounds. A joy that will not distribute to the needy is a shrunken withered joy, nay, a joy that will carry the curse of God with it, because it wants fruits; and a joy that will carry the curse of the poor with it, because they are suffered to pine and languish in our public gladness. 5. All sorts of mirth and innocent recreation, wherein our substance is not exhausted, nor our time trifled away, are agreeable to our Christian conversation. At our times of respite from sacred offices, to delight our sullen nature with harmless pleasures, it rubs off the rust of melancholy, and puts alacrity in us to rejoice always in the Lord. (*Bp. Hackett.*)

Vers. 25-27. Save now, I beseech Thee, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech Thee, send now prosperity.—*The voice of the Church*:—I. The voice of the Church in RELATION TO ALL. Here is the voice of prayer (ver. 25). 1. It is a prayer for immediate salvation. "Save now, we beseech Thee, O Lord." The great want of mankind is salvation from their sins. 2. It is a prayer for immediate prosperity. "I beseech Thee, send now prosperity." There are different kinds of prosperity. Some prosperities become curses. Temporal prosperity is often spiritual adversity. The prosperity which is here prayed for is soul prosperity—prosperity in all that is Christ-like. II. The voice of the Church in relation to those WHO ARE ENTERING IT (ver. 26). Here is a hearty welcome. The true Church is always ready to welcome those who enter it in the name of the Lord. Nay, it goes further, it sends out messengers to the highways and hedges, and seeks to compel those who are morally hungry and thirsty, to come to its feast. III. The voice of the Church in relation to ALL WITHIN (ver. 27). 1. It is the voice of mutual congratulation. He "hath showed us light." How blessed are we! 2. It is the voice of mutual exultation. "Bind the sacrifice with cords," etc. We should all provoke one another to love and good works. (*Homilist.*) *Prayer for prosperity*:—I. WHAT IS THE OBJECT TO BE THUS ARDENTLY DESIRED? A Church is prosperous—1. Where there is growing knowledge and holiness among its members. 2. When there is the cordial exhibition of brotherly love amongst its members. 3. When

there is a constant accession of new converts. II. WHY WE SHOULD BE CONCERNED TO SECURE THIS PROSPERITY. 1. The proof of our godly sincerity requires it. 2. The value of the object itself demands it. 3. No system of means can alone ensure this prosperity. (W. G. Barrett.) *A prayer for spiritual prosperity*:—I. THE BLESSING IMPLIED. 1. That peace and union may prevail amongst us. 2. That a spirit of zeal may be manifested by us. 3. That increased spirituality may be found in us. 4. That true disciples may be added to us. II. THE EARNESTNESS EMPLOYED. "O Lord, I beseech Thee!" It is the language of one who feels what he says. What is prayer without earnestness and fervour? What is the outward form without the inward feeling? (E. Temple.) *The plea for prosperity*:—I. IN WHAT DOES SPIRITUAL PROSPERITY CONSIST? 1. A growth in knowledge. In a prosperous Church the members will manifest a growing acquaintance with the teachings of God's Word—their views of the Person and work of Christ, of the spirituality of God's law, of the privileges and duties of piety will be expanded and enlarged. 2. Where this growth in knowledge and in spiritual understanding obtains there will be found a corresponding growth in holiness. The two things are inseparable (2 Cor. iii. 18). 3. A quickened Church will, as the result of its deepened spiritual life, address itself to aggressive work—to evangelize the nations, to convert the world. II. WHAT IS ESSENTIAL TO SUCH PROSPERITY? 1. Purity of doctrine. Truth is to the Church what food is to the body. 2. The maintenance of godly discipline. What should we think of a gardener who allowed a diseased or a withered branch to remain on the tree, or of a general who tolerated in his camp the presence of known traitors? Far more perilous is it for us to tolerate in the Church that which is manifestly evil. 3. Union of feeling and of action. On the field of battle a small band of brave men acting in unbroken phalanx, with one common determination, and under one bold and resolute leader, will accomplish far more than ten times their number acting singly and alone. So a Church composed but of few members, if they be living to God, one in feeling and in action, will do more for Christ and for the salvation of the world than ten times their number who are alienated in affection and who work independently of each other. 4. The manifest presence and power of the Holy Spirit. A Church without the Spirit is like an engine without steam; the engine may be beautiful to look upon, perfect in all its parts, admirably adapted to answer the ends for which it was made, but without steam there is no motion, no power. III. WHAT CAN WE DO TO PROMOTE AND ENSURE THE PROSPERITY OF THE CHURCH? We suffer, the Church at large suffers, from the great rush and hurry of life in the present day. Let us find time for thought. If we do this our minds and our hearts will become full of the subject, and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak. (C. Garrett.) *Prayer for the Church's prosperity*:—I. WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS OF TRUE PROSPERITY TO SUCH A COMMUNITY AS THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH? First, "righteousness"; the great generic principle of righteousness living in the heart, rising up to its ascendancy in the heart, and working itself out in the life: "righteousness and true holiness," as the idea is amplified and illustrated. Second, "peace"; holy tranquillity, "the peace of God which passeth all understanding, and keepeth the heart and mind through Jesus Christ"; "peace" in the Christian, and "peace," too, among Christians. And, third, "joy in the Holy Ghost"; "joy" produced by "the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us," and by the hope of glory. II. FROM WHOM DOES PROSPERITY COME TO THE CHURCH? The work is as really God's, as is the production of the animal life which pulsates in our bodily frame; and so is all that belongs to the preservation of the spiritual life, and to its progress up to perfection. Is it nourished? He nourishes it. Is it revived? He revives it. Is it developed and exercised in holy and useful activity? He draws it out, and guides and sustains it (Jer. xxxiii. 4-9; Hosea xiv. 5-8). III. WHAT IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE CHURCH IN ORDER TO THE ATTAINMENT OF PROSPERITY? 1. Prayer is required of us for this purpose. The psalmist knew this: nay, more, he felt the knowledge to be so working at his heart, as to bring warm from his lips the words that lie before us, "Save now," etc. 2. With our prayers we must combine activity. 3. Another thing necessary to the success of social prayer is pervasive unity of purpose, giving rise to unity of desire. (D. Young, D.D.) *Church prosperity*:—I. THE SALVATION OF MEN IS THE FIRST PLEA OF THE CHURCH. 1. Our increase depends on it. 2. The Church's best joy lives in it. 3. Our riches in gifts and graces, labours, and in all variety of experience, will be found as the Lord answers this prayer. We shall

value our spiritual wealth, our wealth of gifts and graces, all the more if we know they come to us in answer to our own pleadings. II. **SOUL CULTURE AND SPIRITUAL LIFE IS THE BEST PROSPERITY OF A CHURCH.** Not numbers, or social status, or human applause, or intellectual greatness; but the spirituality of her life, and an increase of saved men brought into her midst. III. **THESE TWO MATTERS THAT COME OUT OF THE PRAYER OF THE TEXT ARE THE HIGHEST GLORY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.** He Himself came to save. That was His one great business while here among men. He came on this one specific errand, and when He had made it complete He passed up into the heavens, still to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins. He is coming again to gather us to Himself. Let us hope and trust, let us watch and pray, and we shall not be disappointed. (*W. Cuff.*) **Church prosperity:**—I. It is not to be determined by the mere number of the congregation. II. Neither is prosperity determined by the wealth of the Church. History shows us that the days of least usefulness of the Church have been the days of its greatest wealth. III. Prosperity is not determined either by the magnificence of the meeting place. IV. The way to judge of the prosperity of a Church is to see if it accomplishes the purpose for which it was organized. (*W. L. Harris.*) **The prosperity of Messiah's kingdom:**—I. **THE NATURE OF THE PROSPERITY HERE DESIRED.** It includes—1. A revival in the personal religion of each member of the Christian Church. 2. Numerous conversions to God. 3. Harmony, peace, and joy in the Church. 4. Liberal support to religious institutions. II. **THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS PROSPERITY.** 1. This is important in its relation to your personal happiness. The Christian should not only possess but enjoy religion. 2. It is important in its relation to our usefulness. Spiritual prosperity is important that the parent may be a blessing to his children, that the Sabbath school teacher may be a blessing to his class, that the minister may be a blessing to his people, and that the Church may be a blessing to the world. Eminent piety is essential to eminent usefulness. 3. This prosperity is important in its relation to our meetness for heaven. There are two things essential to our meetness for heaven, viz. justification and sanctification. The first refers to a change of our state, the second to a change of our nature. Justification is derived from the righteousness of Christ, sanctification from the spirit of Christ. The one is instantaneous in its accomplishment, the other is gradual in its advancement. Justification gives us a title to heaven, sanctification a meetness for it. 4. This prosperity is important when viewed in its relation to God's glory. The fruitful Christian exercises strong faith in God, which produces ardent love, meek submission, and cheerful self-denial; these, and the other graces of the Spirit, reflect the highest honour upon the character and government of God. "Herein is My Father glorified that ye bring forth much fruit." III. **THE MEANS IN THE USE OF WHICH THIS PROSPERITY MAY BE SECURED.** The Holy Spirit operates upon the human soul through the medium of truth, this truth is contained in the Scriptures, and is to be presented to the minds of men by the Christian Church. (*H. Hollis.*) **Religious prosperity:**—I. **WHEREIN DOES IT CONSIST?** 1. The preached Word made effectual to salvation. 2. A steadfast, zealous adherence to the leading doctrines of revelation. 3. A universal observance of the duties of religion. 4. Where the bond of union is such as to promise permanent stability. Not custom, nor wealth, but love. 5. Profession in grace, love, humility, and general resemblance to God. II. **REASONS WHY THIS SHOULD BE ADOPTED AS A PRAYER.** 1. Because this prosperity is from God. 2. And when you look to your own characters, you will find abundant reason for this prayer. 3. Your cordial adoption of this prayer will prove the truth, and promote the growth of your own personal religion. (*John Clayton.*) **The prosperity of the Church:**—This is the language of a man of God, who, by "prosperity" intended the progress and triumphs of Divine truth, the revival of true religion, the enlargement of the kingdom of God, embracing the best interests of the children of men. I. **WHAT IS THE PROSPERITY HERE SOLICITED, AND WHEN MAY THE CHILDREN OF GOD BE REGARDED AS IN A PROSPEROUS STATE?** 1. When her borders are extended—when the light of Divine truth is carried into the dark places of the earth, making inroads on the seats of ignorance, of sin, and of Satan. 2. When her converts increase. 3. When her members are fruitful. 4. When her helpers multiply. 5. When the Head is present with the Church. II. **WHAT IS NECESSARY TO PROSPERITY? ON WHAT DOES IT DEPEND?** 1. The blessing of God—without which the most able, learned, and zealous minister, without which the most pious, active, and generous people, without which the most unrelenting exertions of both, will be perfectly unavailing. 2. Those means which

the blessed God has appointed, and to which He has promised His blessing for a portion of success and prosperity, are such as the following:—(1) Pure doctrine. (2) Strictness of Christian discipline. (3) Union. (4) A praying people. (5) A faithful ministry. (*W. Atherton.*)

Ver. 26. Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord.—*Christ received with great joy*:—The words are an acclamation of the people, declaring and setting forth the welcome of Christ to all believing souls; their joy and rejoicing conceived upon the coming of Christ among them; their gratulation and thanksgiving for Christ's appropinquation and coming nigh unto them; their vote and exoptation of all prosperity, blessed and happy success to Christ in His kingdom. Christ's coming proves most joyful to them that lovingly receive and entertain Him. In the words we have in the general two things considerable—1. A gratulation uttered by the people, Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord. 2. A benediction pronounced by the ministers of the Lord, We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord. In the gratulation there is—(1) The agent, the people, they bless, they rejoice, they are thankful for Christ's coming. Man hath greatest cause of all creatures to rejoice in and for the coming of Christ Jesus. (2) There is the act, Blessed, praised, exalted, magnified be Christ. Christ is worthy to be celebrated with all praises for His coming to us. (3) There is the manner of their gratulation, blessed, expressed—(i.) By way of thanksgiving and rejoicing, and—(ii.) By way of exoptation and wishing. Whosoever truly rejoiceth in Christ doth also wish well to the cause and kingdom of Christ. (4) There is the party coming. He who is the Son of God by eternal generation, and by grace of hypostatical union, the Prince of the kings of the earth by authority and dominion; He who is the Head of the Church by spiritual jurisdiction; He who is the Redeemer of man by the merit of His obedience and passion; He who is the Conqueror over hell, death, sin, and Satan by His resurrection; He who by His office is the Prophet instructing us, the King commanding and defending us, and the Priest offering Himself a sacrifice for us; He who is the Mediator between God and us by His intercession, the fountain of all mercy, grace, and peace unto us by Divine ordination. Blessed be He, welcome be He, in Him let our souls rejoice, His coming let us entertain with the chiefest and strength of our rejoicing. The Lord Jesus ought to be the prime and complete object of man's joyfulness. (5) Here is His motion, cometh. Christ as God is everywhere, and neither goes nor comes, but fills all places; yet He cometh by His laws and ordinances, as a Prince by His proclamations; He cometh by His ministers, as a King by His ambassadors; He cometh by His incarnation, as a brother taking our nature upon Him; He cometh by His gifts and graces bestowed on us, as a friend cometh by his love-tokens; He cometh by His Word and Gospel, as the sun cometh by his light, enlightening us, as a king cometh by his sceptre binding, bowing, and inclining our hearts unto obedience. (*A. Grosse.*) *The coming deliverer*:—During the dark days of the struggle for Italian liberty the people generally looked upon Garibaldi as their invincible deliverer. Prisoners, hurried away to loathsome dungeons, would be cheered as they passed along the streets by friends whispering in their ears, "Courage, Garibaldi is coming!" Men would steal out at night and chalk on the walls and pavements, "Garibaldi is coming!" And when the news of his approach near to a city was announced the people broke out into the rapturous shout, "Garibaldi is coming!" He came, and Italy broke her political and religious fetters never to be so enslaved again. A greater than Garibaldi is coming to God's people. The Desire of all nations is on the way. Jesus is coming, coming to reign, and His kingdom is of joy, peace, blessing eternal. (*H. O. Mackey.*) **We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord.**—*A benediction uttered by the ministers of the Lord*:—1. The parties blessing, the ministers of the Lord; we, who are called of God to this sacred function, who are appointed to make prayer and supplication for you, to pronounce a blessing upon you. Holy and faithful ministers are the instrumental causes of great blessings to God's Church and servants. 2. Here is their act, an act of blessing, We have blessed. Ministers bless the people sometime by way of vote and exoptation, prayer and supplication; sometime by way of vocal pronounciation, pronouncing good things in the name of God upon them; sometime by way of prophecy and prediction, foretelling great blessings to come; sometime by way of doctrine and instruction. They declare and open the blessings which God hath prepared for them, and the Lord by them, as by His ministerial instruments, communicates

His grace and blessing to the people. It must be the care of ministers so to do mean themselves in their function that they prove a blessing to the people. 3. Here is the object or parties blessed, you; you to whom Christ's coming is acceptable, you who wish well to Christ's kingdom, you who readily endeavour the exaltation of Christ's name and Gospel, we have blessed you. The labours of God's ministers prove a blessing only to such people as rejoice in, and endeavour the advancement of, the Gospel. 4. Here is the place from whence they blessed the people, out of the house of the Lord, the place of God's public worship, where His saints are assembled, His ordinances sincerely handled, His name invoked, His Word preached, and religious duties celebrated. God useth to dispense His spiritual blessings in the public and sacred assemblies. (*A. Grosse.*)

Ver. 27. **God is the Lord, which hath showed us light.**—*The light from God:*—I propose to consider how the words of my text may be used in an improper manner, and how, as I think, we may use them aright. 1. If in saying "God is the Lord who hath showed us light" we imply that we in any way have authority to dictate to our fellow-men what they should believe, we are making a most pernicious use of them. Men like ourselves found by prayer and by the right exercise of their reason some precious belief which for all practical purposes may be called for them "the truth." It was, we will say, some great advance on the beliefs prevailing around them; it was the clear detection and straightforward repudiation of palpable error; it was as the lifting of a dark mist which had clouded their souls. In so far it was true; and native piety would make each pioneer and reformer in turn lift up his heart in gratitude and say, "God is the Lord who hath showed us light." But whatever truth was thus discovered we may be very sure was only partial. At its best and brightest it was but a streak of dawn, only one ray of that everlasting sun of the truth of God which no man can look upon and live. This was not all. The truth, whatever it was, had to be proclaimed. It must take shape in words; and from that moment it was liable to be mis-stated or misunderstood. 2. I turn now to consider in what way we may use the words of my text aright. It is especially good for us to keep ever before our minds the source of any light that shines in our hearts. There is no more wholesome state to be in than in one of perpetual thankfulness, both as a safeguard against conceit and vainglory, and as an incentive to fresh effort in the pursuit of truth. We have to thank God and not ourselves for every step in our victorious march. He it was who gave the first impulse to our search for purer truth, who made us restless under the bondage of tradition and filled us with longings to know more of Himself. He it was who in answer to our cry poured upon us His blessed Spirit, enlightening our understandings, quickening our consciences and warming our hearts by His love. I believe it to be a fact that we cannot ask God for too much light. The more we ask, the more we receive; and although the sanctities of the soul are far too sacred to be exposed to public scrutiny, many a prayerful heart can bear witness to the ever ready help of our Father in heaven when His children lift up their cry for His strength and guidance. "Many are the perplexities of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of all." Still we must never forget that all this is between ourselves and God, and must never be used as a means of illegitimate influence, much less as a plea for authority over the souls of others. God has never promised to work a miracle to keep a man from error, must less to give him spiritual authority over his fellow-men. It is enough that each uplifted soul is conscious of Divine illumination exactly in proportion to its own needs and for its own use alone. We know it does not render us incapable of error; we know how far it must fall short of all the truth which God has in store. But we also know that in answer to our cry, God gives quite as much light as He sees fit, as much as He knows our souls can receive, and—most important of all—as much as we can make good use of in our service of our brethren. (*C. Voysey, B.A.*) *The use to make of the light:*—1. Rejoice in this light. Not as children, that come abroad to play in the sunshine, and make no more account of it. Nor as a people that never saw the sun, step out of their doors to gaze upon it, and then turn their backs on it. But rejoice with a solid joy, as they whom God hath "brought out of darkness into His marvellous light." 2. Walk worthy of this light (Eph. iv. 1). Be children of the light. As the light shines on thee, let it shine in thee. Thou hast small comfort to be in the light unless the light be in thee. Saith the prophet to the Church (Isa. lx. 1). As God hath showed His light to you, "so let your light

shine before men," etc. 3. Take heed of sore eyes. Pleasures, lusts, and vanities make the eyes sore that are dotingly fastened on them. The usurer with telling his gold; the haughty with contemplating his greatness; the drunkard with looking at the wine laughing in the cup; the lustful with gazing on his painted damna-tions, make their eyes so sore, that they cannot look up and behold this light. 4. Take benefit of this light while it shines. Either this light may be set to thee, or thou be set to it. That to thee, by removing the candlestick; thou to that, by the hand of death, which shall send thee to the land of forgetful darkness. Our Saviour taught us this, not only in precept, but in practice (John ix. 4). Let us not do like some courtiers, that having light allowed them, play it out at cards, and go to bed darkling. 5. Lastly, help to maintain this light, that it go not out. If you would have the lamps of the sanctuary shine, pour in your oil. Grudge not a little cost to keep this light clear. Repine not you then at a little charge for the everlasting lamp of the Gospel. (T. Adams.) **Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.**—*Binding the sacrifice*:—Bishop Wordsworth gives the most probable explanation of this difficult passage. "The Hebrew word 'chag,' translated 'sacrifice,' literally means 'a feast-day.' Probably the word is adopted here, because the expression is a figurative one. We do not hear that the sacrifices were literally bound to the horns of the altar, on which the blood was sprinkled (Exod. xxix. 16; Lev. iv. 7; viii. 15; ix. 9). Nor does it appear to have been possible that the immense number of victims offered on the day of dedication (Ezra vi. 17) could have been so bound. The Targum, indeed, explains the words as meaning, 'Bring the sacrifice bound until it arrives at the horns of the altar.' But the sense seems to be, bind the festival of dedica-tion to the altar of God—that is, let the joys of all Israelites be concentrated as the joys of one man in a great national act of thankful communion and self-consecration to God. Let the people of God be no more separated from one another by schism, as they were by the severance of Israel from Judah; let them no more be scattered, as they were in the Assyrian and Babylonian captivity; but let them all be bound to one centre of unity—the altar of God." In view of this explanation of the expression as a figurative one, there is no need for inquiries concerning ancient customs of binding sacrifices to altars, or for the assumption that any new practice was enjoined. The passage is best treated as a poetical figure.

END OF VOL. IV.